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The idea that knowledge must be founded upon the absence of any reference to an Absolute translates itself today into the veritable disbelief in the possibility of an articulation between knowledge and desire. As a consequence, we witness the disappearance of any form of transmission which could carry forward the word of the New, while we allow ourselves to be seduced by the profitable and abundant word which secretly relies on an ever-growing debt with the present. We are invited, therefore, to engage ourselves in the task of thinking, in a transmissible way, the current impasses of critical thought – to paraphrase Hegel: to conceptualize what ties us to our current predicament not only as objection but also as object.

Think Media: EGS Media Philosophy Series

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Hegel, Lacan, Žižek

Gabriel Tupinambá
Yuan Yao

Hegel, Lacan, Žižek

Atropos Press

To our friends and families

*How mad would he have to be to say, "He beheld
An order and thereafter he belonged
To it"? He beheld the order of the northern sky.*

*But the beggar gazes on calamity
And thereafter he belongs to it, to bread
Hard found, and water tasting of misery.*

*For him cold's glacial beauty is his fate.
Without understanding, he belongs to it
And the night, and midnight, and after, where it is.*

Wallace Stevens, In a Bad Time

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Foreword

Hegel, Lacan, Žižek is the name given to a collection of theses by Gabriel Tupinambá and Yuan Yao. Written in pursuit of Master's Degrees in Philosophy at the *European Graduate School*, these two works are also something else – they are the first published inscription of the collective constituted by the name *Pensée*.

Pensée – established in the fall of 2010 by the two authors and Srđan Cvjetičanin – was formed not only on the basis of a desire to know but also of a desire to organize. These two desires – today taken as antithetical – are neither separate nor independent from one another in *Pensée's* anatomy: it is to the group, and its organizing propositions, that the members of *Pensée* address their desire to know. The principles by which a study group organizes itself, consequently, are not innocent to the result of the study – after all, the form of organization cannot but stain the knowledge it produces.

But how is it that a form of organization produces such effects? Firstly, we must state that much of the ideas and arguments found in both *Time as the Ambiguity of the Legible* and *From Sapere Aude to Scilicet*¹ find their source in the group's study – a space wherein the right to work is found in the suspension of intellectual property – to the point where it is difficult, if not impossible, to assign the origin of an idea to one of the three – as a consequence, the members are left no choice but to assign it to the fourth. This fourth, in fact, plays a crucial role for another reason – it is ultimately a true friend who by its rigid itinerary of study enables what seemed impossible – the study of Lacan's

¹ *Time as the Ambiguity of the Legible* was completed in the fall of 2012, while *From Sapere Aude to Scilicet*, the previous fall. For this book *From Sapere Aude to Scilicet* has been divided into the two first chapters: “*Ici, au carrefour, nous énonçons...*” and “*... die Rose im Kreuz der gegenwart zu erkennen*”.

Écrits – to be realized. It is not ridiculous to ask the following: are the members of the group able to meet *Pensée's* requirements because of their knowledge of Lacan, or do they have knowledge of Lacan because they have accepted to right to meet *Pensée's* requirements? But there is another reason: the validity of an interpretation of texts such as Lacan's cannot be based on who says it, or where it is said from, but solely on the reading's capacity to withstand the absolute right to question, which stems from the very heart of philosophy. The form of the group's weekly study of psychoanalysis and philosophy – that the text's are read as a group, summarized, interrogated and questioned, page by page, in rotating sequence – demands both the verification of each one's reading, and allows a trial of the effects of each interpretation. Though the labour may be ours, the result is not without *us*.

It is precisely here that *Pensée*, although constructed by nothing but the participation of those who compose it, asserts its unique function. Brecht, in *The Measure Taken*, perfectly articulates this function of organization - a young communist in disagreement with the official party line, is replied to as follows:

“Show us the way which we should take, and we
shall follow it like you, but
do not take the right way without us.
Without us, this way is
the falsest one.
Do not separate yourself from us.”

Slavoj Žižek, in his resurrection of Leninism, shows that what Brecht is articulating here, through the voice of the chorus, is the true conception of the party – a form which is homologous to that of the analyst's discourse –, wherein authority is not founded on the possession of knowledge – after all *Pensée* itself knows nothing beyond the knowledge possessed by its constituents – but on the circuitous form of knowledge that must be traversed for something of truth to be produced. The irony is that this empty form which allows for the production of knowledge is simultaneously the presupposition of knowledge – we organize as if *Pensée* knows what Lacan has said, as if *it*

knows what philosophy is, as if *it* knows what we are to do, and also, as if *it* knows the truth of the desire which constituted it in the first place.

As empty, it proposes nothing, but our work of sustaining and passing through it nonetheless leaves a trace in which the return is not the same as the origin – leaving the form itself somehow marked. I cannot for a moment be blind to the traces of this feeble fourth in the works of my comrades. *Pensée* is there, whenever there is labour amongst us.

This group which we compose, and which depends solely on us, also determines us – for instance, *it* has forced us to labour through texts of philosophy and psychoanalysis, even though *we* set the schedule, and *it* demanded that we transmit, test and inscribe the product of our labours, even though it was *our hands* raised and put to work – finally, *it's* name is inscribed in this book. As a result, even though my own hand did not trace the letters of the thoughts here put to paper I cannot but find myself represented by them – in what they achieve and especially where they falter, referring us to future work to be done. After all, these ideas and problems constitute *Pensée* and I too am a part of it.

Here lies the most worthy of *Pensée's* achievements: the possibility of being implicated in a place which is beyond recognition. Perhaps this is the effect of our labour: to once again make it possible for something to speak for all.

May, 2013,

Srđan Cjvjetićanin

Preface

GABRIEL: My friend, what is the status of this preface?

YUAN: What do you mean?

GABRIEL: Well, this is somewhat confusing to me: are we speaking *about* the book, as if looking at it from the outside, or are we *within* it, and this preface should be counted together with the text as composing “Hegel, Lacan, Žižek”?

YUAN: That is a fair question, indeed. Now that I think of it, I can’t avoid referring with a certain exteriority to the two theses bound together under the title of the book, but, at the same time, I’m aware that this talk of ours is part of the book as well. In a way, whatever we say here will belong to the thing we are speaking about.

GABRIEL: Nicely put!

YUAN: I just wonder then why isn’t every preface subjected to this paradox - even if most prefaces refer to the the book they are included in, this fact doesn’t seem to necessarily lead to this curious contradiction.

GABRIEL: Perhaps it depends on the porosity of the idea at stake in the book to this self-reflection: a book on medicine will include prefatory remarks about the following medical text, which is not the same as a “clinical” remark on the medical theory discussed in the book - whereas a philosophical work might have a preface that is made of the same “stuff” as the thing it frames. So the preface becomes an additional philosophical statement *within* the book, even though it is a philosophical statement *about* the book. Lacan’s famous “there is no metalanguage” translates here as something like “there is no philosophical preface”.

YUAN: This brings to mind Hegel’s famous preface for the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

GABRIEL: How so?

YUAN: Well, if we re-read the first paragraphs of his preface with this paradox in mind, it becomes quite clear that he was in a bit of a pickle. If truth “is the process of its own self-becoming”, then how can we state something about it beforehand? In this

sense, writing a preface to a philosophical system is something rather superfluous.

GABRIEL: Or misleading - since it would seem to presuppose that such a statement would even be possible. Hegel critiques both the possibility of anticipating truth and of running ahead and focusing on the “lifeless result” of thought.

YUAN [pulling out of nothingness a copy of the *Phenomenology* and reading from §3]: Yes, because “the real issue is not exhausted by stating it as an aim, but by carrying it out, nor is the result the actual whole, but rather the result together with the process through which it came about”. So, on the one hand, the preface is superfluous and misleading - but, on the other, Hegel *did* write it. Why? Because the failure to write a preface turns out to be - once we have worked through the book - an example of the very logical space which gives rise to the *Phenomenology*.

GABRIEL [trying to follow the reasoning]: Prefacing a philosophical work is impossible, hence it is superfluous to attempt to write it, but in writing it we end up demonstrating that this impossibility is the very object of our philosophical investigation, and therefore it is not superfluous to write it.

YUAN: Something like that. It is as if it takes time to distinguish between *impossibility* and *interdiction*. We cannot write a preface - but, in trying to do so and failing, it is revealed that this restriction is not the product of a *law*, but rather a logical “fact of structure”. It is not our ability to speak it which fails, but language as such -

GABRIEL [interrupts Yuan, mimicking Lacan’s voice in *Television*]: “la dire toute... c’est impossible...*matériellement*: les mots y manquent.”

YUAN [amused]: I don’t think your pauses were long enough.

GABRIEL: Still, your remark regarding the role of temporality and the function of the impossible in Hegel leads us straight to Lacan - more precisely, to *Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty*.

YUAN: It’s true that the methodological point at stake in Hegel’s preface resonates a lot with Lacan’s treatment of the prisoners’ sophism. There too the relation between temporality and truth is mediated by the logical function of failure: the

moment of concluding comes with the precipitation, *within* the reasoning itself, of a certain inherent failure of the very attempt to work through the hypothesis of what the others are seeing and thinking. In a way, we could take advantage of Hegel's explicitly didactic concern in the preface of the *Phenomenology* to conclude that Lacan too was providing with his sophism a sort of minimal guideline of how to read his own work.

GABRIEL [adds]: By including the difficulty of understanding a text into what we are trying to grasp.

YUAN: Yeah, understanding Lacan seems to depend ultimately on a form of work that is alien to the temporality of progressive accumulation (where more time studying would necessarily amount to more understanding), its temporal markers are rather defined by our capacity to turn our failures at grasping what is at stake into questions, into the very motor of the reading. After all, "He who knows how to question me..."

GABRIEL: "...knows how to read me"!

YUAN: The problem is therefore *how to pose the good question*. In other words: to find an impasse *within* reason that says something *of* reason itself.

GABRIEL: You know, this reference to Lacan's *Logical Time* also shines a light into another possible take on the relation between Hegel and Lacan.

YUAN: How so?

GABRIEL: First of all, the sophism of the three prisoners bears a definite relation to Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel's Lord and Bondsman dialectics, which was Lacan's early model for an intersubjective conception of desire. Though it articulates the struggle for recognition in a triadic rather than dyadic form, it nevertheless still treats the problem of identification through specularly and so on. But the crucial point is that the sophism is not exactly an example of the Kojévian approach to desire, so much as Lacan's contribution, or even objection, to it.

YUAN: So you are suggesting that in Lacan's concept of "logical time" we already find, in anticipation, the germ of those theses and ideas normally identified with his later teaching, when he moved away from intersubjective ground of the Other?

GABRIEL: Yes - you should read the third chapter of our book... it really makes this point clear.

[Yuan rolls his eyes]

GABRIEL [continues]: The role of temporality in the paradoxes of the One and the Other, such as we find them in Lacan's formulas of sexuation, or the double status of the 'object a' in the four discourses, as both cause and product of a certain structure - Lacan's "own personal sophism", as he put it somewhere, is in many ways the earliest text in which we can retroactively find the first traces of these questions. In a certain sense, it could perhaps be even opposed to the more Kojévian alternative to the place of "founding text", *The Mirror Stage*.

YUAN: Another reason to consider it something like a preface to Lacan's teaching!

GABRIEL: It's true - I really like Erik Porge's formulation when he says that the sophism was "at the same time, the chess board over which Lacan set the pieces of his discoveries and a pawn which he moved among these very discoveries".

YUAN: That really sums it up! Now, one thing is quite striking in your previous remark - namely, that you are really keen to separate Hegel from Kojève, aren't you?

GABRIEL: Does it show?

YUAN: It is certainly crucial to distinguish something like an "intrinsic" Hegelianism in Lacan, inherent to the development of his strictly psychoanalytical conceptualizations, from the "extrinsic" references to Hegel which abound in his pre-1964 years. However, one could argue that it is important to do so in order to "de-suture" philosophy and psychoanalysis, in the sense of allowing them to go their separate ways, but that is not what you have in mind, is it?

GABRIEL: Not at all - I'm glad you brought up the reference to Badiou's notion of suture, as the possible confusion between philosophy and one of its conditions, the truth-procedures. I think that we should never forget that there are two ways to err here, two ways to disavow this relation: to affirm the identity between the two discourses *or* to affirm their total separation. Philosophers tend to deviate towards the former, missing out on the structural novelty that psychoanalysis brings to thought, something like a strange non-conceptual dimension of the Concept, while psychoanalysts mostly deviate towards the latter, comfortably avoiding to touch on the nowadays unfashionable

themes of classic philosophy, even though these are precisely the notions which seem to best discern the current situation of psychoanalysis itself -

YUAN [adds]: ... the whole “anti-philosophy” argument.

GABRIEL: Yes: both psychoanalysts and philosophers seem to enjoy that idea today.

YUAN: Which leads us straight into a contradiction: if philosophers have become anti-philosophical, then when a psychoanalyst claims to be an “anti-philosopher”... [both laugh]

GABRIEL: Returning to your question, I think our main concern in distinguishing Hegel from Kojève, and finding a place for the former in psychoanalysis, relates to the possibility of accounting for the relation between psychoanalysis and philosophy in a sense much closer to Badiou’s own: the two fields are more than One, but less than Two.

YUAN: Yes, this is definitely one of our main objectives: to substantiate the plea for a reformulation of the relation between psychoanalysis and philosophy based not on the “extrinsic” but on the “intrinsic” properties of each field.

GABRIEL: This means that we must seek to reconstruct this relation based not on any explicitly Hegelian “solutions” but on the recognition of a Hegelian *problem*, a fundamental contradiction which drives the temporal constitution of the One, for example, which can be discerned at the very heart of Lacan’s project.

YUAN: And Hegel is not only the philosopher who first turned this antinomy into a logical category, inherently connecting it with the temporal constitution of truth itself, but he was himself also written into the history of philosophy in this same way: both inside of it and demarcating its closure.

GABRIEL [proudly]: ... the philosopher “of the Two”, as Žižek puts it.

YUAN [after a long silence]: Ah. I feel like I’ve just been hit by a brick on the head.

GABRIEL: You either had a concussion or an insight.

YUAN: Let’s find out which. Hear me out then: could we not conceive of the movement which goes from Hegel, through Freud all the way to Lacan in the same terms as the prisoners’ sophism?

GABRIEL [raising an eyebrow]: A most inappropriate hypothesis to present in a preface!

YUAN: Okay, let me take advantage of the ambiguous status of our talk to justify a short speculative proposal.

GABRIEL: Please do proceed!

YUAN: Well, we must in fact start with Kant. In his critical philosophy we have a distinction between pure and practical reason: the former leads us to the antinomies which are connected with the inherent reference in reason to totality - an unavoidable implication which leads us to a series of contradictions concerning time, space and so on. The latter, under the guise of the “factum of reason”, leads us not so much to a contradiction as to an ambiguity or undecidable point: the moral law opens up a space beyond pathologically driven conduct, towards a properly ethical, universal reference - the issue here, highlighted by Hegel but properly formulated by Lacan in *Kant with Sade*, is that this empty principle of conduct is in fact the support for the oscillation between the law and the superego – the violent attachment to a pathological interest above every other “egotistical” utilitarianism. So, with pure reason, we have the paradox of totality, while with practical reason, and therefore, with the community and ethics, we have the paradox of the law and the superego.

GABRIEL: That seems about right.

YUAN: Now, what did Hegel “see”? Is the notion of Spirit not the uncanny short-circuit between these two dimensions? Hegel operates a strange trick through which the impasse of reason and the impasse of the community coincide into a productive contradiction. But what is traumatic about this “instant of seeing” is that, by linking the question of rational totality and community, Hegel also bound together its phantasms: totality as the unproblematic One and totalitarianism as the pathological force of the universal imposing itself on the community.

GABRIEL: The birth of the figure of Hegel as the pan-logician who devours all singularity!

YUAN: This fantasy then became a fruitful starting point to criticize philosophy and philosophical systems, a veritable “anti-philosophical” turn which guides some of the most important philosophical developments in the XXth Century. This leads us

to the “time for understanding”: all the different approaches to this fantasy, the different attempts to locate the source of this terrible excess of the Concept, unveiling the deadlock of reason and rational processes of organization.

GABRIEL: Pretty much everyone from Schopenhauer to Foucault...

YUAN: Developing the hypothesis, which was negatively contained in the first moment, these different thinkers sought to refer the problem back to “concrete reality” - to material processes, to what is most singular and so on - without ever questioning the very role of the equation between totality and totalitarianism in their thinking. After all, this long period of elaborations was not only the time to think through the problem of singularity, but also the time of producing a myriad of different conceptions of “overdetermination” - the different ways to articulate this excessive order whose founding logic was supposed to be none other than that of Hegel’s absolute idealist system, an all embracing drive to absorb everything within itself.

GABRIEL [half-joking]: So our concern with social determination was a concern with interpreting our understanding of Hegel, not the other way around!

YUAN: But this “time for comprehending” comes to an end with Lacan’s return to Freud. The crucial turning point here is surely the purification of the concept of the unconscious, which Lacan absolutely distinguishes from that of “unconsciousness” (repressed or forgotten knowledge) and from any sort of external agency alienating the subject. In this way, the fantasy of a complete Other could finally appear for what it is, a fantasy which *stabilizes*, more than threatens, our horizon of thought.

GABRIEL: This seems to be most clearly articulated in Lacan’s reading of Freud’s myths of the father, around *Seminar XVII*.

YUAN [triumphantly concluding]: And this is ultimately why Lacan is simultaneously so close and so far from Hegel: with him, a fantasy which was associated with Hegel could be finally dispelled, leading to important insights into the relation between reason and its inherently excessive dimension, but this very working through also revealed how Lacan’s conceptual framework was already inscribed in the horizon of a strictly Hegelian problem.

GABRIEL [in a serious tone]: My friend, despite the seductive power of your hypothesis, I must confess that my diagnosis is *concussion*! You should see a doctor!

YUAN: Why do you say that?

GABRIEL: Because you have left out a critical detail: the circulation, within psychoanalysis itself, of the very same fantasy you just credited Lacan's "moment of conclusion" with having dispelled! A brief investigation of the functioning of Lacanian schools today would surely reveal that certain crucial institutional decisions, some of them with direct conceptual and clinical import, are based precisely on a fear that too strict a fidelity to the psychoanalytic emblem would necessarily lead to turning psychoanalysis into a "new religion". Not only that, but we must also account for the fact that *Lacan himself* only managed to precipitate this important new moment in the articulation between reason and the unconscious by accepting the ridiculous image of Hegel as presented by Kojève! These two points might not completely contradict your proposal, but they indicate that there is something more at stake, perhaps.

YUAN: Okay, I grant you this objection. It is true: with Lacan we have developed the apparatus which would allow us break away from the paralyzing fear which haunts us every time we need to move from a critique of reason to a new rational system, or when we need to pass from a critique of power to our own theory of government and organization. But the critical situation of psychoanalysis today really does show that these new developments are still kept in a strange state of suspension, unable to motivate the changes they allow for.

GABRIEL: I propose the following: let us call Žižek's hypothesis the articulation between Hegel, Freud and Lacan which you have constructed - it beautifully condenses this founding trait, which can be found in the very introductory remarks of Žižek's first book, *Hegel le Plus Sublime des Hystériques*, which is to associate the critique of the "scarecrow" image of Hegel with a reformulation of the relation between psychoanalysis, politics and philosophy. However, let us call a *Žižekian* hypothesis the one which *includes Žižek himself* into its movement: that is, the hypothesis that the logical movement at stake articulates together Hegel, Lacan and Žižek.

YUAN: Proposal accepted - but then what changes if we adopt this alternate hypothesis?

GABRIEL: First of all, it means that Lacan no longer stands for the moment of concluding, but for - and this is a term he develops in *Logical Time* as well - “the moment of concluding the time of understanding”. In the sophism this moment is very clearly demarcated: there is nothing left to reason, the reasoning has been revealed inherently inconsistent, which means that it counts both conceptually (and, in the “atemporal” space of the prisoner’s thought, has led him to an impasse) and non-conceptually (since the temporality associated with the “material” dimension of the reasoning suddenly starts to count, giving the reasoner a sense of urgency). Nothing is left to do but to anticipate ourselves and conclude.

YUAN: So, to put it in the terms developed by Mladen Dolar in *Freud and the Political*, we are at the very turning point between the “not enough” and the “too much” of an act.

GABRIEL: Exactly - and doesn’t it make sense that psychoanalysis would lead us to a door that it cannot cross on its own? The handling of this threshold is part of the very direction of treatment in the clinic: the analytical act does not decide, it reveals the site of a decision.

YUAN [adds]: Whereas politics must cross this limit - it is the art of extracting consistency and power from nothingness through anticipation.

GABRIEL: So when we position Lacan on the “other side” of this limit, and consider him the thinker who opened the space for a new positing of the productive relation between reason and the common, we can also better understand why psychoanalysis cannot, on its own, solve its current institutional impasses, which repeat the problem posed by Hegel within the very space of its solution - like a play within a play. What is still needed is that “step too much”, which, remaining heterogeneous to the analytic field as such, would nevertheless require psychoanalysis to knot itself to the political.

YUAN [anticipating the conclusion]: ... enter Žižek.

GABRIEL: Ultimately, the main difference between “Žižek’s hypothesis” and our “Žižekian” one is that we further discern how the very positing of the logical time binding Hegel to Lacan

requires us to uphold that the consistency of the psychoanalytic discovery can only be maintained through a “parallaxian” relation with the political and the question of the common.

YUAN: In other words, for psychoanalysis to maintain its place in the world, it must work out how its conceptual and clinical inventions also discern the space for institutional innovation, for a new collective logic.

GABRIEL: ...which, as we know, is a task that falls outside of strict psychoanalytic jurisdiction.

YUAN: This brings us back to our earlier discussion regarding the importance of “de-suturing” psychoanalysis and philosophy without confusing this operation with a complete separation. The same complex articulation seems to be at stake in the relation between psychoanalysis and politics: they are not the same, but they cannot be thought apart from each other either.

GABRIEL [enthusiastically]: No return to Hegel without a return to Freud, but also no return to Freud without a return to Lenin! [Both laugh]

YUAN: It is clear to me now that this is why you proposed in your thesis to elevate Žižek’s “borromean linkage” of psychoanalysis, politics and philosophy to the dignity of a critical axiom.

GABRIEL: It’s true, though I must say that I’m already beginning to doubt if I managed to elaborate this point properly.

YUAN: How come?

GABRIEL: Well, my initial intuition was that there is a relation between the Lacanian emblem “Scilicet” - which stood for a certain institutional orientation that Lacan envisioned for the psychoanalytic community - and Žižek’s return to Hegel. I then started working on the text with the following general strategy: first, to show how psychoanalysis today is submitted to certain impasses which are very much akin to the political problems faced by the Left, and then to declare that these similar impasses have in fact the same cause, which can be grasped as the disavowal of a certain dimension of the concept of totality, already present in Hegel. But at least two major problems followed from this. First: I underemphasized the role of Marx in this schema - I made a quite crude use of Marx’s thought in the first chapter, bypassing a series of important questions which

could be raised by a more rigorous attempt to think the interconnection between Freud, Marx and Hegel. My recent investigation into Sohn-Rethel's work on the notion of "real abstraction" has led me to realize that there is a much more direct and fundamental route to think the way in which Marxism is immanently "pierced through" by both Freud and Hegel. Unfortunately, Marx is mostly featured in my thesis as the distorted figure which I forcefully adapted to fit my arguments.

YUAN [trying not to offend his friend]: I must admit I found quite strange how little engagement with Marx there was in your text - specially since there is no way to argue for Lacan's Hegelianism, while accepting that Lacan is a champion of materialism, without discussing the "materialist reversal" of Hegel by Marx in some detail.

GABRIEL: The second major problem I've already recognize in the thesis - one which I only realized once I had the irritating pleasure of reading your work - is that I've drastically downplayed the intricacies of the division between statement and position of enunciation, between knowledge and enjoyment.

YUAN: You mean to say that you treated the latter only as the impasse of the former?

GABRIEL: Yes.

YUAN: ... and that you therefore reduced the problem of the body in psychoanalysis to the problem of "the thing", as if to argue for the materiality of Reason was the same as to argue for the positive incommensurability between the symbolic and the real?

GABRIEL [irritated]: Yes...

YUAN [facetiously]: Oh, I hadn't thought of that.

GABRIEL [trying to hide his affectation]: I think we can summarize this point by saying that I had not realized how *Lituraterre* marks the beginning of the veritable Hegelian moment in Lacan's teaching. It was only when I considered the relation between Lacan's later conception of the letter and the structure of logical time that I could properly discern how some fundamental points regarding the relation between the letter and the body evoke a thoroughly Hegelian conception of the relation between the signifier and enjoyment. [Gabriel goes silent for a second] Now that I think of it, these two problems are probably

connected: the lack of reference to Marx and the lack of elaboration concerning the body. Our recent research into the “modal” form of Marx’s notion of “abstract labour” does indeed point to a connection between the homogenous dimension of labour and the real of the body. Hopefully, a more rigorous formulation of this axiom binding Freud, Marx and Hegel will arise from these investigations.

YUAN [shakes his head]: Don’t even get me started on rigor...

GABRIEL: Why?

YUAN: Well, though my thesis is called *Time as the ambiguity of the legible*, the problem which motivated my research, and still does, is that of rigor. What is a notion of rigor that would consider the unconscious?

GABRIEL: I dunno.

YUAN: Me neither - so that is what I set out to investigate. We know Lacan desired to restore what he thought the psychoanalytic institutions of his time had lost, namely, the rigor of Freud. But in doing so, he seemed to have invented something hardly recognizable to a classic Freudian! So already we have this paradox: a return to Freud’s rigor is simultaneously a way forward for a radically new psychoanalysis. To make things even more difficult, this movement is tied up with the question of transmission - and, in psychoanalysis specially, this is no small matter, since transmission and communication are here very heterogeneous concepts. So to be as rigorous as Freud was, it was no longer possible to write about psychoanalysis the way Freud did.

GABRIEL [organizing his own thoughts]: The problem of transmitting something which cannot be repeated, a given mode of enjoyment, requires us to consider a notion of transmission that is distinct from that of how a certain “quanta” of information can be passed on to a third party.

YUAN: Yes. The minimal way to formulate this, I believe, is to realize that transmission, for psychoanalysis, is an irreducibly temporal concept. It takes at least two distinct moments: to put it simply, there is the first attempt to transmit how one enjoys, but this attempt is itself distorted by that mode of enjoyment, then there is a supplementary and very paradoxical operation of including this distortion into what there is to transmit, not as the

representation of enjoyment, but as something of its presentation, so to speak.

GABRIEL [summarizing]: So: from rigor to transmission, and from transmission to the problem of time and the letter.

YUAN: Exactly. This investigation contributed to shedding some light into Lacan's style of teaching, I think. It is important to ask ourselves in what sense the difficulty with his style contributes to the "understanding" of the unconscious. Lacan emphasizes that experience, and not knowledge, is the authorization of the psychoanalyst. There seems to follow from this an esotericism that permeates his writings. Yet, where can we find the "inside" of the psychoanalytic community? If we say it is the clinic, then we must accept that this interior is not constituted by "inside knowledge", but by the speech of the analysand. If the analyst has an experience of this, it is because the speech carries with it the possibility of transmission.

GABRIEL [amused]: The most esoteric thing about psychoanalysis is that it is an experience centered around the most "exoteric" and banal of all speeches. No wonder that the "passe", the passage from analysand to analyst, is not the moment of learning some secret knowledge available only to the analytic community - this knowledge is available to all, specially with the booming interest in psychoanalytic jargon in academia today. The movement from analysand to analyst rather related to extracting the consistency of an "inside" - an authorization to belong to this community - out of an irreducibly ordinary matter, which cannot belong to any community.

YUAN: Hence why psychoanalysis is not a matter of having a "right" to know, of being entitled some access to the unconscious - we are rather *permitted* to know... it is a bit like that famous verse by Lucretius: "To no one is life given as a property, but its use is conceded to all".

GABRIEL [slightly annoyed with the solemn tone]: That is really beautiful, but what does this have to do with time and ambiguity?

YUAN: Yes, yes, I'm getting to that... well, I ran into a problem, which was that the only example of rigor I could think of was mathematical. I realized that I had to put off talking about rigor directly so that I could justify the primary difference

between mathemes and mathematics, which I took to be the objective dimension of ambiguity. Up until the discovery of the unconscious, ambiguity was taken to be a purely subjective fact, something that an accumulation of knowledge would eventually take care of.

GABRIEL [adds]: The keyword being “eventually...”

YUAN: The literal in speech comes not from its content, but that it is said. The fact of saying adds a dimension in language which allows one to wonder about the “correct interpretation”. This is also why, perhaps, Lacan says that error is the way truth manifests itself. If one can be mistaken about the literal of the spoken, then there is already, in a second moment, the truth. This question of two moments is that of logical time, or what I tried to formalize as the temporal postulate. In what sense does interpretation require time? It appears, in the clinic, as a single moment, but this moment may be distributed across the subject’s entire discourse. The same goes for reading Lacan, which definitely requires interpretation as well. Interpretation is not hermeneutics – its purpose is not to produce meanings, but to have effects on the subject. We should remember that Lacan’s writings have effects not simply on an individual reader, but also on the collective of psychoanalysts to whom he is always addressing.

GABRIEL: I see. Somehow the letter in psychoanalysis is not a guarantee of consistency - consistency arises through a certain collective treatment of the letter.

YUAN: It is the function of the analyst to keep open the possibility that there can be another moment – for example, that the events which form and shape a life also align with the subject’s truth. But in my work I attempt to point out something else – that interpretation works due to the literality bound up with the question of time.

GABRIEL: But the question of what “time” means, your thesis doesn’t really answer...

YUAN: ... only attesting to how it is all the more a work of philosophy! [Both chuckle] Let’s say that time is a condition of thought, but it is also something minimally constructed by the ideational process. Time serves as the condition to the progression of thoughts, of sequential thinking, and as such it is

the most generic “container” of what is. But once we have a sequence, or a chain of signifiers, there arises that which is true without time, things which are logically coherent in themselves. On the other hand, the *lapsus* indicates that something disrupts the sequence.

GABRIEL: So the formations of the unconscious attest to something which exceeds or disrupts *both* time and eternity. The significance of a slip of tongue or a dream refer us neither to something which is fleeting and accidental - which we could “brush off” with a reference to the contingency of sense - nor to something stable and permanent in us - a “key” to our very being. Even though the void of the sexual exceeds any sense, and therefore exceeds any attempt to fix its meaning, it also disrupts our attempt to justify, on account of this excess, a pure flux of becoming - the sexual somehow insists *as legible*, as a condition of signification.

YUAN [approvingly]: Yes - this is what I tried to articulate as the “Two-ness” at stake in the questions of transmission and transference. Only what is true can be transmitted, but this proceeds by way of “mistaking the subject supposed to know”. Neither a fixation of what can be transmitted, nor a fluidity of sense - somehow the very form of transmission, which inherently makes reference to an Other, insists through both the One and the Other.

[Yuan and Gabriel go silent for a second, losing themselves in thought]

GABRIEL [sighs]: I guess that is enough chit-chat for now. We should get back to work.

YUAN: Wait, shouldn’t we perhaps use the space of the preface to let the readers know about the general structure of the book, about how we have divided your thesis into the first two chapters of the book and then added mine as the third? I think it would be nice to tell everyone that we re-worked together the appendix of your thesis and turned it into our conclusion - and also that throughout the book we have extracted 18 statements which we considered the fundamental “backbone” of the work, and which we added as a separate section, after the conclusion.

GABRIEL: Why bother? I don’t think we should say anything.

1

“Ici, au carrefour, nous énonçons...”²**1. Critical Knowledge and Consolidated Knowledge**

Let us begin by affirming one fundamental division, in what would otherwise have been the homogenous field of knowledge, a division between *critical* and *consolidated* knowledge.

Critical knowledge can, for the moment, be minimally defined as the field of knowledge which has itself as one of its objects of study. The field of consolidated knowledge, on the other hand, has no place for such an object³.

² “Here, at these crossroads, we state that what psychoanalysis enables us to conceptualize is nothing other than this, which is in line with what Marxism has opened up, namely that discourse is bound up with the interests of the subject. This is what, from time to time, Marx calls the economy, because these interests are, in capitalist society, entirely commercial. It's just that since the market is linked to the master signifier, nothing is resolved by denouncing it in this way. For the market is no less linked to this signifier after the socialist revolution.” Lacan, J. (2007) ‘The Other side of Psychoanalysis’ New York: W.W.Norton & Co. p.92.

³ To use Alain Badiou's notation of *splace/outplace*, we could formalize this distinction in the following way:

- critical knowledge: $Ap(A)$
- consolidated knowledge: $Ap(Ap)$

where P names the system of placing - the indexes [p_1 , p_2 , etc.] corresponding to each determination of knowledge - and A is the field of knowledge itself at play. Thus, critical knowledge - $Ap(A)$ - is generally composed of determinations that deal with the very question of what critical knowledge is, while consolidated knowledge - $Ap(Ap)$ - deals solely with the articulation of determinations of a given knowledge, without the tension of A itself “forcing” P . See Badiou, A. (2009) ‘Theory of the Subject’, Continuum, p. 3-21

For example: the consolidated field is concerned with the construction and articulation of concepts, while to the critical field falls the task of analyzing the conditions of the production of knowledge and the consequences of its circulation in culture.

We further concede that both Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxism belong to the category of critical knowledge, insofar as the first analyzes the subject's determinations by the unconscious symbolic order⁴ and the second concerns itself with the realm of ideological phenomena⁵. Another way of justifying this categorization is to affirm that the question "what is psychoanalysis?" is itself a *psychoanalytical* problem, and "what is communism?" is a *Marxist* problem. This reflexive inclusion, on the other hand, plays no part in the production of knowledge inherent to the fields of medicine or of the Law.

In the wake of this elementary division, we can understand the reason why both Marxism and psychoanalysis have occupied a structurally different place to that of consolidated knowledge. Both name an irreducible internal tension to theoretical constructions and knowledge-formations in general, pointing to their ideological uses and their nameless excesses. As preliminary definitions, we recognize Marxism⁶ to be the generic name of communist politics, concerned with social

⁴ Lacan, J. (2006) 'Ecrits', W.W. Norton and Co., p.7

⁵ Žižek, S. (1989) 'The Sublime Object of Ideology', Verso, p. 28-39

⁶ By 'Marxism' we mean the actual tripartite theory of Marx: a dialectical-materialist philosophy, a critique of political economy and capitalist ideology and an affirmation of the revolution of the proletariat. Our reference will always be to the thought that is faithful to Marx's fundamental affirmation of class struggle preceding ideological unity, which can be summarized by Lenin's concise statement regarding dialectics: "The unity (coincidence, identity, equal action) of opposites is conditional, temporary, transitory, relative. The struggle of mutually exclusive opposites is absolute, just as development and motion are absolute" Another, more complex, definition can be found in Badiou's Theory of the Subject, under the guise of the "four fundamental concepts of Marxism": the party, class struggle, the dictatorship of the proletariat and communism. Lenin, V. I. (1976) 'Lenin Collected Works Volume 38: Philosophical Notebooks', Progress Publishers, p. 356; Badiou, A. (2009) 'Theory of the Subject', Continuum, p. 282

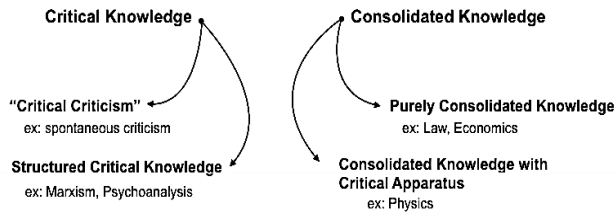
symptoms throughout history, and psychoanalysis⁷, the name of the practice of decomposing the vectors of human desire.

This first splitting into two - giving rise to the critical and the consolidated fields of knowledge - must also be reflected into each of its own terms. This allows us to further distinguish Science - a consolidated field of knowledge which is traversed by an analytical apparatus, the scientific method⁸, defining criteria for the epistemological horizon of its theories - from other forms of consolidated knowledge which do not rely on such a methodology, as is the case, for example, in the field of Law studies. If the relation between critical analysis and consolidated synthesis, internal to the field of Science, makes the further distinction between scientific knowledge and knowledge of a purely consolidated form, it is also crucial to admit this secondary distinction into the critical field as well. We can distinguish between the critical position which does not intend to produce any positive body of knowledge - a “critical criticism”⁹ - and the critical position which is traversed by the synthetic field, structuring and articulating a knowledge of its own. The formulation of this reflective split into the field of critical knowledge will be one of our main threads of inquiry.

⁷ We will use ‘psychoanalysis’ and ‘Lacanian psychoanalysis’ as interchangeable terms, unless where otherwise stated.

⁸ We follow here the manner in which Alexandre Koyré develops the relation between scientific knowledge and scientific method, especially in regards to the difference between ‘experience’ and ‘experiment’. According to the author, the very formulation of Galileo’s new conception of motion already relied on a radical distinction between imagination and thought: “To think with Galileo or to imagine with common sense”. To side with experience, and what could be imagined starting from sense-perception, led only to common sense. It was thought, “pure unadulterated thought” which was at stake in the scientific method, serving the function of cutting through imagination and common sense. Koyré, A. (1968) ‘Metaphysics and Measurement’, Harvard University Press, p. 13

⁹ We name this position in reference to Marx’s famous subtitle from *The Holy Family*: “the critique of critical criticism”. Marx and Engels (1975) ‘Marx and Engels Collected Works Volume 4’, Progress Publishers. Available from: <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/index.htm> [Accessed: June 19, 2011].



1.1 Structural Difference and Revisionism

Today, the threat of suturing the place of critical thought seems dangerously present. The common trait that ties Marxist politics and psychoanalysis together, hitherto characterized by the power of critical analysis of knowledge-formations, now seems to find public and widespread recognition only in the general reproach aimed at exposing these two fields as being the cause of ideological distortions themselves¹⁰.

A clear indication of the new basis of their pairing is the simultaneous publication, and great commercial success, of *The Black Book of Communism*¹¹ and *Le livre noir de la psychoanalyse*¹², which are dedicated to providing an overview of the theoretical mistakes of Marxism and psychoanalysis, focusing on Freud's clinical frauds and the inaccuracies of Marx's economic analyzes¹³. These books also suggest that the connections between the major historical catastrophes of 20th century and these two systems of thought are inherent to their

¹⁰ "In this negative way, at least, the profound solidarity of Marxism and psychoanalysis is now displayed for all to see." Žižek, S. (2007) 'How to Read Lacan', W.W Norton and Co. p. 3

¹¹ Courtois, S. *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. Harvard University Press.

¹² Meyer, C., Borch-Jacobsen, M., Cottraux, J., Pleux, D., and Rillaer, J. V. (2010) 'Le livre noir de la psychanalyse : Vivre, penser et aller mieux sans Freud', Editions Les Arènes. See also Onfray, M. (2010) 'Le crépuscule d'une idole', Grasset.

¹³ See also Todd Dufresne (2006; 1997), Mark Edmundson (2007)

very conceptual basis - that is, to the structurally¹⁴ different place in culture that they claim for themselves -, warning us of the dangers already implicit in affirming a distinction from consolidated knowledge.

In his text *On Marx and Freud*¹⁵, Louis Althusser presents the relation between psychoanalysis and Marxism in terms that simultaneously account for our initial distinction and for the current impasses in the critical field. The philosopher first affirms that the truly dangerous dimension of the critical field actually lies in its power of putting the production of knowledge itself into question, and then moves on to oppose this essential function of critical thought to the insistent threat of revisionism, the pressure to neutralize this structural distinction:

“It is a fact of experience that Freudian theory is a conflictual theory. From the time of its birth, and the phenomenon has not ceased to reproduce itself, it has provoked not only strong resistance, not only attacks and criticisms but, what is more interesting, attempts at annexation and revision. I say that the attempts at annexation and revision are more interesting than simple attacks and criticisms, for they signify that Freudian theory contains, by the admission of its adversaries, something true and dangerous. Where there is nothing true, there is no reason to annex or revise. There is therefore something true in Freud that must be appropriated but in order that its meaning may be revised, for this truth is dangerous: it must be revised in order to be neutralized.”¹⁶

Keeping to their structural contiguity, we encounter the same revisionist tendency throughout the history of Marxism:

¹⁴ We accept the following preliminary definition of structure - which has, again, Badiou's *Theory of the Subject* as a starting point: a structure is a system of determinations (Ap) which functions within the tension of two registers of difference: weak difference ($Ap_1 \neq Ap_2$) and strong difference (the tension between A and P in Ap_1 itself) Badiou, A. (2009) 'Theory of the Subject', Continuum, p. 24. See also Deleuze's famous 'How do we recognize Structuralism?' in (2004) 'Desert Islands: and Other Texts, 1953--1974' New York: Semiotext(e)

¹⁵ Althusser, L. 'On Marx and Freud' in (1991), *Rethinking Marxism* Spring 1991 Vol 4, No 1, (Association for Economic and Social Analysis).

¹⁶ Ibid. p.19

"The entire history of Marxism has verified and continues to verify every day the necessarily conflictual character of the science founded by Marx. Marxist theory, "true" and therefore dangerous, rapidly became one of the vital objectives of the bourgeois class's struggle. We see the dialectic referred to earlier at work: attack-annexation-revision-split; we see the attack directed from the outside pass into the interior of theory which thus finds itself invested with revisionism. In response there is the counterattack and, in certain limited situations, splits (Lenin against the Second International). It is through this implacable and inescapable dialectic of an irreconcilable struggle that Marxist theory advances and is strengthened before encountering grave, always conflictual crises."¹⁷

First, the theory is subjected to the critique of its opponents, then, this critique is reflected into the field itself, under the pretext that it would be necessary to update and revise it. One of the principal consequences of this revisionist reflection is that the brutal neutralization of that which formally distinguishes Marxism and psychoanalysis from other fields of knowledge leads to the perpetual series of internal separations or schisms among schools and parties¹⁸, as the histories of both fields show us with abounding examples. Also, this revisionist tendency produces some of its most evident effects in the realm of the diffusion of concepts: the circulation of discourses that question the relevance of radical Leftist politics is often supported by the inappropriate use of its fundamental notions, with immeasurable consequences for the discourses which absorb them. Lenin, in *What is to be Done?* gives us a precise example of this re-managing and "neutralization" of concepts:

"He who does not deliberately close his eyes cannot fail to see that the new "critical" trend in socialism is nothing more nor less than a new variety of *opportunism*. And if we judge people, not by the glittering uniforms they don or by the high-sounding appellations they give themselves, but by their actions and by what they actually advocate, it will be clear that "freedom of criticism" means' freedom for an opportunist trend in Social-Democracy, freedom to convert Social-Democracy into a democratic party of reform, freedom to introduce bourgeois ideas and bourgeois elements into socialism.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 20

¹⁸ Ibidem p. 20

“Freedom” is a grand word, but under the banner of freedom for industry the most predatory wars were waged, under the banner of freedom of labour, the working people were robbed. The modern use of the term “freedom of criticism” contains the same inherent falsehood. Those who are really convinced that they have made progress in science would not demand freedom for the new views to continue side by side with the old, but the substitution of the new views for the old. The cry heard today, “Long live freedom of criticism”, is too strongly reminiscent of the fable of the empty barrel.”¹⁹

Today, indeed, the term ‘socialism’ does not only refer to the ‘grossly outdated’ politics of a utopian project which failed in all of its implementations, but - based on an obscene use of the term, detached from its original conceptual framework - it also refers to a ‘positive’ project of free market economy, which, in truth, functions to prevent that the blind force of its engine should be revealed in its constitutive blindness: a form of capitalism with social concerns and a “human face”²⁰. In more curious cases, we also witness the appearance of new commodities which attempt to extract a surplus-value through the ironic or simply obscene use of notions and names, like a recent ice cream flavor labeled ‘Cherry Guevara’²¹.

Psychoanalysis, which could be said to be better equipped to distinguish itself from its direct revisionist opposition,

¹⁹ Lenin, V. (2009) *Essential Works of Lenin: “What Is to Be Done?” and Other Writings*. BN Publishing. p.56-57 Available from: <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

²⁰ About the American bail-out plan, considered ‘socialist’ by the right-wing Republicans, Žižek states: “Is the bail-out plan really a “socialist” measure then, the birth of state socialism in the US? If it is, it is a very peculiar form: a “socialist” measure whose primary aim is not to help the poor, but the rich, not those who borrow, but those who lend. In a supreme irony, “socializing” the banking system is acceptable when it serves to save capitalism. Socialism is bad except when it serves to stabilize capitalism.” Žižek, S. (2009) ‘First As Tragedy, Then As Farce’, Verso, p.13 - See also Badiou, A. (2010) ‘The Meaning of Sarkozy’, Verso, p. 53

²¹ Ibid., p.57 apud Glover, M. ‘The marketing of a Marxist’, Times (London), June 6, 2006. See also Klein, N. (2009) ‘No Logo’, Picador - especially the first section, “No Space”.

psychology, is nevertheless facing a similar threat today. For several reasons, Lacanian psychoanalysis has been struggling to position itself in regards to the demands made by the State for a certain institutionalization of its practices²². The contradictions between the psychoanalytical praxis and what such an incorporation into the academic and state apparatus would entail (evaluations, tests, etc.) are evidently a serious matter, but psychoanalysis' resistance to these test mechanisms is itself becoming a revisionist resistance. Rather than pointing out that this incorporation is necessary, but that it *also demands a change in the State itself*, psychoanalysts are more and more willing to identify psychoanalysis with such a direct resistance to the Law - a resistance which relies on the exploitation of the place of the singular in the clinical situation. As Lacan himself demonstrated, probably better than any other thinker before, the cult of the particular is the direct obverse and support of the serialization of quantities or credits which is at work in such a demand for institutionalization²³.

Although a direct revision of the psychoanalytical knowledge has not yet become overt, Lacanian psychoanalysis seems nevertheless to be adapting itself to fit a place within the neo-liberal milieu - normally understood as the comfortable home of the ego psychologies and the behaviorist therapies - precisely by defining itself more and more as the "island" that resists inscription into the market²⁴ and which would, then, be in a position to regulate or "ease" the inscription of others:

²² Miller, J.-A. and Milner, J.-C. (2004) 'Voulez-vous être évalué?' Grasset. Guntert and Colas ed., *Ofício do Analista (2009) Casapsi* ; See also Aouillé, Sophie, et al. (2010), Manifeste pour la psychanalyse, (La Fabrique); Miller, Jacques-Alain (2008), *L' Anti-livre noir de la psychanalyse*, (Seuil); Miller, Jacques-Alain (ed.) (2006), *El Libro Blanco del Psicoanálisis, Clínica y Política*, (ELP)

²³ "You are the products of the University. The surplus value is you and you are proving it, even if only in this respect – which you not only consent to but which you also applaud – and I see no reason to object – which is that you leave here, equal to more or less to credits. You have all made yourself into credits. You leave here stamped with credits." Lacan, J. (1969) 'L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970.', Seuil, class of 6/17/70.

²⁴ In *Ofício de Psicanalista: Formação vs Regulamentação*, this resistance is called "psychoanalysis' historical position" (Güntert, Ingo Bernd and Christiane

“It is a fact that the demand for the listening practices of the psys [psychology and psychoanalysis] has not stopped rising over the last ten years; consultations for children are multiplying; the psy is now being expected to substitute himself for the forebear to assure the transmission of values and continuity between the generations. The listening ear of the psy, qualified or not, constitutes the compassionate cushion necessary to the “society of risk”: the trust given obligatorily to abstract and anonymous systems gives rise dialectically to the need for personalized attention: “I’ve got my psy,” “I’ve got my coach”. . . . Everything is indicating that mental health is a political stake for the future. De-traditionalization, loss of bearings, disarray of identifications, dehumanization of desire, violence in the community, suicide among the young, *passages à l’acte* of the mentally ill insufficiently monitored due to the state of shortage that psychiatry has to endure: the “Human Bomb” in Neuilly, the killings in Nanterre, the attacks against the President and the Mayor of Paris. All this is unfortunately just the beginning (cf. the USA). . . . But it is also a strategic knot. Psychoanalysis is much more than psychoanalysis: it is constitutive, or reconstitutive, of the social bond, which is going through a period of restructuring probably without precedent since the Industrial Revolution”²⁵

But if psychoanalysis’ justification to remain in its current place is that of its use in the reconstitution of the social bond, then the *structural* difference of its founding position has nonetheless become meaningless.

And even if no distortions and revisions of Lacanian theory have been explicitly established, some of the consequences of psychoanalysis’ current position in culture are in undeniable contradiction to its own conceptual framework. At the most elementary level, we can exemplify this tension by relating this

Gradwohl Colas (eds.) (2009), *Ofício de Psicanalista: Formação vs Regulamentação*, Casapsi Editora p.29); in *Manifeste pour la psychoanalyse*, we find the re-affirmation that “neither an Order nor a State” should fit psychoanalysis (p.147); One of the most evident apologies of this resistance can be found in the *Le Nouvel Âne* n.10, an international Lacanian review, which bears the title “Evaluer tue” [Evaluation kills]

²⁵ Miller, Jacques-Alain (2005), *The Pathology of Democracy: A Letter to Bernard Accoyer and to Enlightened Opinion* (Ex-Tensions Series for Journal of Lacanian Studies), (Karnac Books). p. 23. Also available at: <http://www.lacan.com/europe1.htm> [Accessed: May 28, 2011].

institutional impasse to the fact that the concept of the Law is fundamental to Lacanian theory, which affirms that the resistance to symbolic inscription implies the yielding of what is called a surplus-enjoyment²⁶, an obscene satisfaction arising from the very failure of nomination, whose clinical treatment is one of the definitive task of the analyst.

Again, what we see is that the *formal* oppositions - which, according to our initial division, distinguish critical from consolidated knowledge - are obliterated and ideologically reduced to oppositions of *content*: psychoanalysis takes the place of yet another psychological discourse, the Communist militant has become yet another liberal lifestyle, etc. This shift of the oppositional register from structure to content makes itself quite evident today in the very position of enunciation²⁷ of philosophers and radical leftist thinkers: the political effects of a given statement rely more and more on the individual effort of the speaker to differentiate his position of enunciation from that of, say, an economist. One can hardly find support in public knowledge that there exists a distinction between these two discourses and is ultimately left alone to fight two simultaneous battles, one on the level of enunciation, the other on the level of the enunciated. Alain Badiou summarizes this task:

"The principal question of philosophy today is that of knowing how it can protect and save the desire of philosophy. Philosophy can only be the organization of a resistance of thought."²⁸

²⁶ 'Surplus-enjoyment' - *plus-de-jouir* - is a term coined by Lacan and introduced in his 16th Seminar to account for a parasitizing by-product of the inaccessibility of direct enjoyment of the Thing. Lacan, J. (2008), 'O seminário, livro 16', De um Outro ao outro. Trad. Vera Ribeiro. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar,

²⁷ The difference between 'place of enunciation' - *wherefrom* one speaks - and 'place of the enunciated' - *what* one speaks - is paramount to Lacanian theory and is an operative category already in Lacan's early and founding text 'Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis'. (Écrits, p.237) Nevertheless, its definitive *logion* appears in 'L'Étourdit': "qu'on dise reste oublié derrière ce qui se dit dans ce qui s'entend", which can be translated as "that it is said is forgotten behind what is said in what is heard" in Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil) p. 449

²⁸ Badiou, A. (1994), 'Para uma nova teoria do sujeito: conferências brasileiras', Rio de Janeiro: Relume-Dumará p.14

Structurally, this double effort can be traced back to the very founding act of any critical discourse. As Badiou has made perfectly clear, the inscription of the New into a world relies on an individual effort to affirm that what takes place is also *creating a place* - a structurally *new place*²⁹. But what we see today is the necessity to reaffirm such an act *as the very gesture of fidelity*³⁰. And this, we believe, is an effect of the lack of resonance of those founding acts within the current conceptual elaborations which carry forward their eternal names. Because of it, without a firm individual stance on the structural distinction of critical from consolidated discourses, one relegates to the realm of opinions the instruments designed to surpass it:

“It has become difficult to challenge opinion, even though this would seem the duty of all philosophy since Plato. It is not, first of all, the immediate content of that which our countries - by which I mean those whose State takes the form of parliamentary ‘democracy’ - is the most highly regarded freedom of all: the freedom of opinion? Second, is it not another name for what is polled and pampered and, if possible, purchased: namely, public opinion? (...) Basically, what all this going-on about opinion and its freedom, polling and authority comes down to, is that, as far as politics is concerned (though ultimately, as we shall see, in all instances where thinking seems required) *no principle whatsoever should be advanced other than that proclaiming there are no principles*. The democrat will, moreover, happily add to this that holding to principles as though they were absolute is the very stuff of totalitarianism”³¹

From the above, it follows that, if we are to re-establish the place of philosophical and political principles, we must first begin by recognizing that the hindrances encountered by critical thinking when attempting to challenge the hegemony of opinions are not simply external to its field: these obstacles are also a reflection of the conceptual challenges currently inherent to the critical

²⁹ See Badiou, A. (2009) ‘Theory of the Subject’, Continuum, p. 1-37

³⁰ For an abridged explanation of the concept of fidelity for Badiou, see Badiou, A. (1999) ‘Manifesto for Philosophy’, SUNY Press and Hallward, P. (2003) ‘Badiou, a Subject to Truth’ University of Minnesota Press. The concept is fully developed in Badiou, A. (2007), Being and Event, (Continuum).

³¹ Badiou, A. (2011) ‘Second Manifesto for Philosophy’ Polity, p.15-17

field itself. It is, therefore, essential that the distinction - and not only the consequences of such an opposition - between critical and consolidated knowledge should be dialectically reflected into the field of the critical function itself. We must learn the name of the recurring scission which, rather than being transmitted and made use of, repeatedly returns in the real.

1.2 A Totality is not the Whole

To properly approach this issue, we would like to advocate the return to a principle - already supported by a singular branch of contemporary philosophical thought - which can be summarized in the following statement:

S1: *There is a knowledge of totality that is distinct from the fantasy of a total knowledge.*

This fundamental statement introduces a conceptual distinction which allows us to position ourselves against the common reproach, addressed to critical knowledge, that affirming such a structural difference from consolidated knowledge would imply the ambition of knowing all, of being *above* the 'common' realm of what can be known. This phantom grounds a large part of the critiques directed at Marxism and psychoanalysis, on account of the harmful ideological consequences of such a pretension to 'totalization'.

As stated by Badiou, the ideological danger of a 'total knowledge' is closely linked to the threat of 'totalitarianism', 'fanaticism' or 'intolerance'³². The slightest reference to an Idea which would have precedence over the individual realm of

³² For the contrasting position to the 'Black Books', see Toscano, A. (2010) 'Fanaticism: On the Uses of an Idea.' Verso. and Žižek, S. (2001) 'Did Somebody Say Totalitarianism?' Verso; Probably the most in depth critical analysis of the myth of the relation between totality, especially in Hegel's sense, and totalitarianism - the "original sin of the 20th Century" - can be found in the works of the Italian philosopher Domenico Losurdo. Please refer to "Hegel et la catastrophe allemande" (1994), "Le péché originel du XXe Siècle" (1998) and "Le révisionisme in histoire" (2006).

opinions tends to be received as a distorted personal position elevated to a register to which it does not belong - even if such an Idea would in fact be the pivot for the articulation of a true critical discourse, created to account for ideological distortions and fantasies such as the one which relates the Absolute to absolutism.

The looming dangers of totalization insistently invite us to lay down our conceptual weapons, to accept a certain horizon of thought which is defined precisely by the exclusion of the elements which pertain to the dimension of totality: to give away both the Idea which states that there is an essential difference between structured critical knowledge and “critical criticism” and the courage to affirm that this very *horizon* of thinking *falls into* the totality of thought³³. Thus, our response to the siren’s song cannot be to dismiss the place of mastery altogether, nor to purposefully dissolve the conceptual apparatus of the critical function - a conceptual “scorched earth” strategy, so to speak - but the permanent and rigorous restructuring of critical thinking itself.

Accordingly, the starting premise of this chapter can be summarized by one of the alternative formulations of the statement proposed above: totality is not articulatable only because *it is always already articulated*.

To remain faithful to this declaration, we must remain equally faithful to the core dimension of Hegelian-Marxist philosophy and Freudian-Lacanian psychoanalytical theory: what is at stake is the very specificity of critical thinking, and the affirmation that it is possible to distinguish it from the forms of knowledge that serve to the alienation of the subject. In Lacanian terms:

³³ See “the paradox of a finite totality” in Žižek, S. (2008) ‘For They Know Not What They Do’, Verso, p. 214 and Livingston’s description of paradoxico-criticism in Livingston, Paul (2011), *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the Consequences of Formalism* (Routledge Studies in Contemporary Philosophy), Parts Two and Three.

what is at stake is the question of a thought that would not be of semblance³⁴.

2. The University Discourse

In his 1969 seminar, entitled *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*³⁵, Jacques Lacan coined the term 'University Discourse' to account for the very opposite of a "knowledge that would be not of semblance": the *semblance of knowledge* which accompanied certain discursive organizations.

Somewhat like Hegel in Jena, Lacan was reworking his conceptual framework while, outside the walls of his seminar, "structures walked the streets", under the shadow of May of 1968³⁶. As his famous lecture at Vincennes clearly shows, Lacan's quaternary structure known as the "Four Discourses" could not only to help us formalize the cause of the students' manifestations against the establishment, but also the reason why the students seemed themselves stuck in the logic that they were fighting against³⁷. Part of a more complex conceptual apparatus - for this discourse is supplemented by another three, that of the Master, the Hysteric and of the Analyst - the formal structure referred to as 'University Discourse' articulates a very

³⁴ In his 18th Seminar, entitled 'Of a discourse which wouldn't be of semblance', Lacan addresses the growing idea amongst psychoanalysts that to articulate something of truth meant getting rid of knowledge: "I contrast, with them in mind, truth and knowledge. It is in the former that they recognize promptly their *métier*, while, at last, it is their own truth that I expect. I insist, to be more exact, in saying *knowledge in question [savoir en xequé]*: that's where psychoanalysis shows itself in what it has best. Knowledge in question, as it says figure *en abyme*, doesn't mean failure of knowledge." Lacan, J. (2009), O seminário XVIII: De um discurso que não fosse semblante (1971), (Jorge Zahar) p.109

³⁵ See Lacan, J. (2007) *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

³⁶ See Rabaté, J.M. "Lacan's Année Érotique" in Parrhesia n.6 (2009) available at http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia06/parrhesia06_rabate.pdf ; See also Copjec, Joan (1996), Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists (October Books), (Mit Pr) p. 1-14.

³⁷ Lacan, J. (1991) 'L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970', Seuil, class of 3/12/69.

precise relation between knowledge and the agency of discourse³⁸. To put it briefly: in the University Discourse, knowledge is presented as being founded solely upon itself, as the guarantor of its own validity, and thus it functions at the expense of the disappearance of master-signifier which allowed for the consistency of this symbolic network.

2.1 Logic of the Signifier

Before going into more detail, let us first present a brief sketch of the terms involved in this formal apparatus. We ask the reader to be patient with the somewhat hermetic aspects of this presentation - a product of our haste to define these elements more than of the formalization itself. In time, once we have witnessed the functioning of this structure, this opaqueness should slowly dissipate³⁹.

³⁸ The notion of 'discursivity' as social link developed by Lacan in *The Other side of Psychoanalysis* is both a radicalization and an overcoming of the Foucaultian notion of discourse used in discourse analysis and presented in Foucault, M. (2002) 'The Archeology of Knowledge', Routledge. Though Foucault already accounted somehow for the difference between enunciation and enunciated in his conceptualization of 'statement' as diverse from 'proposition' - thus allowing for the distinction between a discourse that is spoken by a subject and one which 'speaks the subject' - the radical contrast between his concept of discourse and Lacan's is that the Lacanian concept goes a fundamental step forward and includes *the reason why there is a split between the two dimensions in the first place*, which is, for Lacan, the 'object a'. Without this concept, the notion of discourse seems to presuppose a consistent Other of the discourse, which guarantees that something is 'hidden' from the speaker. This critique of Foucault in relation to Lacan can be found in Vighi, F. Feldner, H. (2007) 'Beyond Foucault', Palgrave Macmillan., especially in the section, 'Discourse Analysis or Ideology Critique'. We would also like to advance the hypothesis, already implicitly at work in Žižek, that Lacan's discourse as social link is closer to what Alfred Sohn-Rethel calls 'social synthesis' Sohn-Rethel, A. (1978) 'Intellectual and Manual Labour', Humanities Press. See also the first chapter of Žižek, Slavoj (1989), *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Phronesis), (Verso).

³⁹ The expression 'logic of the signifier' became current not through Lacan, but Jacques-Alain Miller. Though Lacan himself recognized it (he uses it himself in his 16th Seminar), it was first proposed as a conceptual expression in Miller (1968) 'Action de la structure', *Cahiers pour l'Analyse* n.9, Paris. Available from: <http://www.web.mdx.ac.uk/cahiers/pdf/cpa9.6.Miller.pdf> [Accessed: June 19, 2011].; See also 'Suture - Elements of a logic of the signifier' and 'Matrix' in

'Language', for Lacan, could be defined as *that which has no outside*⁴⁰. Though this proposition seems to imply a crude nominalist stance, it is rather the contrary: that language is "that which has no outside" means that it is not to be opposed to the world - as a name is spontaneously thought of as "sticking" over that which it names - but that language itself is the (impossible) horizon in which the name and what it names must be conceived of as co-extensive.

'Signifier', in turn, is the element of language that exists only in the guise of a difference⁴¹. For example, if one were to open a dictionary and to look up the meaning of a word, one would not find anything that is *essentially* different from the original word. One would not find an external comparative, but another word, which distinguishes itself from the previous solely in terms of oppositions and differences. Since this difference is not random, but conditioned, there is a stability in the relation between certain signifiers, and the effect of consistency between them is

Miller, Jacques-Alain (2002), *Un début dans la vie*, (Le Promeneur)., for an overall presentation of the basic elements at stake in our presentation. Finally, see Miller, J.-A. (1981) 'La lógica Significante', Conferencias Porteñas, TOMO 1 and Milner, J.-C. (1997) 'A Obra Clara. Lacan, A Ciência, A filosofia', Jorge Zahar Editor, p.87

⁴⁰ Lacan's thought, especially when we follow the developments of his seminars, is in constant movement. Because of this, it is practically impossible to present one definition of a concept that would be valid throughout his teaching. Our violently short definition of 'language' rests upon a particular moment of Lacan's thought - from seminar 16 to seminar 20 - one which, as it will be later argued, we believe to nest certain un-developed consequences. Language here must first be distinguished from the terms "speech" (parole) and "tongue" (langue), and then thought to be the opposite of Milner's expression "other-worldly paths" which he uses in *L'œuvre Claire* to address those modes of thinking that require us to accept the existence of an ineffable beyond. The path of "Language" is not an other-worldly path. See Milner, J.-C. (1997) 'A Obra Clara. Lacan, A Ciência, A filosofia', Jorge Zahar Editor. p.50-57 See also Lacan, J. (1999) 'Encore : Le séminaire, livre XX', Seuil, Class of 09/01/73. Our definitions of signifier, master-signifier, object a and split subject also rely on this same moment of Lacan's teaching but are also deeply indebted to Miller's classical writings, though these correspond to a slightly earlier period of Lacan's thought, mostly from the first five years of the 60's.

⁴¹ See Milner, J.C. "The serious of structure" in (1996) *A Obra Clara*, p.82.

what is called signification. This 'system of differences and oppositions' is what Lacan calls 'the chain of signifiers'⁴².

The question as to why there are conditioned rather than random relations between signifiers is answered with the concept of master-signifier. This signifier is not a 'fixed' signifier, which would serve as reference for the others, as a sort of guarantor. On the contrary, not only is the master-signifier, like every other signifier, a difference with no substance of its own, but *a difference that 'slides' too much, never fixing any relation of meaning* - in this sense, it is an even more radical signifier. Because it is a signifier with no signified⁴³, the master-signifier does not oppose itself to another particular signifier, but to the chain of signifiers as such⁴⁴, engendering through this singular opposition a certain spectre of totalization of the signifying field itself. Consequently, the master-signifier must be defined both by the impossibility of establishing consistent relations of sense with other signifiers and by the necessary figure of Otherness with which it delineates the very field of signifiers.

To put it in an enigmatic, but quite precise way, one can find a better example of this definition in the question "what is a master-signifier?" than in the answer "it is a master-signifier". The first organizes the field of what can be articulated by sliding and demanding meaning, "quilting" the chain through the absence of sense (Lacan called it *ab-sense*⁴⁵) while the second, when taken as something like a "substantial" statement, is supposed to intervene in the chain of signifiers by putting a halt to it with an even more fixed signification.

⁴² The term 'chain of signifiers' appears first in Lacan's third seminar, 'Les psychoses', from 1955-56, but has its first full formulation in Lacan, J. (1966) 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud', in the *Écrits*.

⁴³ See Lacan, Jacques (1993), *The Psychoses 1955-1956 (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 3 / III)*, (W. W. Norton & Company) - class of 11/4/56 and Lacan, Jacques and Jacques-Alain Miller (2011), *Le séminaire : Livre XIX. ou pire*, (Seuil) - class of 21/6/72

⁴⁴ We leave out, for now, the complex temporal relation implied in such a construction.

⁴⁵ See *L'Étourditi* in Lacan, J. 2001 *Autres écrits*. Seuil.

Insofar as there is no outside of language - that is, insofar as language and body do not form an oppositional pair - there must be such a thing as the inscription of a trait in the body. That a master-signifier can mark a body is, for Lacan, precisely the condition for the rise of a subject⁴⁶: a subject that is simultaneously produced and 'cursed' by the demand for signification which, as we presented above, defines the relation between the master-signifier and the signifying chain. This trait both names a singular subject and maintains the signification of this name always open, waiting for new meanings.

If the negative product of the immersion of language in the world is the subject, we are left to define its material effect. The name given by Lacan to this material excess, which sticks to the signifier, always disrupting the possibility of a stable relation between signifiers, is "object a"⁴⁷. Consequently, if there are conditioned relations between signifiers, there must necessarily be an expenditure of energy to displace the excess which structurally disturbs what is being signified. This "entropy"⁴⁸ - for it is an expenditure of energy which does not 'count' for anything, but rather makes possible the serialization and articulation of signifiers - is the material correlate of the subject. It is because something always escapes the Other -and, thereby, the subject too - that there is such a thing as subjectivization. The name given to the paradoxical satisfaction which arises out of the vanishing of the object - since it is the partial satisfaction of something which, structurally speaking, was always *impossible* to obtain⁴⁹ - is *enjoyment*, or, in french, *jouissance*, when referred to this impossible and unreachable satisfaction, and *surplus-enjoyment*⁵⁰, when we speak of the partial

⁴⁶ See Lacan, J. Seminar 16 - class of 25/6/69 and Seminar 17 - class of 20/5/70

⁴⁷ The notion of 'object a' appears in a recognizable form in Lacan's fourth seminar, 'La relation d'objet', from 1956, but its fundamental relation to the subject is formulated in the matheme of fantasy in seminar 5, 'Les formations de l'inconscient', from 1958. It is our opinion that the most complete formulation of the 'object a' is given in the seminar 16, 'D'un Autre a l'autre', from 1968-69.

⁴⁸ Seminar 17 - class of 14/1/70

⁴⁹ Seminar 11 - class of 6/5/64

⁵⁰ Seminar 16 - class of 13/11/68; Seminar 17 - class of 14/1/70

satisfaction that is produced even though (or, more precisely, *because*) it fails to arrive at its full, and inexistent, satisfaction.

If the master-signifier is a trait that names the fundamental dimension of the lack of meaning, inscribing negativity in the body so that a subject can take place, then the object *a* is the material left-over of this operation - its *caput mortuum*⁵¹ -, not only disrupting the relations between two signifiers, but even the relation between a signifier and itself. It stands for the very impossibility of fulfilling the demand, that is, for the libidinal function of the signifier - attesting to the material dimension of language, its immersion in the world, forever disturbing the “inside/outside” duality⁵².

The object *a* is thus not defined by differentiation, but by its irresolvable excess: it is not a signifier, but its reduction to the insignificance of the letter⁵³. As such, this object marks the excess that drives the signifying operation, both as its cause and as its inevitable drive to drift or wander⁵⁴, disturbing any figure of pure difference or equality.

If the chain of signifiers includes all the other signifiers, properly forming what is called a field of the Other, this residue, the small object *a*, names that which impedes the consistency of this very field and embodies the excessive drive, the incessant and unpredictable demand of signification, which makes it structurally impossible to create a figure of a Whole or of any *a priori* determination.

⁵¹ Lacan, J. 2007 *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*. W. W. Norton & Company. p.38

⁵² For a careful presentation of the object's *extimacy* regarding this duality, please see Dolar, M. 'I Shall Be with You on Your Wedding-Night-: Lacan and the Uncanny' at http://art3idea.psu.edu/locus/Lacan_and_the_Uncanny.pdf

⁵³ The concept of the letter appears first 'in 'The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud' both found in Lacan, J. 1966 *Écrits*. Editions du Seuil, Paris., but finds its full elaboration only in *Lituraterre* in Lacan, J. 2001 *Autres écrits*. Seuil.

⁵⁴ Lacan, J. (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company) p.680

The difference, in the sense of negativity, between the place where the master-signifier is inscribed as a lack of signification and the place where excess appears as a libidinal demand, this hiatus, is what Lacan calls the split subject⁵⁵.

These elements - Master-signifier (S_1), field of the Other (S_2), Object a (a), and Split Subject (\$) - together with the operations of impossibility (\rightarrow) and impotence (\diamond) form the structure which, through the ruled permutation of its terms, articulates the Four Discourses. The precise configuration of them that we have sketched in this sub-section stands for the formalization of the very matrix of (unconscious) discursivity, as well as double as one of the discourses, that of the Master⁵⁶:

$$\frac{S_1 \rightarrow S_2}{\$ \diamond a}$$

Let us now return to the University Discourse.

2.2 Series and Differences

This structure - also referred to as the modern master's discourse⁵⁷ - encompasses any discursive formation organized in the following manner: rather than a *constitutive* relation between an inconsistent signifier and the field of articulated signifiers ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), the motor or agency of the discourse is a *constituted* relation between a consistent field of signifiers and that which is

⁵⁵ As we commented before, in reference to the split between enunciation and enunciated, Lacan's reference to a split subject runs throughout his seminars and writings. His elaborations regarding *what* splits the subject, which object causes it, changed drastically and finds its defining form at the same time as Lacan defines the function and place of the object a. See Lacan, J. (1999) O seminário, livro 5: As formações do Inconsciente, Jorge Zahar

⁵⁶ Lacan, J. 1991 L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970. Seuil - class of 26/11/1969

⁵⁷ Lacan, J. 1991 L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970. Seuil - class of 10/6/1970

presented as external to this field ($S_2 \rightarrow a$)⁵⁸. This shift can be intuitively grasped by comparing the Master Discourse presented above with the formalization of the University Discourse, which is produced by turning the matrix of discursivity counter-clockwise once⁵⁹:

$$\frac{S_2 \rightarrow a}{S_1 \diamond \S}$$

Under the name of this supposed exteriority - which, as we have seen, is secondary to the immersion of signifiers in the material reality - this new discursive formation substitutes the *impossibility* of fulfilling the demand for signification (the relation between master-signifier and the chain of signifiers) for the relation between an undisrupted field of knowledge and a field of elements which “have not yet been included” into its articulations.

The possibility of producing sense, or value, from the constant imperative to ‘reintegrate’ that which structurally slips away from sense’s reach can easily be defined as a form of *exploitation*⁶⁰, since, for structural reasons, that which has no value suddenly serves as the *cause* for the extraction of surplus-value, its very justification⁶¹. This extraction of sense out of its own senseless surplus produces a subjective typology whose fundamental characteristic is to have no access to the constitutive dimension which organized the apparently

⁵⁸ We should not forget that “consistent” does not exclude that which is “fluid” or “rhizomatic”, for there can be an underlying consistency in the notion of multiplicity.

⁵⁹ Lacan discusses the “quarter turn” in ‘Kant with Sade’ in *Écrits*, p.656-657

⁶⁰ Lacan, J. 1991 *L’envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*. Seuil - class of 17/12/1969

⁶¹ Marx, Karl (2008), *Capital: An Abridged Edition* (Oxford World’s Classics), (Oxford University Press, USA). For a Lacanian reading of the relation between surplus value and surplus enjoyment, please refer to Regnault, F. “Lacan’s Marx” in Lacanian ink 36 and Zupančič, A, “When Surplus Value meets Surplus Enjoyment” in Clemens ed. *Lacan and the Other Side of psychoanalysis*

autonomous presentation of knowledge. In other words, the subject does not experience herself as implicated in an infinite and impossible demand - this demand appears as *constituted* by an external organization rather than *constitutive* of her subjectivity.

The example of the educational system - which is used by Lacan himself - illustrates such a configuration: based on the principle of credit calculation (S_1), which applies the same standard of value per hour of class to the most diverse knowledge fields ($S_2 \rightarrow a$), contemporary universities confirm the validity of their organization without having to account for the consequences of structuring themselves under the aegis of the master-signifier of 'counting' or 'serialization' to justify their bureaucratic functioning⁶². For instance, a university can function normally while being unaware of how the senselessness of such a founding principle "spills" over the demand for knowledge that it creates: the accreditation of knowledge cannot be thoroughly distinguished from knowledge *as credit*.

The University Discourse presents itself as if it were enunciated from a neutral place, a form of reasoning that would be based on facts and things "as they are", and not on a powerful imperative of "counting". As a result, the knowledge presented in the classroom is detached from those who enunciate it - no longer masters, but teachers⁶³. The teacher addresses the students ($S_2 \rightarrow a$), who are supposed to be outside the academic structure, in order to extract from them, as a product of their intellectual work, theses, articles, new teachers, etc (\$).

The functioning of this discourse gives rise to a subjectivity which occupies the place where a non-totalizable surplus is produced - though the University Discourse aims at the student, it produces a subject who is alienated from the very discursive structure that produced it ($S_1 \diamond \$$), a subject "informed" by

⁶² Lacan, J. 1991 L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970. Seuil - class of 17/12/1969

⁶³ See also Lefort, C. "Formation et autorité, l'éducation humaniste" in (1992) *Écrire, à l'épreuve du politique*, Calmann-Lévy.

transparent knowledge. The Master-signifier, which could orient the subject in the homogeneous multiplicity of credits, cannot not make its senseless presence felt anywhere as the organizing principle of this supposedly transparent field⁶⁴.

It's not hard to understand why Lacan also refers to the University Discourse as the capitalist discourse⁶⁵: this structure, which presents itself as natural and rational, serving the function of accumulating knowledge, while producing a knowledge that is accumulable, is strictly homologous to Marx's description of capitalist mode of production⁶⁶ - it describes, in minimal terms, the mechanism of the extraction of surplus value⁶⁷. Such extraction of an excess, in turn, produces a subjectivity incapable of positioning itself in relation to the imperative of

⁶⁴ For a brilliant account of the functioning of the University Discourse, see 'When Surplus-Enjoyment meets Surplus-Value', by Alenka Zupančič, in Clemens, J. and Grigg, R. 2006. Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII sic vi.

⁶⁵ "And for reasons that have nothing to do with the virtue of this discourse – a certain number of people are here as students, namely, are pushing themselves forward to be recognized in this society which is in the process of really losing the run of itself, namely, of very quickly getting rid of its principal supports – credits pass progressively from a use value to an exchange value. You are predestined, whatever you may wish, in this little mechanism, to play the same role of everything that is involved as o-object in capitalist society, namely, to function as surplus value. You are the true values in the sense that you form part of the movement, of the numerical movement, that is going to sustain the style of exchange, the style of market that capitalist society constitutes." Lacan, J. 1991 *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*. Seuil – class of 4/6/70, entitled "Analyticon".

⁶⁶ See Regnault's 'Lacan's Marx' in Ayerza, J. (2010), *Lacanian Ink* 36 - The Gaze, (The Wooster Press).

⁶⁷ Marx, in 'Capital': "By turning his money into commodities that serve as the material elements of a new product, and as factors in the labour-process, by incorporating living labour with their dead substance, the capitalist at the same time converts value, i.e., past, materialized, and dead labour into capital, into value big with value, a live monster that is fruitful and multiplies. If we now compare the two processes of producing value and of creating surplus-value, we see that the latter is nothing but the continuation of the former beyond a definite point. If on the one hand the process be not carried beyond the point, where the value paid by the capitalist for the labour-power is replaced by an exact equivalent, it is simply a process of producing value; if, on the other hand, it be continued beyond that point, it becomes a process of creating surplus-value." Marx, K. (1990) *Capital* Vol. 1, Ch. 7, S. 2: 'The Production of Surplus Value'.

accumulation which remains invisible in the social field – wrongly distinguishable, for example, in the figure of the capitalist who is, in fact, submissively driven by this injunction himself, in the same way that a teacher is driven by the imperative to extract value from the work of his students⁶⁸. Just as the very quality of work - to produce more value - falls into the quantifiable dimension of the commodity, allowing for labour to be counted amongst other commodities, knowledge itself comes to be inscribed in an infinite series, which does not distinguish between the possible structural differences between that which it serializes⁶⁹.

This double reference to the places of knowledge and labour in the structuring of our current social link should be enough reason for us to question the consequences of this discursive organization for the positioning of both psychoanalysis and the Marxist discourse today. How are we to distinguish structural differences within a social field which is defined by the continuous reification of formal inconsistencies into self-perpetuating imperatives of serialization? Furthermore, how to structure a critical discourse that is capable of addressing this issue without falling prey to its traps?

To properly tackle these questions, we must first learn to recognize them within the current impasses of psychoanalysis and political thought themselves.

3. Psychoanalysis

The diagnosis that the University Discourse structures the logic of the contemporary social link became a central topic in Lacan's seminars around the end of the 1960's. Certainly, this was in part due to the events taking place in the streets of France at the time, but it was also because Lacan had to account, within the formulations of the psychoanalytical field, for ideological

⁶⁸ Seminar 17 – class of 4/6/70, entitled "Analyticon".

⁶⁹ Lacan, J. (2008) O seminário, livro 16: De um Outro ao outro, 1968-69, Jorge Zahar - class of 18/6/1969

effects that initially seemed external to its domain and which suddenly began to threaten the status of psychoanalytical knowledge and institution.

Although these effects seem to belong explicitly to the discussion of psychoanalysis' status in culture - a point of tension present throughout his seminars and writings⁷⁰ - we should not dismiss the possibility that these consequences were also at the root of Lacan's concern with more directly clinical matters, shaping the path he would later lead his conceptual formulations.

To understand what is at stake in this hypothesis, we should again pause for a moment and elaborate some further definitions, without which we cannot investigate the relation between ideology and clinical matters.

3.1 Death Drive and Castration

Picking up from our previous definitions, let us now sketch a panorama of the relations between some of the central categories of the Lacanian framework.

The paradoxical status of language for Lacan - being grasped as "outside" the world only by first being completely immersed in it - is strictly homologous to that of the relation between death drive and the psychic apparatus for Freud⁷¹.

In *Drive and its Vicissitudes*⁷², the first dimension of the drive studied by Freud is precisely that of its disruptive character,

⁷⁰ It was with a discussion on this precise point that Lacan chose to initiate what is known as one of the "founding" texts of his doctrine, 'Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis' in the *Ecrits* p. 204.

⁷¹ See Lacan, J. 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis' Norton and Co., p. 161.

⁷² Freud, Sigmund (1968), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology, and Other Works*, (London).

cutting across the "three polarities" on which the psychic apparatus is based: subject/object, inside/outside; pleasure/displeasure. There is a "constant force" that springs from *within* the psychic apparatus, parasitizing its functioning - which is otherwise based on the homeostasis of stimuli, that is, the pleasure principle. It is important to grasp that this force is not something that intervenes from another realm: it lies, precisely, *beyond* the pleasure principle, as an excess that sticks to the ideal oppositions that sustain the psychic apparatus. There are not *two* principles: drive and homeostasis, there is only one, which is constantly distorted, a limit whose very positing produces too little or too much satisfaction.

The theory of the drives was the essential core of the Freudian conception of the functioning of the unconscious in its relations to the body and to language, but it was only with Lacan that its enigmatic⁷³ structure was properly conceptualized and made central to the very constitution of the psychic apparatus. Though Freud had to presuppose the drive in order to account for the rise of narcissism⁷⁴, it was only with Lacan that the function of consciousness was explicitly founded on the impossibility of its own consistency⁷⁵.

Consciousness maintains itself within the realm of the Freudian polarities - inside/outside, subject/object, etc, but also those of "to see/to be seen", "to eat/to expel" - only because, more

⁷³ Freud's conceptualization of the drive was never free of contradictions and re-elaborations. One of the reasons was the difficulty in accounting for the idea of this *one* principle, which nevertheless functions as *two*, the affirmation of his fidelity to this complex structure, which seemed so counter-intuitive, was the site of many important struggles for Freud, demarcating in many ways the terrain of separation between him and Jung, for example - who argued for a definite monolibidinal principle - which was, consequentially, also a de-sexualized drive. See Johnston, A. (2005) 'Time Driven'. Northwestern University Press

⁷⁴ See the relation between the drives and auto-erotism in 'On Narcissism', from 1914, in Freud, Sigmund (1968), Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology, and Other Works, (London).

⁷⁵ Lacan, Jacques (1998), The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company) p. 167.

fundamentally, these clear-cut oppositions are strictly impossible on their own, without an expenditure of energy to support them. The psychic apparatus is essentially embedded in the material world, its representations cannot avoid having a “weight” that disrupts the idyllic nature of its relations of sense. The satisfaction of sustaining the lure of the consistency of the “I” - as we already mentioned, a satisfaction named ‘enjoyment’, and which is defined in relation to the impossibility of what it strives to attain - is what perpetuates and sustains consciousness as such. And as it was also defined above, the material excess of representation - that which must be structurally excluded from the relations between signifiers in order for there to be any sense or meaning - is called the object *a*, the object which embodies this structural impossibility. Still, even though the ‘object *a*’ is by definition absent, the impossibility it incarnates can nonetheless be thought. In fact, it does not cease imposing itself on thought.

The idea that this impossibility is a restriction imposed on the drive by the psychic apparatus is what characterizes the notion of *imaginary castration*⁷⁶. That is, it includes the impossibility into what is thought only on the condition that *somewhere else* - even if not properly thinkable by the subject - there is something or someone that is not afflicted by this law of non-coincidence which rules the interplay of signifiers in the psychic apparatus. As Freud puts it, one can know that the mother does not have a phallus, yet still maintain the reference to this self-identical, fixed signifier in fantasy.⁷⁷

The transformation of this limit or horizon itself into an impossibility, a *structural* imbalance, is what is called *symbolic castration*⁷⁸. That is, the subject must deal with the structural

⁷⁶ Lacan, J. (2004) O seminário, livro 10: A angústia 1962-63 Jorge Zahar - class of 28/11/1962

⁷⁷ Freud, S. ‘Fetishism’ (1927) in Freud, Sigmund (1964), The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XXI (1927-31): the Future of An Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents, and Other Works, (Hogarth Press).

⁷⁸ Lacan, J. (2004) O seminário, livro 10: A angústia 1962-63 Jorge Zahar - class of 30/1/1963

necessity of a blind spot, of a constitutive gap to her own knowledge. There is no knowledge without the simultaneous positing of the unknowable. No seeing without a gaze that looks back at the subject from there where his sight falters, threatening the stability of his own conscious, self-identical ego.

Thus, it becomes patent that a crucial distinction between the imaginary and symbolic registers is that the instance of something that would be outside of the structure, externally imposing on the organization its limits, is an imaginary *effect*, and not a *cause*, of the structure. The imaginary - as the realm of the consistencies of the I, the multiplicity of objects and the Whole - is a necessary supposition⁷⁹ of the symbolic articulations, of the relations between signifiers⁸⁰.

Through the distinction between the symbolic and the imaginary, we grasp the very genesis of the (empty or structural) reference to an instance prior to, or outside of, the Law of the signifier, because the notion of symbolic impossibility is not the effect of a norm, rule or prohibition, but a fundamental characteristic of the signifier itself, which precedes, determines, and distorts the signification. The task of signification, always incomplete and inconsistent, is to keep open the negative space of the subject, through which she retroactively - since it *answers* to the demand of the Other - mediates the articulation of signifiers, always responsible and always submitted to the Law which constitutes her, even when this submission must be accomplished through the election of the imaginary figure of an oppressive Other, who would have condemned her to the impossibility - the *real* impossibility - of the totalization of meaning.

⁷⁹ Though it is an *effect*, it is important to bring to attention one of the reasons why this seems so counter-intuitive: since there is no *origin* of the symbolic, there is no moment when the symbolic is not already knotted to the imaginary. The imaginary is an effect of something which, strictly speaking, never took chronological precedence over it.

⁸⁰ See Seminar 1 – chapter entitled ‘The topic of the Imaginary’. Lacan, Jacques (1991), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud’s Papers on Technique* (Vol. Book I) (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan), (W. W. Norton & Company).

Therefore, the Lacanian formulation of the concept of castration does not function according to the division between exterior and interior: if there is no spectre of the totalization of signification on the horizon of the psyche, not even in the guise of an unachievable point, the signifier – being that of the death drive which *ex-ists*⁸¹ – in its infinite demand for signification, keeps the serialization of signifiers open in an indistinct manner. The only conceptual distinction here is between the Master-signifier, which names the inexhaustible lack of sense, and all the other signifiers, pertaining to the field of the Other, indifferently encompassing the names of the individual body and the social body within the same series⁸². That is why Lacan famously claims that desire is always the desire of the Other: it is inscribed in the demand that traverses the individual and the social realms without defining or distinguishing them, producing as a singular, partial and unpredictable answer, a subject who makes herself present through the internal obstacles of this serialization, as an answer of/to the Real⁸³.

In this sense, the logic of the signifier defines a precise relation between the subject and the social *corpus*, for the logic of desire imposes that the response that constitutes the desiring subject shall always lie between the creation of a singular effect and its necessary alienation in the Otherness of desire. This logical movement⁸⁴ establishes the connection between the individual and the social realm, while simultaneously alienating one from the other, blurring the lines between what, in psychology, is

⁸¹ Given the primacy of the signifier over that which is (fails) to signify, Lacan writes its existence with an emphasis on its self-exteriority: “ex-sists” See Miller, J-A. ‘Extimity’ The Symptom 9. Available from: <http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?p=36> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

⁸² Hence Lacan’s famous dictum: “The unconscious (...) is outside” (p.126) in Lacan, J. (1998) O seminário, livro 11: Os quatro conceitos fundamentais da psicanálise 1964, Jorge Zahar - class of 15/4/1964

⁸³ “La raison en est que ce que le discours analytique concerne, c’est le sujet, qui, comme effet de signification, est réponse du réel” (“The reason for this is that, concerning the analytic discourse, it is the subject that, as an effect of signification, is an answer of the Real,” *L’étourdit*, in Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil).

⁸⁴ See Lacan, J. ‘Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty’ in *Écrits*, p.161.

defined as 'the Self' and 'the Other'. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, a change in the social organization does not only have consequences for the way the psychic apparatus relates to the social realm, but also consequences for the organization of the psychic apparatus itself.⁸⁵

3.2 Impasses of Discourse

Observing this structural implication, and now focusing specifically on the transmission of psychoanalytical knowledge, it is plausible that it is not without relation to this transformation of the matrix of social links – the current prevalence of the University Discourse, diagnosed by Lacan himself⁸⁶ – that the practice of psychoanalysis is going through the reformulation of some of its concepts today⁸⁷.

The recent production of texts and seminars in the Lacanian field delineates a more or less clear movement: fundamental notions of psychoanalysis are being reviewed and redefined in order to account for this new moment, and we find the emergence of new terms and concepts to describe symptoms that have supposedly defied the classic typology of clinical pathologies⁸⁸. As Erik Porge states:

⁸⁵ Porge, Erik (2007), *Transmitir La Clínica Psicoanalítica*, (Nueva Visión). p.8

⁸⁶ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil 1991-03-06). See page 104 of the english edition

⁸⁷ See Žižek's 'Object a in Social Links' in Clemens, J. and Grigg, R. 2006. Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII sic vi.

⁸⁸ Besides Miller, J.-A., Henry, F., Jolibois, M. ed. *La Conversation D'Arcachon* (1997) *Agalma* - in which rare and unclassifiable cases of the psychoanalytical clinic are presented, we would also like to refer to *Latusa* - a Brazilian psychoanalytical magazine, both in printed and digital form - and its publications n.7, n.16, n.17, n.25, n.26, n.27, n.35, n.36 specially and n.38, all of which can be found at [http://www.latusa.com.br/ indice.htm](http://www.latusa.com.br/indice.htm) [Accessed May 28, 2011]. For two opposing overviews of the 'new pathologies', we suggest Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2009), *Un monde sans limite : Suivi de Malaise dans la subjectivation*, (Erès). and Maleval, Jean-Claude (2000), *La Forclusion du nom-du-père. Le concept et sa clinique*, (Seuil).

“Instead of the recognition of the subject’s division in its different structures, we find the multiplication of supposedly new pathologies (...) the so-called new pathology is usually not as new as it seems when one examines it closely, or it corresponds to the limits of diagnosis as such, which have always existed. More than new pathologies, they are new forms or moments of the demand which one should situate in relation to the ideologies”⁸⁹

While abiding to the hypothesis that “the collective organization can modify the psychic structure of the subject”, Porge also reminds us that although a complete separation between the two realms simply contradicts the Freudian theory of the drive, its reverse, that is, the complete, un-reflected embedding of the psychic economy in the immediate perception of social changes is equally mystifying and tends toward a “sociological holism”⁹⁰. Our current enquiry lies, precisely, in between these two dangerous extremes: the indifferent statement that there is not a relation between the collective and the subjective, and the hasty assumption that the two coincide, or have a direct correlation. As we mentioned above, our wager is that there is actually a *non-relation* between the two: “the common core that binds them together is at the same time the place of their disjunction”⁹¹ - that which keeps psychoanalysis and politics together is precisely the restless negativity which demarcates their division.

For example, in light of the diagnosis of the so-called “pulverization of the father function”, psychoanalysis is undergoing an important revision of the place of the Other and the Law⁹². This change is most evident in the recent evoking of

⁸⁹ Porge, Erik (2007), *Transmitir La Clínica Psicoanalítica*, (Nueva Visión). p.7

⁹⁰ *Ibid.* p.8

⁹¹ Mladen Dolar’s. ‘Freud and the Political’, in *Theory & Event*, Volume 12, Issue 3, 2009. See also Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press).p.5-6; Luis Tudanca, on the other hand, claims something slightly different, more akin to the psychoanalytical common place of the social as imaginary, when he says that “there is no relation between the political and psychoanalysis, there is a link [hay lazo]” Tudanca, L. (2006), *De lo político a lo impolítico. Una lectura del síntoma social*, (Grama Ediciones) p.11

⁹² Please refer to the brief but clear summary on the different conceptualizations of the Other today in Salecl, R. (2010), *Choice*, (Profile Books). p.58-72

the term 'ethics committee'⁹³, used to update the psychoanalytical theory at a historical moment in which the Other, as an empty instance that hovers over the structure of knowledge, would no longer (not)⁹⁴ exist in the way it was previously conceptualized: one would no longer identify with a common trace which hierarchically organizes the social space, but horizontally, directly with one another.⁹⁵

We believe that, by situating this change "in relation to the ideologies", it is possible to trace this effect back to the formulation of the University Discourse outlined above. As we have seen, the subject produced by this mode of social bond is incapable of locating the master signifier which organizes the field that produced her - having thus to resort to signifiers that mark *constituted* traits shared by individuals, who are then grouped together according to somatic characteristics, such as depression, or according to the ethnic minority or sexual preference to which they belong⁹⁶.

At the same time, these new symptoms, which challenge the classic articulations of psychoanalytical concepts, start to delineate a demand addresses to the analysts, a plea for the reformulation, albeit in the form of additions, of the clinical structures – hysteric and obsessive neuroses, perversion and

⁹³ Both the notion of multiplication of the names-of-the-father - which is present in a different form already in early texts by Lacan, such as 'The individual Myth of the Neurotic', in which Lacan talks of 'decline of the father function' - and notion of 'the Ethics Committee' can be found in Miller, J.-A (1996-97). 'El Otro que no existe y sus comités de ética' Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2006

⁹⁴ The Other, as can be deduced from our brief presentation, does not exist as such. As the concept of symbolic castration makes it clear, the impossibility of totalization that splits the subject, also splits the Other. There is no consistent Other: it functions as such precisely *because it doesn't exist*. But this is not what is at stake in this formulation of "the Other that doesn't exist". It never existed. What is implied is that now it would be *openly accepted* that it doesn't exist.

⁹⁵ Miller, J.-A (1996-97). 'El Otro que no existe y sus comités de ética'. Buenos Aires: Paidós See also "A fantasy", Miller's conference in Comandutuba in 2004, available from: <http://www.congresoamp.com/en/template.php?file=Textos/Conferencia-de-Jacques-Alain-Miller-en-Comandutuba.html> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

⁹⁶ Ibid. p.17

psychosis. The notion of ‘ordinary psychosis’⁹⁷, for instance, was elaborated to account for the symptomatology of analysands whose symbolic knotting is strong enough for them to organize their life socially, but which nevertheless allows itself to be categorized by the presence of a trace pertaining to the field of psychoses. This is the case of the modern compulsions that present points of radical occlusion of the dimension of desire, interfering with the diagnosis of a classical neurosis:

“The analysts of today are confronted with demands addressed to them by subjects who pose the question of an eventual psychotic functioning, and who, however, are not delirious, nor hallucinating, nor melancholic. So the term *ordinary* psychosis [was chosen] to mark the asymptomatic character of this sort of subjective structure. Ordinary psychosis is certainly a new concept, and it was introduced to the psychoanalytical clinic by Jacques Alain Miller in 1998. It formalizes that which is otherwise referred to as “non-triggered psychosis”, “psychose blanche” or even “psychose froide” (obscure syndromes without a strong heuristic virtuality). Ordinary psychosis opposes itself thus to clinical (triggered) psychosis; it accounts for the fact that it is possible for a subject to live his life without the presence of any delirium while his structure is very much psychotic. The essential point is that it seems possible to “supplement” the subjective failing that is proper of psychosis.”⁹⁸

There is, thus, a double movement of reformulations in psychoanalysis: on one side, a re-elaboration of the status of the Other today, on the other, the introduction of new clinical terms that account for supplementary ways of organizing the psychic structure, in an attempt to circumscribe the fragile traces of the father function there where it is supposedly forecluded. As André Antunes da Costa recently demonstrated⁹⁹, the introduction of this new para-typology, more than mapping a further nosographic category, is slowly allowing for the blurring

⁹⁷ See Miller, J-A (Org.) ‘Le Conciliabule D’Angers’. Paris: Seuil, 1997

⁹⁸ Flourey, Nicolas (2010), *Le réel insensé - Introduction à la pensée de Jacques-Alain Miller*, (Germina), p.64-65

⁹⁹ See Antunes da Costa, André (2011), ‘Etats Limites et Borderline: Meprise de la nevrose, inexistence de la perversion et meconnaissance de la psychose. Lecture Lacanienne de la dissolution nosographique classique en psychanalyse’, (Paris VII).

and dissolution of the well established structures, and dangerously turning the essential discontinuity between neurosis and psychosis into an approximation, a "gauss curve"¹⁰⁰.

In an homologous way, Lacanian psychoanalysis also faces, beside the already 'traditional' fragmentation of its institutions into smaller schools, an internal and growing exigency for opacity in the transmission of psychoanalytical knowledge, an increasing pedagogical need to transform the lack of rigor and of definitions into a constitutive element of psychoanalytical knowledge itself. The difficulty of disseminating this knowledge, of setting up and consolidating a unified Lacanian school, seems to go hand in hand with the affirmation, mostly upheld by psychoanalysts themselves, that their field of knowledge is inherently inconsistent and, therefore, impossible to be properly transmitted, institutionalized and taught.

Even if today's political and administrative situations in countries like France, Brazil and Argentina are truly not fruitful for the development of a serious relationship between psychoanalysis and the State, this in no way would implies that there is something constitutive of psychoanalysis in such resistance to the State. On the contrary, this conflict could just urge us even more to declare that there is something wrong with the current composition of the State itself, which cannot accommodate a field of knowledge that implicates the desire of the subject in its transmission, and a practice that requires us to accept the necessary retroaction of signifying determinations.¹⁰¹

Unfortunately, today there is no lack of signs of an obscene satisfaction with such a naturalization of psychoanalysis' distance from the State and the University. Consider, for example, the following passage from a text, by a renown psychoanalyst, which brings psychoanalytical concepts into play in order to justify tax evasion:

¹⁰⁰ Miller, J.-A. ed. (2000), *La Psicosis Ordinaria*, (Paidós). p.9

¹⁰¹ We are left to wonder if this is not a good preliminary definition of the communist state.

"All of this allows me to say something regarding the issue of TVA [additional value tax] insofar as its non-applicability in the psychoanalytical session. Each one of us will quickly understand the reason for this. In the psychoanalytical operation, it is not about adding value to whatever it is, nor to any one. Does this mean, then that it is a matter, on the contrary, of removing it? One shouldn't exaggerate. What can be said is that, the psychoanalytical operation, it is a matter of exonerating, it is to have a clear idea regarding what creates value. Can one maintain that psychoanalysis is then a service that is delivered? It is much harder to advance in the matter when the one who works is the analysand. I believe that these few references, these reflexions concerning precisely the manner in which the psychoanalytical operation doesn't produce anything that would be of the order of value in the course of its process, show that psychoanalysis stands in face of what creates value, which is at the same time what essentially disqualifies its figuration as a service delivery. If anything should be brought into the discussion, in regards to the fiscal administration that dedicates itself today to enforce that certain categories of psychoanalysts pay the TAV, it is this point which could be a background argument of the greatest interest for our practice to recognize and to homologate as such, and which would allow, at the same time, to effectively distinguish us from all the other goods services."¹⁰²

Is Žižek not correct here, then, when he remarks that psychoanalysts seem to address today one sonorous demand to the State: "why don't you let us profit from the crisis?"¹⁰³ Is this not an unavoidable consequence of such direct resistance to serialization, an operation that was already properly conceptualized by psychoanalysis and which now, in this atrociously distorted manner, returns to fill the lack of

¹⁰² C. Melman "Why isn't TVA applicable to the psychoanalytical session?" in Goldenberg, Ricardo (ed.) (1997), *Goza! Capitalismo, Globalização e Psicanálise, Agalma*. Does this argument not resemble in frightening ways the recent argument presented to the IMF by certain Greek authorities, according to which the problem with the Greek debt would be inherent to the constitution of the Greek people as such?

¹⁰³ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View (Short Circuits)*, (MIT Press). p.259. An unfortunate confirmation of this is how close some of Miller's recent remarks come to Stuart Schneiderman's "life coaching": <http://www.stuartschneiderman.com/what-can-coaching-do-for-you/>

consequences that were drawn from it? In other words, how can we give proper weight to Lacan's claim that "psychoanalysis is a practice without any value"¹⁰⁴ - a statement recently raised to the status of an emblem of psychoanalysis¹⁰⁵ - without first accounting for the consequences of the concept of surplus value?

The common criticism addressed to the analyst's knowledge - that it would supposedly claim itself to be a "total knowledge" of some sort, "repressing" the subject with fantasies of Oedipal relations etc. - seems to have been here reflected into the very positioning of psychoanalysis within the social space, and thereby making this critique its own as psychoanalysis defends itself from the ghost of totalization. The place of the master-signifier, both in the institutional structure and in the theoretical framework, has begun to be rethought, while the teaching of psychoanalysis resists its formalization and its diffusion in culture, as if the lack of conceptual rigor was a direct consequence of the structure of psychoanalytical knowledge itself¹⁰⁶.

Today's emphasis on the clinic of 'generalized madness'¹⁰⁷ - a response to the symptomatology which brought our History to the couch, both as the cause of these symptoms, as well as its product, as the new conceptual elaborations responsible for giving this historical moment its name - is also an emphasis on what is singular about enjoyment, that which escapes any

¹⁰⁴ Lacan apud Miller, J.-A. "A fantasy". Available from: <http://www.congresoamp.com/en/template.php?file=Textos/Conferencia-de-Jacques-Alain-Miller-en-Comandatuba.html> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

¹⁰⁵ See for example Leonardo Gorostiza's "Resonances of A Fantasy". Available from: <http://www.congresoamp.com/en/template.php?file=Textos/Resonancias-de-Una-fantasia.html> [Accessed June 19, 2011]., one of the selected texts to introduce the VIII Congress of the WAP.

¹⁰⁶ "The essential point of our critique of the so-called new pathologies is the method, or better, the lack of method, with which they themselves establish, present, interpret and transmit the clinical facts" Porge, Erik (2007), *Transmitir La Clinica Psicoanalitica*, (Nueva Visión). p.9

¹⁰⁷ Floury, Nicolas (2010), *Le réel insensé - Introduction à la pensée de Jacques-Alain Miller*, (Germina) p.135

classification¹⁰⁸. After all, it is one of the nodal claims of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory that only the subject himself is able to articulate something about his own singular enjoyment, since *jouissance* is nothing but the structural distortion of the subject's singular name, that is, the other side of this name itself.

Enjoyment is not a concept that can be directly "collectivized": it specifically defines the unique way in which the subject alienates himself from what Freud called the "collective unhappiness" into his own "neurotic misery"¹⁰⁹. Supported by a well-established interpretation of Lacan's conceptual shift after his 20th Seminar¹¹⁰, the most prominent direction of the Lacanian field today seems to rely on a certain conception of the notion of enjoyment - defined by Miller as Lacan's "sixth paradigm of enjoyment"¹¹¹ - which unfolds into the affirmation that to claim a structural knowledge of *jouissance* would be to claim a knowledge of all subjects - a "group" which cannot be totalized without dangerous consequences. In a way, it is increasingly accepted that the public space itself is devoid of any real - as if it is only the field of imaginary and phantasmatic constructions of individuals, an instance which would hold no relevance in itself¹¹². And so, resorting to this argument, many

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p.53-54: "For psychoanalysis, insisting again that counts is the uniqueness of each (and it is precisely this that distinguishes it from all psychology). It is dealing with what is only for "one-all-alone". The singular is outside the clinic, outside classification.

Can we indeed speak of the singular "beyond designating it, to point the finger at it? Can we even talk about it? For the singular as such resembles nothing: it stands outside of what is common. And language cannot say anything other than what is common. Thus membership of the singular to a class raises questions. (...) Because according to the singular point of view dealt with by psychoanalysis "everyone is like no other, each one is unique.": Analysis is an experience which allows for the emergence of the singular; it is even an experience that guides itself towards the singular. Diagnosis, even if it is not excluded, is not what is intended. What is singular in each is his "way of enjoyment."

¹⁰⁹ Freud, Sigmund (1964), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume II (1893-95): Studies on Hysteria* by Joseph Breuer and Sigmund Freud, (Hogarth Press).

¹¹⁰ See Miller, J.-A. (2003), 'O Último Ensino de Lacan', *Opção Lacaniana*, 35

¹¹¹ Miller, J.-A. (2000), 'Seis Paradigmas do Gozo', *Opção Lacaniana*, 26/27

¹¹² Žižek, in a lecture at ICI Berlin in April 2011. Available from: <http://www.ici-berlin.org/docu/one-divides-into-two/> [Accessed May 28, 2011].

psychoanalysts reproach or cynically distance themselves from the cultural analysis of ideology which bases itself on psychoanalytical categories, hardly ever considering such critical knowledge to have pertinence to the clinical realm and to the evident impasses of the Lacanian field.

This emphasis on the individual character of *jouissance* has as its obverse an excessive, though by no means more rigorous, concern with the concept of master-signifier. A secondary effect of the conceptualization of the structural relationship between signifier and *jouissance* seems to have been to make psychoanalysts - even more so than the critics of psychoanalysis - averse to the election of emblems and masters, because of the enjoyment that this desire of 'totalizing' psychoanalysis as a consistent field of knowledge - such as in an unified School - might imply¹¹³. The title 'anti-philosophy', as well as several other debates over the scientific grounding of psychoanalysis, have served as a support for this position - as if the only way to distinguish psychoanalysis from philosophy would be to give up the claim that there is such a thing as a knowledge of the totality. Likewise - as if to distinguish itself from science and philosophy - psychoanalysis seems to demand today less rigor from its own knowledge productions by giving away on the search for any possible criteria for its validity.

3.3 "Critical Criticism"

The impasse described above - which was first articulated by the critics of psychoanalysis, before being reflected into the conceptual framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis itself - can be

¹¹³ The work of Jean-Pierre Lebrun, though in disagreement with us concerning his diagnosis of the causes of the current situation, is specially enlightening in providing an account of another possible relation between psychoanalysis and Institutions based on a presentation of a correct and wrong way of conceptualizing Lacan's logic of the non-all. On this, please refer to Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2008), *Clinique de l'institution : Ce que peut la psychanalyse pour la vie collective*, (Erès).

exemplified by the invective presented in the famous book by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*¹¹⁴.

Published in 1972, the book was presented by Michel Foucault in a preface for the English edition in the following manner:

“I would say that *Anti-Oedipus* (may the authors forgive me) is a book of ethics, the first book of ethics to be written in France in quite a long time (perhaps that explains why its success was not limited to a particular “readership”: being anti-oedipal has become a life style, a way of thinking and living). (...) Paying a modest tribute to Saint Francis de Sales, one might say that *Anti-Oedipus* is an Introduction to the non-fascist Life”¹¹⁵

Starting from the premise that first there is a desire-machine, then the built wall of prohibition and repression – in other words, that desire *precedes* castration¹¹⁶ – the authors define the psychoanalytical practice as a technique of thwarting desire, which, in its raw state, would be a strictly productive intensity, averse to the format of the nuclear family¹¹⁷. From this first presupposition, the authors outlined a critique of psychoanalysis based on its supposed homology with the capitalist structure. The oedipal complex would be a repressive fantasy, attributed by the analyst to the analysand, according to a regulative law that oppresses the subject, in an homologous manner to the imperatives of capitalist consumption and domination¹¹⁸.

Against the primacy of a clinical practice based on this repressed figure of the neurotic, understood as an emblem of the ‘normal’ psychic structure, the authors of *Anti-Oedipus* propose the

¹¹⁴ Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (2004), *Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum Impacts) (Continuum Impacts): Capitalism and Schizophrenia, (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.).

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p.xv

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p.138

¹¹⁷ As can be read in “it is Oedipus that depends on desiring-production, either as a stimulus of one form or another, a simple inductor through which an Oedipal organization of desiring-production is formed, beginning with early childhood, or as an effect of the psychic and social repression imposed on desiring-production by social reproduction by means of the family” in Ibid. p.140

¹¹⁸ Ibid. p.123-124

'schizo-analysis'¹¹⁹: a practice that breaks with the regulatory principles of analysis, correcting what would be the three central errors on the Freudian logic of desire: lack, law and signifier¹²⁰. The 'Schizo', the name of the hero of the anti-Oedipal project, is the one who would break out of this imposed territorialization, out of the fixation of significations, which would have been imposed by the analytical-capitalist machine, and thus would move on to live nomadically, "beyond psychosis". The following, although somewhat long passage illustrates the book's position very well:

"Very few accomplish what Laing calls the breakthrough of this schizophrenic wall or limit: "quite ordinary people," nevertheless. But the majority draw near the wall and back away horrified. Better to fall back under the law of the signifier, marked by castration, triangulated in Oedipus. So they displace the limit, they make it pass into the interior of the social formation, between the social production and reproduction that they invest, and the familial reproduction that they fall back on, to which they apply all the investments. They make the limit pass into the interior of the domain thus described by Oedipus, between the two poles of Oedipus. They never stop involuting and evolving between these two poles. Oedipus as the last rock, and castration as the cavern: the ultimate territoriality, although reduced to the analyst's couch, rather than the decoded flows of desire that flee, slip away, and take us where? Such is neurosis, the displacement of the limit, in order to create a little colonial world of one's own. (...) These catatonic bodies have fallen into the river like lead weights, immense transfixed hippopotamuses who will not come back up to the surface. They have entrusted all their forces to primal repression, in order to escape the system of social and psychic repression that fabricates neurotics. But a more naked repression befalls them that declares them identical with the hospital schizo, the great autistic one, the clinical entity that "lacks" Oedipus. (...) Neurotic territoriality of Oedipus, perverse territorialities of the artifice, psychotic territoriality of the body without organs: sometimes the process is caught in the trap and made to turn about within the triangle, sometimes it takes itself as an end-in-itself, other times it continues on in the void and substitutes a horrible exasperation for its fulfillment. Each of these forms has schizophrenia as a foundation; schizophrenia as a process is the only universal.

¹¹⁹ Ibid. p.301

¹²⁰ Ibid. p.121

Schizophrenia is at once the wall, the breaking through this wall, and the failures of this breakthrough¹²¹

The authors relate their conception of ‘schizophrenia’ to the famous ‘End of History’¹²², the famous thesis of Alexandre Kojève¹²³, popularized by Fukuyama¹²⁴, which accounts for what would supposedly be the moment of Man’s final “overcoming” of the Hegelian dialectic of the Master and Slave - which, in the post-modern milieu, somehow turned into the project of overcoming Hegel himself.

Like Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari also subscribed to the project of “forgetting Hegel”¹²⁵, constructing their philosophical projects without any affirming reference to the Negative¹²⁶ - and the price they paid for this rejection becomes quite clear in their superficial critique of psychoanalysis, based as it is on a ludicrously simplified, and perhaps even falsified¹²⁷, interpretation of Freud. The first consequence of this rejection of the Negative as a philosophical category is the impossibility of outlining the three fundamental registers at the core of Lacanian psychoanalysis’ framework, also implicitly at play in Freud: the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary.¹²⁸

¹²¹ Ibid. p.147-148

¹²² “Schizophrenia as a process is desiring-production, but it is this production as it functions at the end, as the limit of social production determined by the conditions of capitalism. It is our very own “malady”, modern man’s sickness. The end of history has no other meaning.” Ibid. p.142

¹²³ See Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press).

¹²⁴ See Fukuyama, F. 1992 ‘The End of the History and the Last Man’ Penguin Books.

¹²⁵ Deleuze, Gilles (2000), *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, (Athlone Press). apud Žižek, S. 2003 *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences*. Routledge. p.49

¹²⁶ Foucault quotes as one of the “essential principles” to a life counter to all forms of fascism: “Withdraw allegiance from the old categories of the Negative (law, limit, castration, lack, lacuna), which Western thought has so long held sacred as a form of power and an access to reality.” p.xv, in Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. 2004 *Anti-Oedipus*, Continuum.

¹²⁷ Žižek, S. 2003 *Organs without Bodies: Deleuze and Consequences*. Routledge. p.80

¹²⁸ A similar point regarding the contemporary confusion between the three registers of the RSI is made by Jean-Pierre Lebrun in the chapter ‘A Virtual

In *Anti-Oedipus* we find a description of the Symbolic that effectively corresponds to the renaming of the Lacanian concept of the Imaginary: that which would give rise to the fixation of the signifieds, to the realm of substantial consistency, and to the ego as an alienated formation of oneself - this is actually the starting point of psychoanalysis' own definition of the Imaginary.

Consequently, what psychoanalysis calls the Symbolic is named here the Real¹²⁹: the pure flow of becoming – a possible vitalist definition of the chain of signifiers – composed of pure differences, is presented in the book as the dimension beyond neurosis, where the functioning of the 'Schizo' would operate the deterritorialization - the becoming-Other - which, for psychoanalysis, is actually the very structural function of the signifier.

Finally, by completely excluding the field of enjoyment, the Lacanian concept of the Real returns in *Anti-Oedipus* in the form of shocking and obscene *imaginary* formations of great seductive power. A seduction made evident by the very position of the authors, who are clearly taken by the scene of psychosis, whose creative and liberating power could only be understood as such from a 'safe' and sublimated distance from the Thing, to which psychotics themselves, by definition, do not have any access¹³⁰. But the Real of the work - the position of enjoyment from which the authorial responsibility of the book emanates - is

Symbolic' in Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2009), *Un monde sans limite : Suivi de Malaise dans la subjectivation*, (Erès).

¹²⁹ For a brilliant comparison between Lacan and Deleuze, from which we draw our analysis, please refer to Zupančič, Alenka (2008), *The Odd One In: On Comedy (Short Circuits)*, (The MIT Press). p.161-162; For a critique of the institutional consequences of Deleuze's position, please see Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2008), *Clinique de l'institution : Ce que peut la psychanalyse pour la vie collective*, (Erès) - in the portuguese edition, see pages 25-27 and p.34

¹³⁰ Already in his first seminar Lacan was very worried with making sure one did not confuse the psychotic's delirium with a more privileged access to the Real. This same concern was manifested regarding child psychology. See Lacan, J. 1991 *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique* W. W. Norton & Company.

never taken into consideration: this would rely on the category of the subject qua negativity, as pure mediation of the signifiers at play in the text. The important dimension of the disavowal of castration at the level of the enunciation of the thesis of *Anti-Oedipus* is thereby itself elided.

In fact, as Žižek develops in his book *Organs without Bodies*, the Oedipus complex, as developed by psychoanalysis, is *exactly the operation that allows for what Deleuze calls de-territorialization*.¹³¹ The absence of the dimension of the negative impedes the Deleuzian critique from grasping castration as it is conceptually articulated: not as a *wall* that separates the inside from the outside, but as a *gap*, a *lack*, around which there comes to be a terrain in constant displacement. The name-of-the-father is the very condition of possibility of this wandering terrain of desire - the name of the intrusion of the shifting sand within the stable, constituted ground of sense - and, therefore, the condition for fantasizing a place beyond, or prior to, castration. This is why Žižek concludes that “anti-Oedipus is the ultimate Oedipal myth.”¹³²

If we return now to the motto with which Foucault begins his preface - “an introduction to a non-fascist life”¹³³ - we can see, once again, that what guides his critique is a direct association between the master-signifier and a fantasy of totalization. Furthermore, it is also clear that one of the consequences of the thesis that “desire precedes castration” is the idea that the master-signifier “represses” the desire-machine - a claim which has the curious result of inverting the categories of enjoyment and desire: desire becomes the place of the subject, and

¹³¹ Žižek, S. (2003) ‘Organs Without Bodies’. p.83: “Is the Freudian Oedipus complex (especially in terms of its Lacanian interpretative appropriation) not the exact opposite of the reduction of the multitude of social intensities onto the mother-father-and-me matrix: the matrix of the explosive opening up of the subject onto the social space? Undergoing “symbolic castration” is a way for the subject to be thrown out of the family network, propelled into a wider social network - Oedipus, the operator of deterritorialization.”

¹³² Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso). p.80

¹³³ Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. 2004 *Anti-Oedipus*, Continuum. p.xv

jouissance becomes the place of the Other. The imaginary dimension of the Father of the Horde¹³⁴ – the Freudian myth of the father-gorilla, the real ‘fascist’, possessor of all women – becomes indistinguishable from the face of the Other as such, understood, henceforth, as the one who would enjoy divesting the subject of the real responsibility for his own destiny.

The fascism to which Foucault refers, described by the author as that inside of us which “makes us love power”¹³⁵, thus reveals itself - when one remains faithful to the standpoint of Lacanian theory itself - to be supported by the idea that the master-signifier is the agent of repression.

According to psychoanalysis, a signifier in which so much is invested - namely, the possibility of creating an obstacle to the subject’s desire - can only find support in the subject’s own enjoyment, in the way she disavows castration as to sustain the phantasmatic formation which Lacan called the imaginary phallus¹³⁶. It is the signifier of a “whole-Other”, which organizes the fantasy of the subject around what we previously defined as imaginary castration. And this particular subjective position, defined by the disavowal of (symbolic) castration, is precisely what characterizes the structure of perversion: castration is enacted in the imaginary register, in an attempt to ensure that, beyond the restrictions that are ‘imposed’ on the subject, there would be an Other stance that remains untouched by the repressive representations that enslave the subject. In perversion, that which is a structural impossibility becomes fetishized into a restriction erected by the figure of an all powerful Other¹³⁷ - which alone remains outside of the impossibility’s reach.

¹³⁴ Freud, S. (1995), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume Xiii (1913-1914): *Totem and Taboo and Other W*, (Hogarth Press).

¹³⁵ Deleuze, G. Guattari, F. 2004 *Anti-Oedipus*, Continuum. p.xv

¹³⁶ Lacan, J. 1998 *Séminaire*, tome 4 : *la Relation d’objet*. Seuil. - class of 28/11/56

¹³⁷ As Freud states in ‘Fetishism’, this Other or object “stays as a reminder of the triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it.” in Freud (1971), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XXI (1927-1931): *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its*

It should become clear at this point that this particular criticism directed at the founding principles of psychoanalysis can only be sustained in the space of an indistinction between Real, Symbolic and Imaginary, which would then allow for a short circuit between the concepts of ‘object a’ – the object that causes desire -, the symbolic phallus – which is the operator of the castration -, and the imaginary phallus – the pivot of the fantasy of completion or wholeness. Lacanian psychoanalysis, therefore, has all the necessary means to respond to its opponents’ criticisms.

Even so, and according to the double movement of opposition and revision previously described by Althusser, this external opposition to the field of psychoanalysis resulted in a conceptual and institutional reorganization of the field itself, very much in line with the themes presented by its critics.

However, so that it would be possible for Deleuze and Guattari to simultaneously diagnose psychoanalysis and Marxism as potentially fascist or outdated doctrines, it was necessary at least to admit the hypothesis of the existence of homologies between the knowledge in both fields¹³⁸. As it also occurs - although in a less virtuous manner - in the *Black Books*, what is put into question is the ‘alienating’ consequences of these doctrines, effects which would have the same cause, not the recognition that the two fields share certain fundamental traits.

Discontents, and Other Works [vol. 21]], (Hogarth Press). See also Octavio Mannoni’s text ‘I know very well, but all the same...’ in Rothenberg, M. A., Žižek, S., and Foster, D. A. 2003 *Perversion and the Social Link* (Series: SIC 4). Duke University Press Books.

¹³⁸ In order to simultaneously critique the “sad militants, terrorists of theory” and the “poor technicians of desire”, Deleuze and Guattari assume that ‘death instinct’ is what cuts through the individual and the social spheres: “Hence the goal of schizoanalysis: to analyze the specific nature of the libidinal investments in the economic and political spheres, and thereby to show how, in the subject who desires, desire can be made to desire its own repression - whence the role of the death instinct in the circuit connecting desire to the social sphere” p. 115 in *Anti-Oedipus*

On account of this premise, the authors remained somehow faithful to the idea that the field of political organization, presented under the name of "resistance", and the field of the potencies of the individual, which they named "desire-machines", constitute the place from which one can criticize the consolidation and regulation of the capitalist order, simultaneously defending the individual and the social constitution of a subject. In this case, however, the critical function does not sustain itself through conflict of different modes of knowledge, but by affirming a constitutive relation between knowledge and power. Consequently, the critical field that is formed under these conditions cannot establish itself as a knowledge field *per se*, for all knowledge would be a 'knowledge of semblance', always at the service of the domination and alienation of the subject in favor of a fantasy of knowledge as whole. This position, we believe, fits perfectly the name that Marx ironically chose to mock his opposers in *The Holy family*: a 'critical criticism'¹³⁹. Here, the only possible solution to alienation would be to extract oneself from the field of structured knowledge so as to escape the afflictions of power.

That said, it must be promptly affirmed that true psychoanalysis, and true communist thought, as elaborated by our masters, are constructed on a very different hypothesis. The hypothesis that organizes these two fields is that there is a knowledge that articulates something of truth - truth understood here as the position of a subject, the place from which one enjoys a certain non-knowledge. And if there is such a thing as a structured critical knowledge, it is on the condition that there is a Master-signifier which organizes this knowledge without fundamentally suturing its structural difference from other knowledge-formations.

Nevertheless, in this conflict of fundamental hypotheses, the opposition between the field of ideological critique and the field

¹³⁹ Marx, K. *The Holy Family or a critique of critical criticism: Against Bruno Bauer and Company*. Available from: <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/index.htm> [Accessed May 28, 2011].

of the consolidation of knowledge remains in place. Its validity was never in question in the *Anti-Oedipus*. The criticism directed at psychoanalysis referred to a major misunderstanding of what psychoanalytical knowledge would actually be and, perhaps even more so, of what knowledge is, in general¹⁴⁰. Focusing on the relation between power and the master-signifier in the articulations of knowledge, these critical remarks simply disregard what pertained to the realm of enjoyment - a field which is only accidentally named, when so, outside the Lacanian field.

As we have seen, the difficulty of situating master-signifiers in culture is an effect of what Lacan calls the University Discourse, in which the subject not only alienates himself in the name of a Master, but also alienates himself from the realm of mastery altogether, in favor of what Nietzsche called 'slave morality'¹⁴¹. But this difficulty does not imply that the 'invisible' master-signifiers no longer produce effects. As Lacan commented in his seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, in the university discourse, "the master signifier only appears even more unassailable, precisely in its impossibility. Where is it? How can

¹⁴⁰ See Vighi, F. and Feldner, Heiko (2007) 'Žižek – Beyond Foucault' Palgrave Macmillan.

¹⁴¹ Alenka Zupančič has already indicated the relation between 'slave morality' and the University Discourse: "Most of what Nietzsche writes about the difference between the 'morality of the masters' and 'slave morality' or the 'herd instinct,' between the 'powerful' and the 'weak,' between 'aristocratic' and 'democratic' spirits, between 'old' and 'modern' masters, should, in fact, be read as tirades on the theme of the difference between—to use Lacan's conceptualization—the 'discourse of the master' and the 'discourse of the university' as two different forms of mastery. (...) He is referring to masters who are eager to *legitimate* their mastery with some positive feature or content, to 'rationalize' it, to justify and ground it in some 'empirical' factor (knowledge, wealth, honesty . . .). Nietzsche finds this turn toward the legitimization (and justification) of power 'slavish'; he considers the very idea of a 'legitimate power' obscene. Following Nietzsche's arguments concerning the genealogy of the word 'good' (and 'evil'), one could also say that the main difference between 'masters' and the 'herd' (as the new masters) is that masters are the ones who 'give names' (and can thus say 'this is so-and-so'), whereas 'the herd' fights for the *interpretation* of these names ('this means so-and-so'). Yet this interpretation is itself a form of mastery, and is often much more tyrannical than the act of 'giving names.'" Zupančič, A. 2003 'The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two' MIT press, pg. 42.

it be named? How can it be located - other than through its murderous effects, of course."¹⁴²

Perhaps we could include, among these effects of the University Discourse, another impasse, one regarding the very conceptualization of political philosophy and psychoanalytical theories: the difficulty of formalizing the relation between the subject and the master-signifier in such a way that the subject is not merely interpellated, but remains responsible for the power she ascribes to the very representations that alienate her. This difficulty is clearly at play in the way Deleuze and Guattari criticized psychoanalysis: they elected an imaginary adversary, investing it with the responsibility of oppressing the individual, and attacked *constituted* elements as if these were *constitutive* of the ideological structure.

New conceptual formulations, a resistance regarding the diffusion and teaching of psychoanalysis, and especially a plea for an "update" of the pass mechanism¹⁴³ - all these recent developments within the psychoanalytical field show that, in a certain way, there has been a more profound assimilation of the critique of Deleuze and Guattari: instead of answering to the accusations of its so-called "fascist" inspiration by pointing out the misguided interpretation on which the authors have based their remarks, we see that the intrinsic relation between the knowledge of totality and 'totalitarianism' has been in many ways internalized, and regarded as pertinent¹⁴⁴, justifying the careful distance that psychoanalysts themselves are taking from the master-signifiers which organize our field, using its own

¹⁴² Lacan, J. 1991 L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970. Seuil p.169

¹⁴³ See Miller, J.-A. (ed.) (2010), Conversation sur la passe: textes introductifs, ECF)

¹⁴⁴ We believe that Gérard Haddad's statement "Isn't Nazism the prelude sign of the suicidal fantasy that inhabits the subject of science?" is a good example of the relation, made by psychoanalysts themselves, between knowledge and fascism. This particular formulation - insofar as the subject of science is the subject of psychoanalysis - shows how far the 'fantasy of knowing all' is considered a danger that supposedly lurks close to the very core of subjectivity. This affirmation, which is not uncommon in its various presentations, can be found in Haddad, G. (1990) Les Biblioclastes. Grasset p.232;

theoretical mechanisms to support their lack of commitment to its founding principles. And this revision, dangerous on its own, is taking place at a moment in history when psychoanalysis may well be one of the few fields of knowledge still capable of situating these signifiers at all¹⁴⁵:

“Lurking behind the reproach of belonging to university discourse is, of course, the question of the relationship between psychoanalysis and cultural studies. The first fact to note here is that what is missing in cultural studies is precisely psychoanalysis as a social link, structured around the desire of the analyst. Today, one often mentions how the reference to psychoanalysis in cultural studies and the psychoanalytic clinic supplement each other: cultural studies lack the real of clinical experience, while the clinic lacks the broader critical-historical perspective (say, of the historic specificity of the categories of psychoanalysis, Oedipal complex, castration, or paternal authority). The answer to this should be that each of the approaches should work on its limitation from within its horizon—not by relying on the other to fill up its lack. If cultural studies cannot account for the real of the clinical experience, this signals the insufficiency of its theoretical framework itself; if the clinic cannot reflect its historical presuppositions, it is a bad clinic. One should add to this standard Hegelian dialectical paradox (in fighting the foreign or external opposite, one fights one's own essence) its inherent supplement: in impeding oneself, one truly impedes one's external opposite. When cultural studies ignore the real of clinical experience, the ultimate victim is not cultural studies itself but the clinic, which remains caught in pre-theoretical empiricism. And, vice versa, when the clinic fails (to take into account its historical presuppositions), the ultimate victim is theory itself, which, cut off from clinical experience, remains an empty ideological exercise.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ We side, therefore, with Jean-Pierre Lebrun's “counter-”thesis that something of the order of an *ordinary perversion* is more fitting to describe the current situation of psychoanalysis - we psychoanalysts included - than the diagnosis, that only apply to the others, of ordinary perversion.” On this proposal, which is one of the few theses developed within the psychoanalytical field to answer to Žižek's theory of ideology, please refer to Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2007), *La Perversion ordinaire : Vivre ensemble sans autrui*, (Editions Denoël).

¹⁴⁶ in ‘Object a in Social Links’ Clemens, J. and Grigg, R. 2006. Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII sic vi. p.107-108

Instead of defending itself from the critique addressed by its opposition to the status of the analytical knowledge - a criticism infused with the pressure of the contemporaneous - the field of psychoanalysis has begun to defend itself from the structuring of its own knowledge, as if implicitly acknowledging the synonymy between "structured knowledge" and "will to power", more and more willingly admitting itself to be defined as an island of sanity in an insane world, a purely critical mechanism capable of "alleviating"¹⁴⁷ the more pressing symptoms of the contemporary consumer.

We have already mentioned above some of the institutional consequences of this basic agreement with its opponents: namely, psychoanalysis' difficulty in acknowledging its masters and emblems - the concern with the relation between transmission, diffusion and fascism - the impasses of the clinical diagnosis of new symptoms and the new place of psychoanalysis in culture. While supporting these effects, psychoanalysis is becoming increasingly more critical of the political movements of the radical Left – or even worse, it is becoming indifferent to them:

"the very idea of promoting a political category closed upon itself and justifying excommunications seems not only very uncharitable, but also surprisingly in disuse. Its attempt, as well as all the others of the same kind, which will not cease to arise, will reveal themselves, in a short term, inoperative in a social space that has been since then structured according to a completely different logic.

In the matter of hybrids, we have not yet seen anything. The hybrids will grow and multiply: authoritarian homosexuals, catholic feminists, warmongering jews, voltarian muslims, libertarian racists, pacifist nationalists, populist nietzscheans, derridean syndicalists, maniac orleanists, reactionary leninists, trosto-capitalists, precious communists, anti-left leftists, securitarian antimundialists, green-pinks, green-reds, and all the colors of the rainbow, christian-democrat hussards, neocelinian humanists, engaged aesthetes, *i tutti quanti*. The nuance will go to infinity. (...) The generalized hybridization of

¹⁴⁷ See Miller, J-A., Accoyer, M. 'Transcription of the JP Elkabbach broadcast', Available from: <http://www.lacan.com/europe1.htm> [Accessed May 28, 2011].

the left means in fact that it has no assignable *a priori* frontiers. Thus, all hopes are permitted to them. We have seen the second round of the Brazilian elections being decided by two leftist candidates. It all indicates that it is time to give a decent sepulture to the Man-of-the-Left and to turn to a future according to the evangelic word: "Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead"¹⁴⁸

4. Marxism

In 2003, after more than twenty years of arduous struggle, the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores, PT) won the elections for the presidency of the Republic of Brazil. In addition to president Lula da Silva, PT also elected the largest number of representatives to the National Congress in the history of the country, the president of the House of Representatives, and a significant number of senators and governors¹⁴⁹. PT's victory was bound to represent a true break, and breakthrough, in Brazil's political history - were it not for the consequences that followed it: history repeating itself, at the cost of neutralizing the very notion of politics in Brazil.

The Workers' Party - founded by São Paulo's trade union movement, at the end of the 1970's¹⁵⁰ - assumed the presidency holding high the banner of Brazil's leftist politics, which it had honorably represented, alongside other smaller parties, throughout its entire history. But in the first year of its mandate

¹⁴⁸ Miller, Jacques-Alain (2003), *Le Neveu de Lacan*, (Verdier) - in the Brazilian edition p.136-137 We would like to bring the reader's attention to the similar "hybridization" that is being promoted within psychoanalysis in regards to the subjective typology.

¹⁴⁹ Data gathered from Wikipedia's entry on the Worker's Party (http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Partido_dos_Trabalhadores)

¹⁵⁰ Unless where otherwise stated, we are following here Paulo Henrique Martinez' essay 'The Worker's Party and the Conquest of State', where the author describes the foundation and history of PT, up to the middle of the first presidential mandate, in Ridenti, M. and Aarão Reis, D. (ed.) (2005), *História do Marxismo no Brasil*, Volume 6; Unicamp). We also use as reference the online database of PT's resolutions of congresses and encounters, available from: <http://www.fpabramo.org.br/o-que-fazemos/memoria-e-historia/documentos-historicos> [Accessed May 28, 2011].

– as well as in the next three, and then another four years, following the first mandate – it became increasingly clear that PT's governance diverged from its opponents almost exclusively in terms of management strategies¹⁵¹.

One of the most emblematic programs of PT's political position is the '*Bolsa Família*'¹⁵². The project benefits families in conditions of poverty and extreme poverty, through direct transfer of benefits, based on certain criteria: family income, number and age of children, etc. Its goal is to ensure that 12 million families have access to adequate resources for subsistence.

As an emergency measure, *Bolsa Família* could represent a first step towards a more profound change in the social structure of the country - a vow that the Workers' Party would remain loyal to the political project that it stood for, and on the basis of which it was elected. However, the Party's position in the following years was directed by the idea that the Leftist discourse had to acquire a more "mature" tone, as if suddenly aware of the fact that no rupture with the current political-economic order was even be fathomable. The actual destiny of *Bolsa Família* is itself exemplary of this change: it promptly took the semblance of an achievement in itself, and was no longer thought of as a strategical first step on the road to a veritable structural change¹⁵³.

The crucial point is to emphasize the displacement of the Ideal in the discourse of the largest Leftist party in the country: the limit was no longer 'the impossible', but 'the unthinkable'. The occlusion of the socialist Ideal from PT's political horizon revealed itself in the very shift of the Party's role from 'the

¹⁵¹ Ridenti, M. and Aarão Reis, D. *História do Marxismo no Brasil*, volume 6, Partidos e Movimentos após os anos 1960, Editora da Unicamp, p.277

¹⁵² The website from the Social Development Ministry, available from: <http://www.mds.gov.br/bolsafamilia> [Accessed May 28, 2011]. ; See also Weissheimer (2010), *Bolsa Família*, (Fundação Perseu Abramo).

¹⁵³ See Elisa P. Reis 'Inequality in Brazil: Facts and Perception' in Therborn, Göran (2006), *Inequalities of the World: New Theoretical Frameworks, Multiple Empirical Approaches*, (Verso).

opposition' to actual government: the political alliances and compromises, the deals with corporations and political figures, negotiating how it would achieve the presidency, all of this could very well have been justified as a provisory compromise-formation, a preparation for a future that was not yet possible. But the official party response - when questioned about the disparity between the campaign platform and the actions taken in the first year of government - was that there was continuity between the early directives and the new ones, the only difference being that the Party's policy was enriched by the 'attainment of awareness', made possible only through the 'attainment of power'¹⁵⁴.

Bolsa Família was designed as a policy for "social inclusion"¹⁵⁵, a term which was soon turned into the slogan of PT's government. This became most apparent in the triumphant tone used to announce the access that millions of Brazilians gained to consumer goods previously out of their reach. However, this "inclusion" of a parcel of the lower-class into the middle-class could only be celebrated at the expense of a re-elaboration of what the notion of "middle-class" actually means, the definition of which was, in fact, expanded to contain a broader spectre of the social strata¹⁵⁶.

Indeed, the choice of "social inclusion" as a political model exposed the fundamental change in PT's political discourse: the idea of 'inclusion' implies that there is a defined, expanding group, which could "reintegrate" into its fold those who do not enjoy the rights and duties of the system it represents. It is,

¹⁵⁴ This was explicitly affirmed by PT's candidate for the presidency in the 2010 elections when he was interviewed by the *Jornal Nacional* on the 09/8/2010. Available from: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKmTkntjJg> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

¹⁵⁵ 'Partido dos Trabalhadores: resoluções do 12o. Encontro Nacional' in (1998) *Partido dos Trabalhadores: resoluções de encontros e congressos (1978-1998)* Fundação Perseu Abramo apud Ridenti, M. and Aarão Reis, D. *História do Marxismo no Brasil*, volume 6, *Partidos e Movimentos após os anos 1960*, Editora da Unicamp, p.271

¹⁵⁶ For a brilliant critique of the *Bolsa Família*, please see 'Proletarians or Rentiers?' (p.233) in Žižek, Slavoj (2010), *Living in the End Times*, (Verso).

therefore, a political statement directed *towards* the excluded, but not enunciated *from the place of exclusion* – as it is, by definition, the critical position of Marxism¹⁵⁷.

The inclusion model is thus structurally homologous to the University Discourse¹⁵⁸. If we substitute the terms 'student' for 'extremely low-income families' and 'credit system' for '*Bolsa Família*', we see that both operate under the same logic: the imperative of social inclusion is addressed to those who are not integrated into the labour market, offering them the minimum requirements for their subsistence within the current social coordinates. It addresses itself to the excluded by posing the following question: "what is the *impossible* Life in comparison to *possible* survival?" - Against the spectre of Hunger, the crumbs truly appear like the bread.

Beyond *Bolsa Família*'s immediate answer to a present urgency, this political program - termed 'political', but in truth only *managerial* - extracts political surplus-value from the fact that it is geared towards the excluded. Not only does it leave the cause of misery untouched - insofar as the cause is rooted in the very system that created the program - but '*Bolsa Família*' could only become the symbol of the government's achievements *because* the program had misery as its obscene background.

The general movement of this discourse produces a subjectivity incapable of addressing the fundamental problem at its very core: the brutal social inequality that results from the country's political-economic model. The Master-signifier that organizes

¹⁵⁷ This fundamental difference is perceptible in the distinction between the motto of social inclusion "those who are nothing, will be all" and "we are nothing, let us be all", which is declared *by the excluded* in the lyrics of the Internationale. In the first case, the notion of what is the "All" remains unchanged.

¹⁵⁸ "the notion of a two-faced symptomatic element, whose one face is a marginal accident of a situation, and whose other face is (to stand for) the truth of this same situation. In the same way, the "excluded" are, of course, visible, in the precise sense that, paradoxically, their exclusion itself is the mode of their inclusion: their "proper place" in the social body is that of exclusion (from the public sphere)." p.101, Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, (Verso).

national policies – Capital as a principle of exploitation – can only be discerned here through its consequences, such as the exclusion of the poor and its other guises (racism, etc.). The policy of inclusion, in this sense, emerges as an administrative response to a problem which is actually that of its own structural origin.

Therefore, the recent history of PT perfectly exemplifies the transition from a discourse which was, at first, formally opposed to another and which, at a later stage, reduced its oppositions to the level of the content, turning structural differences between political models into questions regarding what administrative measure would be more effective in dealing with a social problem. Once PT shared with their opponents the assumption of the non-existence of any structural alternatives to the neo-liberal model of economic policies, the more fundamental difference in political positions – which allows us not only to answer differently to a particular problem, but to thoroughly reformulate the problem itself – disappeared from its political horizon. And, accordingly, when the Workers' Party accepted this premise, as it was made clear in the Party's general meeting before the 2002 elections, schisms and scissions emerged. The Party for Socialism and Freedom (PSOL) was created in 2004, in a courageous attempt to begin from the beginning, again¹⁵⁹.

4.1 End of History

This excursus through the recent history of the Workers' Party in Brazil serves as an example which allows us to better approach

¹⁵⁹ Plínio de Arruda Sampaio, one of the founders of PT, and the 2010 candidate for presidency through PSOL said in an interview: "We shouldn't have won in 2002 – and consequently we wouldn't win in 2006 – but in this time we could have built a leader who could get there with a firm support of the people. One thing is to govern, another is to have power. We cannot skip these essential steps. What happened to PT was that it governed before it had the power. What is the point of arriving there if one does not have the elements to do what is necessary?" interview in *Jornal do Brasil*, available at <http://altino.blogspot.com/2005/07/plinio-de-arruda-sampaio.html>

the inscription on the empty "tombstone of the Man-of-the-Left"¹⁶⁰: the End of History.

Francis Fukuyama published his book *The End of History and the Last Man Alive*¹⁶¹ in 1992, three years after having written the controversial article *The End of History?*¹⁶². The crucial thesis defended by these two supplementary works is that the end of the Cold War marks the beginning of the 'post-historic' period:

"Liberal democracy may constitute the "end point of mankind's ideological evolution" and the "final form of human government," and as such constituted the "end of history." That is, while earlier forms of government were characterized by grave defects and irrationalities that led to their eventual collapse, liberal democracy was arguably free from such fundamental internal contradictions. This was not to say that today's stable democracies, like the United States, France, or Switzerland, were not without injustice or serious social problems. But these problems were ones of incomplete implementation of the twin principles of liberty and equality on which modern democracy is founded, rather than of flaws in the principles themselves. While some present-day countries might fail to achieve stable liberal democracy, and others might lapse back into other, more primitive forms of rule like theocracy or military dictatorship, the *ideal* of liberal democracy could not be improved on."¹⁶³

According to the author, the collapse of almost every socialist regime, and their replacement by the capitalist model of liberal democracy, indicates the end of an era – but not only that: Fukuyama employs the Marxist concept of history as driven by class struggle, to conclude that, from "the crushing victory" of political and economic liberalism, supposedly abolishing the notion of class struggle, history as History has finally come to an end. The ideal of liberal democracy would not have to endure

¹⁶⁰ The title of a sub-chapter in Miller, Jacques-Alain (2003), *Le Neveu de Lacan*, (Verdier).

¹⁶¹ Fukuyama, F. 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man Alive*. Free Press., New York.

¹⁶² Fukuyama, F. 1989 *The End of History?* National Affairs, Inc.

¹⁶³ Fukuyama, F. 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man Alive*. Free Press., New York. p.xi

any other modifications¹⁶⁴ and the contemporary political problems would therefore only concern the dimension of this idea's implementation:

“There is no doubt that contemporary democracies face any number of serious problems, from drugs, homelessness, and crime to environmental damage and the frivolity of consumerism. But these problems are not obviously insoluble on the basis of liberal principles, nor so serious that they would necessarily lead to the collapse of society as a whole, as communism collapsed in the 1980s”¹⁶⁵

Fukuyama's central thesis is supported by the famous interpretation of Hegel by Alexandre Kojève. Since, for Kojève, the motor of History is the struggle for recognition, Fukuyama found in his interpretation the premise to conclude that the political-economic regime which ‘overcomes’ the struggle between Master and Slave - understood by Kojève to be synonymous with class struggle - will also overcome History itself. In many aspects, Kojève himself had already announced this overcoming, reading in Hegel's commentaries about the French Revolution the end of the inherent contradiction between Master and Slave, and calling the modern Americans, as well as the Japanese, post-historical men¹⁶⁶.

The End of History and the Last Man is an enlightening text because it allows us to understand how it is possible to absorb, from within the ‘post-historic’ discourse, the argument that social inequality still exists as it did before and that the number of excluded and exploited people is still increasing today, even

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. p.45: “What is emerging victorious, in other words, is not so much liberal practice, as the liberal idea.”

¹⁶⁵ Kojève, A. 1980 Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit. Cornell University Press. p.xxi

¹⁶⁶ “History, that universal human process that conditioned the coming of Hegel, of a thinker endowed with an absolute Knowledge, a process that the thinker must understand in and by a Phenomenology before he can realize this absolute Knowledge in the ‘System of Science’ - universal history, therefore is nothing by the history of the dialectical - i.e. active - relation between Mastery and Slavery. Hence, History will be completed at the moment when the synthesis of the Master and the Slave is realized, that synthesis is the whole Man, the Citizen of the universal and homogeneous State created by Napoleon.” Ibid. p.44

within the liberal-democratic system. Fukuyama argues that what had come to an end was the class struggle as an irresolvable and structuring conflict, since there is another Idea that overcomes this contradiction – liberal democracy – and therefore the existence of inequality is not a matter of History, but a matter of time. *This* is the very justification of the neo-liberal model of social inclusion.

What we find here is the explicit elaboration of the premise that guides the recent history of PT: after having accepted the final structure or Idea, it is now time to implement it, to socially include those who do not yet enjoy the benefits of liberal democracy. All political differences would therefore be reducible to ways of managing the present - there is no longer the task to reinvent the future - with the further consequence that class struggle would be displaced, revised: no longer the motor of History, but a historical moment.

Through our brief analysis of Fukuyama's argument we can observe some central aspects of the conceptual framework of the social link called the University Discourse. Analyzing the basic thread of Fukuyama's thought, the logic of the University Discourse reveals itself clearly operational: there is a Present which does not pass, but *expands*, accumulating governments - and as it does so, it produces a subjectivity incapable of distinguishing, and therefore of overcoming, the principle which constituted this Present, namely, Capital as the Master-signifier of democratic organization.

One of the ways to understand the alienating consequences of the cultural prevalence of the University Discourse is to note that it becomes practically impossible to rationally argue that there is a fundamental element organizing this discursivity. The University Discourse presents itself as 'natural' or 'a-historic' – while everything that came before it is carefully 'historicized'. In *The Poverty of Philosophy*, we find a passage in which Marx seems to be directly answering, *avant la lettre*, to our contemporary historicists:

“Economists have a singular method of procedure. There are only two kinds of institutions for them, artificial and natural. The institutions of feudalism are artificial institutions, those of the bourgeoisie are natural institutions. In this, they resemble the theologians, who likewise establish two kinds of religion. Every religion which is not theirs is an invention of men, while their own is an emanation from God. When the economists say that present-day relations: the relations of bourgeois production are natural, they imply that these are the relations in which wealth is created and productive forces developed in conformity with the laws of nature. These relations therefore are themselves natural laws independent of the influence of time. They are eternal laws which must always govern society. Thus, there has been history, but there is no longer any. There has been history, since there were the institutions of feudalism, and in these institutions of feudalism we find quite different relations of production from those of bourgeois society, which the economists try to pass off as natural and, as such, eternal”¹⁶⁷

4.2 The Absolute as Unthinkable

Quentin Meillassoux, in his book *Après la Finitude*, addresses a tendency in philosophy that he identifies as ‘correlationism’:

“correlationism consists in disqualifying the claim that it is possible to consider the realms of subjectivity and objectivity independently of one another. Not only does it become necessary to insist that we never grasp an object in itself, in isolation from its relation to the subject, but it also becomes necessary to maintain that we can never grasp a subject that would not always already be related to an object. If one calls ‘the correlationist circle’ the argument according to which one cannot think the in-itself without entering into a vicious circle, thereby immediately contradicting oneself, one could call ‘the correlationist two-step’ this other type of reasoning (...) which insists that it would be naïve to think of the subject and the object as two separately subsisting entities whose relation is only subsequently added to them.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Marx, K. 2010 *The Poverty Of Philosophy* (1892). Kessinger Publishing, LLC. p.67

¹⁶⁸ Meillassoux, Q. (2008) *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. Continuum p.5

This term denotes a change – which would have occurred after Kant – in the conceptual place of the Absolute¹⁶⁹, from ‘impossible to know’ to ‘unthinkable’:

“Kantian transcendentalism could be identified with a ‘weak’ correlationism. Why? The reason is that the Critical philosophy does not prohibit all relation between thought and the absolute. It proscribes any knowledge of the thing-in-itself (any application of the categories to the supersensible), but maintains the thinkability of the in-itself. According to Kant, we know *a priori* that the thing-in-itself is non-contradictory and that it actually exists. By way of contrast, the strong model of correlationism maintains not only that it is illegitimate to claim that we can *know* the in-itself, but *also* that it is illegitimate to claim that we can at least *think* it.”¹⁷⁰

Next, Meillassoux demonstrates that a fundamental consequence of this change is that it becomes invalid for rational discourses to invalidate irrational discourses about the Absolute:

“thus the strong model of correlationism can be summed up in the following thesis: *it is unthinkable that the unthinkable be impossible*. I cannot provide a rational ground for the absolute impossibility of a contradictory reality, or for the nothingness of all things, even if the meaning of these terms remains indeterminate. Accordingly, facticity entails a specific and rather remarkable consequence: it becomes rationally illegitimate to disqualify *irrational* discourses about the absolute on the pretext of their irrationality.”¹⁷¹

From the correlationist perspective, a rational discourse does not have access to any Absolute, not even to criticize the improper use of the term in other discursive formations. Thus, the

¹⁶⁹ Though Meillassoux discussed the correlationist general distance from the Absolute, he separates very clearly the notion of an Absolute *entity* from that of an Absolute *principle*. This distinction is paramount, because Marxism, Lacanian theory and Hegelian philosophy are precisely fields of knowledge in which there is an Absolute which is not an entity, or a form of Wholeness. Meillassoux states that our duty today is precisely to “uncover an absolute necessity that does not reinstate any form of absolute necessary entity” and “an absolutizing thought that would not be absolutist” (p.34).

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. p.35 Correlationism is also defined as the principle according to which Thought and Being may only be known in their correlation, and none of the two terms can be articulated separately from each other (See Ibid. p.5)

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p.41

correlationist ideology can only produce *fideistic* discourses - which hold a religious relation with the Absolute - or *skeptical* discourses – that deny any kind of relation with it whatsoever:

“Fideism invariably consists in a skeptical argument directed against the pretension of metaphysics, and of reason more generally, to be able to access an absolute truth capable of shoring up (or a fortiori, of denigrating) the value of faith. But it is our conviction that the contemporary end of metaphysics is nothing other than the victory of such a fideism - which is actually of ancient provenance (it was initiated by the Counter-Reformation, and Montaigne is its 'founding father') - over metaphysics. Far from seeing in fideism - as is all too often the case - a mere guise worn by anti-metaphysical skepticism at its origins, before the latter went on to reveal its irreligious essence, we see skepticism as an authentic fideism, which is dominant today, but in a form that has become 'essential', which is to say, one that has shrugged off every particular obedience to a determinate belief system. Historical fideism is not the 'guise' that irreligiosity wore at its beginnings; rather, it is religiosity as such, which adopted the 'guise' of a specific apologia (on behalf of one religion or belief system rather than another), before revealing itself to be the general argument for the superiority of piety over thought. The contemporary end of metaphysics is an end which, being skeptical, could only be a religious end of metaphysics.

Skepticism with regard to the metaphysical absolute thereby legitimates *de jure* every variety whatsoever of belief in an absolute, the best as well as the worst. The destruction of the metaphysical rationalization of Christian theology has resulted in a generalized becoming-religious of thought, viz., in a *fideism of any belief whatsoever*. We will call this becoming-religious of thought, which finds its paradoxical support in a radically skeptical argumentation, the *religionizing [enreligement]* of reason”.¹⁷²

In this way, what is excluded is not the existence of a relation with the Absolute, but the existence of *any rational relation* that claims the Absolute as the cause of effects¹⁷³.

¹⁷² Ibid. p.46

¹⁷³ Ibid. p.44-45: “It then becomes clear that this trajectory culminates in the disappearance of the pretension to *think* any absolutes, *but not in the disappearance of absolutes*; since in discovering itself to be marked by an irremediable limitation, correlational reason thereby legitimates *all* those

The consequences of the correlationist discourse described by Meillassoux may also be situated within the political horizon¹⁷⁴. For example, when we question the principle on which one bases the notion of equality which we currently call 'Democracy', we see that the signifier 'Capital' appears as just one more element of equal significance within the functioning of the democratic system. The Marxist critique which reveals the function of this signifier to be of another order, serving as cause of the structure, is dismissed as 'naïve', as an outdated discourse, since we would already have witnessed the 'end of ideologies' - as it is proposed by Daniel Bell and many others¹⁷⁵. Marxism would be put into question precisely because it claims to have capacity to determine, in a strictly rational and material way, that which functions as an Absolute, the organizing principle of a given political constellation.

And since, according to the correlationist principle, it would not be possible for a rational discourse to invalidate an irrational relation to the Absolute, it follows that it also becomes impossible for a rational discourse to validate any relation to the correlationist principle as an Absolute itself. This would explain, for example, why so few philosophers affirmatively defend Capitalism - except, perhaps, in the cases such as the openly fideistic discourse of Ayn Rand¹⁷⁶.

discourses that claim to access an absolute, the only proviso being that nothing in these discourses resembles a rational justification of their validity"

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. p.34

¹⁷⁵ See Bell, D. 1965 *The End of Ideology*. Free Press.

¹⁷⁶ Ayn Rand had a veritable cult around herself and her books, which openly defend the capitalist principles and imperatives. See Rand, A. 1964 *The Virtue of Selfishness*. Signet. and Rand, A., Branden, N., Greenspan, A., and Hessen, R. 1986 *Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*. Signet. We quote the final verses of her poem 'Anthem' just as a colorful reference: "And here, over the portals of my fort,/ I shall cut in the stone the word which is/ to be my beacon and my banner. The word/ which will not die, should we all perish in/ battle. The word which can never die on/ this earth, for it is the heart of it and the/ meaning and the glory./The sacred word:/ EGO" in Rand, A. 1953 *Anthem*. Caxton Printers. Ayn Rand's position, funnily enough, resounds very well with the Satanic Bible's first statement: "I want - that is the totality of the law" in Lavey, A. S. 1969 *The Satanic Bible*. Avon.

In fact, a discourse which would relate to Capital as an Absolute would itself contradict the capitalist ideology as it is presented today. This is justified by the very operation of the ideological structure: in the realm of the University Discourse, the articulated field of signifiers presents itself as if self-validated, transparent and naturalized. This is why ideology today presents itself precisely as the non-ideological:

“Cynicism is the answer of the ruling culture to this kynical subversion: it recognizes, it takes into account, the particular interest behind the ideological universality, the distance between the ideological mask and the reality, but it still finds reasons to retain the mask. (...) It is clear, therefore, that confronted with such cynical reason, the traditional critique of ideology no longer works. We can no longer subject the ideological text to 'symptomatic reading', confronting it with its blank spots, with what it must repress to organize itself, to preserve its consistency — cynical reason takes this distance into account in advance. Is then the only issue left to us to affirm that, with the reign of cynical reason, we find ourselves in the so-called post-ideological world? (...) It is here, at this point, that the distinction between symptom and fantasy must be introduced in order to show how the idea that we live in a post-ideological society proceeds a little too quickly: cynical reason, with all its ironic detachment, leaves untouched the fundamental level of ideological fantasy, the level on which ideology structures the social reality itself.”¹⁷⁷

Therefore the current discourse in defense of capitalism does not affirm the validity of Capital as a Master-signifier, but, instead, simply points to the fact that the system would ‘defend itself’: capitalism simply ‘works’, no other alternative has functioned properly so far, no possible substitute has been found, it is a natural system, in line with the ‘essence of man’, etc.

As we have seen, the Idea of Class Struggle – an irreducible and asymmetrical division between Capital and Labour – would be replaced, at the End of History, by the Idea of Liberal Democracy, supported by the premise that the only Absolute to which Reason can relate is that it cannot relate to any Absolutes.

¹⁷⁷ Žižek, S. (2009) ‘The Sublime Object of Ideology’ Verso. p.30

Or, as Badiou puts it, "no principle should be advanced other than that proclaiming that there are no principles"¹⁷⁸. Liberal democracy would thus arise out of the end of utopias in the same way that correlationism would do out of the end of metaphysics.

However, the celebration of the disappearance of Absolutes in the arrival of the 'equal rights for all' ultimately only means that the second part of this claim moved from the *visible* to the *invisible*: 'the equal rights for all....to serve Capital.'.

Domenico Losurdo, in *Revisionism in History*, a book which is part of his extensive project of tracing the "original sin of the 20th century"¹⁷⁹ - understood by the author precisely as the serialization of the failed presentations of communism with the provisory victories of fascism - reminds us that the revisionist effort itself has its own kings:

"Despite its seeming iconoclasm, the current wave of revisionism stops at certain taboos or some 'topoi' of the dominant ideology. (...) If we look at the development of the contemporary world, we see that at the center of these two centuries of history there are three gigantic conflicts, each extending throughout decades, developing themselves in the ideological and the politico-military planes simultaneously: the first opened with the French Revolution and concluded with the Restoration, the second covered the period of both World Wars, and the third, after emerging in the outbreak of the October Revolution, had a decisive stage in the years of the Cold War, until the collapse of the Soviet Union. The only political entity to regularly emerge victorious from all these three conflicts was the Anglo-Saxon world. The transfiguration of the Anglo-Saxon political tradition, and the United States in particular, is the consecration of this fact."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Badiou, Alain (2011), *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, (Polity). p.17

¹⁷⁹ Losurdo, Domenico (2007), *Le péché originel du XXe siècle*, (Aden Editions). On the causes and consequences of revisionism, see also Losurdo, D. 2011 *Liberalism: A Counter-History*. Verso.; and Losurdo, D. 2007 *Fuir l'histoire La révolution russe et la révolution chinoise*. DELGA.

¹⁸⁰ Domenico Losurdo, 2006, *Le révisionnisme en histoire. Problèmes et mythes* p.95-96

4.3 Totalitarianism

The appearance of transparency and self-validation of the Idea of liberal democracy has broad consequences for the Left: for example, any real anti-capitalist movement becomes indistinguishable from an anti-democratic one¹⁸¹.

There is, for instance, a noteworthy proliferation of the argument which intends to invalidate the Communist Idea by pointing out the totalitarian outcome of its attempted implementations. The very formal principle of an Idea prevailing over individual liberties - that is, of a principle that could be rationally affirmed as an Absolute - is automatically presented as fascism, as the forced election of a cause.

The unarguable failure of the socialist experience in the 20th century, in its various presentations, would therefore be explained by a fanaticism or manipulation of the people which was already inherent to any possible formulation of the Communist Idea itself - after all, if a rational relation to the Absolute is impossible, then the principles that were elevated in socialism to the position of an Ideal, of an Absolute, could only have been elevated to such a place through a terrifying ideological fideism. The monumental catastrophes of Stalinism and the Cultural Revolution would have been the direct results of a germ that was already present in the very foundation of the Leftist critical discourse, that is, in its affirmation that there is an Idea which conditions the totality of the visible and the economical.

We see how the argument is, once again, supported by a misconception of the relation between knowledge of totality and

¹⁸¹ Badiou, Alain (2010), *The Communist Hypothesis*, (Verso). See also Badiou's text 'The Democratic Emblem' in Agamben, Giorgio, et al. (2010), *Democracy in What State?* (New Directions in Critical Theory), (Columbia University Press).

a total knowledge, which would lead to totalitarianism¹⁸². This structural difference is sutured through the invalidation, in the correlationist discourse, of an Absolute articulatable within Reason – an invalidation that allows for the obscene serialization of the names Hitler, Mussolini... Mao, Lenin¹⁸³. More generally, it allows for the indistinct disqualification of any discourse which affirms the existence of an Absolute that can be sustained by Reason, as if this was just another way of fanatically imposing an Idea over the liberties of the individual:

"It all comes down to a simple negative statement that is as bald as it is flat and as naked as the day it was born: socialisms, which were the communist Idea's only concrete forms, failed completely in the twentieth century. Even they have had to revert to capitalism and non-egalitarian dogma. That failure of the Idea leaves us with no choice, given the complex of the capitalist organization of production and the state parliamentary system. Like it or not, we have to consent to it for lack of choice. And that is why we now have to save the banks rather than confiscate them, hand out billions to the rich and give nothing to the poor, set nationals against workers of foreign origin whenever possible, and, in a word, keep tight controls on all forms of poverty in order to ensure the survival of the powerful. No choice, I tell you! As our ideologues admit, it is not as though relying on the greed of a few crooks and unbridled private property to run the state and the economy was the absolute Good. But it is the only possible way forward. In his anarchist vision, Stirner described man, or the personal agent of History, as 'the Ego and his own'. Nowadays, it is 'Property as ego'¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² See a thorough critique of this point in Losurdo's article "For a critique of the category of totalitarianism" in *Crítica Marxista* n.17 (Available in portuguese from: <http://revan.com.br/catalogo/0289b.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011])

¹⁸³ The final obscene series appeared recently, during anti-Obama campaigns in the USA, when a big outdoor poster featured Obama's face next to Hitler's and Lenin's appeared in the news. If it wasn't enough putting the great Marxist leader in series with Hitler, now the final perversion is that, by recognizing Hitler's and Obama's impotence to act upon proper structural issues of the capitalist system, the outdoor ends up making an even more violent claim about Lenin. See James, F. 'Anti-Obama Billboard Splits Tea Partiers' National Public Radio. Available from: <http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2010/07/13/128497723/anti-obama-billboard-splits-iowa-tea-party> [Accessed June 19, 2011]. See also Badiou, A. 2010 *The Communist Hypothesis*. Verso p.4

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* p.5

But if the rhetorics of the Right is almost exclusively based on the argument of the totalitarian threat, on the failure of the communist experience as a failure of the Idea itself, most of the contemporary Leftist discourse seems to share this same basic premise. Following the 'ideological danger' that is imputed to its most elementary conceptual framework, the Left itself ends up choosing its adversaries and basing its critique on the same fundamental principles as its opponents. Consider, for example, the following passage in which Gianni Vattimo defends the communist Idea through a plea for a laxity of rigorous definitions:

"Communism ought to be weak in order to rediscover a meaningful presence among the political forces it encounters in society even before entering the electoral arena.

The weakness I am referring to is a theoretical weakness necessary to correct those 'metaphysical' claims which characterized communism in its original Marxist formulation. Communism should become theoretically 'weak', not simply because it has now lost its historical battle with capitalism. I am not claiming that had Lenin and Stalin been less metaphysical (in appealing to the laws of history, to the proletariat's almost holy mission, to economic development guaranteed by a planned economy), then the really existing communism that resulted from the October Revolution would still be alive and might even have triumphed over its enemies. (...) weak communism is what ought to take the place of these two violent and authoritarian models."¹⁸⁵

4.4 Impasses and Revisionism

As we saw in our brief discussion on the *Anti-Oedipus*, the criticism that there would be an intrinsic relation between the master-signifier and the repression of desire, and that this hypothesis - also known as the 'repressive hypothesis'¹⁸⁶ - finds

¹⁸⁵ Vattimo, G. "Weak Communism" in Žižek, Slavoj and Costas Douzinas (2010), *The Idea of Communism*, (Verso) p.205-206

¹⁸⁶ Foucault, Michel (1998), *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge* v. 1, (Penguin Books Ltd).

a strange resonance within psychoanalysis's own position in face of its current impasses.

Such an articulation between master-signifier, authority and alienation of the subject – the basis of the argument against Marxism and psychoanalysis – ends up serving as the very basis for the development of these two critical discourses: instead of questioning the structure that allows a state mechanism to represent the interests of a few, instances where structural effects are *condensed*, the Leftist discourse tends to elect the 'ideological apparatuses of the State' as such as agents of repression and alienation, since it does not have the necessary conceptual space - occluded by the correlationist discourse - to discern what is constitutive and what is constituted in the hegemonic social link.

The difficulty in delineating the relation between the instances that represent the Law, and the element within us which "makes us love power", supports the idea that every principle that hovers over individual liberties is necessarily an agent of the repression of the subject - an idea which is shared today by Left and Right-wing discourses alike.

It is from this position that statements such as 'all power is corrupt' or 'all violence is unnecessary' are enunciated, attesting to the distance one adopts when approaching and arguing for the revitalization of Ideals and emblems - a distance posited as necessary to prevent the discourse from becoming a form of terrorizing mastery and the body from being violated by the abusive imposition of representations. Under these restrictions - homologous as they are to those prescribed by the correlationist discourse - political thought is left with the following choice: either one cannot truly know anything about power - because knowledge *is* already embedded in power - or one may only know that which is already known about power, that it corrupts and enslaves. We are thereby caught in the problematic of either to think without power or to think against power.

This new horizon of the 'unthinkable' within - or better, at the limit of - the Leftist discourse is precisely what provides the guidelines for today's notion of 'micro-politics'¹⁸⁷: in a given structure, it is possible to criticize representations which occupy positions of authority as agents of repression, but since the critical discourse addresses these representations as being intrinsically repressive themselves, this analysis cannot be made in the name of any other Cause, nor of any other Master-signifier. The structure that defines the representations in which the semblance of a repressive agency will fixate itself remains outside the grasp of the critical discourse, a discourse condemned to share the stage built by its adversaries, where it enacts the passion of a politics without any political consequences.

In our analysis of the initial hypothesis of *Anti-Oedipus*, we underlined that the essential premise at work is that the relation between the master-signifier and enjoyment is, in fact, presented as the very *substance* of the master-signifier: desire precedes the signifier, which, in its inscription in the body, enslaves desire's productive force. All knowledge - that is, every articulation of signifiers - would fixate and enslave desire. We see that the relation between excess and master-signifier is presented in these discourses in such a way as to make the master-signifier *a signifier of itself*, transforming the empty signifier into a signifier of an annihilating Whole, an abominable Other.

But if the fantasy of 'the All' sutures the Absolute, transforming it into an 'absolutist' agent, what is the place of the excess of this so-called totalization? How does the object vanish, allowing for such a consistent discourse - where is enjoyment to be localized?

When we probe deeper into what would 'freedom' mean for the "desire-machine", we are confronted with how this fashionable critical discourse is still stuck in the structure it intends to

¹⁸⁷ We use as a reference for 'micro-politics' a collection of Foucault's writings edited as Gordon, Colin ed. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977* Pantheon

oppose: the notion of freedom implicated in the "repressive hypothesis" stems directly from the bourgeois mythology - unconditional, individual liberty, devoid of any relation to the antagonisms of the World. Its horizon is the End of History.

5. Critical Knowledge and the Master-Signifier

We have described the revisionist movement which Lacanian psychoanalysis underwent when it was confronted with the criticism that it would be, in Foucault's terms, just another "technology of the self"¹⁸⁸, another mechanism of disciplining the body¹⁸⁹: the psychoanalytical field's response to those who opposed it did not prevent it from sharing with them the premise of the alienating danger of the ideological State apparatuses.

This is made evident in the growing emphasis given by many authors and commentators of Lacanian psychoanalysis to the new function of the 'Other that does not exist', and to a certain new conceptual 'fluidity'¹⁹⁰ of clinical notions and diagnoses - a cautionary position taken against the semblance of an alienating completeness and which also consequentially constitutes a relation increasingly defined by a strong resistance to evaluation and the bureaucratic apparatus. Additionally, this resistance also has the secondary consequence of distancing Lacanian psychoanalysis from the field of the political movements of the Left, not only the field responsible for thinking the idea of a new State - one that *could* accommodate the psychoanalytical praxis, for example - but also the field responsible for the rehabilitation of Grand Narratives¹⁹¹ in these times of 'the decline of the Father function'.

¹⁸⁸ Foucault, Michel (2006), *History of Sexuality Vol.3: The Care of Self*, (Penguin Books, Limited (UK)).

¹⁸⁹ Foucault, M. 1995 *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Vintage.

¹⁹⁰ Flourey, Nicolas (2010), *Le réel insensé - Introduction à la pensée de Jacques-Alain Miller*, (Germina) p.106

¹⁹¹ 'Grand-Narratives', or 'meta-narratives', is a term used critically by Jean-François Lyotard. The author defined modernity by its relation to totalizing systems of thought: "I will use the term *modem* to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an

We have also observed that - as Althusser had already clearly stated - the same revisionism can be traced in the recent history of Marxism: under the pressure of the correlationist discourse, presented also in the guise of the “End of History”, the place of the Ideal in the Leftist discourse tends to move today from the “impossible” to the “unthinkable”. A shift that manifests itself either directly - as in the case of PT, in Brazil, in the move from “impossible” to “unthinkable” - or indirectly - by implicating the unthinkable character of a knowledge that would not serve power.

Answering to the danger of totalitarianism, a supposedly direct consequence of the fidelity to any Idea, the Left itself assumed as valid the premise of the ‘disciplinarization of bodies’ - which silently accepts the idea of freedom as the freedom of the bourgeois individual - and, thereby, became incapable of recognizing in the psychoanalytical field an allied discourse, which could provide it with a theoretical framework capable of pointing out, beyond the ideological closure of History, the ahistorical time of the unconscious¹⁹².

Keeping to the fundamental traces that delineate the current impasses of Marxism and psychoanalysis, we have identified in them a certain *homology* - that is, effects which have the *same* cause -, which revolves around imprecisions regarding the place and conceptualization of the master-signifier in both discourses.

explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject, or the creation of wealth.” (p.xxiii) While the ‘postmodern’ position would be defined precisely by an “incredulity toward metanarratives” (p.xxiv) in Lyotard, J. F. 1991 *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge* [Theory and History of Literature, Volume 10]. Manchester University Press.

¹⁹² p.35-36 in Lacan, J. 1985 *O seminário, livro XI: Os quatro conceitos fundamentais da psicanálise* 1964, Jorge Zahar Editor (our translation) See also Copjec, J. 1996 *Read My Desire: Lacan against the Historicists* (October Books). MIT Press, (specially chapter 3, entitled ‘Cutting Up’)

5.1 Master-Signifier and the University Discourse

As we have previously elaborated, one of the main characteristics of the University Discourse is that the master-signifier of a given discursivity becomes inaccessible as such: we can distinguish its effects, but we cannot confront it in its constitutively enigmatic and inconsistent dimension. It is plausible, therefore, to claim that this consequence of the University Discourse also manifests itself as the very difficulty of properly conceptualizing what a master-signifier is and how it functions.

We began our analysis from the hypothesis that the field of critical knowledge would be structurally distinct from the field of consolidated knowledge. After schematizing some of the impasses of these two critical fields, it quickly became evident that the concept of master-signifier is of capital importance to the critical discourse, while, in the realm of consolidated knowledge, which is not concerned with the structuring of its own knowledge, the signifier which represents the field as such does not play a functional role. This is why what presents itself as a fatal impasse for psychoanalysis and Marxism today does not produce - at least for now - the same effects in the formulations of consolidated knowledge¹⁹³.

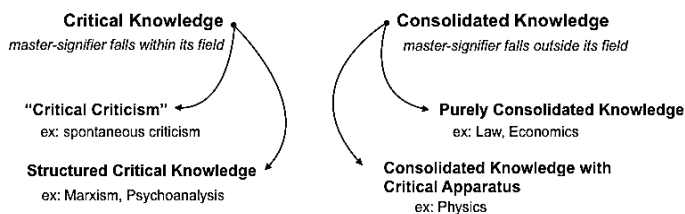
We began by affirming a structural difference between critical and consolidated knowledge - an affirmation developed into the first formal statement of this chapter:

S1: *There is a knowledge of totality that is distinct from the fantasy of a total knowledge*

We can now add the following proposition:

¹⁹³ Though certain impasses in theoretical physics today (the relation between M-Theory, its omnipresence in Academia, and its lack of experimental capability) seem to point towards the first evident consequences of the University Discourse for Science. See Smolin, Lee (2007), *The Trouble With Physics* Publisher: Mariner Books

S2: *The operator of this difference is the concept of master-signifier.*



We believe to have properly demonstrated that some of the fundamental conceptual problems faced by psychoanalysis and Leftist politics today spring from the imprecision in distinguishing that which is a matter of enjoyment from what is proper to the empty signifier as such¹⁹⁴.

To this extent, it is only from the standpoint of a rigorously structured critical knowledge, capable of properly elaborating the double movement of separation and articulation of these two concepts, that it becomes possible to avoid the impostures of 'mastery as the substance of agency' and of 'the Cause as the ineffable', and to rigorously affirm that, beyond immediate disjunction between knowledge and power, there is a thought which maintains a (paradoxical) relation to Truth.

Thus, it becomes unnecessary at this point to keep to the general distinction between these two broad fields of knowledge - critical and consolidated - for we have found a way to differentiate within the critical field the difference between a faithful and a revisionist discourse. This split can now be reflected back into the field of critical knowledge itself.

¹⁹⁴ "When exactly does the *objet petit a* function as the superego injunction to enjoy? When it occupies the place of the Master Signifier – that is to say, as Lacan formulated it in the last pages of Seminar XI, when the short circuit between S1 and a occurs. The key move to be accomplished in order to break the vicious cycle of superego injunction is thus to enact a separation between S1 and a." Žižek, S. (2006) 'Parallax View' Verso. p.303

In our analysis, we have distinguished the place of Lacanian psychoanalysis the position which, sometimes from within the critical field itself, diagnosed as dangerous its claim to a knowledge of totality, an articulation between knowledge and that which makes a hole in knowledge. In the case of Marxism and the Communist Idea, we have also presented how Right-wing and Left-wing thinkers alike distance themselves from the Idea of class struggle as the name of a knowledge of totality - as a privileged position in the social field¹⁹⁵ - calling out in unison for its "overcoming" - the overcoming of the term, not of class struggle itself, we might add.

In the same way that we have established the master-signifier to be not only the concept of a constitutive trace, but a constitutive trace of the conceptual framework of the field of critical knowledge itself, we can now consider a second, equally fundamental aspect, which results from this first affirmation.

5.2 Critical knowledge and Totality

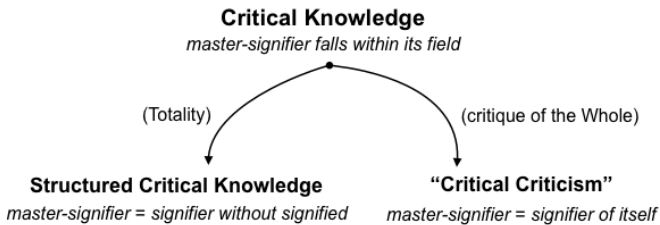
We have seen that within the realm of critical discourses, there is a position which claims that a knowledge of totality would always carry a dangerous pretension of being a total-knowledge, and that, consequently, the critical field could not allow itself to consolidate its concepts. This position holds that the master-signifier would not be the Name of a Void, but a Name of Itself, imposing on the subject the alienating fixation of all sense.

But we have seen that there is also another position, which claims that the knowledge of totality, by definition, is not a total-knowledge, and that there is no possible critical field that is not itself a structured¹⁹⁶ field of knowledge. From this standpoint,

¹⁹⁵ Althusser, L. 'On Marx and Freud' in Montag, W. (1991), *Rethinking Marxism* Spring 1991 Vol 4, No 1, (Association for Economic and Social Analysis). p. 20.

¹⁹⁶ We already presented a brief and minimal definition of structure. It was a definition of structure based on Badiou's Theory of the Subject. Now, that we approach Lacan's theory of the *object*, we would like to propose a new, albeit

the danger of imposing an ‘absolutist’ regime of fixed knowledge-formations does not have any grounds, since there is no such thing as a horizon of total signification, the master-signifier itself has no fixed signified¹⁹⁷.



The exemplary proximity between the neo-liberal discourse based on the ‘End of Ideologies’ and the critical discourse based on the ‘repressive hypothesis’ - both supported by the fundamental belief that mastery is the agency of alienation and that freedom is the ‘un-repressed’ freedom of the individual - leads us to postulate that there is no such thing as a critical position outside of the realm of structured critical knowledge. Regarding both the critique of ideology and the analysis of the effects of the subject’s fantasy, this claim amounts to the statement that the attempt of avoiding ‘totalitarianism’ and ‘fixation of sense’ by the means of avoiding a knowledge of totality is fated to serve the very ideology and phantasm that it attempts to fight or reveal¹⁹⁸.

similar definition: a structure is an articulated field of signifiers in which there is difference not only between S2 and S2’’ (two signifiers), but between S1 and a (the Lack of Being and the Being of Lack).

¹⁹⁷ Lacan, J.. (2005) ‘Le Seminaire livre XVI: D’un Autre a l’autre’. Seuil. class of 11/12/68.

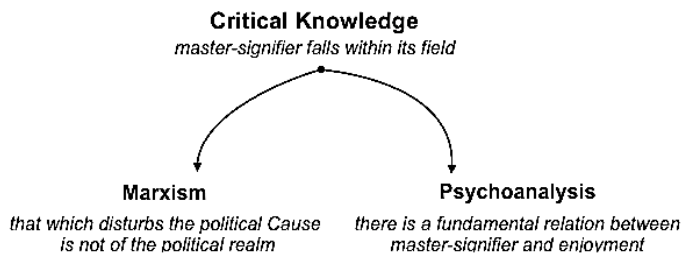
¹⁹⁸ Regarding the growing use of Deleuzian terminology in IDF military academies: “What follows from all this? Not, of course, the nonsensical accusation that Deleuze and Guattari were theorists of militaristic colonization - but the conclusion that the conceptual machine articulated by Deleuze and Guattari, far from being simply ‘subversive’, also fits the (military, economic and ideologico-political) operational mode of contemporary capitalism.” p.27 of Žižek’s introduction in Tse-Tung, M. (2007) ‘On Practice and Contradiction (Revolutions)’. Verso.

Following our second statement, and using Meillassoux's terminology, we claim that neither fideism nor skepticism are possible positions for psychoanalysis and for Marxism: there is a truly critical position only where there is a rational relation to the Absolute. Therefore, it becomes unnecessary to focus on the opposition between the critical position that does not affirm the possibility of such a relation between Reason and Absolute, and the position that affirms it. Rigorously speaking, there is only the latter.

5.3 Two Hypotheses

We can focus, henceforth, on the internal articulation of the critical field - from now on understood as *the field of knowledge that affirms the possibility of a rational relation to an Absolute*¹⁹⁹. Here, two additional hypotheses must be presented:

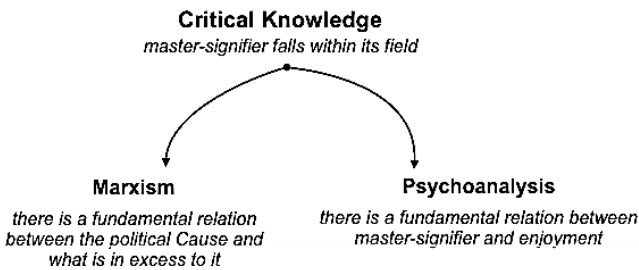
H1: *Solely the place of the master-signifier defines the field of critical knowledge.*



¹⁹⁹ It is worth repeating that we are aware of a certain distinction between what "Absolute" will come to mean for us - especially after our presentation of the Žižekian reading of Hegel in Chapter I.3 - and Meillassoux's use of the term. For now, it is enough to understand that while Meillassoux's Absolute is fundamentally grounded on the necessity of contingency, ours, as we side with Žižek, will be grounded on the contingency of necessity: that is, an Absolute can come to be so *in time*.

That is: Marxism and psychoanalysis are critical knowledges, but the master-signifier functions differently in them. Marxism can conceptualize the function of a master-signifier without articulating it with the object a, so that any excessive enjoyment which distorts the relation of a subject to his political Cause would remain a matter of psychoanalysis, as separate from the properly political field.

H2: *Not only the master-signifier has a structural place in both Marxism and psychoanalysis, but the paradoxical relation between signifier and enjoyment in psychoanalysis has a homologous correlate in politics as well.*



That is: Marxism too must articulate the concept and function of the master-signifier together with something homologous to what psychoanalysis calls the object a - and the operation of this excess in the constitution of critical knowledge is precisely what binds Marx and Freud. This would lead us, in a second moment, either to further hone our definition of 'critical knowledge', or to reiterate the Žižekian plea for the consideration of 'enjoyment as a political factor'.

These two hypotheses are divided by a fundamental question: does the concept of Cause, in political thought, share with the concept of master-signifier, in psychoanalysis, the necessity of articulating itself with an excess that is both product and cause of subjectivization?

6. Alain Badiou

Thus far, we have been quietly treading a path set out, as we mentioned before, by the few contemporary philosophers who have remained faithful to both Freud and Marx, without making use of one to dismiss the other - in what could be understood as a revisionist movement not of each one of the two fields, but of critical knowledge as such. This deviation was, for example, the underlying orientation of the Frankfurt School, for Freudo-Marxism did not escape the revisionist displacement of the constitutive inconsistency of sexual difference and class struggle by "complementing" an unstable configuration with what was already consolidated in the other critical field.²⁰⁰

The same movement is also evident, albeit in a less programmatic way, in the *Anti-Oedipus* critique of Freud: instead of a conjunctive supplementation, neutralizing certain productive conceptual difficulties of one field with the other's conceptual common places, Deleuze and Guattari's critique was disjunctive, dismissing the fundamental category of the negative in Freud by clinging to a "positive" notion of "desire-machine", clearly constructed with the vocabulary of the proletariat in mind.

Against both of these positions, it is now time to recognize our debt to Alain Badiou's philosophical project.

Even though we have based our work thus far on the fundamental distinction between critical and consolidated knowledge, we made this choice with the awareness that, although it is a terminology which can only help us to delineate a certain fundamental distinction, it nonetheless has very clear limitations. While it allowed us to formulate our two current hypothesis, the moment has come to confront ourselves directly with the philosophical positions which have already conceptualized this fundamental distinction from the position of a possible *solution* to what a critical field should rigorously be.

²⁰⁰Badiou calls Freudo-Marxism "the fool's bridge" in Badiou, A. (2009), *Theory of the Subject*, (Continuum).p.115

Badiou's philosophical system - a veritable materialist "castle of purity" - perfectly accounts for everything we have developed up to this point²⁰¹. Moreover, Badiou's theory of the *generic procedures*, we believe, is the best example of our H1.

6.1 Psychoanalysis and Politics

In *Theory of the Subject*, a book composed of Badiou's seminars from 1975 to 1979, we find the following formulation:

"Even though psychoanalysis and Marxism have nothing to do with one another - the totality they would form is inconsistent - it is beyond doubt that Freud's unconscious and Marx's proletariat have the same epistemological status with regard to the break they introduce in the dominant conception of the subject.

'Where' is the unconscious? 'Where' is the proletariat? These questions have no chance of being solved either by an empirical designation or by the transparency of a reflection. They require the dry and enlightened labour of analysis and of politics.

Enlightened and also organized, into concepts as much as into institutions."²⁰²

Here, in a condensed form, we encounter the core of our first hypothesis: the master-signifier - here, under the guise of the question "where is the subject?", the elementary pivot of

²⁰¹ Section 1: theory of *outplace* and *splace*, determination and relapse; the difference between Whole and One (*Theory of the Subject*); Section 2: definition of democratic materialism and the relation between the transcendental and the distribution of appearances (*Logic of Worlds* and *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*); Section 3: critique of Deleuze's monism (*Deleuze: The Clamour of Being*), critique of revisionism in psychoanalysis, both conceptual and institutional (*Theory of the Subject*); Section 4: critique of claims of the end of philosophy (*First Manifesto for Philosophy*), critique of what is to live without Idea (*Logic of Worlds* and *Second Manifesto*), affirmation of communism (*Communist Hypothesis* and *The meaning of Sarkozy*). Section 5: Theory of the generic procedures (*Being and Event*)

²⁰² Badiou, Alain (2009), *Theory of the Subject*, (Continuum), p.279-80

Badiou's book - insofar as is articulated in both psychoanalysis and Marxism through the "enlightened labour" of accounting for what is "always invisible in the excess of its visibility"²⁰³, grants them the same "epistemological status with regard to the *break they introduce*". In minimal terms: both Marxism and psychoanalysis deal with the subject as that which exceeds the law of the *splace*²⁰⁴ or, in our current terminology, that which exceeds the consistency of consolidated articulations of knowledge. But the theory of the subject, such as Badiou develops it, also exceeds its psychoanalytical grounding, which does not need to "push the issue [of the dialectics of the real, that engenders the subject] beyond that which, at the level of formalization, lets itself be recognized as consistent homogeneity of the symbolic"²⁰⁵, that is, beyond the subject's relation to the already established order of consistencies²⁰⁶. What Badiou calls "Lacan's embarrassment"²⁰⁷ is precisely to have never properly conceptualized a *real consistency* which would not rely on the revisionist mediation of the imaginary²⁰⁸, and could therefore escape the repetition of the Old law.

Ten years later, in *Being and Event*, Badiou made a similar claim regarding philosophy's duty after Lacan:

"What Lacan lacked - despite this lack being legible for us solely after having read what in his texts, far from lacking,

²⁰³ Ibid. 280

²⁰⁴ Ibid. p.10 - *splace* is a neologism for "space of placement"

²⁰⁵ Ibid. 231

²⁰⁶ To think how an act could not only destruct the old order but also *recompose* a New one is the fundamental question of 'Theory of the Subject' - in which the rupture with the present is the very operator of subjectivization - and the point of Badiou's distancing from Lacan. How much of this particular critique is pertinent to Lacan's teaching is irrelevant to us at this point. We should, nevertheless, not forget that Badiou's reading of Lacan is in many ways indebted to Althusser's essential first approach to Lacan - which led him to the concept of overdetermination - and which seems to serve as the spectre for this dismissal of the creative power of repetition. On the relations between Badiou and Althusser, please refer to Bosteels, Bruno (2009), Alain Badiou, une trajectoire polémique, (La Fabrique). and Badiou, Alain (2009), Pocket Pantheon: Figures of Postwar Philosophy, (W W Norton & Co Inc).

²⁰⁷ Badiou, Alain (2009), Theory of the Subject, (Continuum)

²⁰⁸ Ibid. p.246

founded the very possibility of a modern regime of the true - is the radical suspension of truth from the supplementation of a being-in-situation by an event which is a separator of the void.

The 'there is' of the subject is the coming-to-being of the event via the ideal occurrence of a truth, in its finite modalities. By consequence, what must always be grasped is that there is no subject, that there are no longer some subjects. What Lacan still owed to Descartes, a debt whose account must be closed, was the idea that there were always some subjects."²⁰⁹

Setting aside the complex conceptual system that is at play in such a dense passage (the articulation of void, situation, Event, truth, etc), let us take note that his critique is based on the fact that, for Lacan, "there were always some subjects". In the Lacanian teaching, there where there is no clear or visible irruption of the New, there is still a subject, because the master-signifier cannot be thought not only as "the separator of a void" - as the Event which is undecidable and indiscernible from within a given situation - but must also be thought of in its articulation with the subject's excessive and problematic enjoyment of the situation itself. The infinitude of the subject, for Lacan, is operational not *beyond* the finite - in the guise of a rupture with the countable of the symbolic order - but *in its interstices*, in the entropic expenditure of energy which constitutes the subject's attachment to the world as it is.

And so, in accordance to our first hypothesis, Badiou affirms that, though psychoanalysis and Marxism both deal with the subject as that which is represented by the situation to an enigmatic (indiscernible or undecidable) event²¹⁰, Lacanian psychoanalysis nevertheless thinks the subject's fidelity under

²⁰⁹ Badiou, A. (2007), *Being and Event*, (Continuum) p.434

²¹⁰ We are aware of the subtle differences between the logic of the signifier and Badiou's theory of the Event, but given the developments of Badiou's theory of subjective typologies in *Logic of Worlds*, it seems to us that the homology between "evental trace" and master signifier, or unary trace, is very clearly established by Badiou himself. Please refer to Book I of *Logic of Worlds* (p.43) See also his use of the term signifier to define the evental trace in p.36 of the *Manifesto for Philosophy*

the auspices of the "mortifying drive"²¹¹, the strange counterforce of the situation over the subjectivizing forcing of the New²¹². For Badiou, "every subject is induced by a generic procedure, and thus depends on an event. Which is why the subject is rare."²¹³

Accordingly, even in Badiou's early work the subject is not defined in relation to a cause akin to that of the death drive. Instead, the political subject was defined by a shift, in which the 'anxiety-superego' axis of psychoanalysis is supplemented by the 'courage-justice' axis of revolutionary practice - a shift which allows Badiou to conceptualize the consistency of the New against its re-inscription into the "old" symbolic order: the political subject does not share with the psychoanalytical one the category of *enjoyment*, for the Event *interrupts repetition*, whose mechanism has no positive bearing on the force of this interruption and on subjectivization²¹⁴.

This essential separation is maintained in his later major works - *Being and Event* and *Logic of Worlds* - though the subject is no longer defined as necessarily political or psychoanalytical²¹⁵ - but bound to four conditions, called *the generic procedures*:

"Both the ideal recollection of a truth and the *finite* instance of such a recollection that is a subject in my terms, are therefore attached to what I will term *generic procedures* (there are four of them: love, art, science, and politics). The thought of the generic supposes the complete traversal of the categories of being (multiple, void, nature, infinity, ...) and of the event (ultra-one, undecidable, intervention, fidelity, ...). It crystallizes concepts to such a point that it is almost impossible to give an image of it. Instead, it can be said that it is bound to the profound problem of the indiscernible, the unnameable, and

²¹¹ Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds (Being and Event, 2)*, (Continuum Pub Group) p.509

²¹² "psychoanalysis operates as the reduction of the too-much of the real; it reintegrates within a splace of nomination that part of excess over the place which kept the subject in the suspense of anxiety." Badiou, Alain (2009), *Theory of the Subject*, (Continuum) p.154

²¹³ Badiou, Alain (2009), *Conditions*, (Continuum) p.234 n.41

²¹⁴ Badiou, Alain (2009), *Theory of the Subject*, (Continuum) p.170

²¹⁵ *Ibid.* p.285

the absolutely indeterminate. A generic multiple (and the *being* of a truth is always such) is subtracted from knowledge, disqualified, and unrepresentable. However, and this is one of the crucial concerns of this book, it can be demonstrated that it may be thought.

What happens in art, in science, in true (rare) politics, and in love (if it exists), is the coming to light of an indiscernible of the times, which, as such, is neither a known or recognized multiple, nor an ineffable singularity, but that which detains in its multiple-being all the common traits of the collective in question: in this sense, it is the truth of the collective's being. The mystery of these procedures has generally been referred either to their representable conditions (the knowledge of the technical, of the social, of the sexual) or to the transcendent beyond of their One (revolutionary hope, the lovers' fusion, poetic ec-stasis ...). In the category of the generic I propose a contemporary thinking of these procedures which shows that they are simultaneously indeterminate and complete; because, in occupying the gaps of available encyclopedias, they manifest the common-being, the multiple-essence, of the place in which they proceed."²¹⁶

6.2 Generic Procedures

The complex construction of the concept of *generic* is one of the fundamental tasks of *Being and Event*²¹⁷, and we shall not venture here into the intricate description of such fundamental a concept of his mathematical ontology²¹⁸. For our current intent, it is enough to define that generic multiplicities are multiplicities "characterized by their absence of characteristics", which "testify for the whole world - which is why they are its truth - given that, unable to be defined by any particular predicate, their being can be considered to be identical to the simple fact of belonging to this world"²¹⁹.

²¹⁶ Badiou, A. (2007), *Being and Event*, (Continuum) p.16-17

²¹⁷ Badiou, Alain (2011), *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, (Polity) p.125

²¹⁸ We refer the reader to Peter Hallward's book "Badiou a Subject to Truth" for a clear presentation of Badiou's ontology, including an elucidative appendix with a brief history and conceptual framework of transfinite set theory. Hallward, Peter (2003), *Badiou: A Subject To Truth*, (Univ Of Minnesota Press).

²¹⁹ Badiou, Alain (2011), *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, (Polity).p.125

That is, if there is at least one element which, being part of count-for-One of the situation, nevertheless remains indiscernible in the situation itself²²⁰, then the generic procedure "entails the non-coincidence of this part with anything classified by an encyclopedic determinant":

"Consequently, this part is unnameable by the resources of the language of the situation alone. It is subtracted from any knowledge; it has not been already-counted by any of the domains of knowledge, nor will be, if the language remains in the same state - or remains *that of* the State. This part, in which a truth inscribes its procedure as infinite result, is an indiscernible of the situation."²²¹

Truth is then defined as that which "groups together all the terms of the situation which are positively connected to the event"²²²:

We shall therefore say: *a truth is the infinite positive total - the gathering together of x(+)’s - of a procedure of fidelity which, for each and every determinant of the encyclopedia, contains at least one enquiry which avoids it.*

*Such a procedure will be said to be generic (for the situation)."*²²³

The subject’s fidelity to a truth, to that which *inexists* in a given configuration, *forces* its inscription into existence, into a new situation, in which the Event *will have taken place*. Accordingly, there is only a subject insofar as there is a truth²²⁴. And since there are four known generic procedures - four terrains for the manifestation of the New - there are also four localities of the subject:

²²⁰ The full demonstration of this condition, drawing from specially from the axiom of choice and the logic of forcing in the work of Paul Cohen, is presented in Parts V to VIII of *Being and Event*

²²¹ Badiou, A. (2007), *Being and Event*, (Continuum) p.338

²²² Ibid. p.335

²²³ Ibid. p.338

²²⁴ "there are truths, and there must be an active and identifiable form of their production (but also of what hinders or annuls this production). The name of this form is *subject*. Saying 'subject' or saying 'subject with regard to truth' is redundant. For there is a subject only as the subject of a truth, at the service of this truth, of its denial or of its occultation." p.50 in Badiou, A. 2008 *Logics of Worlds* (Being and Event, 2). Continuum Pub Group.

“A subject is then a finite moment of such a manifestation. A subject *is manifested locally*. It is solely supported by a generic procedure. Therefore, *stricto sensu*, there is no subject save the artistic, amorous, scientific, or political.”²²⁵

Badiou also refers to the generic procedures as the *conditions* of philosophy²²⁶, introducing a distance between philosophy and the production of truths: philosophy does not produce truths, but operates from them²²⁷. This distance from its conditions not only keeps open the proper space of philosophy, but also implicitly affirms there to be a thought that is internal to each one of the generic procedures - that is, there is a “non-dialectical or inseparable unity of theory and a practice”²²⁸.

There is, for example, *scientific* thought: the thought implicated in a text by Einstein circulates among notions and experiments in a unique movement, internal to the scientific field itself.²²⁹ The same is valid for the other three procedures. Philosophy takes it upon itself to configure these truths, to develop their possible conjunctures:

“Philosophical concepts weave a general space in which thought accedes to time, to *its* time, so long as the truth procedures of this time find shelter for their compossibility within it. The appropriate metaphor is thus not the register of addition, not even of systematic reflection. It is rather of the liberty of movement, of a moving-itself of thought within the articulated element of a state of its conditions. Within philosophy’s conceptual medium, local figures as intrinsically heterogeneous as those of the poem, matheme, political invention and love are related, or may be related to the singularity of time. Philosophy does not pronounce truth but its

²²⁵ Badiou, A. Being and Event. Continuum International Publishing Group. p.17

²²⁶ Badiou, Alain (1999), Manifesto for Philosophy: Followed by Two Essays: “the (Re)Turn of Philosophy Itself” and “Definition of Philosophy” (Sunny Series, Intersections, Philosophy and Critical Theory), (State University of New York Press).

²²⁷ Badiou, Alain (2009), Conditions, (Continuum) p.66

²²⁸ Badiou, Alain, Justin Clemens, and Oliver Feltham (2003), Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy, (Continuum International Publishing Group). p.79

²²⁹ Ibid. p. 60

conjunction, that is, the thinkable conjunction of truths"²³⁰

Accordingly, 'anti-philosophy' appears in the abandonment of philosophical thinking to one of its conditions.²³¹ Still using the example of Science, this abandonment is what allows for the existence of scientific *thinkers* - as opposed to scientists - incapable of separating, for example, Science from Technology, by positioning themselves within the generic procedure of Science, from where the scientific Event and its potentially technological consequences are undistinguishable, their difference is unthinkable.

Lacan himself is placed under the heading of "anti-philosopher"²³² - and not without his own collaboration. In Badiou's theory of the generic procedures, psychoanalysis is understood as the generic procedure of Love, as the thought of "the scene of the Two"²³³: "through love, an individual qua individual realizes (s)he is not a self-sufficient One (an ego) but a disjointed part of an original bifurcation, or Two"²³⁴. The subject, transfixed by the eventual grace of Love, can force into the World the affirmation of the couple, against the luring conceit of its own ego. But Lacan, who conceptualized the subject of truth as *constitutively* articulated with enjoyment, would then have sutured the distance between the generic

²³⁰ Badiou, Alain (1999), *Manifesto for Philosophy: Followed by Two Essays: "the (Re)Turn of Philosophy Itself" and "Definition of Philosophy"* (Sunny Series, Intersections, Philosophy and Critical Theory), (State University of New York Press). p.38

²³¹ Zupančič, A. in Hallward, P. 2004 *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series). Continuum. 'The Fifth Condition', p. 193 See also the chapter "Suture" in *Manifesto for Philosophy* p.61

²³² See 'Anti-Philosophy: Lacan and Plato' in Badiou, A. and Corcoran, S. 2009 *Conditions*. Continuum and 'Lacan and the Pre-socratics', in Žižek, S. 2006 *Lacan: The Silent Partners* (Wo Es War Series). Verso. also available at <http://www.lacan.com/badpre.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011]; See also *Infinite Thought* p.87

²³³ See "What is Love?" and See 'La Scène du Deux' in Badiou, A. and Truong, N. 2009 *Eloge de l'amour*. Flammarion. A translation can be found at: <http://www.lacan.com/frameXXI3.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

²³⁴ Hallward, Peter (2003), *Badiou: A Subject To Truth*, (Univ Of Minnesota Press) p.186

procedure and philosophy by positing the death drive - a category that, according to Badiou, pertains exclusively to the psychic apparatus and the construction of the ego²³⁵ - as the subject's material correlate.

Just like Philosophy relates to, but does not coincide with, Politics – dealing with issues that the discourse of collective organization raises regarding the fidelity to an Event, the status of subjectivity in a social body, etc. - the relationship between Philosophy and Psychoanalysis also reveals a vast field of important issues. For example, besides the idea of an “immanent Two”, the generic procedure of Love provides the material for philosophy to think the ‘ideal of matheme’²³⁶, to affirm the essential status of mathematics and formal logic in the construction of the theory of the subject :

“We must recognize that we are indebted to Lacan—in the wake of Freud, but also of Descartes—for having paved the way for a formal theory of the subject whose basis is materialist; it was indeed by opposing himself to phenomenology, to Kant and to a certain structuralism, that Lacan could stay the course.”²³⁷

Indeed, the subject is defined in *Being and Event* by the sole operation of *forcing* the inscription of the Event into the World, which is later supplemented, in *Logic of Worlds*, with the construction of a subjectivized body, the material support of a truth, the incorporation of a new body within the consequences of an event through the corporal treatment of points, or decisions²³⁸. Such a body, ultimately, is not the one at stake in psychoanalysis - the irreducible excess that parasites and, as such, constitutes the subject, or better, the subject *in its own objectal dimension* - but one that is the positive support of truth,

²³⁵ Badiou, Alain, Justin Clemens, and Oliver Feltham (2003), *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, (Continuum International Publishing Group) p.87

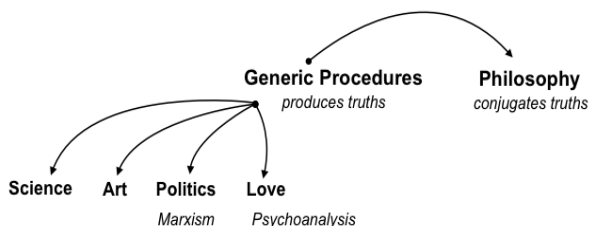
²³⁶ Ibid p. 67

²³⁷ Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds (Being and Event, 2)*, (Continuum Pub Group) p.48

²³⁸ Ibid p.50 “Referents and Operations of the Faithful Subject”

that follows from its evental traces²³⁹.

If "where is the subject?" was the question which grouped the "inconsistent totality" of Marxism and psychoanalysis in *Theory of the Subject*, the conceptual shift presented in Badiou's later works seems to steer his philosophy towards a more affirmative stance - the possibility of the subject - as the condition for the generic procedures. A shift that does not alter the fundamental condition that simultaneously defines a generic procedure and separates each one from the others: what Science, Politics, Art and Love share, as generic procedures, is being the ground for the emergence of the Event through the work of a subject which has no other condition than to be at service of the Event's truth²⁴⁰.



Let us now attempt to delineate the figure that represents the theory of the generic procedures:

The relation between Marxism and psychoanalysis is sketched here in clear parity with what we proposed as our first hypothesis. There is no intersection between Psychoanalysis and Politics other than belonging to the field of the "trajectory of truth", the generic procedures.

²³⁹ Badiou, Alain (2011), *Second Manifesto for Philosophy*, (Polity). p.88-90

²⁴⁰ Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds* (Being and Event, 2), (Continuum Pub Group) p.50

7. Alenka Zupančič

In the short text *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*²⁴¹, Badiou argues that there is a certain commonality between psychoanalysis and Marxism, for they both present “the same relation between the moment of writing and the moment of transformation or experience”²⁴², which gives rise to the essential conjunction, in both fields, of institutional organization and transmission:

“One sign of this resemblance between psychoanalysis and politics is the *necessity* for a collective organization of knowledge. That organization is necessary to politics is well known, as is the fact that there have always been associations of psychoanalysis. Why? It’s simple: if the concrete situations dealt with are singular and unrepeatable, you can only verify your thinking in a subjective manner, by transmission to *others*”²⁴³

Even so, beyond the resemblances which bring politics and psychoanalysis closer to each other than to science or art, their limit, as we have already seen, remains their structurally different relations to the real:

“As such, psychoanalytic thinking aims at the *subject accommodating its real*. Whereas a political thinking aims at the exhaustion of a structure’s - or State’s - ability to accommodate the point of the real worked by that political thinking. Perhaps what separates politics from psychoanalysis is this relation to the real. For psychoanalysis the relation to the real is always finally inscribed in the structure. For politics the relation to the real is always subtracted from the State”²⁴⁴

The interplay between their similarities and limits ultimately introduces a certain disruptive tension, which brings into question both the separation and the articulation proposed above, as well as the place of philosophy itself:

²⁴¹ Badiou, Alain, Justin Clemens, and Oliver Feltham (2003), *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, (Continuum International Publishing Group)

²⁴² *Ibid.* p.80

²⁴³ *Ibid.* p. 81

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.* p.84

"But perhaps all this is simply due to a difference of matter. What psychoanalysis aims to think is the *difference of the sexes*. The major thesis of psychoanalysis is: *there is no sexual relation*. Whence a negative figure which can be transformed into skepticism. What politics aims to think is the difference between collective presentation and State representation. Its major thesis: there is a possibility of pure presentation. Whence an affirmative figure which can be transformed into dogmatism.

The best solution would be the following: that political thinking protects itself from dogmatism by listening to psychoanalysis, and that psychoanalytic thinking protects itself from skepticism by listening to politics. (...) The ultimate solution to our problem, the relation between psychoanalysis and politics, finally depends upon a philosophical choice."²⁴⁵

It is in regards to this tension that one could object to a fundamental difference between Badiou's theory of the generic procedures and our first hypothesis concerning the relation between the field of critical knowledge and two of its subsets: that is, there where there would seem to be a direct relation between the two procedures, philosophy comes in to mediate this relation, which is ultimately, "a philosophical choice".

In this way, Badiou introduces a split into the very notion of critical field, dividing it between the *production* and the *conjunction* of truths, precisely where our first hypothesis seems to slide towards the second one.

In fact, we have purposefully abstained from giving 'critical knowledge' the name 'philosophy' precisely because of this tension and the difficulty of *where* to locate it. Thus far, we have kept it implicit by presenting it as the dialectical movement of reflecting consolidated knowledge into the critical field itself. Here, too, Badiou's claim that the suture of philosophy into one of its conditions gives rise to *thinkers* already accounts for our affirmation that there is no critical knowledge without an internal split welcoming the rigorous consolidation of knowledge within its own field.

²⁴⁵ Ibid. p.84-85

Yet, it is precisely at this tense juncture between the conditions of philosophy and philosophy proper that we find a certain ambiguity in regards to Badiou's theory of the procedures of truth.

7.1 Psychoanalysis and Philosophy

In her article *The Fifth Condition*²⁴⁶, Alenka Zupančič carefully studies the relation proposed by Badiou between philosophy and the generic procedures, and demonstrates that this relation is supported by a contradiction regarding what Badiou claims to be Lacan's contribution to philosophy²⁴⁷.

Zupančič's starting point is precisely philosophy's status as a "thought of thought"²⁴⁸ in regards to its four conditions, to which she adds another condition - one that is somewhat implicit in Badiou's own texts: that of maintaining a *distance* from the procedures, preventing philosophy from suturing its own proper dimension, and which she calls philosophy's "fifth condition"²⁴⁹. The impasse at hand could be formulated in the following way: do we not need here to conceptualize what keeps the threat of suture constant, requiring a certain amount of work from philosophy in order for its place to remain symbolically operative? How are we to understand the function and maintenance of this distance between philosophy and its conditions without contradicting Badiou's own philosophical system?

One possible solution is to say that this distance implies that philosophy is some sort of meta-discourse, a thought of thought in the sense of two superimposed registers, but this naive answer fails to rise to the standards of Badiou's project, which

²⁴⁶ Zupančič, A. in Hallward, P. 2004 *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series). Continuum.

²⁴⁷ Ibid. p.199

²⁴⁸ Ibid. p.194

²⁴⁹ Ibid. p.193

enthusiastically affirms this distance to be one of *engagement* with its conditions and, moreover, claims that philosophy relies on its conditions to exist in the first place - a philosopher "must practice the conditions of philosophy"²⁵⁰. This solution is therefore unacceptable.

We must, then, take another path in order to think this distance between philosophy and the generic procedures, a distance that makes them *more than One* - for they do not coincide - and, simultaneously, *less than Two* - for they do not relate to each other as two separate realms. Zupančič finds the material to propose another solution to this question, precisely in the terms of the One and its excess, in something that is already at play in Badiou's system itself, although in a restricted and mostly implicit form:

"The answer – which I will only try to sketch or roughly indicate here – rather lies in acknowledging something that Badiou strangely refuses to acknowledge or at least to adopt. Something that happened in linguistics and gained a definite form in psychoanalysis (more precisely, in the Lacanian 'use' of linguistics). Something that can in no way be dismissed as yet another expression of the 'linguistic turn' and even less as a 'poetic turn'. Something that is as important for contemporary philosophy as is Cantor's secularization of the infinite: an entirely new conception of representation."²⁵¹

Indeed, as we have seen, the thought of "the scene of the Two" is very much present in Badiou, under the title of the *generic procedure of Love* - that is, psychoanalysis - which thinks precisely the structure of such paradoxical "Twoness"²⁵² under

²⁵⁰ Hallward quoting Badiou ("Nous pouvons redéployer la philosophie," 2.) in Hallward, Peter (2003), Badiou: A Subject To Truth, (Univ Of Minnesota Press)

²⁵¹ Zupančič, A. in Hallward, P. 2004 Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series). Continuum. 199

²⁵² "Lacan's S1, the (in)famous 'master signifier' or 'phallic signifier' is, paradoxically, the only way to write that 'the One is not' and that what 'is' is the void that constitutes the original disjunction in the midst of every count-for-one. The count-for-one is always already two. S1 is the matheme of what one can describe as 'the One is not'. It writes that 'the One is not' by presenting the very thing that prevents it from being One. This is what S1 says: the One is not; yet what is not a pure multiple, but two. This is perhaps Lacan's crucial insight: if

the name of sexual difference. Focusing on the conceptual apparatus which allows for psychoanalysis to think the “immanent count-for-two” through a veritably new theory of representation, Zupančič goes on to claim that Lacan’s logic of the signifier “was a major breakthrough of contemporary thought, a breakthrough that could in fact provide philosophy with its ‘fifth condition’, i.e. its own distinctive conceptual space.”²⁵³ From which she concludes:

“If philosophy is to take place within the space of the infinite process of truth without itself being a process of truth, if it is to be situated on the same level as generic procedures yet at a certain distance from them (i.e. dislocated in relation to them), then it has to rely precisely on such an ‘immanent count-for-two’ as is at work in a Badiouian conception of the Two.

This would imply, of course, that one of the four conditions of philosophy (love, with its immanent count-for-two) is also its ‘fifth condition’, the condition that defines the very relationship of philosophy with its conditions and keeps it from merging with them, as well as from appearing as their independent sum. As a thought that operates within the field of the four generic procedures of truth, without simply merging with this field and becoming indistinguishable from it, philosophy presupposes a *scène du Deux*, a ‘stage/scene of the Two’. In other words, in the configuration of the conditions of philosophy, one of its conditions – the immanent count-for-two, which Badiou recognizes in the figure of love – has itself to be counted-for-two.”²⁵⁴

The generic procedure of love would then be a *split* condition of philosophy, with psychoanalysis simultaneously being the thought of sexual difference and serving as a fifth condition which thinks the very relation of philosophy to the generic procedures as a whole.

With Zupančič’s controversial²⁵⁵ thesis in mind, let us return to

there is something on which one could lean in order to leave the ‘ontology of the One’ behind, this something is not simply the multiple, but a Two.” Ibid. p.200

²⁵³ Ibid. p.199

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p.201

²⁵⁵ See Bruno Bosteels’ “Badiou without Žižek” in Hallward, Peter, et al. (2005), *Polygraph 17: The Philosophy of Alain Badiou*, (Polygraph: An International Journal of Culture and Politics).

the tension we identified above. To account for the relation between psychoanalysis and politics, it was necessary to bring philosophy's relation to the generic procedures into play, in a triadic configuration which stabilized the conditions' common traits and differences by placing philosophy *in between* the two. That is, as Zupančič argues, by placing philosophy not as a *distant* thought hovering over the political and psychoanalytical field, but, more precisely, as a thought of the *excess* of the procedures, thinking their tense non-relation.

7.2 Lacan and Badiou

Though this is not the place for a full development of this point, it is nevertheless important to take note of a striking configuration which supports Zupančič's conclusion.

It is known that Badiou, in his constant dialogue with Lacanian theory, used Lacan's Four Discourses to build his own theory of discourses²⁵⁶ and his mathemes of the faithful, reactive, obscurantist and resurrected subject²⁵⁷. The relation between the mathemes presented in *Logics of Worlds* and Lacan's matheme of the master's discourse might serve us well to demonstrate that, once we understand that there are two different theories of representation at play in them, there where something is "missing" in Badiou's matheme - that is, there where Lacan placed the object *a* in his formalization - it is precisely where philosophy comes to be. Let us briefly compare the two.

First, Lacan's discourse of the Master:

²⁵⁶ See *Saint Paul and the foundation of Universalism*, and also Badiou's Seminar 'Théorie axiomatique du sujet' (1996-1998) available at: <http://www.entretiens.asso.fr/Badiou/96-98.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011]; Žižek summarizes the difference between Badiou and Lacan's use of the discourses in his text "Spinoza, Kant, Hegel...Badiou!" Available from: <http://www.lacan.com/zizphilosophy3.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

²⁵⁷ Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds* (Being and Event, 2), (Continuum Pub Group) p.43

$$\frac{S_1 \rightarrow S_2}{\$ \diamond a}$$

In it, we find the dense conjunction of at least two of Lacan's most famous formulations - precisely the ones which define his new theory of representation: "a signifier (S_1) represents (\rightarrow) a subject (\$) for another signifier (S_2)"²⁵⁸ and "there is no Other (a) of the Other (S_2)"²⁵⁹, understood here as the assertion that there is no third position (A) which could stabilize an excess-less relation between two signifiers ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$). There is always an excess (a) which marks the subject's enjoyment ($\$ \diamond a$) of her own failure to fulfill what is demanded by the Other ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$)²⁶⁰.

It is also important to be aware of the paradoxical role of the object a in this formulation: it is an impossible excess *produced* by the symbolic operation ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), but, given the complex temporality at play in the matheme - which we will not go into here -, it is simultaneously the very *cause* of the structure:

"When we propose the formalization of discourse and establish for ourselves, within this formalization, some rules destined to put it to test, we find an element of impossibility. It is what is properly at the basis, the root of what is a fact of structure."²⁶¹

Badiou, on the other hand, presents the matheme of the faithful

²⁵⁸ Lacan, J. (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company) p.694 For a detailed analysis of this Lacanian axiom, please see Žižek, S. (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do*, (W W Norton & Co Inc), p.21

²⁵⁹ Lacan, J. (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company) p.688 See also Žižek, Slavoj (1989), *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Phronesis), (Verso) p.153

²⁶⁰ We refer the reader back to our section I.2 for further clarifications, and, of course, to Lacan 16th and 17th seminars.

²⁶¹ Lacan, J. 1992 *O seminário, livro XVII: O avesso da psicanálise (1969-1970)* Jorge Zahar Editor, p.43. Also, "there is no discourse - not only the analytical - which is not of jouissance", p.73 (our translations)

subject in the following way:

$$\frac{\mathcal{E}}{\phi} \Rightarrow \pi$$

In which the evental trace (\mathcal{E}) is represented by (ϕ) the split subjectivized body (ϕ) to the present (π).

The first important point to note, which we have already mentioned before, is that the theory of representation at play in Badiou's construction is the classical one - namely, that 'a signified is represented by a signifier to a subject' - while, in Lacan's case, his conception of the relation between the signifier and the signified is part of his novel contribution to philosophy.

A second, crucial element depends on a slightly more detailed understanding of what is at play in the matheme of the faithful subject. Let us approach it through an elucidative example given by Badiou:

"Take, for instance, the specialized military detachments that the slaves, led by Spartacus, try to constitute in their midst in order to face the Roman cavalry. This is why we say that the elements of the body are incorporated into the evental present. This is obvious if one considers, for example, a slave who escapes in order to enlist in Spartacus's troops. What he thereby joins is, empirically speaking, an army. But in subjective terms, it is the realization in the present of a hitherto unknown possibility. In this sense it is indeed into the present, into the new present, that the escaped slave incorporates himself. It is clear that the body here is subjectivated to the extent that it subordinates itself to the novelty of the possible (the content of the statement 'We slaves, we want to and can return home'). This amounts to a subordination of the body to the trace, but solely in view of an incorporation into the present, which can also be understood as a production of consequences: the greater the number of escaped slaves, the

more the Spartacus-subject amplifies and changes in kind, and the more its capacity to treat multiple points increases.”²⁶²

If we now read together the matheme of the faithful subject and the example of Spartacus, we see that the present (π), as “the set of consequences of the evental trace”²⁶³, is opposed only to the subjectivized body - which is split (\emptyset) because it is caught up between that to which it is subjected, the trace of the event, and the present into which it must incorporate itself - and to the “old” present, the one being transformed, by the work of fidelity. In accordance with what we have previously described, Badiou understands that any resistance to the inscription of the traces of the event by the work of fidelity belongs to the elements of the old situation or present - that is, to elements of a constituted, rather than constitutive dimension. In the matheme of the faithful subject, therefore, there is no formal excess akin to the object *a*, something which would structurally escape the grasp of the present while also not contributing to fidelity as such.

The third important aspect of the matheme we are investigating, deeply connected with the other two points, is that the subject is none of the elements of the matheme, but the matheme when taken in its entirety²⁶⁴. But if the subject is formalized here as the matheme as such, we must ask: *wherefrom* is it being articulated so that “the formula as a whole” can be perceived?

The answer, we believe, is the one already presented by Zupančič. In the same way that, for Lacan, “representation is the infinite tarrying with the excess that springs (...) from this act of representation itself, from its own inherent ‘crack’ or inconsistency”²⁶⁵, Philosophy can only be placed in relation to the matheme of the faithful subject, if there is to be no meta-discourse involved, at the very position of an *excess to the*

²⁶² Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds* (Being and Event, 2), (Continuum Pub Group). p.52

²⁶³ Ibid p. 52.

²⁶⁴ Ibid p. 53-54

²⁶⁵ Zupančič, A. in Hallward, P. 2004 *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series). Continuum. p.199

Present - which is, after all, what Badiou himself claims when he affirms that philosophical thought "accedes to its time"²⁶⁶, a time "out of joint" with that of its own conditions. Do we not find in the "impossible" Twoness of Badiouian philosophy and the generic procedures, the proper locus of the subject, a resounding reverberation of the above mentioned quote by Lacan, of the fact that "within this formalization, some rules destined to put it to test, we find an element of impossibility. It is what is properly at the basis, the root of what is a fact of structure"?

We are now in a position to properly summarize the issue at hand.

We began by affirming that Badiou's theory of the generic procedures is the one which better exemplifies our first hypothesis. Indeed, there is a constant reference throughout Badiou's work to a structural difference which would distinguish psychoanalysis from politics on the basis that the first would be concerned with *accommodating* the subject in the real, while the second would *exhaust* the real of a given situation, the two fields being nevertheless grouped together as terrains of the production of truths.

This position supports our first hypothesis - that there is no direct relation between politics and psychoanalysis - which is then further confirmed by Badiou's claim that one can only truly discern and think the generic procedures' commonalities and limits from the philosophical standpoint²⁶⁷. The distinction between generic procedures and philosophy made it clear that the question of the validity of our first hypothesis relied thus on the statute of the 'fifth condition' of philosophy, on a certain

²⁶⁶ Badiou, Alain (1999), *Manifesto for Philosophy: Followed by Two Essays: "the (Re)Turn of Philosophy Itself" and "Definition of Philosophy"* (Sunny Series, Intersections, Philosophy and Critical Theory), (State University of New York Press), p.38

²⁶⁷ Badiou, Alain, Justin Clemens, and Oliver Feltham (2003), *Infinite Thought: Truth and the Return to Philosophy*, (Continuum International Publishing Group). p.84-85

understanding of its distancing from the generic procedures.

Following Zupančič, we noted that this distance cannot be understood as pointing to a meta-discourse, for this would contradict Badiou's own philosophical project. Even so, in order to keep to the hypothesis of there being no direct relation between the two procedures, philosophy's 'fifth condition' would have to be grounded solely in its direct engagement with the generic procedures as such, without nevertheless forming a consistent One or two different, separate realms. We have sided, then, with Zupančič's solution, which states that it is psychoanalysis which thinks philosophy's essential distance from its conditions, given that - as Badiou himself defines it - it is the first consistent thought of an irreducible Two.

But this position also entails that the (symmetrical) tension that we first found in Badiou's description of the similarities and differences between the two conditions, which the philosopher himself then solved by re-affirming that philosophy is precisely the place of such conjunctures, has returned, via psychoanalysis, to the (now asymmetrical) relation between the procedures. That is: there must be something in psychoanalytical thought itself which allows it to simultaneously be a theory of sexuality - the thought of sexual difference - and the thought of a Twoness which relates not only to politics, but to philosophy and the procedures as such.

What is at stake, then, is not only psychoanalysis' relation to politics, but, more fundamentally, psychoanalysis' relation to philosophy. The question which gave rise to our two hypotheses - does the concept of Cause in political thought share with the concept of master-signifier in psychoanalysis the articulation with an excess, homologous to the object *a*? - should find its answer through a second, more general one, which follows from the affirmation by Zupančič of psychoanalysis' double role: what is the philosophical statute of psychoanalysis?

7.3 Sexuality and Ontology

We have already seen that a certain facet of the master-signifier is very much at play in Badiou's conception of the fundamental trait that gathers the four generic procedures. We have also seen that what the philosopher "strangely refuses to acknowledge"²⁶⁸ has to do with the properly Lacanian theory of representation and, more precisely, with the *constitutive* dimension of the object a.

Through Badiou's philosophical system, in which we find one of the most profound engagements with the question of psychoanalysis' philosophical ground, we have unearthed a fundamental tension which points to the fact that, beyond the possible impasses of the Badiouian philosophy, there might be a problem in the very configuration of our first hypothesis. And so, by referring to Badiou, we managed to further refine our enquiry, and re-state the present question in more precise terms: what is the philosophical statute of the formal excess which Lacan called the object a, and Freud, the death drive?

To hint in the direction of an answer, let us continue to follow Zupančič's Lacanian critique of Badiou in another one of her texts - *Sexuality and Ontology*²⁶⁹ - which deals precisely with the question of psychoanalysis' double role and the ontological dimension of the death drive.

Zupančič begins by underlining the real place of the term 'sexuality' in the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis. Usually understood as that which denotes the realm of empirical experiences in analytical consideration, 'sexuality' is commonly associated with anatomical accidents and with the mythology of instinct – the idea that a vestige of animalism which was not "destroyed" or "repressed" by culture would haunt the individual, always threatening to reduce us to "human

²⁶⁸ Zupančič, A. in Hallward, P. 2004 *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series). Continuum. p.199

²⁶⁹ Zupančič, A. (2008), *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*, (NSU Press).

animals”²⁷⁰. As Zupančič goes on to show, sexuality, on the contrary, is the very “operator of the inhuman”²⁷¹, that which, in psychoanalysis, stands not between ‘nature’ and ‘culture’, *but between this duality and being as such*²⁷².

Zupančič’s starting point is to remind us that the Freudian theory of sexuality is not at all concerned with unveiling the sexual meaning which would be implicit in the subject’s symptomatology, but, much more radically, psychoanalysis traverses the sexual meaning which parasites any formation of sense in order to arrive at the constitutive and incessant attempt of ascribing sense to the Sexual as such. Sexual meaning, which sprouts abundantly, is the product of the psychic apparatus’ attempt to account for *a constitutive impossibility*, which is beautifully summarized by the philosopher in the following way:

*“(human) sexuality is a paradox-ridden deviation from a norm that does not exist”*²⁷³

This statement brings together Badiou’s famous claim that “the One is not”²⁷⁴ and Lacan’s “there is no sexual relation”²⁷⁵. Sexual difference does not submit itself to the figuration of a ‘One’ – since there is no third, neutral, position which would encompass the two sexes – nor to the figure of a ‘one plus one’ – since, literally, the difference between the female and male sex is a difference between ‘one’ sex and the ‘other’ sex, and not between ‘two’ symmetrical sexes²⁷⁶. This difference (S_1) is irreducible to the meaning that might be ascribed to it ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), always producing an excess (a) - no consistent relation of sense is possible: “the sexual is the *edge of meaning*”²⁷⁷.

²⁷⁰ Ibid. p.14

²⁷¹ Ibid p.20

²⁷² Ibid. p.24

²⁷³ Ibid. p.15

²⁷⁴ Badiou, Alain and Oliver Feltham (2007), *Being and Event*, (Continuum).p. 23

²⁷⁵ Lacan, J. (1967), *Seminaire XIV: La logique du fantasme*, (unpublished). - class of 12/4/67

²⁷⁶ Ibid. - class of 19/4/67

²⁷⁷ Zupančič, A. (2008), *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*, (NSU Press). p. 27

The relation between the senselessness of the Sexual and the master-signifier is thus made quite evident: if the movement of constant signification aims at 'filling in' the emptiness of the master-signifier, which constantly slides, and if what we call "signification" is a conditionally stable relation between signifiers, then the edge of meaning is precisely the place where the master-signifier incessantly slides away from the chain of signifiers, from the field of articulations and sense.

If, however, the *aim* of this production of sense is to ascribe meaning to the void of the master-signifier - to fixate it under the regime of the *splace*, in the parlance of Badiou's *Theory of the Subject*, or to distribute minimal intensity to the existence of its being, as he puts it in *Logic of Worlds* - the *goal* of the production of sense is not to reach the void of the signifier of Sex. Instead, it seeks to accomplish the *reversal* of the 'meaning of the sexual' into 'sexual meaning'²⁷⁸, a reversal in which something of the void - its *material dimension*, the object *a* - is brought into play, no longer as the *absence of a presence*, but as *the presence of an absence*, giving rise to satisfaction through the very impossibility of fully achieving it. Lacan emphasizes this point in the following passage:

"Here we can clear up the mystery of the *zielgehemmt*, of that form that the drive may assume, in attaining its satisfaction without attaining its aim—in so far as it would be defined by a biological function, by the realization of reproductive coupling. For the partial drive does not lie there. What is it?

Let us still suspend the answer, but let us concentrate on this term but, and on the two meanings it may present. In order to differentiate them, I have chosen to notate them here in a language in which they are particularly expressive, English. When you entrust someone with a mission, the aim is not what he brings back, but the itinerary he must take. The aim is the way taken. The French word but may be translated by another word in English, goal. In archery, the goal is not the *but* either,

²⁷⁸ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company). p.182-183

it is not the bird you shoot, it is having scored a hit and thereby attained your '*but*' [*goal*].

If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what, from the point of view of a biological totalization of function, would be the satisfaction of its end of reproduction, it is because it is a partial drive, and its aim is simply this return into circuit. This theory is present in Freud."²⁷⁹

Lacan then takes care to properly distinguish the *void* of the master-signifier, from the *hole* of the object *a*, making reference to the oral drive:

"...this object, which is in fact simply the presence of a hollow, a void, which can be occupied, Freud tells us, by any object, and whose agency we know only in the form of the lost object, the petit *a*. The *objet petit a* is not the origin of the oral drive. It is not introduced as the original food, it is introduced from the fact that no food will ever satisfy the oral drive, except by circumventing the eternally lacking object."²⁸⁰

If Badiou recognizes in Lacan's master-signifier the very *lack of being*, then what Zupančič is trying to conceptualize here is the necessity of thinking this lack of being as always already articulated - even if only in its very separation - with the *being of the lack*²⁸¹, which is, strictly speaking, the locus of a veritable *ontological inconsistency*:

"I definitely agree with philosophy in maintaining that the empirical argument (convoking the vast experience of human being as intrinsically sexual) would be out of place here. We must not forget, however, that the above question/objection only makes sense if we have already accepted the scheme according to which the sexual is one of the characteristics of being (as human). Yet this is precisely not the argument Freud is making. What Freud is saying is that the sexual (in the precise sense of an inconsistent circling of partial drives) is being. More precisely, and without pushing things too much, we could say that Freud is developing, constructing a concept of 'the sexual' as the (psychoanalytic) name for the inconsistency of being. And this is precisely what Lacan is

²⁷⁹ Ibid p. 179

²⁸⁰ Ibid p.180

²⁸¹ Zupančič, A. (2008), *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*, (NSU Press) p.27

more than willing to embrace in his theory: the sexual as the concept of radical ontological impasse."²⁸²

Thus, the philosopher affirms that it is precisely there where psychoanalysis would be supposedly dealing with what concerns the mere existence in a World - as it is prescribed in the distribution of intensities by the democratic materialist principle, with the existence of the "human animal"²⁸³ - there is precisely where psychoanalysis actually finds its greatest ontological reach: 'sexuality' is the name of an inconsistency that is not derived from the particularities of the individual subject, of the anatomical limitations of the body, but is the mark of an *ontological impasse* that allocates itself in the body without any respect for what could be considered "natural", "animal" or "human". An ontological inconsistency that is at the very cause of the unconscious:

"It is well known how firm Lacan was in his insistence that there is nothing 'purely subjective' (in the sense of some psychological depth) about the unconscious, which he defined as the "discourse of the Other".

This could be said to be a properly materialistic stance of psychoanalysis: the unconscious is not a subjective distortion of the objective world, it is first and foremost an indication of a fundamental inconsistency of the objective world itself, which - as such, that is as inconsistent - allows for and generates its own (subjective) distortions. The thesis here is indeed very strong: if 'objective' reality were fully ontologically constituted, there would be no unconscious."²⁸⁴

In this same movement, Zupančič re-affirms the necessity of separating the concept of the death drive from the Heideggerian concept of Being-toward-Death²⁸⁵. The death drive is not what deadens the subject, reducing him to the corporal data of a situation, as Badiou sometimes implies, referring to it as a

²⁸² Ibid. p.24

²⁸³ Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds (Being and Event, 2)*, (Continuum Pub Group), p.114 and p.480

²⁸⁴ Zupančič, A. (2008), *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*, (NSU Press) p.25

²⁸⁵ Ibid. p.29-30

‘mortifying instinct’, or making sure to remind us - in what is actually a very Lacanian thesis, though he mentions it *against* Lacan - that “death is not a category of being”²⁸⁶. On the contrary: Lacan even called the drive ‘Being-toward-Sex’²⁸⁷, emphasizing that the death drive is a faulty circulation that cuts across the articulation of signifiers toward that which is inconsistent in being itself. And even if Freud first conceptualized the drive as originating in the body²⁸⁸, it was precisely to the extent to which the body is embedded in being, and thus shares its ontological “incompleteness”.

Žižek makes this precise point when he claims that the death drive is the Freudian name for the subject’s *immortality* - which is also the very name, for Badiou, of the “only question that pertains (...) to philosophy alone”²⁸⁹:

“This is why we should not confuse the death drive with the so-called “*nirvana* principle,” the thrust toward destruction or self-obliteration: the Freudian death drive has nothing whatsoever to do with the craving for self-annihilation, for the return to the inorganic absence of any life-tension; it is, on the contrary, the very opposite of dying— a name for the “undead” eternal life itself, for the horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain. The paradox of the Freudian “death drive” is therefore that it is Freud’s name for its very opposite, for the way immortality

²⁸⁶ “Just like existence, death is not a category of being. It is a category of appearing, or, more precisely, of the becoming of appearing. To put it otherwise, death is a logical rather than an ontological concept. All that can be affirmed about ‘dying’ is that it is an affection of appearing, which leads from a situated existence that can be positively evaluated (even if it is not maximal) to a minimal existence, an existence that is nil *relatively to the world*.” Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds* (Being and Event, 2), (Continuum Pub Group). p.269-270

²⁸⁷ Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil) p.365-366; See also Balmès, François (2007), *Dieu, le sexe et la vérité*, (Erès).

²⁸⁸ See “Instinct and its Vicissitudes” in Freud, Sigmund (1968), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIV* (1914-1916): *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology, and Other Works*, (London).

²⁸⁹ *Logic of Worlds*, p.268: “Under what conditions is existence—our existence, the only one that we can bear witness to and think—that of an Immortal? This is—on this point at least, Plato and Aristotle were in agreement—the only question of which it can be said that it pertains to philosophy, and to philosophy alone.” See also *Ethics* (where?)

appears within psychoanalysis, for an uncanny *excess* of life, for an "undead" urge which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of life and death, of generation and corruption. The ultimate lesson of psychoanalysis is that human life is never "just life": humans are not simply alive, they are possessed by the strange drive to enjoy life in excess, passionately attached to a surplus which sticks out and derails the ordinary run of things."²⁹⁰

After demonstrating that to give the master-signifier's void such an ontological status without simultaneously thinking its relation with the object a, its inconsistency, is to "confuse desire and drive", Zupančič returns to Althusser's text *On Marx and Freud*²⁹¹ to deal with what this further development entails for the relation between psychoanalysis and Marxism.

As we briefly mentioned before, Althusser had already indicated that one of the central homologies between the two fields is that both are positioned within the conflict they theorize - that is, their objectivity is not defined by their supposed neutrality, but by their engagement:

"The criterion of objectivity in such a case [as in Marxism and psychoanalysis] is thus not neutrality, but the capacity of theory to occupy a singular, specific point of view within the situation. In this sense, the objectivity is linked here to the very capacity of being 'partial' or 'partisan'"

Along the same lines, Zupančič argues that "*the sexual* is precisely such a 'position' in psychoanalysis."²⁹²

There is a fundamental asymmetry inscribed in both Marxism and psychoanalysis, which makes it possible to access the truth of a given situation only by assuming certain positions, while others - supposedly more neutral or 'overseeing' not only serve the ruling ideology - defined precisely by the prescription of what is natural or normal and what is not - but also obliterate the

²⁹⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press). p.62

²⁹¹ Althusser, Louis and Montag, Warren (1991) 'On Marx and Freud', *Rethinking Marxism*, 4: 1, 17 — 30

²⁹² Zupančič, A. (2008), *Why Psychoanalysis: Three Interventions*, (NSU Press) p.29

theory's access to truth²⁹³. The revisionist movement described by Althusser, to which we referred earlier, can be defined precisely by the displacement of critical knowledge's position, usually in the direction of an assumed neutrality.

A conflict that, from the 'neutral' perspective of our market economy, is apparently meaningless or inexistent, such as, for example, the fundamental impasse of integrating a great part of the poor population into a system of opportunities offered by liberal democracy – the project of so-called 'social inclusion' – only reveals itself and its causes if we assume our engagement with the Idea of Class Struggle. It is only from this political position that we can structure a critical knowledge of the totality, of the very ground or structure of the impasse, a knowledge that does not concern only the political and economical conditions of the many, but touches directly on the fundamental inconsistency of the social realm as such – which manifests itself in reality both as the terrible conditions of the exploited and in the *obscene satisfaction* that constitutes and supports these conditions.

In an homologous way, more than dealing with the interpretation of sexual connotations that are the obverse of every signification – “indoctrinating” the subject to negotiate with its primitive machine of producing unconstrained perversions – psychoanalysis reveals that the sexual meaning produced by the unconscious is both an always failed attempt to “fulfill” the traumatic emptiness of the subject's encounter with an ontological inconsistency that parasitizes the body and a way of nevertheless reaching some fulfillment – some *enjoyment* – in that very failure to signify it. Only from this position of engagement with the Idea of the Sexual is it possible to account not only for the subject's

²⁹³ Althusser, Louis and Montag, Warren(1991) 'On Marx and Freud', Rethinking Marxism, 4: 1, 17 — 30 p.21: “The idea is, at bottom, that *to see* and *to understand* what happens in class societies, it is indispensable to occupy proletarian class theoretical positions; there is the simple postulate that *in a necessarily* conflictual reality, such as a society one cannot see everything, from everywhere; the essence of this conflictual reality can only be discovered on the condition that one occupies certain positions and not others in the conflict itself. For to passively occupy other positions is to allow oneself to participate in the logic of the dominant ideology.”

individual suffering, but for the ontological incompleteness out of which the subject builds her fantasy.

Seen in the light of Župančič's argument, the Marxist axiom 'history is the history of the class struggle' bears an uncanny homology to the psychoanalytical axiom 'there is no sexual relation' precisely on account of both touching upon an *ontological* impasse - the fundamental *philosophical* dimension of psychoanalysis' "count-for-Two". The two propositions cut across the universe of discourses asymmetrically, founding a difference that cannot be assimilated by the premise that all discourses are structurally equivalent. Žižek summarizes this point brilliantly:

"This is also how the Real of antagonism ('class struggle') functions within the social field: antagonism, again, is not the ultimate referent which anchors and limits the unending drift of the signifiers ('the ultimate meaning of all social phenomena is determined by their position in class struggle'), but the very force of their constant displacement - that on account of which socio-ideological phenomena never mean what they seem/purport to mean -for example, 'class struggle' is that on account of which every direct reference to universality (of 'humanity, of 'our nation', etc) is, always in a specific way, 'biased', dislocated with regard to its literal meaning. 'Class struggle' is the Marxist name for this basic 'operator of dislocation'; as such, 'class struggle' means that there is no neutral metalanguage allowing us to grasp society as a given 'objective' totality, since we always-already 'take sides'. The fact that there is no 'neutral', 'objective' concept of class struggle is thus the crucial constituent of this notion.

Exactly the same goes for sexual difference *qua* real in Lacan: sexual difference is not the ultimate referent which posits a limit to the unending drift of symbolization, in so far as it underlies all other polarities and provides their 'deep' meaning (as in pre-modern sexual cosmologies: light against darkness, fire against water, reason against emotion, etc; they are all, in the last resort, yin against yang, the male principle against the female . . .), but, on the contrary, that which 'skews' the discursive universe, preventing us from grounding its formations in 'hard reality' - that on account of which every

symbolization of sexual difference is forever unstable and displaced with regard to itself."²⁹⁴

Though we have reached a point where it becomes difficult to dismiss the ontological import of the Freudian death drive, we still have to decide on two different approaches regarding our second hypothesis. On one hand, we can posit that there is a *new* direct relation between psychoanalysis and marxism, on account of the effects of the articulation and separation between the master-signifier and the object a. This position can be formulated in Badiouian terms as the further addition of a structural condition to what it means to constitute a generic procedure. On the other hand, we can also posit that the relation between the two fields *remains indirect* - that is, that the shift to the second hypothesis has consequences foremost for the conception of philosophy itself, and not only to that of its conditions.

Given that the first option seems to rely on maintaining that there would be a strict equivalence between our conception of critical knowledge and Badiou's definition of philosophy - an unsustainable position, which would greatly simplify the Badiouian project - the second configuration seems more fitting for us to articulate and develop the consequences of the following statement: *death drive is a philosophical category*.

8. Death Drive as a Philosophical Category

Thus far, we have followed the consequences of establishing a first split within the field of knowledge. Our first step was to transform the tension that arises from such a split into the first statement of our thesis (**S1**), through which we affirmed the existence of a knowledge of totality that is not a fantasy of total knowledge, responsible for opening the space of the field of critical knowledge.

²⁹⁴ Žižek, S. (2009) *The Plague of Fantasies* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek). Verso. p.277-278

Our enquiry led us to conclude that an essential difference between critical and consolidated knowledge is that in the critical field there is a signifier that represents the very structure of knowledge, the master-signifier. In Meillassoux's terms, it posits a rational relation to the Absolute.

Then, reflecting this split into the critical field itself, we grasped the difference between a critical knowledge that structures itself around the master-signifier and a critical position that reproaches the structuring effects of this empty signifier. We concluded that the second position - which defines itself as critical precisely by resisting the signifier that represents the specificity of the critical field - is the properly revisionist one.

If the master-signifier has a fundamental function and place both in Marxism and psychoanalysis, and if, as we have proposed, it is in the very difficulty of its conceptualization²⁹⁵ that the revisionist deviations find their support, then we presented two hypotheses:

H1) The first hypothesis states that, in Lacanian terms, the concept of master-signifier could be elaborated independently from the concept of object *a* - that is, the affirmation of the Absolute is not a simultaneous affirmation of the absolute character of the failure of this affirmation itself. Here, the relation between Marxism and psychoanalysis would be indirect, defined solely by their belonging to the broader field of critical knowledges, which, in its turn, is defined by the place and function of the Absolute.

In this case, the revisionist deviation would be caused by the different ways the master-signifier is mystified or 'contaminated' by the accidents and particularities of the situations in which it comes to be elaborated.

²⁹⁵ Jean-Claude Milner, in his text 'A generation that wasted itself' says, apropos of the French generation of the 60's that "If there is no metalanguage, this [political] certainty crumbles. Well, there, and nowhere else, was where we stumbled. Not by contradiction - this was not new - but by indistinction" Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier).

H2) The second hypothesis states that the master-signifier must be articulated with its excess, the object *a*. In this case, the relation between Marxism and psychoanalysis would be more strict than it might be philosophically accepted at first, defined not only by the trait that includes them both in what he have called “critical knowledge”, but by a certain formal place of the very failure of that essential trait. According to this hypothesis, the impasses we have encountered in our analysis of psychoanalysis and Marxism would have to do not only with the elaboration of the concept of master-signifier, but, especially, with the difficulty of transforming the “accidental” excess that parasites the master-signifier into a concept itself.

We took upon us to investigate the first hypothesis and to present Badiou’s theory of the generic procedures, arguably the best example of this first position. But after presenting the overall delineation of the intrinsic relation between the generic procedures and their extrinsic relation to philosophy, we encountered an insistent tension between politics and psychoanalysis: though they are indirectly related by belonging to the procedures, the two fields nevertheless present a direct affinity that challenges this conception.

We then turned to Zupančič’s claim that there would be a deeper influence of Lacan’s logic of the signifier in Badiou’s formulations. By analyzing her argument, we found that the hypothesis of the indirect relation between the two fields already relies - even if in an implicit and unelaborated way - on the articulation between master-signifier and object *a*, an articulation that is condensed in Badiou’s work itself under the figure of the Two.

Following the philosopher’s analysis of psychoanalysis’ double role both as a generic procedure, and as philosophy’s ‘fifth condition’, we presented her argument defending the ontological import of Freud’s theory of sexuality. Zupančič re-affirms that the Lacanian claim that “there is no sexual relation” names a fundamental inconsistency at the level of being itself, which

manifests itself in the individual reality of the subject in the guise of an infinite demand for signification. The Freudian notion of death drive, the name of this "being-of-Lack", traverses the name of a Void - the master-signifier - towards a void that inhabits every Name - the object a.

Thus, we have reached our second hypothesis by following through a tension that was already inherent to the first one. What Zupančič ultimately proposes is that the Freudian notion of death drive - later further conceptualized by Lacan, as he formalized the very object of this drive, the object a - does not solely concern the field of clinical investigations in psychoanalysis. On the contrary: *there only is psychoanalysis because the psychic apparatus is traversed by an impasse of the order of being.*

Zupančič's work allows us then to affirm a second proposition:

S3: *Death drive is a philosophical category.*

Through the affirmation that the death drive is strictly related to an ontological impasse we have arrived at a point in which it becomes impossible not to question how this structural excess functions within political considerations. And indeed, it is precisely on account of this essential articulation between the master-signifier and the object a that Lacan, in his seminar *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, could affirm that:

"The intrusion into the political can only be made by recognizing that the only discourse there is, and not just analytic discourse, is the discourse of *jouissance*, at least when one is hoping for the work of truth from it."²⁹⁶

"The only discourse there is (...) is the discourse of *jouissance*": a categorical affirmation of a knowledge of totality.

To affirm that there is no discourse that is not of enjoyment

²⁹⁶ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil). (p.78 in the english version)

ultimately means that there is no discourse that is not driven, and distorted, by the failure of articulating itself as a consistent and totalizing formation, the “Whole” of discourse . If Lacan’s dictum enunciates a knowledge of totality it is precisely because, consenting to a fundamentally ontological inconsistency, it is capable of affirming that the figure of the Whole is always a product of enjoyment.

In the next class, after having declared that it is through the recognition of the place of enjoyment in discursivity that one can make an “intrusion into the political”, Lacan returns to this point once more, reminding us that, without considering the object a, one cannot truly account for the dangerous effects of the master-signifier:

“Here, at this crossroads, we state that what psychoanalysis enables us to conceptualize is nothing other than this, which is in line with what Marxism has opened up, namely that discourse is bound up with the interests of the subject. This is what, from time to time, Marx calls the economy, because these interests are, in capitalist society, entirely commercial. It’s just that since the market is linked to the master signifier, nothing is resolved by denouncing it in this way. For the market is no less linked to this signifier after the socialist revolution”²⁹⁷

The conceptual “confusion” between total knowledge and a knowledge of totality is therefore explained by the knowledge of totality itself, while the inverse is not true. It is only a knowledge

²⁹⁷ Ibid. p.92 of the english version. See also Lacan, J. (1967), *Seminaire XIV: La logique du fantasme*, (unpublished) - class of 16/11/66: ““What have you done then,” one of them said to me, “what need did you have to invent this little *o*-object?” I think, in truth, that taking things from a broader horizon it was about time. Because, without this *o*-object - whose incidences, it seems to me, have made themselves widely enough felt for the people of our generation - it seems to me that much of what is done as analyses, of subjectivity as well as of history and of its interpretation, and specifically of what we have lived through as contemporary history, and very specifically of what we have, rather crudely, baptised with a most improper term, under the name of totalitarianism ... Anyone, who after having understood it, is able to occupy himself in applying to it the function of the category of the *o*-object, will perhaps see there being illuminated what it returned from, in that for which we still lack, in a surprising manner, satisfying interpretations.”

which consents to the Idea - in its double dimension of signifier and excess - that can articulate the manner in which a fantasy or ideology of the Whole serves the individual ego or the ruling class.

The old debate on the dangers of considering psychoanalysis and Marxism two *weltanschauungen*²⁹⁸ - a danger that would be associated with the reproaches of the megalomania of both fields - could probably now be reformulated and even put to rest: yes, these are world-views - but, more importantly, these are views of *this* world, discourses capable of accounting for the irreducible and ontological difference between reality and the Real. Maybe it would be more pertinent to oppose the *weltanschauungen* to the concept of *andereweltanschauungen*: *other-worldly*-views - totalizations which allow themselves to turn away from the challenge of articulating the place and function of the Real, expecting reality itself to do it for us.

We are left, then, with one question: what would a philosophy *after* Marx and Freud be - namely, what would a philosophy that has the death drive at the core of its conceptual framework be?²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ The most famous passage in Freud's lecture on psychoanalysis and different world-views, in which he mentions the relation between Marxism and Psychoanalysis is: "Were anyone in conditions to show in detail how these different factors - the general human disposition, inherited, its racial variations and its cultural transformations - inhibit and stimulate each other under the conditions of social category, profession and capacity of realization; if someone were capable of doing this, he would have supplemented Marxism in a way that it would truly have become an authentic social science. For even sociology, dealing, as it is its task, with the behavior of people in societies, cannot but be applied psychology. Strictly speaking, there are only two sciences: psychology, pure and applied, and natural science" Freud, S. 2001 *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud: "New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis" and Other Works* Vol 22. Vintage.

²⁹⁹ We remember here with enthusiasm the last lines of Miller's *Action de structure*, not so much for the direct articulation it proposes, but for the imperative it evokes: "We know two discourses of overdetermination: the Marxist discourse and the Freudian discourse. Because the first is today freed by Louis Althusser of the mortgage that indebted it to the conception of society as a historical subject, and, in the same way, because the second was also freed, by Jacques Lacan, from the interpretation of the individual as psychological subject - it seems to us now to be possible to unite them. We hold that the discourses of Marx and Freud are susceptible of communicating with one another through

8.1 A Borromean Property

Our second hypothesis relies on the question articulated above and a crucial aspect of what is at stake in it can be grasped in the very way we approached its schematization. At the heart of the proposition that the death drive has an ontological import, fundamentally binding together Marxism and Psychoanalysis, there lies the question of what would an intersection composed of an ontological inconsistency be.

If we are now to account for the distinction between what we called “critical knowledge” and philosophy proper - a step we must accomplish so as to avoid the reproach that we would be repeating, albeit in a different form, the confusion between philosophy and the generic procedures - it must be said that philosophy is not simply the overarching field to which Psychoanalysis and Marxism belong. In order to re-think their relation we need to turn towards a different way of structuring their schematization: the borromean link³⁰⁰.

Simply put, the borromean knot is defined by the tying together of at least three rings in such a way that, if we cut any one of them, all others are also untied. In other words, the borromean knotting requires *no relation of complementarity*³⁰¹ between the elements it brings together, no direct interlacing between the

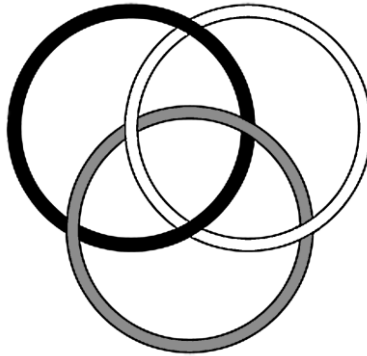
regulated transformations, and to reflect each other in a unitary theoretical discourse." in Cahier pour l'Analyse n.9 Available from: <http://www.web.mdx.ac.uk/cahiers/pdf/cpa9.6.Miller.pdf> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

³⁰⁰ Livingston, Charles (1996), Knot Theory (Mathematical Association of America Textbooks), p.10; See also the theoremic definition of the Brunnian link in Kawauchi, Akio (1996), Survey on Knot Theory, (Birkhäuser Basel), p.38, and the presentation of the different possible links of a knot's components in Farmer, David W. and Theodore B. Stanford (1995), Knots and Surfaces: A Guide to Discovering Mathematics (Mathematical World, Vol. 6), (American Mathematical Society), p.73

³⁰¹ This point was made in the context of a psychoanalytical study in Porge, E. (1990), Se compter trois : le temps logique du Lacan, (Erès). (page 169 of the brazilian edition)

rings. In a certain sense, we could even say that none of the elements are tied to each other, but only to the knot itself.

Furthermore, the lack of complementarity prevents us from speaking of *belonging*, for each one of the elements the knot binds is actually connected to the other two only insofar as the others are also linked between them - so that, when we consider the borromean knotting of philosophy, marxism and psychoanalysis, the paradoxical import of their intersection becomes quite evident. Note that when we write their intersection as the superposition of the three rings, we produce a *negative intersection* - which is not the same as to say that they have no intersection:



In the same way that, in the borromean knot, each ring is actually tied to the knot they constitute more than to each other, the intersection between the three is marked in the knot, but does not constitute any actual location. It is precisely because "the object a is no being"³⁰² that Lacan assigns to it, in his borromean knotting of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary, this properly *impossible* place³⁰³.

³⁰² Lacan, Jacques and Jacques-Alain Miller (1999), *Encore : Le séminaire, livre XX*, (Seuil), p.114 (page 126 of the english edition)

³⁰³ See Ibid. - class of 15/5/73. For detailed commentary of Lacan's use of the borromean ring, please refer to "R,S,I" in Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier); Granon-Lafont, Jeanne (1999), *La topologie ordinaire de Jacques Lacan*, (Erès). - chapter VII "Le noeud borroméen" - and specially to Darmon, Marc (2004), *Essais sur la topologie lacanienne*, (Éd. de

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“...Hegelian dialectics, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, and contemporary criticism of ideology. These three circles form a Borromean knot: each of them connects the other two; the place that they all encircle, the “symptom” in their midst, is of course the author’s (and, as the author hopes, also the reader’s) enjoyment of what one depreciatingly calls ‘popular culture’...”³⁰⁴

This is how Slavoj Žižek presents the basic structure of his philosophical project. To which he adds that through the very reference to the borromean knot, the Lacanian ring is seen to function here as one of the three circles as well as the conceptual support for the entanglement of the three. Žižek emphasizes this point by describing the trajectory that intertwines the triad, giving each ring of the knot its singularity:

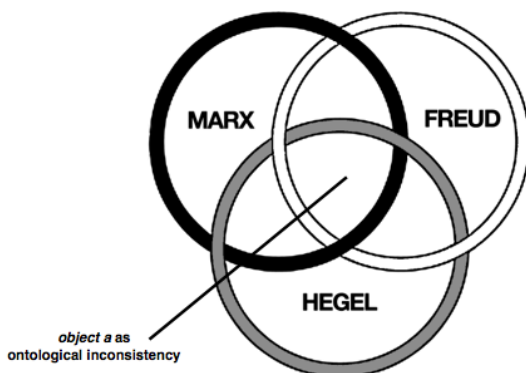
“the only way to ‘save Hegel’ is through Lacan, and this Lacanian reading of Hegel and the Hegelian heritage opens up a new approach to ideology, allowing us to grasp contemporary ideological phenomena (cynicism, ‘totalitarianism’, the fragile status of democracy) without falling prey to any kind of ‘postmodernist’ traps (such as the illusion that we live in a ‘post-ideological’ condition).”³⁰⁵

We can configure Žižek’s description in the following way:

l’Association lacanienne internationale). - chapter XI, “Noeuds” (p.353), in which the authors’ careful presentation of the borromean chain includes the study of the Seifert surfaces produced by the chain, therefore better grounding the proposed comparison above.

³⁰⁴ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso), p.2

³⁰⁵ Žižek, S. 2009 *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek). Verso. p. xxxi



Žižek's proposition of knotting psychoanalysis, Marxism and philosophy together does not only correspond to the most convincing presentation of the second hypothesis that we formulated, but also resonates with the path we took to arrive at it. For example, the choice between a direct or an indirect relation between psychoanalysis and politics can now be answered in a strictly Žižekian way: *Yes, please!*

Indeed, as was the case with Badiou, we cannot continue our work without first recognizing that everything we have developed thus far - including our critique of Badiou himself - is already accounted for in Žižek's philosophy³⁰⁶.

³⁰⁶ Section 1: the Hegelian totality (*Tarrying with the Negative, First as Tragedy Then as Farce, The Monstrosity of Christ*); ideology today (*Sublime Object of Ideology* and *For they know not what they do*); Section 2: university discourse and exploitation (*Living in the End Times* and *The Parallax View*); Section 3: critique of the political stance of psychoanalysis and critique of Deleuze (*The Parallax View* and *Organs without Bodies*); Section 4: critique of Fukuyama and of Kojève's reading of Hegel (*Living in the End Times* and *Sublime Object of Ideology*), critique of "Bolsa Familia" (*Living in the End Times*), affirmation of Communism (*In Defense of Lost Causes, First as tragedy then as Farce, Living in the End Times*); Section 5: the master-signifier (*For they know not what they do, Parallax View*); Section 6: with Badiou (*Idea of Communism, Philosophy in the Present*); Section 7: critique of Badiou (*Ticklish Subject, The Parallax View, Living in the End Times*) Section 8: the ontological import of the object a (*Tarrying with the Negative, Ticklish Subject, The Parallax View*)

This point brings us again back to our choice of terminology. When we related our first hypothesis to Badiou's theory of the generic procedures, we had to confront ourselves with the limitations of the broad term "critical knowledge": in contrast to Badiou's configuration of 'procedures' and 'philosophy', one the field of the production of new truths, the other the field of their articulation, we only used one term, 'critical knowledge', defined, until then, as the field of knowledge which includes a signifier that represents the structure of knowledge itself, the master-signifier. Our concern at this point is with the relation between the term 'critical knowledge' and Žižek's complex engagement with Hegel's philosophy. This, we believe, is an easier account to settle, for we claim that the basic traits of the Žižekian Hegel are themselves delineated by our initial statement and the two others which followed:

S1: *there is a knowledge of totality that is not a total knowledge.*

Or: the affirmation that there is a possible articulation between knowledge and truth that has nothing to do with the naive fantasy of a *gradual* relation - as if the more one accumulated knowledge the closer to truth one would be. Here we find Žižek's reading of Hegel's Absolute Knowledge and his critique of the interpretation of Hegel as the "absolute idealist"³⁰⁷.

S2: *the master-signifier is an operator of this structural difference.*

That is: there is a rational relation to the Absolute. Partially described by the above proposition, here we find the statement that the master-signifier is the name of how senselessness plays a part in the knowledge of totality, playing an essential part in the distinction between Reason and Understanding in Hegel's thought³⁰⁸.

³⁰⁷ Žižek, S. (2008) 'Sublime Object of Ideology' Verso, p.xxi.

³⁰⁸ Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso). p.85-86

S3: *Death drive is a philosophical category.*

Otherwise put: we cannot think the Absolute without its (absolute) failure. This affirmation is one of the pivots of his philosophy and functions also as an implicit affirmation of the homology between Hegelian dialectics and Lacan's logic of the signifier - another of Žižek's central theses about Hegel³⁰⁹.

The affirmation that German Idealism - and Hegel in special - already articulates some of the philosophical foundations of psychoanalysis allows us to approach Marxism anew and, by developing the consequences of this new philosophical ground, elaborate a more radical conception of ideology critique, one capable of accounting for the current political impasses, without giving in to revisionism or giving away on our fidelity to Marx's fundamental insights. This essential claim - which in many ways is also the dividing line between Žižek and Badiou³¹⁰, who together lead the project of restructuring Leftist thought today - is clearly affirmed in the following passage from an interview with Glyn Daly:

"Now, of course, the rabbit that I now pull out of my hat is that German idealism and psychoanalysis have specific terms for this malfunction [in awareness and the human mind]: in German idealism it is absolute self-relating negativity; in psychoanalysis it is the death drive. This is at the very centre of what I am doing generally. My basic thesis is that the central feature of subjectivity in German idealism - this desubstantialized notion of subjectivity as a gap in the order of being - is consonant with the notion of the 'object small a' which, as we all know, for Lacan is a failure. It's not that we fail to encounter the object, but that the object itself is just a trace of a certain failure. What I am asserting here is that this notion of self-relating negativity, as it has been articulated from Kant to Hegel, means philosophically the same as Freud's notion of death drive - this is my fundamental perspective. In other words, the Freudian notion of death drive is not a

³⁰⁹ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.xviii

³¹⁰ Badiou, Alain (2008), *Logics of Worlds (Being and Event, 2)*, (Continuum Pub Group) p563) and Badiou, Alain (2010), *The Communist Hypothesis*, (Verso). p.237-238 (footnote)

biological category but has a philosophical dignity.”³¹¹

Žižek’s project, therefore, involves a “paradoxical relation”³¹² between two incommensurable terms: Freud and Hegel. And, as it has recently been noted by Mladen Dolar³¹³, this conjunction does seem at first an impossible task: was Freud not the one who liked to quote Heine’s famous verses, most certainly written with Hegel in mind, in which the poet mocks philosophy’s attempt to systematize everything and to “fill the holes in the universe”?

9.1 The Philosopher of the Two

Surprisingly, the idea of philosophy implied in Heine’s poem - a philosophy that would attempt to fit everything into a consistent whole, patching up holes and inconsistencies with useless abstractions - finds a much more appropriate muse not in Hegel, as it is commonly thought, but in one of his most famous interpreters, Alexandre Kojève³¹⁴.

In our previous analyses of the current impasses of psychoanalysis and Marxism, we inadvertently encountered Kojève twice: in Fukuyama’s own explicit position, which bases

³¹¹ Žižek, Slavoj and Glyn Daly (2004), *Conversations with Žižek* (Conversations), (Polity) p.61

³¹² To use Badiou’s minimal definition of philosophy in Badiou, A. (2009), ‘Cinema as Democratic Emblem’, *Parrhesia*, Number 6 - available at http://www.parrhesiajournal.org/parrhesia06/parrhesia06_badiou.pdf

³¹³ In a seminar presented by him, Žižek and Zupančič at the ICI Berlin in March of 2011 - available at <http://www.ici-berlin.org/publication/375/> See also Dolar, M. (1992), ‘Lord and Bondsman on the Couch’, *American Journal of Semiotics*, Vol 9 - Nos. 2-3 p.69-90.

³¹⁴ Žižek remarked in this same seminar at ICI Berlin, in a half-mocking tone, that most of the time one can substitute the name “Hegel” for the name “Kojève” every time he is mentioned in Lacan’s *Écrits*. Freud’s mistrust regarding German Idealism was not like Lacan’s, who worked in close proximity to philosophy for most of his teaching. Still, Kojève’s reading of Absolute Knowledge returns constantly in his work as the pivot for his critique of the absolute subject in philosophy. See “Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectics of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious” in Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company).

itself directly on Kojève's work, and in Deleuze and Guatarri's fantasy that desire would precede castration³¹⁵, implicitly framing their declaration that "schizophrenia as a process is desiring production, but it is this production as it functions at the end (...). The end of history has no other meaning"³¹⁶. Both in Fukuyama's account of the relation of History and class struggle, as well as in Deleuze and Guatarri's dismissal of Hegel and the categories of the negative, the object of their affirmation or reproach is undoubtedly closer to the Kojévian interpretation of Hegel - an interpretation which has as one of its central pillars the affirmation that the Hegelian Absolute Knowledge is a circular knowledge of the Whole³¹⁷:

- By clinging to this statement, Fukuyama could reinforce Kojève's diagnosis of the End of History on the basis that there would be nothing more to be known of freedom.

- By refusing it - but simultaneously investing it with a pertinency - Deleuze and Guatarri, could dismiss psychoanalysis under the claim that a knowledge of totality - here indistinguishable from a whole-knowledge - would only serve the subject's alienation.

Žižek, on the other hand, radically diverging from Kojève, affirms that the reading of Hegel which supports such an affirmation is extremely falsifying³¹⁸. As the Slovenian

³¹⁵ We will analyze this in more detail in our next chapter, but for now it is enough to note that Kojève's *Introduction to Reading Hegel* somehow presents a very similar thesis in the form of the claim that Desire would precede, or at least could do without, the impasse staged by the struggle for recognition. See 'In Place of an Introduction' in Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press).

³¹⁶ Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari (2004), *Anti-Oedipus* (Continuum Impacts) *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, (Continuum International Publishing Group Ltd.) p.142

³¹⁷ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press), p.94

³¹⁸ Žižek, S. 2009 *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek). Verso. p.xxx. See also Žižek, S. 2002 *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (1991). Verso p.68-69

philosopher continuously reaffirms throughout his work, the Hegelian Absolute Knowledge is not the name of how an impossibility is “lifted” or overcome by knowledge, but, in fact, *the name of how impossibility falls into knowledge*: a complex intercrossing of the *necessity of contingency* - the inherent contingency of what comes to be - with the *contingency of necessity* - the way the accident itself might be retroactively transformed into essence:

“This is how one should read Hegel’s thesis that, in the course of the dialectical development, things ‘become what they are’: it is not that a temporal deployment merely actualizes some pre-existing atemporal conceptual structure—this atemporal conceptual structure itself is the result of contingent temporal decisions.”³¹⁹

It is through the failure of an Idea to coincide with itself - for it does not escape the negative restlessness of the dialectical movement - that it *will have been* One:

“In a sense, we could say that “absolute knowledge” implies the recognition of an absolute, insurmountable *impossibility*: the impossibility of accordance between knowledge and being. Here, one should reverse Kant’s formula of the transcendental “conditions of possibility”; every positively given object is possible. it emerges only against the background of its impossibility, it can never fully “become itself”, realize all its potential, achieve full identity with itself. In so far as we accept the Hegelian definition of truth - the accordance of an object with its Notion - we could say that no object is ever “true”, ever fully “becomes what it effectively is”. *This discord is a positive condition of the object’s ontological consistency* - not because the Notion would be an Ideal never to be achieved by an empirical object, but because Notion itself partakes of the dialectical movement. As soon as an object comes too close to its Notion, this proximity changes, displaces, the Notion itself.”³²⁰

Furthermore, two of the most essential Hegelian concepts, that

³¹⁹ Žižek, S. “Is it Still Possible to be a Hegelian Today?” p.212 in Bryant, Levi, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (2011), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, (re.press).

³²⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.68

of *concrete universality*³²¹ - a short-circuit between the particular and the universal that is actualized in the way the actual content exceeds the Idea which in-forms it - and that of *totality*³²² - of how knowledge touches on truth precisely when its limit falls into that which was limited by it - make it impossible for there to be a final figure of Spirit, while at the same time accounting for why one cannot but experience *every* figure as final:

"For Hegel, (...) there is no contradiction between our absorption into the historical process and the fact that we not only can but are obliged to speak from the standpoint of the "end of history": precisely because we are absorbed into history *without remainder*, we perceive our present standpoint as "absolute" - that is, we cannot maintain an external distance towards it."³²³

To put it very succinctly, one cannot read Hegel's claim that "Das Wahre ist das Ganze. [The truth is the whole/totality]"³²⁴ without thinking its paradoxical conjunction, the affirmation that Spirit "gewinnt seine Wahrheit nur, indem er in der absoluten Zerrissenheit sich selbst findet [wins its truth only when it finds

³²¹ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books) p.603-604. Žižek writes: "the true Hegelian "concrete universality" is the very movement of negativity which splits universality from within, reducing it to one of its particular elements, one of its own species. It is only at this moment, when universality, as it were, loses the distance of an abstract container, and enters its own frame, that it becomes truly concrete" Žižek, Slavoj (2003), *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.87 One of Žižek more detailed readings of the Hegelian 'concrete universality' can be found in Žižek, S. 2009 *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek) Verso p.98 See also the first section of Zupančič, Alenka (2008), *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press)

³²² "This is what Hegel calls 'totality' or what structuralism calls 'synchronic structure': a historical moment which is not limited to the present but includes its own past and future, i.e., the way the past and the future appeared to and from this moment." p.211 in Žižek, S. "Is it Still Possible to be a Hegelian Today?" in Bryant, Levi, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (2011), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, (re.press).

³²³ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.217

³²⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §20

itself within its absolute disruption]”³²⁵

Accordingly, Žižek claims that, far from being based on this ‘totalizing’ principle of which it is accused, Hegelian philosophy must be grasped as the definitive thinking of the Two - a philosophy in which there is only a One to the extent that there is an excess that cannot be re-inscribed into a consistent Whole, and which, in its very “excessiveness”, supports the place of the Absolute as such:

“Is Hegel's dialectics not, in this precise sense, the definitive formulation of the thought of the Twosome? Its ultimate insight is neither the all-encompassing One which contains/mediates/sublates all differences, nor the explosion of multitudes (which - and this is the lesson of Deleuze's philosophy - ultimately amounts to the same: as Alain Badiou pointed out, Deleuze the philosopher of the multitude is at the same time the last great philosopher of the One), but the split of the One into Two. This split has nothing whatsoever to do with the premodern notion that, at all levels of reality, an ontological Whole is always composed of two opposed forces or principles which have to be kept in balance (from Yin and Yang to social freedom and necessity). The Hegelian Twosome, rather, designates a split which cleaves the One from within, not into two parts: the ultimate split is not between two halves, but between Something and Nothing, between the One and the Void of its Place. In this split, the opposition of two species coincides with the opposition between the genus itself and its species: it is the same element which encounters itself in its “oppositional determination” - or, in other words, the opposition between the One and its Outside is reflected back into the very identity of the One.”³²⁶

We have already seen, that the figure of the Two is inherently present in Lacanian psychoanalysis. It is precisely this point which leads Žižek's Lacanian reading of Hegel to one of its most fundamental propositions: “Hegelian dialectics and the Lacanian ‘logic of the signifier’ are two versions of the same matrix”³²⁷ - a statement which brings together two irreducibly

³²⁵ Ibid. §32

³²⁶ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.xxvi-xxvii

³²⁷ Ibid. p.xviii

rationalist thoughts, capable of affirming that the material excess of formalization has itself a formal function³²⁸, and that the failure of totalization is a structural fact, a consequence of an inconsistency in the very fabric of being³²⁹.

We mentioned above that it is possible to translate our stepping stones thus far into certain fundamental threads of Hegel's philosophy. This can now be summarized as the following "corollary" to our initial statement:

S4: *There is a knowledge of totality because Hegel has taken place.*

Following the trajectory described in our initial quote, after reading Hegel through Lacan and demonstrating that a careful reading of his work reveals that the Freudian death drive was already operational in German Idealism, Žižek moves on to question what would be the consequences of this insight for Marxism itself.

One of the most general ways in which this return to Hegel affects Marxism can be exemplified by one of Žižek's most recent slogans: a 'materialistic reversal of Marx'³³⁰, the declaration that we need to add yet a 'second twist' to the turn already proposed by Marx himself to the Hegelian dialectics. What Žižek's second twist ultimately affirms is that we must develop the consequences for Marxist thought of the fact that, at its philosophical foundation, there was already at play the dimension of an excess of representation over itself. Such an idea could help us do away with the traces of the ineffability of the immanent that still parasitize Marx's thought, rendering its conception of ideology prone to the fascination with that which

³²⁸ Dolar, M. (1992), 'Lord and Bondsman on the Couch', *American Journal of Semiotics*, Vol 9 - Nos. 2-3 p.85-87

³²⁹ See "Physics of the Infinite against Metaphysics of the finite" in Zupančič, Alenka (2008), *The Odd One In: On Comedy (Short Circuits)*, (The MIT Press).

³³⁰ Title of one of Žižek's lectures in 2008 and part of the description of his course at European Graduate School. This formulation also appears in Žižek, Slavoj (2010), *Living in the End Times*, (Verso). p.226

the market itself presents as being outside its own grasp³³¹.

One of the consequences of this new theory of representation is that, once we affirm Marxism and psychoanalysis to partake on this utterly constitutive impasse, we can argue for a re-conceptualization of the notions of political Cause and political engagement, in which alienation³³² can be recognized as a product of true fidelity, given that the emblem always fails to fully represent the subject. This would allow us to answer to the current reproaches to the radical Left which are based on the confusion between the master-signifier and the agent of totalization, no longer delegating to the traumatic scissions of the political movement the task of naming the distinction between the two concepts.

9.2 Disavowal and *Deckerinnerung*

The first obvious reproach to Žižek's project is that Hegelian philosophy is a well-established field of academic study and thus far most of the consequences Žižek elaborates from Hegel are not recognized by the majority of Hegelian schools of thought today³³³. This, in fact, is one of the fundamental starting points of Žižek's return to Hegel, for he claims precisely that something of Hegel's philosophy has been obliterated and replaced by the caricatural figure of an idealist megalomaniac:

“To us, the figure of a “panlogistic” Hegel that devours and mortifies the living substance of the particular *is the real of his critics*, the real in the Lacanian sense: the construction of a point that effectively does not exist (a monster that bears no relation to Hegel himself) but that, even so, must be presupposed so that we can legitimize our posture through a negative reference to an other, that is, an effort to distance

³³¹ See Chapter 3 in *Ibid.* p.181-243

³³² We use the term here not in the sense of a constituted, but of a constitutive blindness.

³³³ Domenico Losurdo discusses certain classical reproaches to the re-evaluation of Hegel today in Losurdo, Domenico (2004), *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns* (Post-Contemporary Interventions), (Duke University Press Books). p.26

ourselves. This horror that takes over the post-Hegelians when faced with the monstrous absolute knowledge, where does it come from? What covers up this phantasmatic construction with its fascinating presence? A hole, a void."³³⁴

Both neo-Hegelians, as well as those who, at the peak of anti-Hegelianism, preached that we 'should forget' the German philosopher, undeniably agree on the following: Hegel represented a break in the history of philosophical thinking. Two major schools of thought emerged from the recognition of this rupture: those who, in order to maintain the reference to Hegel, reduced him to a 'theory of discourse', letting go of the major ontological and metaphysical affirmations of his philosophical system, and those who, because of his supposedly megalomaniac affirmations, dismissed him altogether. In any case, it is evident that both positions are based on the image of Hegel as the 'Absolute Idealist', to which they then answer in two different ways³³⁵.

Žižek identifies in the image of Hegel that came to represent this rupture a case of what Freud referred to as *Deckerinnerung*³³⁶:

"The index of this obliteration is the ridiculous image of Hegel as the absurd "Absolute Idealist" who "pretended to know everything," to possess Absolute Knowledge, to read the mind of God, to deduce the whole of reality out of the self-movement of (his) mind—the image which is an exemplary case of what Freud called *Deck-Erinnerung* (screen-memory), a fantasy-formation intended to cover up a traumatic truth. In this sense, the post-Hegelian turn to "concrete reality, irreducible to notional mediation," should rather be read as a desperate posthumous revenge of metaphysics, as an attempt to reinstall metaphysics, albeit in the inverted form of the primacy of concrete reality."³³⁷

³³⁴ Žižek, Slavoj (2011), *Le plus sublime des hystériques - Hegel avec Lacan*, (Presses Universitaires de France - PUF). (page 14 of the Brazilian edition)

³³⁵ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.26

³³⁶ Screen Memory "in Freud (1971), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume III (1893-1899), Early Psycho-Analytic Publications, (Hogarth Press).

³³⁷ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.35-36

Žižek goes on to claim that the consequences of Hegel's philosophy were not fully elaborated even by the philosophers and thinkers who wanted to give continuity to his project under the principle of giving it a 'more materialistic' perspective: for example, at the same time that Marx "inverted" Hegel's idealism, he also opened up the space for a vitalistic notion of 'use value', based on the real, immanent procedures of socio-economic life in-itself³³⁸. The gesture of turning Hegelian dialectics "upside down", looking for its material bases, served to reintroduce into the core of Marxism the idea of something that would be obliterated by the notional mediation, a force that would externally resist the articulations of representation and value³³⁹. This, we know today, must be understood as a relapse into naive materialism, one which cannot but feed Capital with the fantasy of an inexorable source of surplus-value: from that which is supposedly natural, holistic, "real" and pure - especially if it is the purity of work as such - we can extract endless value and profit.

The move beyond Hegel's supposed idealism, even in the case of some of his most faithful followers, has represented, more fundamentally, a break with his radical conception of rationality - which had to wait until Lacan developed his novel theory of representation in order to be properly grasped, and further elaborated.

In our opinion, what enabled Žižek to unearth this essential dimension of Hegel's thought was that - with Freud, and then Lacan - it finally became possible to properly conceptualize an excess that in Hegel functions only as *an operation* rather than as a formal element³⁴⁰. Moreover, as we have already seen, while the fundamental function of this constitutive excess is not

³³⁸ For a Marxist critique, see Ilyenkov, E.V. (1983), *Dialectics of the Abstract and Concrete in Marx's Capital*, (Firebird Pubns). Lacan also makes important points regarding use-value in Lacan, J. (2005), *Le Séminaire livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre*, (Seuil) - class of 12/02/69

³³⁹ Žižek, Slavoj (2010), *Living in the End Times*, (Verso) p.206-207

³⁴⁰ This point will be developed in detail in our next chapter.

given its proper concept, it remains dangerously at the mercy of becoming an excess of the concept itself - returning in the real to paint Hegel himself in the history of philosophy as the caricature of the ghosts he was responsible for exorcising.

If Hegelian philosophy was already capable of thinking of the figure of Two as a 'One and its excess', it was with the Freudian death drive and the Lacanian object *a* that this excess was rigorously named and put to function within a strict conceptual framework - giving rise to a field that is even capable of accounting for the place that was assigned by history to Hegel himself.

It is also interesting to note that - given the unexpected proximity of Hegel and Freud - the Žižekian hypothesis about the obliteration of Hegel's philosophy is paradoxically already the result of his rehabilitation³⁴¹: the conceptual mechanism that allows Žižek to develop the difference between the Hegel who is the founder of a revolutionary philosophical school of thought and the caricatured Hegel, agent of an absurd fantasy of totalization, is itself part of the most precious legacy that the German philosopher bestowed upon philosophy - and which was reaffirmed by psychoanalysis long afterwards. It is not without reason, then, that we recognize in the fantasy of Hegel as a megalomaniac and Absolute Master strong resonances with the Freudian myths of the father. In fact, it was Freud himself, in *Moses and Monotheism*, who proposed that we think the forgotten murder of the father as a possible formula of textual obliteration: "the distortion of a text is not unlike a murder"³⁴²

Lacan once remarked that the "structural operator" of the Freudian myths - the assassination and devouring of the primal father and the repressed murder of Moses by the Jewish people, as well as the myth of Oedipus - is the equivalence between the

³⁴¹ We recognize in the necessarily irreducible supposition of the fields articulated in Žižek's project yet another sign of the borromeanism of their knotting.

³⁴² Freud, Sigmund (1940), *Moses and Monotheism*, (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London), p.70

dead father and jouissance³⁴³: in the myth of the father of the Horde³⁴⁴, the murder and ingestion of his body does not abolish the prohibition of enjoying the women of the tribe, which he maintained while alive - on the contrary: his death serves as an indelible support for this prohibition, leading the members of the tribe to seek their females elsewhere. This outward movement is sustained by the strict relation between the father's prohibition and enjoyment: insofar as enjoyment is prohibited, it remains the horizon which regulates the choice of substitute objects of each member's desire. The dead father serves, therefore, as an *origin* for the prohibition of full enjoyment - the *imaginary* name of something which was actually impossible to begin with, and which is granted, through its very exclusion, a place in the subjective constitution of the members of the tribe³⁴⁵.

This relation of opposition between the father's enjoyment of the women of the tribe and the internalized prohibition which keeps this same enjoyment as the horizon of subjectivization is dialectically reflected back into the figure of the father in *Moses and Monotheism*. In his investigation of the hypothesis that Moses would have been killed by the Jewish people, Freud articulates a fundamentally *dual*³⁴⁶ figure of the father - Moses, the Jewish leader who founded the Law, and Moses, the Egyptian whose violent rule entered into contradiction with the Law he himself had authorized³⁴⁷. Freud goes on to argue that the constitution of the Jewish religion through the murder of its founder was then repressed and, in its place, the figure of Moses as the grand benevolent leader - who no one would ever have wanted to assassinate - and the promise of the future Messiah - the figure to which the guilt originated with the murderous act was now associated - came to be, constructed upon the forgotten

³⁴³ Lacan, J. (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil). (page 123 of the english edition)

³⁴⁴ Freud, Sigmund (2001), *RC Series Bundle: Totem and Taboo*, (Routledge) p.164-166

³⁴⁵ Lacan, J. (1995) *O seminário, livro IV: A relação de objeto (1956-1957)* Jorge Zahar Editor, p.255

³⁴⁶ Freud, Sigmund (1940), *Moses and Monotheism*, (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London). p.84

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p.76

murder³⁴⁸.

In the first case, the killing of the father of the horde had to be consistently present in order to disavow, and therefore maintain, the impossible of the sexual relation under the name of its imaginary prohibition. In the case of the murder of Moses, the explicitly exceptional place of the father - the one who is not completely under the law he authorizes - does not function as a univocal instance: Moses was the exception, but it is precisely his submission to the Law founded by this exception that led to his death. Moses was killed because, even though he stood for the Law, he could not *fully* stand for it - and it is precisely this negative dimension of his representation by the Law that was repressed and substituted by an imaginary figure. According to Freud, this lack of representation insisted throughout Jewish history as a repetition of the satisfaction associated with the murder of God's representative³⁴⁹.

On the one hand, the imaginary opposition between prohibition and full enjoyment, sustained by the dead father of the Horde. On the other, the symbolic ambiguity of Law and partial enjoyment, sustained by the repetition of the murder. Does Hegel not offer himself here as the example of a third movement, in which obliteration is not the product of what remained unrepresented by the signifier, as in the case of Moses, but precisely a consequence of the fact that, in his philosophy, *too much got caught up in representation itself*? Maybe, the resonances between this strange idea and the Hegelian reading of the Christian Event should not be taken for a coincidence.

As Žižek repeatedly returns to again and again, the empty place left by the disavowal of a crucial and traumatic dimension of Hegel's thought was filled by the figure of violent delusions about knowledge - very akin to that of the imaginary father of the Horde: alive, Hegel was the megalomaniac philosopher who claimed to "posses all knowledge" - dead, he preserves for us the ideological horizon of the Whole of knowledge through its very

³⁴⁸ Ibid. p.144

³⁴⁹ Ibid. 139

prohibition - so dear to us today - of attempting such a “fascist” endeavor.

9.3 Hegel and Lacan

Though psychoanalysis was responsible for carrying forward this otherwise disavowed dimension of Hegel’s thought, making it possible for Žižek’s later rehabilitation of the philosopher, some of the current impasses of the psychoanalytical field arise from the fact that this fidelity was almost accidental and still remains widely unrecognized. We could say that Lacan was not (knowingly) faithful to Hegel: he rather was faithful to the conceptualization of the Real³⁵⁰.

In fact, given that Lacan was himself an outspoken disciple of Kojève and his criticisms of Hegel explicitly followed the anthropological interpretations of his master³⁵¹, the starting point of Žižek’s Lacanian reading of Hegel, was to defend the thesis that the *implicit* trajectory of Lacan’s teaching delineates an opposite movement to the *explicit* one: the further Lacan moved away from Kojève, the closer he actually came to the Hegel himself, unknowingly elaborating some of the fundamental insights of his philosophy³⁵². The tracing of this unspoken thread is made that much harder by the fact that Lacan used the names ‘Kojève’ and ‘Hegel’ indistinctly, practically as synonyms³⁵³.

³⁵⁰ “the Real is my symptomatic response [le Réel est ma réponse symptomatique]” Lacan, Jacques and Jacques-Alain Miller (2005), *Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan : Livre 23, Le sinthome*, (Seuil). - class of 13/4/76

³⁵¹ See, for example, Lacan’s discussion with Jean Hyppolite in Lacan, J. (1988), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book II: The Ego in Freud’s Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.64 and his comments on Kojève in Lacan, Jacques and Jacques-Alain Miller (2001), *Le Séminaire, livre VIII : le transfert*, (Seuil) - class of 7/12/1960

³⁵² Žižek, S. 1988 *Le plus sublime des hystériques: Hegel passe* (French Edition). Distribution, Distique. Extracts available online. ‘Lacan: at what point is he Hegelian?’ Available from: <http://www.lacan.com/zizlacan1.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011]., and ‘Hegel with Lacan’ Available from: <http://www.lacan.com/zizlacan2.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

³⁵³ Dolar, M. (1992), ‘Lord and Bondsman on the Couch’, *American Journal of Semiotics*, Vol 9 - Nos. 2-3 69-90.

Still, following Žižek's reading of the different elaborations of Lacan's notion of the Real, we can observe some of the traces of this hidden thread, focusing here on the outlined relation between the "scarecrow image of Hegel" and the Imaginary Father. We believe that it is possible to sketch an articulation between the course of Lacan's elaborations of the RSI of the Father (the real, the symbolic and the imaginary fathers) and the philosophical references with which he engaged at different moments of his teaching:

i) An early Lacan, who focused on separating the Imaginary and its effects from the other registers, the one who defined the symbolic by its intersubjective dimension, and for whom the Real was defined as that which 'resist' symbolization³⁵⁴. Three theses that find strict resonance with Kojève: the dismissal of the Master as an imaginary formation that alienates man in slavery³⁵⁵, the intersubjective dimension of Desire as Desire for recognition³⁵⁶, and the original thesis of the real as what "resists symbolization"³⁵⁷.

Did Kojève not serve here as the very *father of the Imaginary*, allowing Lacan to distinguish the imaginary other from the symbolic Other of intersubjectivity and to first deal with the dangerous effects of the misappropriations of Freud by psychology?

ii) But Lacan's true fidelity, which was to Freud, traverses this first moment and reveals a second one, in which Kant served as the main philosophical reference: do we not find beyond the explicit affinities between Kant's Thing-in-itself and Freud's 'das Ding', condensed in Lacan's new conception of Real³⁵⁸, an

³⁵⁴ Lacan, Jacques (1975), *Le Séminaire Livre I: Les Écrits Techniques de Freud*, (Seuil). - class of 17/2/1954

³⁵⁵ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press). p.25

³⁵⁶ 'In place of an introduction' in *Ibid.* p.2

³⁵⁷ *Ibid.* p.156

³⁵⁸ Lacan, Jacques (1986), *L'éthique de la psychanalyse, 1959-1960*, (Seuil). - class of 27/1/1960

even greater affinity with Kant³⁵⁹ in Lacan's further distinction between the Symbolic Father and the Desire of the Mother³⁶⁰, which appears in its place in a relation akin to the one between the noumena and the Law?

Did Kant not serve at this particular moment of Lacan's teaching as *the father of the Symbolic* in its properly ethical and ontological dimensions, allowing for the elaboration of Freud's metapsychology into a veritable "critique of pure desire", capable of distinguishing in the categorical imperative of the superego the ethical injunction of not giving way on one's Desire³⁶¹?

iii) And when Lacan's fidelity to the truth of the Freudian Event led him beyond the Real as absence into the full articulation of the object a³⁶², and into an even sharper critique of Descartes's cogito³⁶³, - do we not find here the hidden spectre of the Hegelian concept of Spirit "as substance as well as subject"³⁶⁴?

Is Hegel then not *the father of the Real*³⁶⁵ insofar as it was through a repeated and unsatisfying re-imaginarization of the

³⁵⁹ Baas, Bernard (2000), *De la chose à l'objet: Jacques Lacan et la traversée de la phénoménologie*, (Peeters).

³⁶⁰ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *Séminaire, tome 4 : la Relation d'objet*, (Seuil). p.253-256

³⁶¹ Lacan, Jacques (1986), *L'éthique de la psychanalyse, 1959-1960*, (Seuil) - class of 6/7/60

³⁶² Lacan, Jacques (2004), *Le séminaire, livre 10 : L'angoisse*, (Seuil). - class of 21/11/62

³⁶³ Lacan, J. (1967), *Séminaire XIV: La logique du fantasme*, (unpublished). - class of 11/1/67

³⁶⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §17

³⁶⁵ An expression taken from Lacan himself: "In effect, there beyond the Oedipus myth we recognize an operator, a structural operator, which is called the real father - with, I would say, this property that in the name of a paradigm, it is also the promotion, at the heart of the Freudian system, of what the father of the real is, which places a term for the impossible at the center of Freud's utterance [*enonciation*]." Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil). (p.123 in the english edition)

philosopher in Lacan's 16th and 17th Seminars³⁶⁶ that he was able to confront the un-analyzed in Freud's desire³⁶⁷ and, beyond the Oedipus complex, render the primacy of the notion of the Real as the non-coincidence of the symbolic with itself over the Real as cause³⁶⁸?

As Lacan himself puts it, castration is precisely that which can be transmitted³⁶⁹ and the agent of castration is none other than the real father, whose fundamental inadequacy, an obstacle produced by the very master signifier he incarnates, renders him not only castrated, but castration itself³⁷⁰. Not only do we find this precise point in the disavowed core of the Hegelian account of the Christian Event³⁷¹ but it seems that Lacan's radical fidelity to the Real was precisely what led him, unknowingly, to continue the project of the philosopher who was in many ways an embarrassment to 20th Century's thought.

At that moment in his teaching, Lacan was actually in constant dialogue with Hegel, especially regarding the reformulation of how he had previously conceptualized the struggle for Recognition. But, as we already mentioned, that which was in truth a final separation from Kojève's anthropological phenomenology was here indistinguishable from a separation from Hegel himself, given the extreme proximity of the two figures for Lacan. Because of this, it was *against Hegel*, that, throughout this period, many of Lacan's most Hegelian concepts

³⁶⁶ See Mladen Dolar's "Hegel as the Other side of Psychoanalysis" in Clemens, Justin and Russell Grigg (2006), 'Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis: Reflections on Seminar XVII sic vi' p.129-154

³⁶⁷ Lacan, J. (2005), *Le Séminaire livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre*, (Seuil). - class of 26/2/1969 ; Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil) - class of 18/3/70

³⁶⁸ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil) - class of 18/3/1970. See Žižek's analysis of this shift in Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View (Short Circuits)*, (MIT Press). p.62-63

³⁶⁹ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil) - class of 8/4/70.

³⁷⁰ Ibid. (page 121 in the english edition)

³⁷¹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press).

were elaborated, such as the notion of surplus-jouissance³⁷² - explicitly developed to supplement Marx's 'surplus value'³⁷³ - and, especially, the matheme of the Four Discourses³⁷⁴.

It was also within this same moment of Lacan's teaching in mind that we have attempted to apply to Lacan that which he accomplished in regards to Freud: in the seminar *The Other side of Psychoanalysis*, he equates the three Freudian myths of the Father - the Father of the Horde, Moses and Oedipus - and the RSI of the Father, displacing the figure of the real father, the father as a surplus of castration itself, to the core of the psychoanalytical considerations³⁷⁵.

In what was yet another resonance with Hegel - and with Lenin, for that matter³⁷⁶ - Lacan's new placement of the real father as the agent of castration led him to emphasize the need of properly transmitting and organizing the psychoanalytical movement. Lacan proposed an unheard of concatenation between the psychoanalytical conceptual apparatus and the organization of the psychoanalytical community - akin only to Hegel's reading of the Christian Event, in which the arrival of the Holy Spirit simultaneously paved the way for the proper constitution of philosophy and for the formation of the community of believers³⁷⁷. It was then that Lacan decided to elaborate a new model of functioning for his recently created School, the *École*

³⁷² Lacan, J. (2005), *Le Séminaire livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre*, (Seuil). - class of 13/11/1968

³⁷³ See Regnault's 'Lacan's Marx' in Žižek, Slavoj, Alain Badiou, and Jacques-Alain Miller (2010), *Lacanian Ink 36 - The Gaze*, (The Wooster Press).

³⁷⁴ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil) - class of 26/11/1969

³⁷⁵ Ibid. See classes of 18/2/1970 ('The castrated Master'), 11/3/1970 ('Oedipus and Moses and the Horde Father'), 18/3/1970 ('From Myth to Structure') and 15/4/1970 ('Yahvé's ferocious ignorance'), put together under the title of 'Beyond the Oedipal Complex' in Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil)

³⁷⁶ Lacan, Jacques (1999), *Encore : Le séminaire, livre XX*, (Seuil). - class 20/3/73

³⁷⁷ Hegel, G.W.F. (1968), *Hegel's Lectures on the History of Philosophy - Vol III*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul/Humanities Press). See also Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press).

*Freudienne de Paris*³⁷⁸, and to develop the 'pass': a mechanism designed to assess if one has actually reached the end of analysis based on the possibility of transmitting to others something of one's own position of enjoyment³⁷⁹.

But, and this is our wager, as Lacan got closer to the disavowed dimension of Hegel, the spectre of a rupture or obliteration returned.

In *The Six paradigms of Jouissance*³⁸⁰, Jacques-Alain Miller sketches a brilliant and thorough panorama of Lacan's different elaborations of the relation between the signifier and enjoyment. In it, he presents the moment of the Four Discourses as that of the fifth paradigm: defined as that of 'discursive jouissance'³⁸¹, the moment of Lacan's insistence on the real as *produced* by the symbolic, as its inherent non-coincidence.

But Miller recognizes that there would have been a break right after these formulations, marking the beginning of a sixth paradigm³⁸²: that of the "empire of the non-relation", of the idiotic and solitary enjoyment³⁸³ – a moment which also corresponds to the end of any noteworthy reference to Hegel in the seminars.

Similarly, in what is surely one of the most important accounts of Lacan's itinerary, *L'Oeuvre Claire*³⁸⁴, Jean-Claude Milner also identifies a break that would occur around the same point:

³⁷⁸ See "The Founding Act" in Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.229

³⁷⁹ See "Proposition of the 9th of October of 1967" in Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil)., specially page 225

³⁸⁰ Miller, J-A. "Os seis paradigmas do gozo". In: *Opção Lacaniana*, n° 26-27. São Paulo:

Edições Eólia, abril de 2000, p. 87-105.

³⁸¹ Ibid. p.95

³⁸² I Miller, J-A. "Os seis paradigmas do gozo". In: *Opção Lacaniana*, n° 26-27. São Paulo:

Edições Eólia, abril de 2000, p. 101

³⁸³ Ibid. 103

³⁸⁴ Milner, Jean-Claude (1998), *L'oeuvre claire*, (Seuil).

“The Seminar XX, which introduces it [the Borromean knot], occupies a place of exception in Lacan’s work. Because of its doctrinal reach: in it, Lacan’s second classicism fulfills itself, both in what it distinguishes itself and articulates itself to the first (such is the title of the seminar: *Encore*). Because of its form: in it, the disjunction between the exoteric and the esoteric reveals to have been provisory; here the form of the work is tied to its protreptic efficacy. Finally, because of its inversion, worthy of tragedies: in its perfection, it contains the seed of the lethal factor by which the Seminar as such will be undone, from the first to the last book.”³⁸⁵

Here we find what would be the beginning of the “deconstruction” of the doctrine of the matheme³⁸⁶ - the centrality of mathematization in the Lacanian formulations - which would then have given way to the emphasis on the theory of the knots³⁸⁷. The matheme would finally have been replaced by the poem, by the fluid power of language that precedes its letter³⁸⁸.

But, for Lacan, the matheme was also a condition of transmission³⁸⁹ and a conceptual apparatus that was deeply connected to some of his most important and radical institutional endeavors: the foundation of the Freudian School, the formalization of the mechanism of *pas*se and the magazine with unsigned articles *Scilicet*³⁹⁰. With the supposed break represented by the sixth paradigm of enjoyment and by the dissolution of the doctrine of the matheme, these three pillars would also have lost their conceptual necessity and strength:

“The doctrine of the matheme was linked to an institutional correlate: the Freudian School; this school was called both ‘school’ and ‘Freudian’ because it was based on the tripartite hypothesis that something is integrally transmitted since Freud, that the place of the integral transmission is a school and that

³⁸⁵ Ibid. (page 135 of the Brazilian edition)

³⁸⁶ Ibid. p.129

³⁸⁷ Ibid. p.130

³⁸⁸ Ibid. p.133

³⁸⁹ Lacan, Jacques (1999), *Encore : Le séminaire, livre XX*, (Seuil). - classes of 8/5/73 and 15/5/73

³⁹⁰ See ‘Introduction of *Scilicet* on the title of the magazine of the Freudian School of Paris’ in Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.288

the medium for an integral transmission in such a place is the *matheme*; the school acted towards the exterior through a magazine titled *Scilicet* ("you may know what the Freudian School thinks of it", this was its epigraph; to which we add: "thanks to the *matheme*"); this magazine was modeled on Bourbaki, because mathematics is the model of literal transmission and because Bourbaki is the model of literal mathematics. Well, the school was dissolved, in an instant. Even though another school appeared right afterwards, we cannot pretend as if the dissolution didn't happened. The magazine *Scilicet* disappeared. In its name and form (signed essays) the magazines which followed attest to a more classical model of organization. In parallel, the *bourbakism* is in mathematics a closed figure and in such a way that Lacan could not ignore.³⁹¹

Thus, we can see that it is quite well-established in the Lacanian field that the moment of greatest proximity between Lacan, Hegel and Marx would have been followed by a rupture, after which there would not have been a continuation so much as a break or overcoming of what was developed until then. Even the most important and brilliant Lacanian thinkers today, capable of the most lucid interpretations of Lacan's teaching, seem to agree that there would have been a rupture precisely at the moment of deriving the consequences of Lacan's articulation of the strict relation between psychoanalysis and its place in the *polis* - which was supported by the rigorous elaboration of what would be a transmissible knowledge capable of separating, for example, an institution's emblem from an agency that is supposed to alienate the subject by inscribing her in a totalizing normativity.

In our opinion, there is a certain fundamental correlation between what is identified in this supposed break in Lacan's thought - which is not interpreted in exactly the same manner by Miller and Milner, but seems sufficiently similar to us in terms of what is at stake here - and the Žižekian account of the disavowal of Hegel. The Slovenian philosopher himself indicates this correlation when, in *On Belief*³⁹², he argues against Miller's interpretation of the passage from the fifth to the sixth

³⁹¹ Milner, Jean-Claude (1998), *L'oeuvre claire*, (Seuil). p.130

³⁹² Žižek, S. (2001) *On Belief* (Thinking in Action). Routledge.

paradigm. For Žižek, this reading of Lacan serves as evidence of Miller's current difficulties in keeping to the exemplary rigor of his conceptual elaborations when faced with the pressure of the post-modern 'digital age', which seems to demand of psychoanalysis the recognition of new subjective typologies, conceptual formations etc:

"This weakness of Miller's description of the paradigms of jouissance has a deeper ground. Today, in a time of continuous rapid changes, from the "digital revolution" to the retreat of old social forms, thought is more than ever exposed to the temptation of "losing its nerve," of precociously abandoning the old conceptual coordinates. The media constantly bombard us with the need to abandon the "old paradigms": if we are to survive, we have to change our most fundamental notions of what constitutes personal identity, society, environment, etc. New Age wisdom claims that we are entering a new "post-human" era; postmodern political thought tells us that we are entering post-industrial societies, in which the old categories of labor, collectivity, class, etc., are theoretical zombies, no longer applicable to the dynamics of modernization. The Third Way ideology and political practice is effectively THE model of this defeat, of this inability to recognize how the New is here to enable the Old to survive.

Against this temptation, one should rather follow the unsurpassed model of Pascal and ask the difficult question: how are we to remain faithful to the Old in the new conditions? ONLY in this way can we generate something effectively New. And the same holds for psychoanalysis: starting with the rise of ego-psychology in the 1930s, psychoanalysts are "losing their nerve," laying down their (theoretical) arms, hastening to concede that the Oedipal matrix of socialization is no longer operative, that we live in times of universalized perversion, that the concept of "repression" is of no use in our permissive times. Unfortunately, even such an astute theoretician as Miller seems to succumb to this temptation, desperately trying to catch up with the alleged post-patriarchal "new times," driven by the fear of losing contact with the latest social developments, and thus proposing dubious fast generalizations, claiming that the symbolic order proper is no longer operative in our society of imaginary semblances, that feminization is acquiring global dimensions, that the very notion of interpretation is rendered inoperative ... Miller's description of Lacan's last paradigm of jouissance exemplifies this failure of conceptual thought, whose lack is filled in by hasty pre-

theoretical generalizations"³⁹³

We have seen that Žižek's philosophical project is defined by the fidelity to a certain traumatic truth which emerged with Hegel and that was later obliterated by the philosophical developments of his critics and followers alike. This fidelity, we argue, is reaffirmed by the philosopher through his engagement with the conceptual moment in which Freud, Hegel and Marx came the closest to one another in Lacan's teaching. In accordance, we claim that one of the most fundamental theses of Žižekian philosophy can be formulated into the following statement:

S5: *the obliteration of Hegel threatens to repeat itself in Lacan*

This thesis names Žižek's strategy of returning to Hegel through Lacan, but also of keeping true to Lacan *through Hegel*, opening the space for us to unfold some of the unthought consequences of the moment identified as that of the "fifth paradigm" in Lacan's teaching.

All that remains now is for us to openly declare our fidelity to Žižek's philosophical project.

10. Žižekian philosophy

In 2009, from the 13th to the 15th of March, some of the greatest intellectuals and contemporary philosophers, led by Badiou and Žižek, came together in London for a conference, later published under the name *The Idea of Communism*³⁹⁴.

This public event served as the emblem of a new attempt to reformulate the communist hypothesis, taking into account not only the drastic failures of its implementation in the 20th century, but also the urgency of thinking the Communist Idea in the light

³⁹³ Ibid. p.32-33

³⁹⁴ Published as Žižek, S. and Douzinas, C. (2010) *The Idea of Communism*. Verso.

of the even greater failure of our current predicament.

In his introductory remarks to the lecture cycle³⁹⁵, Žižek emphasized the role of philosophy today: we cannot give in to the temptation of transforming the weight of the present - the situation of obscene misery in which hundreds of millions of people live today, the environmental problems and the financial crisis - into a justification for acting under the terms of this same present. We should also not forget that the concern with mechanisms which would offer quick emergency solutions to the current situation of those who are excluded and exploited is shared by the neo-liberal benefactors and Leftist thinkers alike. It is *the patience of the concept*³⁹⁶ that distinguishes the true Left, the difficult task of thinking not the continuation of the present, but the very impossibility of something New.

“We must have trust in theory!” was Žižek’s first lesson that day, one which set the tone for almost all the lectures. But what might seem at first a simple reversal of Marx’s famous eleventh thesis on Feuerbach³⁹⁷ - given that such a direct “call to action” serves today the interests of the ever-acting ruling class and not of those who are currently excluded even from thought itself - must, in fact, be understood as a much more subversive short-circuit: until today philosophers have only interpreted the world in different ways; the question, however, is *to transform the very concept of interpretation*³⁹⁸.

³⁹⁵ These remarks were not included in the published edition, but they can be found at the website http://infinetthought.cinestatic.com/index.php/site/index/on_the_idea_of_communist_birkbeck_13-15_march_2009/

³⁹⁶ “With what must Science Begin?”, §100 in Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books).

³⁹⁷ 11th Thesis: “The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways; the point is to change it.” Available from: <http://www.Marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/theses/theses.htm> [Accessed June 19, 2011].

³⁹⁸ “what is required is the courage to conceive of theorizing not only as interpretation, which in itself cannot break through the social fantasy and its endless chain of alibis, but also as a reorientation of the subject in its relation to the fundamental fantasy” Vighi, Fabio (2010), *On Žižek’s Dialectics: Surplus*,

10.1 Two Contemporary Tasks

In the wake of this fundamental collective impetus, the recent publications of *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*³⁹⁹ and *Living in the End Times*⁴⁰⁰ crystalize some of Žižek's most fundamental philosophical concerns into two crucial impasses of political thought.

First as Tragedy, Then as Farce was written in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. In the book, while explicitly arguing for a return to the Communist hypothesis, Žižek nevertheless reminds us that simply remaining faithful to the Idea is not enough - we need to localize the antagonisms out of which the Idea itself concretely emerges:

"The only true question today is: do we endorse the predominant naturalization of capitalism, or does today's global capitalism contain antagonisms which are sufficiently strong to prevent its indefinite reproduction? There are four such antagonisms: the looming threat of an ecological catastrophe; the inappropriateness of the notion of private property in relation to so-called "intellectual property" ; the socio-ethical implications of new techno-scientific developments (especially in biogenetics); and, last but not least, the creation of new forms of apartheid, new Walls and slums. There is a qualitative difference between this last feature - the gap that separates the Excluded from the Included - and the other three, which designate different aspects of what Hardt and Negri call the "commons; the shared substance of our social being, the privatization of which involves violent acts which should, where necessary, be resisted with violent means. (...) It is the reference to the "commons" which justifies the resuscitation of the notion of communism: it enables us to see the progressive "enclosure" of the commons as a process of proletarianization of those who are thereby excluded from their own substance."⁴⁰¹

Subtraction, Sublimation (Continuum Studies In Continental Philosophy), (Continuum) p.163

³⁹⁹ Žižek, S. (2009) *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*. Verso.

⁴⁰⁰ Žižek, S. (2010) *Living in the End Times*. Verso.

⁴⁰¹ Žižek, S. (2009) *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*. Verso. p.91-92

Žižek also defines the three “secondary” antagonisms as the three problems of the *commons*: commons of *culture*, commons of *external nature* and commons of *internal nature*⁴⁰². Given the “qualitative difference” of the radical gap which distinguishes the Included/Excluded opposition from the other three antagonisms, the diagnosis of these “four horsemen of the Apocalypse” is strictly linked to the necessity of a radical re-laboration of the notion of the proletariat:

“We should certainly not drop the notion of the proletariat, or of the proletarian position; on the contrary, the present conjuncture compels us to radicalize it to an existential level well beyond Marx's imagination. We need a more radical notion of the proletarian subject, a subject reduced to the evanescent point of the Cartesian cogito.”⁴⁰³

In *Living in the End Times*, Žižek further elaborates this position in a dispute against Catherine Malabou's book *Les Nouveaux Blessés*⁴⁰⁴, proposing the development of the notion of “libidinal proletariat”⁴⁰⁵ to account for the radicalization of the proletarian subjectivity, which is today devoid even of the experience of being excluded, thoroughly substance-less and incapable of recognizing and organizing itself as a class:

“how does the rise of such a detached subject relate to the ongoing process of “enclosing” the commons, the process of the proletarianization of those who are thereby excluded from their own substance? Do the three versions of proletarianization not fit perfectly the three contemporary figures of the Cartesian subject?

The first figure, corresponding to the enclosure of external nature, is, unexpectedly perhaps, Marx's notion of the *proletarian*, the exploited worker whose product is taken away from him, reducing him to a subjectivity without substance, to the void of pure subjective potentiality whose actualization in the labor process equals its de-realization.

⁴⁰² Ibid p.91

⁴⁰³ Ibid p.92

⁴⁰⁴ Malabou, C. (2007) *Les nouveaux blessés : De Freud à la neurologie, penser les traumatismes contemporains*. Bayard Centurion.

⁴⁰⁵ Žižek, S. (2010) *Living in the End Times*. Verso. p.306

The second figure, linked to the enclosure of symbolic "second nature," is that of a *totally "mediatized" subject*, fully immersed in virtual reality, while "spontaneously" he thinks that he is in direct contact with reality, his relationship to reality is in fact sustained by complex digital machinery. Recall Neo, the hero of *The Matrix*, who all of a sudden discovers that what he perceives as everyday reality is constructed and manipulated by a mega-computer — is his position not precisely that of the victim Cartesian *malin génie*?

The third figure, corresponding to the enclosure of our "inner" nature, is, of course, the post-traumatic subject: to get an idea of the *cogito* at its purest, its "degree zero," one need only come face to face with an autistic "monster" — a painful and disturbing spectacle. This is why we resist so adamantly the specter of the *cogito*.⁴⁰⁶

We cannot fail to recognize here the strict relation between Žižek's four antagonisms and that which we have been trying to circumscribe so far: the revisionist threat of obliterating the structural difference between critical and consolidated knowledge through the lack of a rigorous articulation between master-signifier and 'object a'. As we have seen, this threat might very well name an antagonism at the heart of critical thought itself, giving rise to a subjective impasse *at the level of the conceptualization of the subject as such*: a tension which presents itself, for example, as a demand for the dissolution of the boundary between neurosis and psychosis, on account of the rise of the "ordinary psychosis".

In addition to the plea for a re-elaboration of the notion of proletariat, Žižek has also returned to the polemical question of the conceptualization of the Communist State. Given the current ideological place of the signifier "totalitarian", it is no wonder that there is nothing more despised by the Left today than the Hegelian idea of the State as "God's march in the world"⁴⁰⁷ - yet, it is precisely in the direction of the further affirmation of the relation between community and State that Žižek constructs

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid. p.313-314

⁴⁰⁷ Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press), p.197, §258

his argument. Consider, for example, the following passage from *The Idea of Communism*:

“How, then, are we to revolutionize an order whose very principle is constant self-revolutionizing? (...) The Hegelian answer is that capitalism is already in itself communism, that only a purely formal reversal is needed. My surmise is: what is contemporary dynamic capitalism, precisely insofar as it is ‘wordless’, a constant disruption of all fixed order, opens up the space for a revolution which will break the vicious cycle of revolt and its re-inscription, i.e. which will no longer follow the pattern of an eventual explosion after which things return to normal, but will assume the task of a *new ‘ordering’ against the global capitalist disorder?* Out of revolt we should move on shamelessly to enforcing a new order. (Is this not one of the lessons of the ongoing financial meltdown?)”⁴⁰⁸

Žižek concludes with the proposal of “two axioms concerning the relationship between State and politics”:

“1) The failure of the Communist State-Party politics is above all and primarily the failure of anti-statist politics, of the endeavor to break out of the constraints of the State, to replace statal forms of organization with ‘direct’ non-representative forms of self-organization (‘councils’). 2) If you do not have an idea of what you want to replace the State with, you have no right to subtract/withdraw from the State. Instead of withdrawing into a distance from the State, the true task should be to make the State itself work in a non-statal mode”⁴⁰⁹

In *Living in the End Times* this position is further developed as Žižek presents two impossibilities which must be dealt with if we are to elaborate the consequences of our return to Hegel⁴¹⁰: the fundamental non-relation between self-consciousness and the revolutionary act⁴¹¹, and the impossibility of not creating surplus value out of the direct resistance to the inscription in the capitalist market⁴¹². In line with his previous statements, Žižek claims that the impossibility of directly affirming the stateless or

⁴⁰⁸ Žižek, S. and Douzinas, C. (2010) *The Idea of Communism*. Verso. p.219

⁴⁰⁹ Ibidem

⁴¹⁰ See chapter ‘Bargaining: The Return of the Critique of Political Economy’ in Žižek, S. (2010) *Living in the End Times*. Verso.

⁴¹¹ Ibid. p.181

⁴¹² Ibid. p.242

of directly resisting the State requires us to move along the much narrower conceptual path of thoroughly rethinking the notion of State itself:

"The question to be raised here concerns the classical Marxian notion of proletarian revolution: is it not all too subjectivist, conceiving communism as the final victory of subject over substance? This does not mean that we have to accept the necessity of social domination; we should, rather, accept the "primacy of the objective" (Adorno): the way to rid ourselves of our masters is not for humankind itself to become a collective master over nature, but to recognize the imposture in the very notion of the Master."⁴¹³

To conceptualize "a more radical notion of proletarian subject" and "to recognize the imposture in the very notion of the Master", these are, for us Žižekians, the two key tasks today. Both arising out of the impasses of articulating the relation between master-signifier and object *a* in the university discourse, both requiring of us the patience and courage of the concept.

Žižek summarizes the articulation of these two tasks in one sentence:

"All truly emancipatory politics is generated by the short-circuit between the universality of the 'public use of reason' and the universality of the 'part of no part'."⁴¹⁴

10.2 The Reflective Positing of Lacan

We have already seen that the difficulty of elaborating the consequences of the formalization of the master-signifier and its material excess can be accounted for by an analysis of the effects of Lacan's notion of university discourse. We have also seen that this discursivity produces a subjectivity that is

⁴¹³ Ibid. p.242-243. Also, the position regarding State politics is one of the main diverging points between Žižek and Badiou. Badiou's position, in opposition to Žižek, is stated in a letter included in Badiou, A. 2010 *The Communist Hypothesis*. Verso. (p.261)

⁴¹⁴ Žižek, S. and Douzinas, C. (2010) *The Idea of Communism*. Verso. p.215

incapable of making do with the senselessness of the signifier and the uselessness of the excess - to describe it, Lacan even uses the Marxian term *lumpenproletariat*⁴¹⁵.

Following some of Žižek's own remarks on the matter⁴¹⁶, we believe that the effects of the university discourse are at the very root of the two conceptual challenges we recognized at the vanguard of Žižekian thought, calling out for a precise and rigorous conceptualization of the theory of the Four Discourses and its consequences. Our wager is that this is one of the fundamental starting points in the formulation of the two tasks identified above and in the groundwork we must do on our way to a new affirmation of the communist project.

In fact, though Žižek's philosophical trajectory has proven itself to be extremely fruitful for the development of Hegelian philosophy and Marxist politics, when we consider psychoanalysis' porosity to his thought, we find that very little of his thought has been incorporated back into the Lacanian field. Žižek's journey from Lacan to Hegel, and then to Marx, has had very little reach in regards to its ultimate return to Lacan himself. We must consider this veritable Hegelian reflective positing as one of our most clear directives.

The first and most explicit consequence that can be drawn from this point of reference is that - following Žižek's diagnosis of the four current antagonisms of capitalism - we should formally maintain that psychoanalysis' current impasses arise precisely from such antagonisms. This would allow us to draw from our statement:

S5: *the obliteration of Hegel threatens to repeat itself in Lacan.*

The following two additional ones:

⁴¹⁵ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse*, 1969-1970, (Seuil). (p.190 in the english edition)

⁴¹⁶ See, for example, "The impasses of anti-anti-semitism" and "the historicity of the four discourses" in Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press).

S6: The current institutional crisis in psychoanalysis must be thought as an impasse of the concept of State itself

S7: The current conceptual crisis in psychoanalysis must be thought as an impasse of the order of the libidinal proletariat.

According to our very definition of Žižek's philosophical project, in order to develop the consequences of these two corollaries, we must also develop the consequences, for philosophy, Marxism and psychoanalysis itself, of Žižek's Hegelianism, especially regarding the supposed break in Lacan's teaching at the very moment of his greatest proximity to Hegel. As we already mentioned, it was at this fleeting moment that three of the major achievements of contemporary psychoanalysis came to be: the foundation of a new model for the collective of analysts in the EFP, the creation of the mechanism of the pass and *Scilicet* - the School's magazine.

In fact, it is this Latin word which must now serve as our emblem: not only does it name the Idea that shines through all the three achievements of psychoanalysis mentioned above, but, we believe, it also names the wager at the very core of Žižek's philosophy:

"Back in the 1960s, Lacan named the irregular short-lived periodical of his school *Scilicet* - the message was not the word's predominant meaning today (namely; "to wit", "that is to say"), but literally "it is permitted to know".⁴¹⁷ (To know what? - what the Freudian School of Paris thinks about the unconscious...) Today, our message should be the same: it is permitted to know and to fully engage in communism, to again act in full fidelity to the communist Idea. Liberal permissiveness is of the order of *videlicet* - it is permitted to see, but the very fascination with the obscenity we are allowed to observe prevents us from knowing what it is that we see."⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁷ Žižek, S. (2009) 'First As Tragedy, Then As Farce', Verso, p.6-9

10.3 Only that which is non-all is for all

There is a fundamental difference between the Lacanian *Scilicet* and the motto of the Enlightenment, *Sapere Aude*⁴¹⁸. Instead of “having the courage to use your own understanding!” - having courage to partake in the public use of Reason - as Kant incited us to⁴¹⁹, the Lacanian motto invites us to take a further step and include into the very space of Reason the singular ways we fail to rise to the Cause.

The apparent passivity of this ‘permission’ - in loud contrast with the enlightened imperative to courage - is misleading: what is at stake is that, freed from the confusions between totalization and totality, between Absolute and absolutism, the task of thinking is no longer to confront the resistances of a supposed prohibition, but to acknowledge that, rather than avoiding totalization, we must go *through it*, for thought is up to its task only when it looks the One in the face and tarries with it. This tarrying is the magical power which converts it into a totality. To know everything is impossible and *this is the very condition of knowledge*: we are allowed to desire to know.

Lacan begins the text in which he introduces this latin emblem by distinguishing his School from the other “societies” of psychoanalysis. This essential division has the articulation of the Cause and its failure as one of its very principles:

“Scilicet: you are allowed to know, that is the sense of this title. You are allowed to know now that I have failed in a teaching that, for twelve years, has addressed itself only to psychoanalysts, and which, in their own doing, four years ago, encountered that to which, in december of 1967, in the École

⁴¹⁸ ‘Answer to the question ‘What is Enlightenment?’’(1784) in Kant, Immanuel (1991), Kant: Political Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press). p.54

⁴¹⁹ “Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-imposed immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's understanding without guidance from another. This immaturity is self-imposed when its cause lies not in lack of understanding, but in lack of resolve and courage to use it without guidance from another. *Sapere Aude!* [dare to know] "Have courage to use your own understanding!"--that is the motto of enlightenment.” in Ibid. p.54

Normale Supérieure, where I speak, I paid an homage to the number.

In both of these times, I failed in breaking away from the pernicious enchantment that exerts itself, by the order in force at the existing psychoanalytical Societies, on the practice of psychoanalysis and on its theoretical production, one and the other in solidarity.

This review is one of the means through which I expect to overcome in my School, which distinguish itself in its very principle from the above mentioned Societies, the obstacle that has resisted me elsewhere.

Scilicet: you are allowed to know what will come to be there now."⁴²⁰

The recognition of his own failure in overcoming a certain resistance to his teaching gives rise to a new idea of psychoanalysis' place in the world, one which implies a singular concern with political engagement in a time of the primacy of the university discourse:

"Nevertheless, to whom does this 'you' address itself? Isn't *you* nothing more than what is at play - to be situated in a time which only traces itself as the origin of a game which will only have lacked not having been played? This time isn't anything, but it makes you doubly lost, Eurydice, you who subsist as that which is at stake.

I claim that psychoanalysis doesn't play fairly with you, that it does not take charge of that which it, nevertheless, lays claim next to you. Namely: that the being which thinks (on the condition of being so only by not knowing it), that this being, I claim, is not without thinking himself as a question of his sex: sex of which his being is already a part, since he poses himself as a question. (...) *You* who I seek, know that I have my share of mockery.

That is why I decide to call you 'bachelor' [bacharel], to remind you of your place in this empire of pedantry, which became so prevailing that your very fall in this world does not promise anything beyond the sewer of culture. Do not expect to escape it, even if you affiliate yourself to the Party."⁴²¹

⁴²⁰ Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.283

⁴²¹ *Ibid.* p.284-285

Lacan addresses himself to the ‘bachelor’ - the graduate, the subject of the university discourse - who, as Duchamp put it, “makes his own chocolate”⁴²², seemingly unaffected by the disorder he denounces everywhere, a disavowal that Lacan does not fail to diagnosis within the psychoanalytical milieu itself. He also reminds us that there is no escape out of the “sewer of culture” - there is no “safe” place outside the commodification of knowledge, no place from which we could criticize it, while remaining impervious to its effects. We cannot simply delegate to the political Party the responsibility of accounting for the ideological effects that threaten the entire field of critical knowledge. To begin with, the knowledge of what the university discourse is has itself no translation into Marxist terms today.

In Kant’s time, it was necessary to dare and go ‘into the darkness’, to have the courage to partake in an enlightened Idea, recognizing the “practical principle of pure reason as such”. This was not simply a political statement, but a philosophical declaration which extracted from the most diverse fields of knowledge and practices a certain movement of Spirit. In fact, our wager is that *Sapere Aude* stood for the very principle of transmission as such. Today, as Lacan has taught us, we must recognize that Kant’s project actually demanded a further effort from us - to use Hegel and Žižek’s terms, another, *monstrous* step:

“Without a doubt, this enlightened philosophy and its prototype, the man of pleasure, made a mistake. They wanted to explain what opposed their questioning through imposture and to make of the obscurantism a conspiracy against the freedom of nature.

It is from the return of this mistake that we suffer now. Because the monsters forged in the name of the necessities of a cause bring us the most surprising evidence of the force of

⁴²² Duchamp’s expression. Lacan refers to it in the context of May 68’ in Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L’envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil). - class 3/12/69 - See also Lacan’s reference in praise of the bachelor in Jacques, Lacan (1980), *Television*, (W. W. Norton and Company, Inc.). p.42

truth: there these actually expose themselves in clarity."⁴²³

The Idea cannot be thought without the monsters it produces, for it is by tarrying with its failure to be "all-transmissible" that we encounter its true universality. This, however, is not a prohibition to think the Idea - reminding us to restrain ourselves to the study of its bestiary. On the contrary, it is not only the most enthusiastic invitation to think the New, *but also the very first new thought itself*. We have learned that the Absolute is also an absolute failure, and that "the dream of Reason produces monsters"⁴²⁴ - this recurring fantasy of totalization - but these are the very *constitutive conditions of a desire to know*, not a final limit or prohibition.

The task today - thought under the paradoxical emblem of this short-lived magazine - is to recognize the properly universal import of the impossibility of knowing all and how this impossibility does not fall outside of knowledge, but within it. Under the current threat of suturing the space of critical knowledge, of cynically reproaching the "empire of pedantry" without substituting its horizon for any other affirmative project, the passage from Kant's *Sapere Aude* to Lacan's *Scilicet* must be stated as follows:

S8: *only that which is non-all can truly be for all.*

Or: "What is decisive in this matter is to remain in solidarity with a transmission that knows itself to be feigned"⁴²⁵, that is, a transmission that is constituted upon its very impossibility⁴²⁶.

⁴²³ "Psychoanalysis, true and the false" Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.172

⁴²⁴ Inscription from Goya's famous etching http://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/El_sueño_de_la_razón_produce_monstruos

⁴²⁵ Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.297

⁴²⁶ "I would like it to be noticed, this is my delusion or not, that it is no longer possible to play the role that is necessary for the transmission of knowledge if it does not involve the transmission of value, even though now this is inscribed in the registers of credits (unité de valeur), but to grasp what can be called a formation effect. This is why, in any case, whoever in the future, precisely because something has happened to this value of knowledge, wants to occupy a place that contributes in any way to this place of formation, even if it is

We recognize in this proposition Žižek's answer to the threat of obliteration that hangs today over Lacan - our Hegel⁴²⁷ - in what must be understood as a fidelity to the undeveloped consequences of this particular moment of Lacan's teaching.

No wonder, then, that, following the accusations of Lacan having been "too obscure"⁴²⁸, Žižek - one of the great didacticians of psychoanalysis today - is accused of being "too accessible"⁴²⁹. The university discourse, after all, relies on the tensionless duality of holistic illumination and fetishistic darkness. We can only counter it with the *blinding* force of true engagement, affirming the constitutive mark of our desire to be all the darkness we need.

10.4 Transmission as Consistency of Critical Knowledge

Saint Augustine composed his treatise *De Magistro*⁴³⁰ as a long dialogue between himself and his son Adeodatus, through which he presents his theory of language and signs.

The dialogue's starting point is the affirmation that the function of speech - *dicere* - is to teach - *docere*⁴³¹. Then, through the elaboration of the relation between signifier and signified, Saint Augustine argues that, given language's nature, it is not through the exteriority of words that something can be known. Words

mathematics, biochemistry or anything else whatsoever, would do well to be a psychoanalyst, if this is how there must be defined someone for whom there exists this question of the dependence of the subject with respect to the discourse that holds him, and not that he holds." Lacan, J. (2005), *Le Séminaire livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre*, (Seuil). - class of 5/2/69

⁴²⁷ Badiou, A. (2009). *Theory of the subject*. Continuum. p. 132

⁴²⁸ Sokal, Alan D. and Jean Bricmont. (1999). *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science*. Macmillain, p. 24

⁴²⁹ See, for example, Žižek's essay titled "With Defenders Like These, Who Needs Attackers?" in Bowman, P. and Stamp, R. (2007) *The Truth of Žižek*. Continuum.

⁴³⁰ Augustine (2009). *De Magistro*. (Editora Vozes)

⁴³¹ Ibid. p.74 - §1

"slide": they mean something and then they mean something else - and, at times, they don't seem to signify anything at all. There is a fundamental relation between being in language and being at the mercy of lies and errors⁴³². But, if words fail to unveil what they are intended to signify, then they cannot truly teach anything by themselves. Teaching cannot be understood, then, as the circulation of words, for words are not receptacles for what we want them to mean. Consequently, Saint Augustine concludes that a master cannot be the one who teaches what he thinks, his function must be understood differently:

"Now I leave aside all of this, and concede that, when words are received by the ear of someone who knows them, one might know that he who spoke thought about the things that those words signified. But he may come to learn something, and is this not what is at stake, if the words were true?"

And might the masters proclaim that their thoughts, and not the doctrines themselves, are retained by the student through the learning of what they [the masters] claim to speak? And who would be so foolishly curious to send his son to school in order to learn what it is that the teacher thinks?

On the contrary, once the masters have explained with words all these disciplines that they profess to teach, including those relating to virtue and wisdom, those who are called their disciples ask themselves if true things were spoken; and they do so contemplating, at the best of their strengths, that inner Truth, for it is only then that they learn."⁴³³

The master's words - in the very way they do not correspond to this thoughts - incite the disciple's relation to truth, and it is only on account of the disciple's engagement with this truth that there can be actual learning. It is precisely because the master is also submitted to language - this "torture house of being"⁴³⁴ - that his necessary failure to communicate is the condition of the opening of the place of truth.

In his commentary of Saint Augustine's text, Lacan summarizes

⁴³² Ibid. p.153 §42

⁴³³ Ibid. p.157-158 §45

⁴³⁴ Žižek, S. (1999). The ticklish subject: the absent centre of political ontology. Verso. p. xiv

this point:

“Every act of speech which is formulated as such brings into the world the novelty of the emergence of meaning. It is not that it is affirmed as truth, but rather that it introduces the dimension of truth into the real. (...) We have seen that deception, as such, can only be sustained as a function of the truth, and not only of the truth, but of a movement of the truth - that error is the usual manifestation of the truth itself - so that the paths of truth are in essence the paths of error.”⁴³⁵

It is the very impossibility of the signifier fully representing that which it is supposed to signify that founds the dialectics of truth and the word. That it is impossible - in other words, that one's own desire is at stake - is the condition of real teaching and transmission. Saint Augustine, however, goes on to explain why the relation between master and disciple, supported by the engagement of desire with a *fourth* term - Christ, the name of this interior truth⁴³⁶ - is mistakenly grasped as the relation between two hierarchically distinguished individuals:

“once the disciples have investigated in themselves that true things were said, they praise. Not knowing that they do not actually praise men who *teach*, but men who *are learned* - if it is really the case that these too know what they say.

Are deceived, however, by the men who are called masters those who are not, for the latter do not not mediate an interval between the time of locution and that of knowledge. And, since they learn by themselves immediately after the locution of who spoke, they judge having learned from he who exteriorly taught them.”⁴³⁷

By suturing the time that passes between the enunciation of the master and the moment of interior learning, we behave as if we have learned not through the work of desire, but directly through

⁴³⁵ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique* (Vol. Book I), (W. W. Norton & Company). p. 263-264

⁴³⁶ Saint Augustine, as Frederic Jameson has brilliantly demonstrated, should be taken with a grain of salt when it comes to the matters of interior life. Please refer to “On the Sexual Production of Subjectivity, or St. Augustine as a Social Democrat” in Salecl, Renata and Slavoj Žižek (1996), *Gaze and Voice As Love Objects* (sic i), (Duke University Press Books). p.177

⁴³⁷ Saint Agustin (2009). *De Magistro*. Editora Vozes. p.157

the exteriority of the speech of the one who spoke to us. As a result, we disavow our fundamental *equality* with our masters, in order to profit from the fantasy of an Other that would be - as we believe ourselves to be - impervious to the most constitutive restlessness of language. In this way, Saint Augustine allows us to think a variant of our eight statement. To put it in Jacques Rancière's terms: "equality and intelligence are synonymous terms"⁴³⁸.

This, nevertheless, entails that we also learn to distinguish the fundamental equality *before Reason* - which renders operative the relation between a master and a disciple - from the secondary, and imaginary equality *amongst slaves*, on which the figure of an Absolute Master is also constructed. It is no surprise, then, that we encountered this secondary form of equality - better referred to as a *sameness* - in our analysis of the university discourse and its effects. The price to pay for the confusion of the two, and for the naive dismissal of mastery in the name of the fantasy of a substantial agency, is highlighted by Lacan in another passage of his first published seminar:

"Well, every time that the other is exactly the same as the subject, there isn't another master except the absolute master, death. But it takes the slave sometime to realize this. Because he is quite happy with being a slave, like everybody."⁴³⁹

The proliferation of the idea that every knowledge is a consolidated knowledge, founded upon the absence of any reference to an Absolute, also translates itself today into an indifference regarding the desire to know, and a veritable disbelief in the possibility of an articulation between knowledge and desire. Abiding to this homogenizing principle of knowledge, we cannot but witness the disappearance of a form of transmission which could carry forward the word of the New, while we allow ourselves to be seduced by a profitable and abundant word which secretly relies on an ever-growing debt

⁴³⁸ Rancière, J. (1991). The ignorant schoolmaster: five lessons in intellectual emancipation., (Stanford University Press). p. 73

⁴³⁹ Lacan, Jacques (1991), The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique (Vol. Book I), (W. W. Norton & Company), p. 373

with the present.

We are invited, therefore, to engage ourselves in the impossible task of thinking *in a transmissible way* the current impasses of critical thought - that is, paraphrasing Hegel, to conceptualize what ties us to our current predicament not only *as objection* but also *as object*.

The discipline and fidelity to this Idea, we believe, is part of the patient work of reconstructing the horizon - referred to once by Father Antônio Vieira, when he preached to a crowded church in Lisbon, to Kings and peasants alike - of an Event which took place in the past, but whose calling comes from the future:

“King of kings and Lord of lords, thou who died amongst thieves to pay for the theft of the first thief, and the first though promised Heaven he too was a thief, so that thieves and kings can save themselves, teach with thine example, and inspire with thine grace all kings who, not electing, nor dissimulating, nor consenting, nor increasing in thieves, do so as to prevent future thefts and to retribute past ones, instead of thieves taking kings with them, as they do, to Hell, may kings take thieves with them, to Heaven.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴⁴⁰ Padre Vieira, A. (2009). Sermões, vol. III. (Edições Loyola). p. 202

2

“...die Rose im Kreuz der gegenwart zu erkennen”⁴⁴¹

1. At what crossroads are we?

The relation between the Lacanian Four Discourses and political theory is quite well established: at the time of their elaboration, Lacan already emphasized that the Discourses were a psychoanalytical contribution to political thought and ideology critique, affirming that it was only through the consideration of the dimension of enjoyment that any truth could be revealed in the critique of a particular ideological discourse⁴⁴². This was also the moment of Lacan’s most explicit dialogue with Marx, whose concept of surplus value served as the basis for the development of Lacan’s notion of surplus enjoyment. And, in fact, even if his most constant and explicit philosophical reference at that point might have been Hegel⁴⁴³, it was the Kojévian anthropological reading⁴⁴⁴ of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* he was mostly

⁴⁴¹ “To recognize reason as the rose in the cross of the present, and to find delight in it, is a rational insight which implies reconciliation with reality. This reconciliation philosophy grants to those who have felt the inward demand to conceive clearly, to preserve subjective freedom while present in substantive reality, and yet thought possessing this freedom to stand not upon the particular and contingent, but upon what is and self-completed.” Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press). p.22

⁴⁴² Lacan, Jacques (1998), *L’envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil). (p.78 in the english version)

⁴⁴³ Krutzen, Henry (2009), *Jacques Lacan Séminaire 1952-1980 : Index référentiel*, (Economica).p.817

⁴⁴⁴ Jarczyk, Gwendoline and Pierre-Jean Labarrière (1996), *De Kojève à Hegel : 150 ans de pensée hégélienne*, (Albin Michel). p.64

concerned with - which was itself Kojève's attempt to bring Hegel closer to Marx⁴⁴⁵.

Following the conceptual trajectory proposed by Žižek - reading Hegel through Lacan, only then returning to the critique of ideology - we will now focus on the other side of Lacan's engagement with Hegel, that is, on the unnamed proximity between Hegelian philosophy and Lacan's teaching, so that we may be better equipped to assess the consequences of Žižek's Lacanian Hegelianism without being at the mercy of the reproaches which evoke Kojève as their guarantee. Skipping this fundamental step would not only lead us to bypass some consequences of the actual contribution of psychoanalysis to social theory, but could ultimately support the dismissal of the Four Discourses as a framework designed to analyze only *other* discourses, and the characterization of the doctrine of the *matheme* - with its institutional and political dimensions - as something which was "surpassed", rather than radicalized, by Lacan's later formulations.

Žižek addresses the threat of conceptual disavowal in two different contexts: regarding the dismissal of Hegel under the pretext of his 'absolute idealism' and the shift in the interpretation of Lacan's later teaching. In both cases, Žižek criticizes how the supposed 'fluidity' of the Present is taken for the New, rather than as a novel way of propagating the same, ultimately serving as the cause for revisionism and obliteration of the consequences of critical knowledge.

In the present chapter, we will study the first of these two ruptures. We believe that the consequences of the philosophical underpinning of Lacan found in Hegel have only been developed within the Lacanian field insofar as certain common place interpretations of Lacan remain untouched. And so, by following Žižek's return to Hegel, and especially the articulation between Reason and community in his philosophy, our wager is that the space for new elaborations of Lacanian teaching should also

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid. p.65

open itself, allowing us to develop a new knotting between the institutional, conceptual and political dimensions of psychoanalysis.

We will begin by comparing Kojève's reading of Hegel with the Žižekian one. We chose to use Kojève as our example of a reading that relies on a disavowal of Hegel's fundamental insights not only because he was Lacan's master and the philosopher through which Lacan explicitly related to Hegel, but also because the Kojévian reading of Hegel, as we already commented in the previous chapter, had a very widespread impact on both left and right-wing thought. Kojève had such a dominant influence on philosophers and psychoanalysts across all political and conceptual spectrums, that both negative and positive remarks on Hegel tend to relate to the Kojévian understanding of Absolute Knowledge as "circular knowledge" - Lacan's comments included.

In fact, Kojève's crucial influence on Lacan could be evoked at this point as an obvious reproach to our proposal. It is tempting, however, to answer it by saying that the Kojévian thesis of the circularity of Absolute Knowledge did not withstand the test of its own transmission: Lacan's struggle with the actual development of his Kojévian-inspired thought changed the very spectral Idea of Hegel which served as his reference, something which might have been veiled by the forced synonymy of 'Hegel' and 'Kojève' in his work - nonetheless, there is not a *circularity*, but a *non-coincidence* of readings. More importantly, this non-coincidence of the figure of Hegel became part of Lacan's own framework - it is itself accounted for by Lacan's logic of the signifier. In other words, there is not only a shift or non-coincidence in Lacan's reference to Hegel, but the (silent) Hegel he shifts towards *is himself the philosopher of non-coincidence*. The non-coincidence of the Idea with itself is, after all, precisely what Hegel named 'concrete universality'.

Furthermore, we intend to show that, as a true Lacanian, Žižek remains faithful not to Lacan's outspokenly Kojévian position, but to this inherent shift which places Lacan beyond his

professed Master at the same time that it strikingly confirms the centrality of Hegel's thought to the psychoanalytical development. The way the rupture represented by Hegel was inscribed in the history of philosophy - as well as the supposed rupture with Hegel in Lacan's work - becomes a *disavowal* once we realize that Hegel's system already accounted for this sort of failure as an inherent operation of Reason itself.

Therefore, using Kojève's reading of Hegel as the example of the disavowal diagnosed by Žižek allows us both to remain close to the matter at hand - the relation between philosophy and psychoanalysis - as well as to map Žižek's own place within this question: in this chapter we will argue that the "double" relation that Lacan had with Hegel, one explicitly Kojévian and one implicitly closer to Hegel himself, *is itself accounted for in the Žižekian reading of Hegel*, a reading which does not turn away from the irreducible tension that permeates the Idea itself, a restlessness that prevents it from coinciding with itself in a "circular" movement.

Through our comparison of these two different Hegelianisms, we will attempt to unearth the necessary conceptual tools to approach the second, and much more subtle revisionism, which we have identified as a threat to the development of Lacanian thought. Still, we do not expect to accomplish within the scope of the present work what we have previously called a "reflective positing" of Lacan, but only to delineate a possible position from which one could engage with this task in a responsible way - that is, with attention to the distinction between structured critical knowledge and "critical criticism".

Finally, we could summarize our current effort as follows: to elaborate a more precise account of the concept of totality in Hegelian philosophy, so that Lacan's remarks on psychoanalysis being an anti-philosophy and on politics' necessary reference to the One no longer interpose themselves as obstacles to the proper reformulation of certain fundamental questions, essential to the maintenance of the critical field today.

1.1 The Žižekian reading of Hegel

The practically infinite field of commentaries and interpretations of Hegel's philosophy is a background against which the opposition between Žižek and Kojève could dissolve into a mere comparison of two different, but equally valuable readings. However, some of the underlying similarities between the left and right-wing interpretations of his philosophy - well illustrated by the solid foundation Fukuyama found in Kojève's Marxist reading of Hegel to support his own neo-liberal thesis - are enough to incite a certain doubt into this accumulative infinity of perspectives, which, we believe, tends towards a neutralization of the radicality of Hegel's thought.

The objection could be raised, of course, that there is no such thing as a sole perspective on a philosopher's thought and that the multiplicity of possible approaches is a sign of the strength of a particular philosophy. But to this we must reply that Hegel's thought is positioned in a rather unique place: the concepts of *totality* and *infinity* play such central roles in his system that a rigorous reading of his philosophy must account for its own place in the totality of its interpretations. Hegel himself was very clear in differentiating *bad* from *true* infinity - the infinity of an endless accumulative *series* from the infinity which, being a principle of *self-difference*, cannot be figured as *one more* nor as *the One*⁴⁴⁶ - and, with this essential distinction, the philosopher himself presented the criteria through which we should measure our readings of his philosophy. To properly understand Žižek's return to Hegel we must have the courage to measure it by such a standard.

⁴⁴⁶ Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences With the Zusätze*, (Hackett Publishing) §94-§95; Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books). §272 - See also Žižek's second preface to Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso).

At the beginning of *The Monstrosity of Christ*, after quoting Chesterton's *The Oracle of the Dog*⁴⁴⁷, Žižek puts forth a fundamental axiom which simultaneously addresses the above mentioned issue and supports his own reading of Hegel:

"I am even tempted to go a step further here, and give Chesterton's last lines a different reading—no doubt not intended by Chesterton, but nonetheless closer to a weird truth: when people imagine all kinds of deeper meanings because they "are frightened of four words: He was made Man," what really frightens them is that they will lose the transcendent God guaranteeing the meaning of the universe, God as the hidden Master pulling the strings— instead of this, we get a God who abandons this transcendent position and throws himself into his own creation, fully engaging himself in it up to dying, so that we, humans, are left with no higher Power watching over us, just with the terrible burden of freedom and responsibility for the fate of divine creation, and thus of God himself. Are we not still too frightened today to assume all these consequences of the four words? Do those who call themselves "Christians" not prefer to stay with the comfortable image of God sitting up there, benevolently watching over our lives, sending us his son as a token of his love, or, even more comfortably, just with some depersonalized Higher Force?"

The axiom of this essay is that there is only one philosophy which thought the implications of the four words through to the end: Hegel's idealism— which is why almost all philosophers are also no less frightened of Hegel's idealism."⁴⁴⁸

Let us advance, then, the following presentation of this axiom:

⁴⁴⁷ Chesterton, G. K. (2010), *The Complete Father Brown Mysteries*, (Joust Books)

⁴⁴⁸ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press).p.35. The stress on the uniqueness ("the only position") of this stance in relation to Christianity can also be found in *The Puppet and the Dwarf*: "My claim here is not merely that I am a materialist through and through, and that the subversive kernel of Christianity is accessible also to a materialist approach; my thesis is much stronger: this kernel is accessible *only* to a materialist approach—and vice versa: to become a true dialectical materialist, one should go through the Christian experience" Žižek, Slavoj (2003), *The Puppet and the Dwarf: The Perverse Core of Christianity* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.6

S9: *Hegel is the only philosopher to think through the consequences of the Christian Event.*

This proposition can also be developed into at least two corollaries. From the affirmation that “there is *only one* philosophy”, the Hegelian one, which developed the consequences of the Christian Event, as summarized by the four words “He was made man”, it follows that:

S10: *After Hegel the consequences of the Christian Event have been obliterated by the post-metaphysical philosophies.*

The fact that this proposition can be stated at all also implies that it is possible to occupy a position from which the difference between the fidelity to Hegel and the disavowal of his philosophy can be perceived. By relating the first statement to the place of its enunciation we can present a second corollary:

S11: *Žižek occupies a position within contemporary philosophy which includes the conceptual apparatus necessary to distinguish transmission from obliteration.*

This first axiom, along with the two additional propositions, clearly instructs the following passage, in which Žižek answers simultaneously to the two main threads in contemporary philosophy, the one which strives to “forget” Hegel and the other which sets out to revise and adapt his philosophy to the contemporary demands:

“True, there is a break, but in this break Hegel is the “vanishing mediator” between its “before” and its “after,” between traditional metaphysics and post-metaphysical nineteenth- and twentieth- century thought. That is to say: something happens in Hegel, a breakthrough into a unique dimension of thought, which is obliterated, rendered invisible in its true dimension, by post-metaphysical thought. This obliteration leaves an empty space which has to be filled in so that the continuity of the development of philosophy can be reestablished—filled in with what? The index of this obliteration is the ridiculous image of Hegel as the absurd “Absolute Idealist” who “pretended to know everything,” to possess Absolute Knowledge, to read the mind of God, to deduce the whole of

reality out of the self- movement of (his) mind—the image which is an exemplary case of what Freud called *Deck-Erinnerung* (screen-memory), a fantasy-formation intended to cover up a traumatic truth. In this sense, the post-Hegelian turn to “concrete reality, irreducible to notional mediation,” should rather be read as a desperate posthumous revenge of metaphysics, as an attempt to reinstall metaphysics, albeit in the inverted form of the primacy of concrete reality.”⁴⁴⁹

Similar accounts of this obliteration can be found throughout Žižek’s work - already in *Hegel the Most Sublime of Hysterics* the introductory remarks begin by stating the centrality of this thesis to his philosophical project⁴⁵⁰. Even so, this particular presentation of the disavowal is very pertinent to our enquiry, not only because it is the most explicit assertion by Žižek of the centrality of Hegel’s Christology to the totality of his philosophical project, but also because the reference to the freudian notion of *Deck-Erinnerung* allows us to expand our understanding of what is explicitly stated in our second corollary. Žižek’s diagnosis of the Hegelian break is directly informed by the conceptual frame of psychoanalysis, which, since Freud’s earliest writings, is concerned with accounting for the distinction between the empty space of trauma and the associative logic that, driven by this empty space itself, incessantly attempts to cover it up⁴⁵¹.

⁴⁴⁹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.35-36

⁴⁵⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2011), *Le plus sublime des hystériques - Hegel avec Lacan*, (Presses Universitaires de France - PUF). p.14 of the brazilian edition

⁴⁵¹ Even as early as the *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, written in 1895, we find the seed of this precise concern, for example when Freud discusses the case of Emma (not to be confused with the Emma from *Studies in Hysteria*). Emma, very much like most post-metaphysicians, was also covering up the trauma of her encounter with the impossibility of a sexual relation through the continuous obliteration of that encounter, propelled by the over-investment that she allocated in otherwise meaningless representations of her past. When constructing a graph which related the different scenes and memories associated with a traumatic event in her childhood, Freud already drew another place, prior to the traumatic scene itself, which he left empty. See Freud, Sigmund (1966), *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume I (1886-99): Pre Psychoanalytic Publications and Unpublished Drafts*, (Hogarth Press).

If we refer now to the problem we mentioned before - the issue of comparing different readings of Hegel against the background of the over-abundance of comments and interpretations - we can see how Žižek's return to Hegel is not opposed to any particular reading, but to the very field which supports these different perspectives, to their common trait. Therefore, to refer to an obliteration of Hegel's thought is ultimately to refer not to an interpretation, but to something which *was not* - or rather, that *could not* - be interpreted.

However, if we accept that there is a reading of Hegel which addresses concomitantly *all* possible approaches to his thought - a position which holds on to the *impossible* as a guarantee of truth, rather than to the *possible* - then the inclusion of the impasse of interpretation into the totality of interpretations shifts the very axis of opposition, allowing us to directly address the "scarecrow image of Hegel" which serves as the negative support for the very background of most contemporary readings of his philosophy⁴⁵².

In its minimal form, this new opposition cutting across the field of interpretations distinguishes itself by contrasting different concepts of totality - an asymmetrical one, undoubtedly, for this so-called "democratic" totality is fundamentally a *spuriously infinite* one, always ready to accommodate a new perspective and to dissolve it into the homogenous multiplicity of the possible. The position defended by Žižek, on the other hand, unearths in Hegel the consequences of there being a *self-different* infinity, a position grounded on the affirmation that

⁴⁵² Losurdo, in *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns*, warns us: "Modern critics should beware of assuming they are prophets, as if the truth, the authentic meaning of Hegel's philosophy, had remained hidden and inaccessible for over 150 years, and then had suddenly revealed itself epiphanously to a fortunate and genial critic, a critic who, of course, is always the latest and trendiest one on the list." (p.26) But, just like Losurdo himself, who starts from a clear hypothesis (p.31) whose development turns interpretative "mistakes" into socio-political symptoms, Žižek's position is simply not concerned with misunderstandings, but with the rehabilitation of some of the central and most fruitful *contradictions* in Hegel's thought. See Losurdo, Domenico (2004), *Hegel and the Freedom of Moderns* (Post-Contemporary Interventions), (Duke University Press Books).

failure is a fundamental category of Hegel's system⁴⁵³. From this standpoint, one is capable of accounting for the very opposition between the notion of totality and its irreducible spectre of *totalization*, against which post-metaphysical thought affirms the necessity of forgetting or "deflating" Hegel's thought.

As we shift our axis of interrogation from the multiplicity of 'Hegels without Hegel' - to paraphrase Žižek - to the direct confrontation with the absurd stand-in, which endows the continuity of post-hegelian philosophy with an aura of correction and "anti-totalitarianism"⁴⁵⁴, the figure of Alexandre Kojève springs forth, standing at a double intersection.

Firstly, Kojève's reading of Hegel is a direct articulation of the 'total' or circular notion of totality, a solid base for the argument that Hegel would be the philosopher who claimed to 'know all'. Simultaneously, his reading is based on a radical dismissal of certain dimensions of Hegelian philosophy, especially regarding Hegel's reading of the Christian Event, the pivotal example of Hegelian concrete universality. As Gérard Lebrun summarizes it:

⁴⁵³ Žižek's critique of the hegelian break is thus supported by the claim that Hegel's philosophy itself can account for such a break - after all, Hegel was the *only* philosopher to develop the consequences of the obliteration of Christianity's fundamental Event, that is, to have distinguished the Event from its obliteration. See, for example, the section *How to do a totality with failures* in Žižek's *For they know not what they do*. A very careful study of the category of failure or of loss in Hegel can be found in Jarczyk's work - for example, when she claims that, in Hegel, "the return, any return to itself which translates itself into the many attempts to grasp self-reflection, marks the reencounter not with what was lost, but the reencounter in and through what was lost" in Jarczyk, Gwendoline (2004), *La réflexion spéculative : Le retour et le perte dans la pensée de Hegel*, (Editions Kimé). p.310 Another interesting study of the category of failure in Hegel can be found in David Gray Carlson's Žižekian-inspired paper "The Antipenultimacy of the Beginning in Hegel's Logic", in Carlson, D.G. (2007), *A Commentary on Hegel's Science of Logic*, (Palgrave Macmillan). p.206

⁴⁵⁴ We mentioned in our previous chapter the importance of the imaginary Other to the critique addressed to marxism and psychoanalysis of their supposed "totalitarian" tendencies. See Domenico Losurdo's "Hegel et la catastrophe allemande" for a careful tracing of the revisionist stance of Hegelian philosophy and its totalitarian phantasies. Losurdo, Domenico (2000), *Hegel et la catastrophe allemande*, (Albin Michel).

“It is only when one no longer believes in the “absolute aspect of Christianity” - and when one doesn’t even understand that Hegel based his thought on this belief - that the scholar’s alternative of historicism/Absolute can be born, and there also arises the anachronous image of a gifted dialectician that, however, since he was an incorrigible metaphysician, made eternity prevail over becoming”⁴⁵⁵

The second, superimposed intersection has to do with the political consequences of this interpretation. Here too Kojève seems to play a double role: he was deeply concerned with bringing Hegel and Marx closer - of bringing Hegel closer to Marx, to be more precise. His reading of Hegel was incredibly influential on many of the most important left-wing French thinkers of the last fifty years⁴⁵⁶, but, at the same time, Kojève’s explicitly leftist thesis found its way to the core of the neo-liberal ideology, where it seems to reside comfortably today. Fukuyama’s famous work, *The End of History and the Last Man*, is many things, but a bad reading of Kojève is certainly not one of them.

We will now attempt to sketch some of the fundamental elements of Kojève’s interpretation of Hegel, focusing especially on the relation between the Hegelian Concept and the emptying out of the Christian ‘overtones’ of his philosophy - a movement which amounted, as we will see, to the disavowal of the dimension of what would be later known as the death drive, and which is strictly connected in Hegel’s philosophy with his account of the Christian Event. Our main interest here is to present the Kojévian figure of Absolute Knowledge which, following the Žižekian axiom previously stated, offers itself as the perfect alibi for the dismissal or revision of Hegel’s project. This investigation will also serve us as the starting point for the

⁴⁵⁵ Lebrun, Gérard (2004), *L’Envers de la dialectique : Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche*, (Seuil). p.239 of the brazilian edition

⁴⁵⁶ Drury, Shadia B. (1994), *Alexandre Kojève: The Roots of Postmodern Politics*, (Palgrave Macmillan); Devlin, Roger F. (2004), *Alexandre Kojève and the Outcome of Modern Thought*, (University Press Of America); Jarczyk, Gwendoline and Pierre-Jean Labarrière (1996), *De Kojève à Hegel : 150 ans de pensée hégélienne*, (Albin Michel).

formal presentation of the Žižekian reading of the Absolute Knowing.

After presenting the Kojévian figure of Absolute Knowledge - the ridiculous Other of post-metaphysical thought, which nevertheless haunts it incessantly - we should be able to fully grasp the extensive consequences of Lacan's and Žižek's return to Hegel, unearthing a philosophy which is not one of "the end of history", but one whose time has not yet fully arrived.

2. Kojève

Kojève's work notoriously stands out because of its two famous and interrelated central theses: the fundamental role played by the Hegelian dialectic of the Lord and the Bondsman in the structuring of the individual and the collectivity, and the consequence that he draws from this first thesis: that the overcoming of this dialectical opposition amounts to the coming to an end of history.

However, rather than focusing on those two points, we would like to turn our attention to what we believe to be the truly symptomatic point of his approach to Hegel - the idea that man can become Christ. This particular statement allows us to approach a nodal point in Kojève's reading, one which forcefully binds together Hegel and the post-metaphysical thought through a simultaneous (imaginary) exacerbation of knowledge and deflation of the (real) Absolute.

2.1 "Man can become God"

Let us begin our presentation by considering the following paragraphs from the *Introduction to the reading of Hegel*. In the pages immediately prior to this fragment, Kojève described the historical underpinnings of the dialectical movement of Self-Consciousness - beginning with the dialectics of the Master and the Slave, through the Stoic and Skeptic societies, finally

arriving at the Judeo-Christian one. We will quote this long passage in full, before moving on to analyze it:

"Hence Christianity is first of all a particularistic, family and slavish reaction against the pagan universalism of the Citizen-Masters. But it is more than that. It also implies the idea of a synthesis of the Particular and the Universal - that is, of Mastery and Slavery too: the idea of Individuality - I.e., of that realization of universal values and realities in and by the Particular and of that universal recognition of the value of the Particular, which alone can give Man *Befriedigung*, the supreme and definitive "satisfaction." In other words, Christianity finds the solution to the pagan tragedy. And that is why, since the coming of Christ, there is no longer any true tragedy - that if inevitable conflict with truly no way out. The whole problem, now, is to realize the Christian idea of individuality. And the history of the Christian World is nothing but the history of this realization.

Now, according to Hegel, one can realize the Christian anthropological ideal (which he accepts in full) only by "overcoming" the Christian theology: Christian Man can really become what he would like to be only by becoming a man without God - or, if you will, a God-Man. He must realize in himself what at first he thought was realized in his God. To be really Christian, he himself must become Christ. According to the Christian Religion, Individuality, the synthesis of the Particular and the Universal, is effected only in and by the Beyond, after man's death. This conception is meaningful only if Man is presupposed to be immortal. Now, according to Hegel, immortality is incompatible with the very essence of human-being and, consequently with Christian anthropology itself.

Therefore, the human ideal can be realized only if it is such that it can be realized by a mortal Man who knows he is such. In other words, the Christian synthesis must be effected not in the Beyond, after death, but on earth, during man's life. And this means that the transcendent Universal (God), who recognizes the particular, must be replaced by a Universal that is immanent in the World. And for Hegel this immanent Universal can only be the State. What is supposed to be realized by God in the Kingdom of Heaven must be realized in and by the State, in the earthly kingdom. And that is why Hegel says that the "absolute" State that he has in mind (Napoleon's Empire) is the realization of the Christian Kingdom of heaven.

The history of the Christian World, therefore, is the history of the progressive realization of that ideal State, in which Man will finally be "satisfied" by realizing himself as Individuality - a synthesis of the universal and the particular, of the Master and the Slave, of fighting and Work. But in order to radicalize this State, Man must look away from the Beyond, look toward this earth and act only with a view to this earth. In other words, he must eliminate the Christian idea of transcendence. And that is why the evolution of the christian world is dual: on one hand there is the real evolution, which prepares the social and political conditions for the coming of the "absolute" State; and on the other, an ideal evolution, which eliminates the transcendent idea, which brings Heaven back to Earth, as Hegel says.⁴⁵⁷

This passage shows the intertwining of some of the most central aspects of Kojève's thought. To begin with, we find here the characteristic mode of historicization that permeates the Kojévian reading of Hegel's figures of Self-Consciousness, giving primacy to the "concrete" elements of the examples used by Hegel over the dialectical operations at stake in such stagings. This choice is most visible, and most criticized, in relation to Kojève's account of the dialectics of the Lord and the Bondsman⁴⁵⁸, which, by such standards, is understood as the historical battle between Masters and Slaves, the fundamental driving force of History itself⁴⁵⁹.

From this 'historical reification' of Hegel's logic, which proposes that the only temporality at play in Hegelian philosophy is the historical one⁴⁶⁰, follows a second fundamental point -also clearly present in the above-mentioned passage - which has to do with the idea of an "overcoming", in the sense of an ascent or a return to Man of something previously allocated in the Beyond. The passage from Christian individuality to actual freedom is signaled here as the

⁴⁵⁷ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit, (Cornell University Press) p.66-67

⁴⁵⁸ See Jarczyk, G. and Labarrière, P.-J (1992), Les premiers combats de la reconnaissance, (Aubier Montaigne).

⁴⁵⁹ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit, (Cornell University Press) p.43

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid. p.133

“‘overcoming’ of the Christian theology” through the consolidation of Napoleon’s Empire⁴⁶¹, as the passage from a transcendental to an immanent Universal, the “absolute” State. The Beyond, the last figure of mastery over the individual, would have been *potentially* overcome with the event of the French Revolution, giving rise to the end of History⁴⁶².

The idea of an “overcoming” of the Christian Beyond, the central theme of the passage we are dealing with, is very telling of the particular intercrossing of Kojève’s ontological and political projects. As we mentioned above, the emphasis given to historical time as the *sole* temporality of the Concept, together with the claim that History itself is put in motion through the struggle between the Master and the Slave, seems to directly echo the first lines of *The Communist Manifesto*, in a supposed homology between class struggle and the struggle for recognition.

But if his political aim was to bring Hegel closer to Marx, hopefully breathing into the Slave the horizon of his own liberation⁴⁶³, Kojève was nevertheless willing to simplify the Hegelian ontology in some essential points, the most important one concerns the nature of the Christian Event - which clearly did not stand, according to Hegel’s later writings, as an example of a Man who became “fully and perfectly self-conscious”⁴⁶⁴, as it is the case with the Kojévian figure of the Wise Man, the

⁴⁶¹ Kojève famously read Hegel’s admiration for Napoleon, whom he referred to as the “World-Spirit” in a letter to Nietzhammer, as a confirmation that Hegel saw in Napoleon the Wise man at end of history insofar as his rule signified the end of the struggle between master and slave. Critics, such as Lebrun, remind us though that in this same letter Hegel goes on to say that he just wishes Napoleon would go away! As we will later see, to recognize the Idea’s work in the world is the first element of the operation of concrete universality. The second is to realize that neither does the King coincide with the King, nor does the man coincide with the man.

⁴⁶² Fukuyama would later turn this potential into the new index of social inequalities in the world. See the preface for *The End of History and the Last Man*

⁴⁶³ Ibid p.23

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid. p.76

transparent Self-Consciousness who could appear once history would supposedly have ended⁴⁶⁵.

The individual freedom that Kojève mentions as the outcome of the descent of "Heaven back to Earth" relies on the premise that, by 'looking away' from the Beyond, the recognition which was first given only to the Master, then to the Slave, by being enslaved to God, could transparently be returned to the individual - to a man who would himself be the perfect synthesis of the Particular and the Universal: "Christian Man can really become what he would like to be only by becoming a man without God - or, if you will, a God-Man".

It is not difficult to see that, in directly opposed terms to those of Chesterton and Žižek, Kojève understands the Christian Event to represent four very different words: *Man was made God*. To "become Christ", as he says, is to achieve Man's satisfaction, to encounter oneself at the end of a process Kojève refers to as a circular knowledge⁴⁶⁶, which is, or, at least, can be, a *total* knowledge of oneself.

The Kojévian 'four words' can be traced back to the two theses for which he is famous: if man can become God - that is, if man can arrive at a knowledge which consistently and coherently answers the question 'Who am I?'⁴⁶⁷ without the destructive struggle with an alterity which alienates man from this knowledge - then, to put it in a Hegelian terminology, History would be understood as the process of Man alienating himself (Master) from himself (Slave), and then returning to himself (Wise Man), now in possession of a knowledge of his own position (Absolute Knowledge), constructed through the labour he endured along his alienated path. History would be the place of struggle of Masters and Slaves, and thus would come to an

⁴⁶⁵ For an expanded reading of this point, please refer to Nichols, James H. (2007), *Alexandre Kojève: Wisdom at the End of History* (20th Century Political Thinkers), (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers).

⁴⁶⁶ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press) p.104

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid p.75

end once Man could finally grasp himself as the Wise Man, the one who does not need God, for he himself has risen to a place in which such obstacles to recognition - Masters, Gods - have been lifted.

In this sense, by turning into *constituted* obstacles the otherwise *constitutive* dimension of alienation itself, Kojève's Heideggerian-Marxism could be grasped as the shift from Spirit to Man, for it brings to the historical, anthropological dimension, in a sort of strange promethean movement, an antagonism which Hegel had first placed *not only* on earth, but in the heavens as well. Instead of universalizing the restlessness which alienated the subject from himself, Kojève saw it fit to get rid of the Beyond as the place which imposed such alienation and thus to affirm its overcoming to be possible within History itself, or rather, at its end.

The consequences of this shift, we argue, is the obliteration of Hegel's essential insight into the de-centering of the subject, returning to the Cartesian-Heideggerian frame of reference, which might work with an evanescent and punctual subjectivity that does not coincide with the individual as such, but which does not account for the material left-over that is clearly presented as a constitutive dimension of Self-Consciousness by Hegel - not only in the last figure of the dialectics of Self-Consciousness, the Unhappy Consciousness⁴⁶⁸, but essentially in the very form of what he called "infinite judgment"⁴⁶⁹.

If Kojève's 'four words' have the paradoxical nature of simultaneously bringing Man up to God and supposedly⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §230 See also the chapter "Self-Consciousness is an object" in Žižek, Slavoj (1993), *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Post-Contemporary Interventions), (Duke University Press Books).

⁴⁶⁹ See Mladen Dolar's "The Phrenology of Spirit" in Copjec, Joan (1994), *Supposing the Subject*, (Verso).

⁴⁷⁰ Quentin Meillassoux aptly summarizes the implicit return of theism in the guise of its explicit overcoming: "Scepticism with regard to the metaphysical absolute thereby legitimates *de jure* every variety whatsoever of belief in an

having done with God and theism - and if, as we briefly sketched, they serve as the support for his two famous theses - what is then the conceptual support of this very particular reversal of the opening axiom of Žižek's *The Monstrosity of Christ*?

2.2 The Coincidence of the Concept and Time

Kojève began his course of 1938-39 with two lectures on the figure of the Wise Man or Sage, and then went on to deal in more general terms with the last chapter of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, famously titled *Absolute Knowing* [Absolute Wissen]. But Kojève, who was aware of the importance of Hegel's presentation of the relation between Concept and Time - which takes on a couple of paragraphs of the last Chapter of the *Phenomenology*, as well as some lines of the *Preface* - devoted three lectures specially to this relation. It is here that we find both the core of Kojève's interpretation of Hegel⁴⁷¹ and the link which will allow us later on to turn the following unfounded remark into a conclusion: Kojève's reading of Hegel's Absolute

absolute, the best as well as the worst. The destruction of the metaphysical rationalization of Christian theology has resulted in a generalized becoming-religious of thought, viz., in a *fideism of any belief whatsoever*. We will call this becoming-religious of thought, which finds its paradoxical support in a radically skeptical argumentation, the *religionizing [enreligement]* of reason: this expression, which echoes that of rationalization, denotes a movement of thought which is the exact contrary to that of the progressive rationalization of Judaeo-Christianity under the influence of Greek philosophy. Today, everything happens as if philosophy considered itself of its own accord - rather than because of pressure exerted upon it by an external belief - to be the servant of theology - except that it now considers itself to be the liberal servant of any theology whatsoever, even an atheology." Meillassoux, Quentin, Alain Badiou, and Ray Brassier (2008), *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*, (Continuum) p.77-79

⁴⁷¹ There seems to be quite a clear correlation between Kojève's books and his main theses: *Le Concept, Le Temps et le Discours* expands on his reading of the relation between Concept and Time; *La Notion de l'Autorité* develops in detail his thesis on the Master and Slave Dialectics; and *Esquisse d'une Phénoménologie du Droit* presents a philosophy of right suited for the End of History.

Knowledge has the structure of what Lacan called *imaginary phallus*⁴⁷².

Kojève focuses his reading of the relation between “Eternity, Time and the Concept”⁴⁷³ on Hegel’s famous remark that “Time is the being-there of the Concept” [Die Zeit ist der Begriff selbst, der da ist]⁴⁷⁴. Kojève praises how Hegel explicitly addressed this point, whereas most philosophers must be analyzed in some depth so one can actually unearth the relation between Concept and Time that is at play in their philosophies⁴⁷⁵.

He begins his sixth lecture of that year presenting the four possible relations between Concept and Time:

1. C=E (Concept is Eternity)
2. C=E' (Concept is eternal - and Eternity is either outside or inside Time)
3. C=T (Concept is Time)
4. C=T' (Concept is temporal)

He then relates the first position to Parmenides and Spinoza, the second - which can be subdivided into two variants, the “ancient or pagan” one and the Judeo-Christian one⁴⁷⁶ - to Plato and Aristotle on one side, and Kant on the other. The third

⁴⁷² Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company) p.697

⁴⁷³ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press) p.100

⁴⁷⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §801

⁴⁷⁵ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press) p.131

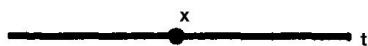
⁴⁷⁶ “Once again, then, the *second possibility* divides into two. Since it is *eternal*, and not *Eternity*, the Concept is *related* to something *other* than itself. Whence two variants: (1) the ancient or pagan variant, according to which the *eternal* Concept is related to *Eternity*; a variant clearly formulated by Plato and Aristotle (who agree on this point); and (2) the modern or Judeo-Christian variant, clearly formulated by Kant: the *eternal* Concept is related to *Time*. The first variant in turn implies two possible types: (1) the eternal Concept related to Eternity which is *outside* of Time (Plato); and (2) the eternal Concept related to Eternity *in* Time (Aristotle).” Ibid.102

possibility is the Hegelian one, and the fourth is not a philosophical possibility, for it denies the idea of truth⁴⁷⁷.

Once these four possibilities are presented, Kojève concentrates on Plato's hypothesis, using it as the basis to construct the diagram of Absolute Knowledge, given the proximity of Plato's position to the one of Christian theology⁴⁷⁸. Later on we will return to this schema in order to compare the Kojévian Absolute Knowledge with our findings - so let us now carefully follow this construction step by step⁴⁷⁹, referring to Kojève's own description of each figure as our guideline.

He begins:

"If we symbolize temporal existence (Man in the World) by a line, we must represent the Concept by a singular point on this line: this point is essentially *other* than the other points of the line."⁴⁸⁰



So, we could symbolize 'temporal existence' as a line **t** and the Concept, in this line, as a point **x**:

"Now, for Plato, the Concept is *related* to something *other* than itself (...) being eternal, the Concept must be related to *Eternity* (...) But, Plato says Eternity can only be *outside* of Time."

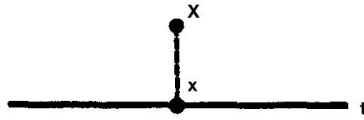
Above the point **x** we should write, outside of temporal existence **t**, the point **X**, of Eternity:

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid. 102

⁴⁷⁸ Ibid p.104

⁴⁷⁹ The figures we present here are identical to the ones used by Kojève, we have only added the letters, which will later on help us to discuss them in more detail.

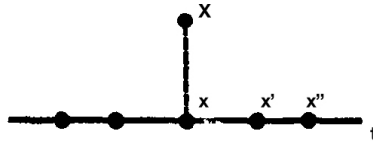
⁴⁸⁰ Ibid. p.104



Kojève adds:

“In any case, the Concept can appear at any moment of time whatsoever. Hence the line that symbolizes existence implies *several* eternal singular points.”

And now we add several other singular points (x' , x'' , x''' ...) to account for the different possible appearances (in t) of the Concept (x):



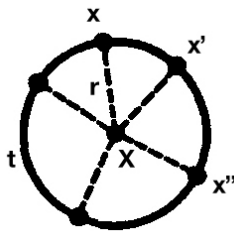
Because the relation between Eternity (X) and the Concept's appearances (x , x' , x'' ...) is always the same, Kojève introduces the *circular* aspect of this schema, basing himself on his reading of Plato's *Timaeus*:

“Now, by definition, *Eternity* - I.e., the entity to which the Concept is related - is always the *same*; and the *relation* of the Concept to this entity is also always the *same*. Therefore: at *every* instant of time (of the existence of Man in the World) the *same* relation to one and the *same* extra-temporal entity is possible.

(...) Thus we find the schema of the metaphysics of the *Timaeus*: a circular time, the circularity of which (and the circularity of what, being temporal, is *in* time) is determined by the *relation* of what is *in* Time to what is *outside* of Time. And at the same time we find the famous “central point” that a Christian theology (I.e., in my view a variant of Platonism) must necessarily introduce into the Hegelian circle that symbolizes absolute or circular knowledge.”

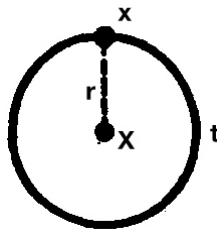
Two interesting aspects are implied in this step: the first is the *geometrical* understanding of the relation (r) between Eternity (X) and the appearing Concept ($x, x', x'' \dots$), which gives rise to the circular character of the figure - for it must keep the *same* relation r for every x - and the second, the remark about the central point of the circle and its importance for the Christian theology, which strangely implies that a circle without a drawn central point *does not have that same centre*.

We could thus construct the figure in this way:



Now we simplify the figure:

"The Concept *can* be repeated in time. But its repetition does not change it, nor does it change its relation to Eternity; in a word, it changes nothing. Hence we can do away with all the radii of the circle, except for one"⁴⁸¹

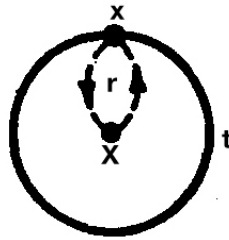


Kojève then dwells on the *double* aspect of the relation r between x and X :

⁴⁸¹ Ibid. p.105

“The radius symbolizes the *relation* between the eternal Concept and the Eternal or the eternal Entity. Therefore this relation too is non-temporal or eternal. Nevertheless, it is clearly a *relation* in the strict sense - I.e., a relation between two *different* things. Therefore the radius has, if you will, *extension* (in Space, since there is no Time in it.) Therefore we did well to symbolize it by a line (a dotted line, to distinguish it from the solid temporal line). However, the relation in question is undeniably *double*. Indeed, on the one hand the (eternal) Concept situated in Time - I.e., the Word - *rises* up through its *meaning* to the entity revealed by this meaning; and on the other hand, this entity *descends* through the *meaning* toward the Word, which it thus *creates* as *Word* out of its phonetic, sound-giving, changing reality.”

Here the importance of the classical theory of representation - that is, representation defined as the adequacy between signifier and signified, a relation commonly represented in geometric terms - to his understanding of Plato, and the Concept in general, becomes more evident. And given that the Word rises to the Eternal entity, which then comes down to the Word, this double relation *r* must now be written as:

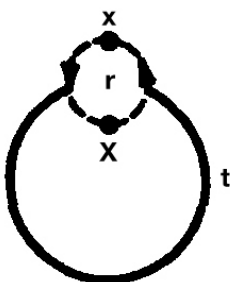


After having established the double nature of this relation *r*, Kojève moves on to emphasize that it is the relation itself which guarantees the *truth*, not the terms *x* and *X*, for without this double relation which binds them together, cutting across Time, there is no Concept and no Eternity:

“Generally speaking, there is a movement from the word to the thing, and a return from the thing to the word. And it is only this *double* relation that constitutes the *truth* or the revelation of reality, that is to say, the *Concept* in the proper sense. And on the other hand, this double relation *exhausts* the truth or the Concept: the (eternal) Concept is related only to Eternity, and

Eternity reveals itself exclusively through the Concept. Hence, even though they are in Time, they nonetheless have no relations with Time and the temporal. Therefore the double, or better, *circular*, relation of the (eternal) Concept and Eternity *cuts through* the temporal circle. Change as change remains inaccessible to the Concept.⁴⁸²

He then presents the following figure, stressing the primacy of the relation *r* over the point *x* within temporal existence *t* and the Eternal entity *X*:



Though the figure seems to displace the point *X* from its center⁴⁸³, this is only a graphical distortion, for Kojève bases himself on this configuration in order to stress that

“all truly coherent theism is a monotheism (...) the symbol of the theistic System is valid for every System that defines the Concept as an *eternal* entity in relation to *something other* than itself, no matter whether this other thing is Eternity in Time or outside of Time, or Time itself.”⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸² Ibid. p.107

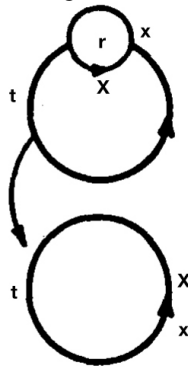
⁴⁸³ We constructed our last figure according to the figure 7 that can be found on page 105 of the english edition of Kojève's book. Even so, we believe that Kojève's text is not well represented by his own figure, for he seems to disregard certain conditions that were put forward before (such as the geometrical approach to *r*) and would have to be kept operational in order to maintain some rigor to the schema. As we will demonstrate later on, this inconsistency has to do both with Kojève's reading of Hegel and with the impossibility of fully formalizing Hegel's thought without the help of topology.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid. p.121

So, once the construction and significance of the schema of the monotheistic System is understood, Kojève affirms once more the ‘overcoming of Christian theology’ mentioned above and claims that “Hegel does away with the small circle”⁴⁸⁵ which, according to the relation r , ascended to a place outside of Time. In an inverse operation to Spinoza (who, Kojève claims, does away with the *temporal* circle), Hegel would thus arrive at an equally “homogeneous closed circle”:

“For we see that it is sufficient to deny that the Concept is a *relation* with *something other* than itself in order to set up the ideal of *absolute* - that is, *circular* - Knowledge.”

This amounts to the following movement:



Kojève explains that this circular schema of Absolute Knowledge, which equates Concept with Time (since, in it, r is nothing more than t itself), is the only one capable of giving “an account of History - that is, of the existence of the man whom each of us believes himself to be - that is, the *free* and *historical individual*.”⁴⁸⁶ Only if the Concept is identified with Time, *historical* Time, - “the Time in which human history unfolds” - can one account for the Concept as *work*⁴⁸⁷, as the work of Man, as the very existence of Man *as* Time.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid. p.121

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid. p.132

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid. p.145

To say, thus, that the Concept is *historical* is to supposedly give 'back' to Man a power over that which determines him. If, as Kojève claims, at the very first sentence of the introductory chapter, "Man is Self-Consciousness"⁴⁸⁸, and the Concept unfolds itself solely within historical, "human" temporality, then the relation between Man and the Concept is based on a *transparency*, on the possibility of grasping the *whole* of the knowledge of oneself. To become a "God-Man", that is, an "Eternity revealed to itself", is in a certain way no longer to be in historical time (End of History) and no longer to find an obstacle to self-recognition (Mastery, the Beyond):

"It is only *finite* Being that dialectically overcomes itself. If, then the Concept is Time, that is, if conceptual understanding is *dialectical*, the existence of the Concept - and consequently of Being revealed by the Concept - is essentially *finite*. Therefore History itself must be essentially finite; collective Man (humanity) must die just as the human individual dies; universal History must have a definitive *end*."

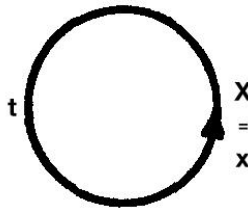
We know that for Hegel this end of history is marked by the coming of Science in the form of a Book - that is, by the appearance of the Wise Man or of *absolute* Knowledge in the World. This absolute Knowledge is the *last* moment of Time - that is, a moment without *Future* - is no longer a temporal moment. If absolute Knowledge comes into being in Time, or better yet, as Time or History, Knowledge that has come into being is no longer temporal or historical: it is *eternal*, or, if you will, it is Eternity revealed to itself"⁴⁸⁹

2.3 Absolute Knowledge and its Critique

Everything hinges here on the status of one particular point in Time - its *edge* even - which we can find at the junction of *x* and *X*, the "last moment of Time". If we take another look at the Kojévian figure of Absolute Knowledge, there are some important elements to be noted concerning this particular point:

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid. p.3

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid. p.148



If $t=x$, that is, if the conceptual work amounts to a *circular* knowledge which arrives at a transparent understanding of X , then we must also be able to write that $x=X$ ⁴⁹⁰ at the point where the circle *closes* - another way of stating what Kojève means by “Eternity (X) is revealed to itself ($=x$)”. At this precise point, a certain impediment to Desire’s recognition would have been lifted: from that position, a man would be “capable of answering in a *comprehensible* or satisfactory manner all questions that can be asked him concerning his acts, and capable of answering in such fashion that the *entirety* of his answers form a *coherent* discourse.”⁴⁹¹ This position - as it was already made explicit by Kojève in the long quote we previously mentioned - has to do with a certain knowledge regarding Death:

“The Concept is Time. Time in the full sense of the term - that is, a Time in which there is a Future also in the full sense - that is, a Future that will never become either present or past. Man is the empirical existence of the concept in the world. Therefore, he is the empirical existence in the world of a Future that will never become present. Now, this Future, for Man, is his death, that Future of his which will never become his present; and the only reality or real presence of this Future is the knowledge that Man has in the present of his future death. Therefore, if Man is Concept and if the Concept is Time (that is, if Man is an essentially temporal being), Man is essentially

⁴⁹⁰ In this chapter we will use the mathematical symbols $=$ and \neq as our way of symbolizing direct or immediate relations. It is, in itself, not a properly Hegelian way of writing these relations, for one of Hegel’s most crucial insights was precisely the difference *in* identity and this dimension is lost in this notation. Thus, we ask the reader to keep in mind that the usage of the symbols is Aristotelian, and will only guide us up until the moment the necessity arises of forging a properly Hegelian notation - that is, in our passage to Lacan.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid. p.75

mortal; and he is Concept, that is, absolute Knowledge or Wisdom incarnate, only if he knows this. Logos becomes flesh, becomes Man, only on the condition of being willing and able to die.⁴⁹²

We would like to suggest that $x=X$ obeys the same logic of the following statement: "I am finite" or "I know (x) that I will die (X)". To better understand this, we refer to an example used by Kojève himself.

A Desire to eat leads man to action, to satisfy himself through the transformation of what is eaten. In negating the object of his Desire through the act of eating it, the subjective reality of man, the empty place of the "I", is created - as the "I" who ate something, as a subject. But to preserve this empty place beyond mere "thinghood" - beyond the punctual place of a object of Desire - Man's Desire must be aimed at another Desire, at another emptiness such as its own. Beyond the direct object of Desire, there lies its true one, a Desire of/for Desire, a Desire to remain desiring and to be recognized as an independent Desire⁴⁹³.

But if the Desire to eat is always set against the background of the Desire to continue to Desire, the object of hunger, which is "negated" when eaten, is always measured up against Man's own negativity. To put it bluntly, when we eat something we are not only looking to satiate that particular Desire, but the object is invested with the expectation to satisfy Desire as such, that ultimate satisfaction that is the sustainment of Desire. Behind the object x at which we aim our direct satisfaction, there lies the spectre of X , that which would guarantee our complete satisfaction, an eternal dimension of ourselves. It is this distinction between the unchangeable X and the passing x which gives rise to Kojève's reading of the struggle for recognition and the figures of Lordship and Bondage⁴⁹⁴.

⁴⁹² Ibid. p.147

⁴⁹³ Ibid p.3-6

⁴⁹⁴ Kojève carefully explains how this difference between the two objects of Desire leads to the struggle for recognition in page 6 of *Introduction to the reading of Hegel* (p. 6)- but a comparison with the actual text of Hegel's Chapter

Taking this example into consideration, we can better appreciate the consequences of the Kojévian figure of Absolute Knowledge, which can be defined as the thought of the “last moment in Time” as the point in which $X=x$, as the return of Man to himself, closing the figure’s circle: the excessive investment in what is eaten is but an illusion, our ignorance in the face of our finitude.

Viewed under this light, the idea that Man should “become Christ” must ultimately means that Man must accept finitude, be “willing and able to die”, in order to find, against the spectre of Death, the perfect return to himself, now that he knows his own horizon. By accepting that Man is not infinite - that is, that X is solely and fully inscribed in the historical dimension - Man’s finitude becomes *the whole of Man*. Here we find the perfect transition point between the metaphysical tradition and the post-Hegelian, post-metaphysical currents of thought. The finite as the Absolute - the Idea of the End as the last Idea, or even as the end of the Idea - ultimately means that *to accept this figure of Absolute Knowledge is the same as to simply refuse it*, since the limits of knowledge and the knowledge of these limits directly coincide.

This, we believe, is the precise point where the core of Hegel’s philosophy finds its most radical obliteration. Kojève is one of the philosophers most responsible for bringing to the attention of 20th Century French thought the utter importance of the philosophy of Hegel -Heidegger’s and Marx’s great and

on Self-Consciousness in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is enough to present important discrepancies with the Kojévian reading, specially regarding the true dimension of such split, which Hegel considers utterly *ontological* - both subject and substance must be thought as composing Spirit and this point is clearly made in relation to Self-Consciousness in the end of the first triad of the Unhappy Consciousness (see §210-213). Kojève himself was very aware of some of this differences, since in one of his letters to Truc Thao he mentions them as some of his personal contributions to philosophy - in special the turn towards an “anthropological phenomenology”. (See the reproduction of this letter in Jarczyk’s *De Kojève a Hegel*) The difference between his contributions and his direct reading of Hegel seems to have been somewhat confused by his disciples and critics.

influential predecessor - as well as having being the direct influence of Lacan's first theory of Desire⁴⁹⁵. However, a possible reason as to why Kojève's re-affirmation of Hegel also served as an alibi to dismiss him is that the Kojévian Hegel perfectly fits the role of being the last metaphysical philosopher of the Absolute and simultaneously the first philosopher of finitude - and this is precisely the function served by the Kojévian figure of Absolute Knowledge: it closes a circle with a negativity, yes, but with a *self-identical negativity*.

2.4 Self-Different Negativity

We should pause here for a moment to consider a particular symptom of Kojève's reading. In his famous series of lectures, Kojève strangely *skipped*⁴⁹⁶ the section on the dialectics of Consciousness titled "Perception: the Thing and deception" - the section in which the figure of a *negativity that coincides with itself* is proven to be as restless and equally inscribed in the dialectical economy as everything else, being nothing more than "the work of the empty 'Ego', which makes an object out of this empty self-identity of its own"⁴⁹⁷.

Similarly, nowhere in Kojève's comments do we find a fully developed interpretation of what Hegel refers to as the moment of Self-Consciousness in which "the enemy shows itself in its distinctive shape"⁴⁹⁸, the very last figure of Unhappy Consciousness⁴⁹⁹, which attempts to reduce itself to an

⁴⁹⁵ See Butler, Judith (1999), *Subjects of Desire*, (Columbia University Press).

⁴⁹⁶ We use the complete french edition as reference, the english one is an abridged compilation. See Kojève, Alexandre and Queneau, Raymond (1980), *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel : leçons sur la Phénoménologie de l'Esprit professées de 1933 à 1939 à l'École des Hautes Études*, (Gallimard).

⁴⁹⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §128 See also Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences With the Zusatz*, (Hackett Publishing) §44

⁴⁹⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §225

⁴⁹⁹ The abridged english version contains only a couple of references to the last figure of the dialectics of Self-Consciousness, while the complete version

immediate nothingness⁵⁰⁰, but cannot give away the wretchedness of its own “animal functions” - it is parasitized by its own unessential body which must serve as the support for its essential nothingness.

What these two moments have in common is that, in them, nothingness itself appears in its *constitutive impurity*. In the first case, the last moment of the dialectics of Consciousness delineates a proposition akin to “the Thing is a Veil”⁵⁰¹ - the supposed self-identity of the void is nothing but a product of the veil’s own inherent non-coincidence - while in the second case, it could be stated that “Nothingness is Wretchedness”⁵⁰² - there is a material obstacle that is both the product and the support of Self-Consciousness’ drive to renounce every determination in order to become itself a self-identical void. These two sentences, which have the form of what Hegel calls an infinite judgment, or *speculative proposition*, state that the utmost negativity is bound to a material left-over:

presents an analysis which describes it simply as “Christian” consciousness, reducing it to the same register of an anthropological example as the Stoic and Skeptical ones, without privileging its status as the *truth* of the previous moments.

⁵⁰⁰ See a careful reading of this section by Catherine Malabou in “Detache-moi”, in Butler, Judith and Catherine Malabou (2010), *Sois mon corps : Une lecture contemporaine de la domination et de la servitude chez Hegel*, (Bayard Centurion).

⁵⁰¹ “it is manifest that behind the so-called curtain which is supposed to conceal the inner world, there is nothing to be seen unless *we* go behind it ourselves, as much in order that we may see, as that there may be something behind there which can be seen.” Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §165

⁵⁰² Ibid. § 225: “the actual activity of consciousness becomes an activity of doing nothing, and its act of consumption becomes a feeling of its unhappiness. (...) In its animal functions, consciousness is consciousness of itself as this *actual individual*. These functions, instead of being performed without embarrassment as something which are in and for themselves null and which can acquire no importance and essentiality for spirit, are even more so now objects of serious attention. They acquire the utmost importance since it is in them that the enemy shows itself in its distinctive shape. However, since this enemy engenders itself in its very suppression, consciousness, by fixating itself on the enemy, is to an even greater degree continually dwelling on it instead of freeing itself from it.”

"What has been said can be expressed formally in this way. The nature of judgment, that is, of the proposition per se which includes the distinction of subject and predicate within itself, is destroyed by the speculative judgment, and the identical proposition, which the former comes to be, contains the counter-stroke to those relations (...)

Some examples will clarify what has been said. Take the proposition: "*God is being*." The predicate is "*being*"; it has a substantial meaning in which the subject melts away. Here, "*being*" is not supposed to be a predicate. It supposed to be the essence, but, as a result, "*God*" seems to cease to be what it was by virtue of its place in the proposition, namely, to be a fixed subject. – Thought, instead of getting any farther with the transition from subject to predicate, feels to an even greater degree inhibited, since the subject has dropped out of the picture, and, because it misses the subject, it is thrown back to the thought of the subject. Or, since the predicate itself has been articulated as a subject, as *being*, as the *essence* which exhausts the nature of the subject, it finds the subject also to be immediately present in the predicate. Now, instead of having taken an inward turn into the predicate, and instead of having preserved the free status of merely clever argumentation, it is still absorbed in the content, or at least the demand for it to be so absorbed is present. – In that way when it is said, "*The actual is the universal*," the actual, as subject, vanishes into its predicate. The universal is not supposed to have merely the meaning of a predicate such that the proposition would state that, "*The actual is the universal*"; rather, the universal ought to express the essence of the actual. – Thought thus loses its fixed objective basis which it had in the subject, when, in the predicate, it was thrown back to the subject, and when, in the predicate, it returns not into itself but into the subject of the content."⁵⁰³

In *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Žižek remarks how easy it is to dismiss the outrageous aspect of such formulations:

"At the immediate level, that of 'understanding', of representation [Vorstellung], this proposition appears, of course, as an extreme variation of vulgar materialism; reducing

⁵⁰³ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) § 61-63 Important note: all our references to the paragraphs of the *Phenomenology* are taken from the Oxford edition, but the translations are directly transcribed from Pinkard's unpublished version of the text, available at http://web.mac.com/titpaul/Site/Phenomenology_of_Spirit_page.html

the spirit, the subject, pure negativity, the most mobile and subtle element, an ever-escaping 'fox', to a rigid, fixed, dead object, to total inertia, to an absolutely non-dialectical presence.

Consequently, we react to it like the shocked Soviet bureaucrat in the Rabinovitch joke: we are startled, it is absurd and nonsensical; the proposition 'the Spirit is a bone' provokes in us a sentiment of radical, unbearable contradiction; it offers an image of grotesque discord, of an extremely negative relationship.

However, as in the case of Rabinovitch, it is precisely thus that we produce its speculative truth, because this negativity, this unbearable discord, coincides with subjectivity itself, it is the only way to make present and 'palpable' the utmost - that is, self-referential - negativity which characterizes spiritual subjectivity. We succeed in transmitting the dimension of subjectivity *by means of the failure itself*, through the radical insufficiency, through the absolute maladjustment of the predicate in relation to the subject. This is why 'the Spirit is a bone' is a perfect example of what Hegel calls the 'speculative proposition', a proposition whose terms are incompatible, without common measure. As Hegel points out in the Preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, to grasp the true meaning of such a proposition we must go back and read it over again, because this true meaning arises from the very failure of the first, 'immediate' reading."⁵⁰⁴

It is this intricate relation between the infinity of the speculative proposition - the true infinity, the infinity of *self-difference* - and the category of a failure which extends itself even to negativity as such that is obfuscated in Kojève's interpretation. To exemplify this we could refer back to the fundamental infinite judgment that sustains the Christian Event: "God is Man". If we are to understand it in terms of the *serial infinity* of approximations and accumulations, then it does state that Man's horizon is to become the (immediate) identity of Man and God ($x=X$), a "God-Man". But considered under the light of the true, self-different infinity, "God is Man" is an assertion of God's very restlessness, his uncontrolled entanglement with his own creation. God himself has been marked by the wretched

⁵⁰⁴ Žižek, Slavoj (1989), *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Phronesis), (Verso). p.207

experience of self-estrangement which defines the miserable figures of self-consciousness: “He was made Man”⁵⁰⁵.

Hegel’s famous proposition “Time is the being there of the Concept” - which so univocally supports Kojève’s reading of the hegelian edifice - also opens up to a very different approach, one that is not based on the overcoming of one term through the other, but which states their simultaneous entanglement and incommensurability. Hegel himself made it very explicit, specially in his later works, that Time itself is trapped in a dual logic of the finite and the infinite⁵⁰⁶ but Kojève, who did not fail to see this, referred to this duality as Hegel’s “basic error”⁵⁰⁷.

2.5 The Beautiful Soul and Absolute Knowledge

If we now briefly re-consider the importance given by Kojève to the dialectics of the Lord and the Bondsman, a moment which is the outcome of a fight for Life and Death between two desiring self-consciousnesses, we should be able to see that Kojève *repeats the gesture of the Slave*, for he sees in the Slave that which the Slave sees in the Master: the possibility of pure, independent, self-coincident nothingness, one which would not be attached or parasitized by the *excessive life* which disrupts its willed freedom.

⁵⁰⁵ As we will see, we propose that, instead of $x=X$, concrete universality should be written $x \neq x$ and $X \neq X$, according a topological twist which binds them together *in their alienation*.

⁵⁰⁶ “While we are thus concerned exclusively with the Idea of Spirit, and in the History of the World regard everything as only its manifestation, we have, in traversing the past, — however extensive its periods, — only to do with what is *present*; for philosophy, as occupying itself with the True, has to do with the *eternally present*.” Hegel, G. W. F. (2010), *Lectures On the Philosophy of History*, (Nabu Press) \$99 For a detailed study of Time in the Science of Logic, please see Arantes, P.E. (1981), Hegel, a *ordem do tempo*, (Polis) - specially chapter 12, “Time and its Double”. p.173

⁵⁰⁷ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press) footnote 20 p.133

The object of desire never coincides with the promise of infinitude which shines from the Beyond - Kojève made this very clear - but this insight should be further radicalized: the Beyond also fails to coincide with itself, and is caught up in the objects which do not measure up to it. Death itself, as the ultimate name of finitude, cannot serve as Man's final horizon, for this positing implies that *it has fallen over into Life*. That is: not only is the finite different from the infinite, but this difference is so radical that the finite appears as containing that distinction itself - *being-not* the infinite - and not simply as *being* the finite. In this negative sense, something of the infinite must get stuck in the finite objects which present themselves to Man, including Man himself. This is why the total acceptance of death as the self-identical limit of our finitude ultimately consents too little to the Hegelian restlessness of the negative, which, in truth, prevents death from separating finitude and the infinite without any porosity. It is beyond the self-identity of the negative - where Žižek identifies the true outrage of the speculative - that we must come to terms with the constitutive impasse of subjectivity - perfectly formulated by Zupančič in the following statement: "not only are we not infinite, *we are not even finite*"⁵⁰⁸.

This is why, ultimately, the historical reification of the figures of the Lord and the Bondsman must be strictly understood as a *fetishization*⁵⁰⁹ of Hegel's logic. Through it, Kojève keeps alive the promise of a fully self-conscious Man, a Man in whom Desire would coincide with itself, like an Heraclitean Fire, which consumes all, but does not itself suffer the radical differentiation that it recognizes in everything else:

⁵⁰⁸ Zupančič, Alenka (2008), *The Odd One In: On Comedy (Short Circuits)*, (The MIT Press), p.53

⁵⁰⁹ In the freudian sense of "a reminder of the triumph over the threat of castration and a protection against it."- a way of simultaneously defending oneself against the universalization of a principle of non-coincidence and of electing something which we suppose to be beyond such principle. "Fetishism" (1927) in Freud (1971), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works [vol. 21]*, (Hogarth Press).

"As long as one questions solely the fixation of determinations, we will only be moving from an ontology of the inalterable Being to an ontology of a devouring Becoming. Insignificant advantage. Certainly this is a way of declaring that the 'finite' is incapable of integrating in itself the Other - but one remains thinking about the finite 'thing' as a being."⁵¹⁰

In this sense, we argue that the reading in which *x* should coincide with *X* in Absolute Knowledge, as Man accepts his finitude, requires an homologous operation to the one known in psychoanalysis as *imaginary castration*⁵¹¹: one recognizes that there is an absolute lack in the Other, but this empty place is still roamed by the spectre of a complete Otherness because of the very univocity of this void⁵¹². To put it in freudian terms: the boy has seen that his mother has no penis, but the fantasy that she *could* have one is kept alive through the very partial acceptance of its lacking⁵¹³ - even missing, or better, *precisely* as missing, that object still serves as the background of the subject's fantasy, it is still thought as the "*it*" against which everything else is measured or valued - and self-identity remains therefore as the horizon of what can be grasped. Does Death not play a similar role in Kojève's philosophical thought? Does it

⁵¹⁰ Lebrun, Gérard (2004), *L'Envers de la dialectique : Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche*, (Seuil). p.216

⁵¹¹ Please refer to section 3 of the previous chapter

⁵¹² Lacan, Jacques (1998), *Séminaire, tome 4 : la Relation d'objet*, (Seuil). p.230 See also Lacan's critique of the absolute subject in the (Kojévian) Hegel in *Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectics of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious* in Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company).

⁵¹³ "In every instance, the meaning and the purpose of the fetish turned out, in analysis, to be the same. It revealed itself so naturally and seemed to me so compelling that I am prepared to expect the same solution in all cases of fetishism. When now I announce that the fetish is a substitute for the penis, I shall certainly create disappointment; so I hasten to add that it is not a substitute for any chance penis, but for a particular and quite special penis that had been extremely important in early childhood but had later been lost. That is to say, it should normally have been given up, but the fetish is precisely designed to preserve it from extinction. To put it more plainly: the fetish is a substitute for the woman's (the mother's) penis that the little boy once believed in and - for reasons familiar to us - does not want to give up" in "Fetishism" (1927) in Freud (1971), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXI (1927-1931): The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and its Discontents, and Other Works [vol. 21]*, (Hogarth Press).

not serve as the name of the subject's finitude, its irremediable lack, but an *identical* lack none the less? It is Death which coincides with itself in $x=X$, in what might be called the first axiom of the metaphysics of finitude⁵¹⁴.

Kojève's 'four words' - Man can become Christ - silently hovers on the horizon of post-metaphysical thought, for the death of Mastery, taken positively (like Kojève does) or negatively (as his critics do), cannot avoid being the hymn of Death *as the Master*. To put it in the Hegelian terms of the fight for Life and Death, the Slave's mortal encounter with Death, the Absolute Master, as it first seeks to detach itself from Life, to prove its independence, is perversely disavowed in the guise of the Wise Man's final statement, the immediate positing that "Death is Death". As Hegel makes very clear, the immediate positing of self-coincidence always relies on a hidden economy, which makes its restlessness spring forth somewhere else - and the name of the figure of self-consciousness associated with this transparent self-knowledge is, in fact, the *beautiful soul*:

"Inasmuch as the self-certain spirit as a beautiful soul does not yet possess the strength to empty itself of the self-knowledge which it keeps to itself in itself, it cannot achieve a parity with the consciousness it has repulsed, and thus it cannot achieve the intuited unity of itself in an other, and it cannot attain existence. Hence, the parity comes about merely negatively, as a spirit-less being. The beautiful soul, which lacks all actuality, which is caught in the contradiction between its pure self and its necessity to empty itself into existence and to convert itself into actuality, exists in the *immediacy* of this opposition to which it so tenaciously clings - in an immediacy which is alone the mediating term and the reconciliation of an opposition which has been intensified up to the point of its pure abstraction, and which is itself pure being or empty nothingness - and thus, as the consciousness of this contradiction in its unreconciled immediacy, it becomes unhinged to the point of madness, and it melts into a yearning tubercular consumption. It thereby in fact gives up its grim

⁵¹⁴ We use the term as it is articulated in the title "Physics of the Infinite against Metaphysics of the Finite" in Župančič, Alenka (2008), *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press).

adherence to *its being-for-itself*, but it only manages to engender merely the spiritless *unity* of being."⁵¹⁵

With the figure of the beautiful soul in mind - this consciousness "unhinged to the point of madness" - let us consider the following passage from *Death as a Master*, written by the Brazilian psychoanalyst Rosaura Oldani, which attests to some of the clinical symptoms found in our contemporary world:

"In the last couple of years the following restless complaints have appeared in my clinical practice: 1) an analysand who tried very hard to be infected with AIDS, when asked about what were his reasons, answers: "Everyone is born with a passport, but I want mine already stamped"; 2) another one stays home imprisoned, panicking over the very idea of leaving his house and family: for him, life, the very movement of living, was a phobic object, for it would necessarily imply death.

Beside these two cases, in which the anguish of death presented itself in an intense manner, and provoked extreme reactions on the side of the analysands, it has become increasingly frequent the demand for analysis by people who present fragile objectal relations, as well as reduced perspective of the future, adopting an immediatist posture, which leads to the feeling of failure, as well as to a difficulty in keeping with one's commitments and responsibilities.

In the unfolding of these analysis a common trait emerged: all of the analysands presented an accentuated fear of death, which in the manifested discourse appeared as a fear of physical death, but which referred essentially to the fear of forgetfulness, of annihilation, in consequence of the absence of ties which allowed for the maintenance of the existence of the subject beyond the body itself.

These elements allowed us to perceive a new form of social link which follows this same angulation. It is another form of social bond which has caught our attention: the crescent appearance of groups with a therapeutical objective, political and religious organizations. Such groups present rigid norms, have the motivation of rescuing a lost dignity and, mainly, in them the group has a prevalence over the individual. What is most disquieting is a particular characteristic presented in

⁵¹⁵ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §668

therapeutical groups which bear the name of ‘mutual help’ groups, and have the objective of helping those who have a dependency of chemical substances or are HIV positive. All these groups have as their main theme death and destruction, evoking a parallel situation to the clinical observations. In these groups it seems to be in course a process of subjectivization of death.”⁵¹⁶

Oldani’s thesis is supported by the clinical observation of a symptomatology that is directly related to an “impossibility of speaking about death”⁵¹⁷, a difficulty to inscribe the signifier of Death into speech - that is, to assign to Death the same dialectical restlessness which makes all other signifiers slide, in the perpetual non-coincidence of the symbolic chain. Death remains a devouring abyss, the very figure of Chronos about to eat his children. Faced with such a threat, some subjects are left only with the option of inscribing death directly into their own bodies - “stamping” their passports with the imprint of AIDS, for example - in a fetishized, patch-worked inclusion of this signifier into their lives, while others are left to equate an “outside of language” with the outside of their bodies or homes as the only assignable limit between life and death.

This helplessness in the face of Death, which afflicts certain subjects with devastating consequences, but which can nevertheless be encountered, as Oldani notes, in the very mode by which certain social groups tend to structure themselves today - could this not be seen as a clear symptom of the ideological field which has the ‘End of History’ as its founding trace? If the Kojévian Absolute Knowledge is the knowledge of the *absolute finitude* of Man, these dangerous attempts at “subjectivizing Death” - desperately trying to bring it into culture somehow - ultimately mean that certain subjects today have so little means of articulating something of death through speech - for it serves as a self-identical beyond, and its inscription in language is correlated to the rise of an all-encompassing Otherness - that the price to pay for being alive is

⁵¹⁶ Oldani, R.F. ‘A morte como Mestre’, (UFRJ) p.4; See also Edson Luiz André de Souza’s “Contaminações contemporâneas” in Goldenberg, Ricardo (ed.) (1997), *Goza! Capitalismo, Globalização e Psicanálise*, Agalma)

⁵¹⁷ Oldani, R.F. ‘A morte como Mestre’, (UFRJ) . p.2

left to the illiteracy of our bodies. This symptomal trace delineates a subjectivity that is not slave to a visible and assignable Master, but one that is nevertheless a slave to the *absolute* one, whom we cannot but serve as we think of ourselves as free.

Our presentation of the Kojèvian Hegel, albeit not exhaustive, allows us a better grasp of the exact element which, according to the Žižekian axiom put forth in the previous section, is obliterated in Hegel's philosophy, so that "the continuity of the development of philosophy could be reestablished"⁵¹⁸. If we consider Kojève's 'Man can become Christ' - Christ understood here as the "God-Man", the zero level of a figure of self-consciousness which would be supposedly self-transparent - to be the pivotal statement, and underlying fantasy of Kojève's anthropological phenomenology of Hegel, and if we accept that this particular reading of Hegel serves the purpose of the obliteration of his philosophy, as diagnosed by Žižek, then it might be worthwhile to compare the three famous Kojèvian theses:

- a) *The primacy of the historical reading of the dialectics of the Lord and the Bondsman.*
- b) *The temporality of the Concept is solely historical Time.*
- c) *Absolute Knowledge is Circular Knowledge.*

With the three post-modern theses we presented in our introductory chapter - and which could now be understood as part of a symptomatic return of the Kojèvian obliteration:

- a') *The claim that Desire precedes castration as a consequence of the Slave becoming Sage by releasing himself from an external oppressor.*
- b') *The closure of the dimension of the Idea as a consequence of the End of History and the arrival of the final Idea of liberal democracy.*

⁵¹⁸ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.35-36

c') *The criticism of structured critical knowledges based on the reproach that the Master-signifier is a signifier of itself as a consequence of the circular and total Absolute Knowledge.*

Let us now turn to Žižek's philosophical project. We intent to show that his Lacanian reading of Hegel does not simply oppose the Kojévian one, but is actually able to resolve the *negative* inconsistencies presented by Kojève - Hegel's "basic error", for example - by clinging to a *positive* inconsistency that is central to Hegel's project itself - the Freudian name of which is *death drive*.

Our task is to take up once more our previous statement:

S3: Death drive is a philosophical category.

And to assert that we can reformulate our second "axiom", presented in the beginning of this chapter, in the following way:

S9': *Hegel is the only philosopher to have turned inconsistency into an ontological category.*

With this formulation as our guiding principle, we intent to unfold from it yet another proposition, deeply connected to the Hegelian account of the Christian Event:

S12: *Death drive is that which allows us to serve ourselves of Death.*

3. Žižek

We began our enquiry on Hegel by addressing the common idea that his thought represents a break in the history of philosophy.

We then moved on to present the Žižekian thesis that this break - which was supposedly followed through by the different trends of post-metaphysical thought - is nonetheless a break *with* Hegel, an obliteration of his essential insight. Here we

contrasted the practically infinite series of possible and equally valid interpretations of Hegel, which take place *au-delà* of the rupture, with the singularity of Žižek’s position by referring to the difference between bad and true infinity, a central distinction developed by Hegel himself. Under the light of this new axis of oppositions, the Kojévian Hegelianism sprung forth as the spectral alibi against which the boundless interpretations of Hegel establish themselves.

Now, after having presented certain elements of the Kojévian reading of Hegel, we are left to understand how Hegelian philosophy itself, once distinguished from certain revisionist interpretations, conceptualizes the idea of a break or failure. At the precise intersection between infinity, totality and rupture - under the emblem of Christ’s *monstrosity* - we intend to recognize a fundamental pivot of Žižek’s return to Hegel.

To justify our continuous use of the Christian Event as the site of elaboration of the conceptual divergences between Kojève and Žižek, and as a privileged example of the uniqueness of Hegel’s thought, let us briefly quote a passage from his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* which serves us here as a guiding principle:

“Make of Christ what you will, exegetically, critically, historically - demonstrate as you please, what was possibly made of the teachings of the Church by the Councils and by this or that interest and passion of the Bishops, or what came from it and what came to it, as one wishes; what must alone be questioned is what the Idea or the Truth in and for itself is.”⁵¹⁹

It is precisely when one is concerned with “the Idea or the Truth in and for itself” - that is, with the structuring relation between the subject and the Event⁵²⁰ - that the full extend of Hegel’s

⁵¹⁹ Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília) p.276 Also, Lebrun reminds us that it was precisely through the young Hegel’s reproach that Christianity stumbled upon an obstacle the nature of which it could not itself analyze, that hegelian dialectics was born - See Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard). p.71

⁵²⁰ We use here Badiou’s definition of truth in Badiou, Alain (2007), *Being and Event*, (Continuum).

philosophical achievement shines through. This, we believe, is precisely what Žižek's return to Hegel accomplishes, given the lacanian framework of his reading. Lacan was, after all, a *hyperstructuralist*⁵²¹ thinker - for him a myth is nothing if not a fact of structure⁵²² - and, as Žižek demonstrates, that might very well be the case with Hegel himself.

3.1 "Christ has appeared"

In this same text, Hegel directly addresses the difference between the propositions "He was made Man" and "Man can become God" in terms of the difference between Christ and Socrates.

Hegel begins the chapter on Christianity⁵²³ by quoting the famous biblical passage "When the time was fulfilled, God sent his Son"⁵²⁴ and emphasizing the trinitarian structure of this statement, which encapsulates the arrival of the Christian Religion:

"God is thus recognized as Spirit only when known as the Triune. This new principle is the new axis on which the World-History turns. This is wherefrom and whereto History goes. [Bis hierher und von daher geht die Geschichte] "When the Time was fulfilled, God sent his Son" is the statement of the Bible. This means nothing other than: Self-Consciousness had

⁵²¹ Milner, Jean-Claude (2008), *Le périple structural : Figures et paradigme*, (Editions Verdier); For a very good summary of this particular point see Chiesa, Lorenzo (2010), 'Hyperstructuralism's Necessity of Contingency', S (Jan van Eyck Circle), Vol 3 159-77 - available at <http://lineofbeauty.ys.be/index.php/s>

⁵²² Lacan, Jacques (1991), *L'envers de la psychanalyse, 1969-1970*, (Seuil) - class of 18/03/70

⁵²³ We chose to begin this section by focusing directly on Hegel's argument in the Chapter on Christianity in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, leaving the references to Žižek implicit in our reading. We believe that in this way we might be able to better understand how Žižek's return to Hegel is truly a *return*.

⁵²⁴ Galatians 4, 4 in God (2011), ESV Study Bible, (Crossway Bibles) - Hegel translated this passage as "Als die Zeit *erfüllet* war, sandte Gott seinen Sohn" - a different translation from both 1545's *Luther Bibel* and the *Hoffnung für Alle*. See <http://www.biblegateway.com/>

risen to the moments which belong to the Concept of Spirit, and to the need of seizing them in an absolute manner”⁵²⁵

It is important to note that Hegel chose a very particular verb - *erfüllen* - to express the moment of Christ’s coming - he paraphrases the biblical verse a couple of pages later, again referring to a *fulfilling* of Time⁵²⁶. The time of Christ does not simply ‘come’ as if it was a particular moment *in Time*, rather, something of Time itself is at stake in the Christian Event - something *of Time* is fulfilled.

Hegel goes on to present some essential traits which constitute the Greek, Roman and Jewish Spirits - in an abridged and slightly distinct manner from the famous chapter on religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. After having outlined the path from the Greek law of Spirit - which could be summarized in the statement “Man, know thyself”⁵²⁷ - to the wretchedness and boundless longing of the Jewish people, whose Spirit is “refined to Universality, through the reference of it to the One”, Hegel introduces the arrival of Christian Religion in the following manner:

“The infinite loss [of the Jewish Spirit] is countered only by its own Infinity, and thereby becomes infinite gain. The identity of the Subject with God came into the World *when the Time was fulfilled*: the Consciousness of this identity is the manifested God in His Truth. The content of this Truth is Spirit itself, the vital movement itself. God’s nature, being pure Spirit, is *manifested to Man in the Christian Religion*.”⁵²⁸

The passage from Judaism to Christianity - encapsulated in the sentence “the infinite loss is countered only by its own Infinity, and thereby becomes infinite gain” - is explained through a reference to the narrative of Original Sin, the “eternal myth of

⁵²⁵ Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília) p.271 We also refer the reader to the original text - the second chapter in Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1986), *Werke in 20 Bänden und Register*, Bd.12, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, (Suhrkamp).

⁵²⁶ “ The identity of the subject with God came into the World when the Time was fulfilled.” Ibid. p.274

⁵²⁷ Ibid. p.271

⁵²⁸ Ibid. p.274

Man⁵²⁹: in the Old Testament, it is told as the story of a Fall, an infinite *loss*, but, in Christ, it is transformed into infinite gain through the restless Infinity of its own negativity. Man does not rise up towards the Other, the inaccessible One: the negative Beyond itself, for it is *infinite*, cannot be simply self-identical, and thus manifests itself. The shift from infinite *loss* to infinite *gain* must, in this sense, be understood as the shift from a God who is a lost object to Man to a God who is himself *loss as an object*⁵³⁰.

If at first Man fell from God, alienated in his wretched existence from the transcendental Oneness which lay beyond his nostalgic longing, in the Christian Event *God himself falls from Heaven*. The crucial declaration of the Christian Event, which directly echoes the Chestertonian “four words”, is thus: “Christ has *appeared* [Christus ist erschienen]”⁵³¹.

But Hegel is very clear in distinguishing the consequences of this Event from the idea of a direct and immediate identity of Man and God: God has not revealed himself to have been always ‘just’ Man himself, who up until then failed to grasp himself as such. On the contrary: it is the same wretchedness which alienates Man from God in the Jewish Spirit - the impossibility of reducing oneself to nothingness⁵³² and thus achieve self-identity in pure Subjectivity - which is now *the very condition of Man’s reconciliation with God*:

“Man himself therefore is comprehended in the Idea of God, and this comprehension may be thus expressed – that the unity of Man with God is posited in the Christian Religion. But this unity must not be superficially conceived, as if God were only Man, and Man, without further condition, were God. Man, on

⁵²⁹ Ibid. p.273

⁵³⁰ The distinction between the lost object and the loss as object is a crucial point of Lacanian theory. See Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press), p.63-66

⁵³¹ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1986), *Werke in 20 Bänden und Register*, Bd.12, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, (Suhrkamp), p.393

⁵³² Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília) p.272-273 See also Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §225

the contrary, is God only in so far as he annuls the merely Natural and Limited in his Spirit and elevates himself to God. That is to say, it is obligatory on him who is a partaker of the truth, and knows that he himself is a constituent [Moment] of the Divine Idea, to give up his merely natural being: for the Natural is the Unspiritual. In this Idea of God, then, is to be found also the *Reconciliation* that heals the pain and inward suffering of man. For Suffering itself is henceforth recognized as an instrument necessary for producing the unity of man with God.”⁵³³

Man’s alienation from himself is precisely what Man shares with God⁵³⁴. Hegel emphasizes this essential point by further distinguishing Christ from the great figures of the Greek World:

“Our thoughts naturally revert to the Greek anthropomorphism, of which we affirmed that it did not go far enough. For that natural elation of soul which characterized the Greeks did not rise to the Subjective Freedom of the I itself – to the inwardness that belongs to the Christian Religion – to the recognition of Spirit as a *definite positive being*. – The appearance of the Christian God involves further its being *unique* in its kind; it can occur only once, for God is realized as Subject, and as manifested Subjectivity is exclusively One Individual.”⁵³⁵

In contrast to the exemplar individuals of the Greek world - as well as the Lamas and higher religious figures of the East, which are supposed to return many times throughout History - the coming of Christ is an unique Event, for “subjectivity as infinite relation to self, has its form *in itself*, and as manifested Subjectivity is exclusively One Individual”. This individuality cannot be repeated. But Hegel goes even further and claims that, though Christ was One, one misses the point of the Christian Event if he is considered to be “merely” the appearance of a *perfect* Man - the man who would be a godly or whole Man:

⁵³³ Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília) p.274-275

⁵³⁴ On this precise point, see Žižek’s “Il n’ya pas de rapport religieux” in Ayerza, J. (2001), *Lacanian Ink* 18, (The Wooster Press).

⁵³⁵ Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília) p.275

“the question is asked, What are we to make of his birth, his Father and Mother, his early domestic relations, his miracles, etc.? – *Il.e.*, What is he *unspiritually* regarded? If we consider Christ only in reference to his talents, his character and his morality, as a teacher, etc., we are putting him on the same plane as Socrates and others, even if we place him higher from the moral point of view. (...) If Christ is only taken as an exceptionally fine individual, even as one without sin, then we are ignoring the representation of the speculative idea, its absolute truth.”⁵³⁶

Christ is One, but if we are not to ignore the absolute truth of God’s manifestation, we cannot simply take him for the “impeccable” One, because “the sensuous existence in which Spirit is embodied is only a transitional phase. Christ dies; only as dead is he exalted to Heaven and sits at the right hand of God: only thus is he Spirit”. The fulfillment of Time mentioned above is thus properly distinguished from a ‘culmination’, it cannot be accounted for in the measurable sense of a series of qualities which, by a miracle, touched upon the Beyond. It belongs to a different register: only by counting *the One together with its own negativity* - by including Death *within* Christ - can we grasp Spirit as such:

“It has been already remarked that only after the death of Christ could the Spirit come upon his friends; that only then were they able to conceive the true idea of God, viz., that in Christ man is redeemed and reconciled: for in him the idea of eternal truth is recognized, the essence of man acknowledged to be Spirit, and the fact proclaimed that only by stripping himself of his finiteness and surrendering himself to pure self-consciousness, does he attain the truth. Christ – man as man – in whom the unity of God and man has appeared, has in his death, and his history generally, himself presented the eternal history of Spirit – a history which every man has to accomplish in himself, in order to exist as Spirit, or to become a child of God, a citizen of his kingdom.”⁵³⁷

Again, Hegel puts forth a very precise claim: not only is the Christian Event defined not by Christ’s ‘perfection’, but by the inclusion of Death as part of the Event itself. Hence, one should

⁵³⁶ Ibid. p.275-276

⁵³⁷ Ibid. p.277-278

also not strive to ‘accomplish himself’ Christ’s act - one should actually accomplish it ‘*in himself*’ [die jeder Mensch an ihm selbst zu vorbringen hat].⁵³⁸ In this sense, Christ’s gift to mankind is to allow Man to name a Death which takes place *within* Life - not only a *future* Death, like the one mentioned by Kojève, which would determine the horizon of History, but a *present* one. In the words of the priest Antonio Vieira, in his famous sermon of Ash Wednesday, from 1672:

“Two things preaches the Church to all the mortals: both are great, both are sad, both are fearful, both are certain. But one is in such a way certain and evident, that it is not necessary any understanding to believe it; the other is in such a way certain and difficult, that no understanding is enough to grasp it. One is present, the other future: but the future one, the eyes can see; the present one, understanding cannot reach. What two enigmatic things are those? *Pulvis es, et in pulverem reverteris*. You are dust, and into dust you shall convert. You are dust, that is the present one; Into dust you shall convert, that is the future one. The future dust, the dust we shall become, the eyes can see it: the present dust, the dust we are, neither can the eyes see it, nor can understanding grasp it.”⁵³⁹

Christ’s exception thus consists in being the One in which *one* Death was simultaneously inside and outside of Life. This is why Hegel claims that Christ’s death *is his resurrection*:

“Christ’s death assumes the character of a death that constitutes the transition to glory, but to a glorification that is only a restoration of the original glory. Death, the negative, is

⁵³⁸ “What belongs to the element of representational thought, namely, that absolute spirit represents the nature of spirit in its existence as *an individual spirit* or, rather, as a particular spirit, is therefore shifted here into self-consciousness itself, into the knowledge that sustains itself in its *otherness*. This self-consciousness thus does not therefore actually *die* in the way that the *particular* is represented to have *actually* died; rather, its particularity dies away within its universality, which is to say, in its *knowledge*, which is the essence reconciling itself with itself.” Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §785

⁵³⁹ Vieira, Antonio (2009), *Sermões*, (Vol. I; Edições Loyola). p.260 (our translation)

the mediating term through which the original majesty is posited as now achieved.”⁵⁴⁰

After Christ, Death itself has been split into two - the present and the future death - and in the spiritual life of the community, founded upon this division, Christ lives on as the Holy Spirit - as a *real* presence, not a merely future presence⁵⁴¹ - which affirms Death's submission to non-coincidence:

“The followers of Christ, united in this sense and living in the spiritual life, form a *community* which is the Kingdom of God. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name,” (that is, in the determination of that which I am) - says Christ - “there am I in the midst of them”. The community is the real and present life in the Spirit of Christ”⁵⁴²

The idea of a Death that is itself split into two, and therefore of a Life that “bears death calmly, and in death, sustains itself”⁵⁴³, leads us back to Galatians 4,4 - “when the Time *was fulfilled*, God sent his Son” - allowing us to grasp in this return the true dimension of the ‘fulfillment’ of Time: the founding of a new temporality which does not simply move *towards* the end, but which contains that end *within* itself, in its very constitution⁵⁴⁴. In minimal terms: after Christ, one is allowed *to die before one dies*⁵⁴⁵.

Concluding the above-mentioned sermon, priest Antonio Vieira affirms the fundamental dimension of this death within life:

“Now I have finally understood that difficult advice given [to Hezekiah] by the Holy Spirit: *Ne moriaris in tempore non tuo* .

⁵⁴⁰ Hegel, G.W.F. and Peter C. Hodgson (2008), Hegel: Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion: Volume III: The Consummate Religion (Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion (Oxford)), (Oxford University Press, USA) p.325-326

⁵⁴¹ Ibid. p.322

⁵⁴² Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília) p.278

⁵⁴³ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §32

⁵⁴⁴ Arantes, P.E. (1981), ‘Hegel, a ordem do tempo’, (Polis). p.303

⁵⁴⁵ Hence Žižek's remark in “Il n'y a pas de rapport religieux” that “if one conceives of the Holy Spirit radically enough, there is simply no place in the Christian edifice for afterlife” (p.92 - in lacanian ink 18)

Do not die in the time that does not belong to you. *Ne moriaris*. Do not die? Thus, to die is within my hand's reach: *In tempore non tuo*. In the time that does not belong to you? Thus, there is a time that is mine, and a time that is not mine. And so it is. But which time belongs to me, in which it would be good to die, and which time is not mine, in which it would be wrong for me to die? Mine is the time before death; the time after death does not belong to me. And to withhold or to wait for death, for the time after death, which is not mine, is ignorance, is madness, foolishness (...); but to anticipate death, and to die before life is over, in the time that belongs to me, this is the prudent, the wise and the well understood death. And this is the advice that is given to us by the one who only holds in itself life and death: *Ne moriaris in tempore non tuo*⁵⁴⁶

The Holy Spirit thus reminds us that man can serve himself of death - there is a death that falls within language, one that bears our name. Catherine Malabou, in her seminal work *The Future of Hegel*⁵⁴⁷, carefully develops how the Hegelian reading of the Incarnation is centered around the arrival of this new temporality:

"The coming-to-be-human of the divine being is 'the simple content of absolute religion', a content sought by the previous configurations of religion but never achieved. What was missing was the manifest nature of this being, perhaps even the time of Revelation was missing: for isn't this another name for 'intuitively perceived necessity'? God revealing himself reveals a new modality of coming-to-be. A fundamental temporality, in its very concept irreducible to no other, arrives with the Incarnation.

In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, Hegel speaks of 'the divine being in the stages of its life (its *Lebensverlauf*, or life-process)'. It is not uncommon for commentators to translate *Lebensverlauf* as *curriculum vitae*. The temporality introduced in this *curriculum vitae* is none other than the temporality posited by the subject as ahead of itself (*vor-stellt*).

Now if Christ, as is claimed in the Encyclopedia, 'involves himself in time', this does not mean that he enters into a

⁵⁴⁶ Vieira, Antonio (2009), *Sermões*, (Vol. I; Edições Loyola). p.273 - a very similar point is made by Brecht in his Baden Baden play on Consent. Žižek presents a brilliant reading of it at the end of *The Monstrosity of Christ* (p.299)

⁵⁴⁷ Malabou, Catherine (2004), *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, (Routledge).

temporality which is already given, already there. The temporality he is involved with is a temporality whose very concept God has introduced. Indeed, He creates it. Without this correlative dimension of time, Revelation would not be a revelation. Without it, there would be no way of distinguishing the life of Christ from that of any other exemplary individual. By dying, Christ reveals to the Western world a new relation between spirit and finitude, in which death is the limitation (borne), the end of a linear series of moments linked one to the other.”⁵⁴⁸

The full weight of this passage can only be appreciated under the light of the distinction between *limit* (Granze) and *limitation* (Schranke), as it is made by Hegel in the *Science of Logic*: “In order that the limit which is in something as such should be a limitation (Schranke), something must at the same time in its own self transcend the limit. It must in its own self be related to the limit as to something which is not”⁵⁴⁹. That is, to have death as a *limitation* means that it must transcend its own self, it can not be understood as a separate dimension, simply ‘outside’ of Life, but one that names the limit *from within* that which it is not.

This reference to the arrival of a new temporality allows us to turn the distinction made above between Socrates and Christ into the fundamental distinction between the Greek and the Christian temporalities⁵⁵⁰. Hegel’s solution is to present the latter as that which reconciles the inherent duality of the first - the duality between the time of Man and the eternity of the Gods⁵⁵¹ -, the crucial point, however, is that it overcomes this duality without having to dismiss any of the two terms: the solution is *to shift the accent from the duality to the gap that separates them*⁵⁵². As

⁵⁴⁸ Ibid. p.120

⁵⁴⁹ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books). p.132

⁵⁵⁰ For a extensive reading of this comparison, which is in fact composed of the triad of Greek, Jewish and Christian temporalities, please refer to the second part of Malabou’s book - *Hegel on God: the turn of double nature* - p.77-125

⁵⁵¹ See Malabou, Catherine (2004), *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, (Routledge). p.65

⁵⁵² On this point, see Lebrun, Gérard (2004), *L’Envers de la dialectique : Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche*, (Seuil). p. 250 and Agamben, Giorgio (2005), *The Time*

Malabou writes, "Hegel's God (...) is situated *at the crossroads of time*"⁵⁵³ Or, to put it in the terms used by Hegel himself, the "infinite loss" of their distinction is itself grasped as "infinite gain": that which separates Man from Eternity is becomes that which *simultaneously constitutes both realms*: "the non-being of the finite is the being of the Absolute"⁵⁵⁴:

"This is how Hegelian "reconciliation" works: not as an immediate synthesis or reconciliation of opposites, but as the redoubling of the gap or antagonism—the two opposed moments are "reconciled" when the gap that separates them is posited as inherent to one of the terms. In Christianity, the gap that separates God from man is not directly "sublated" in the figure of Christ as God-man; it is rather that, in the most tense moment of crucifixion, when Christ himself despairs ("Father, why have you forsaken me?"), the gap that separates God from man is transposed into God himself, as the gap that separates Christ from God-Father; the properly dialectical trick here is that the very feature which appeared to separate me from God turns out to unite me with God."⁵⁵⁵

We see, thus, that this conception of overcoming is radically distinct from the one implied by the Kojévian 'Man can become God'. To paraphrase Mao Zedong's famous retort to the Americans⁵⁵⁶: the coming about of a perfect Man - the actualization of an impeccable individual who would be the culmination of the horizon set by the Greek Spirit - might even be a major event for the solar system, but it would hardly mean anything to the universe *as a whole*.

That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans (Meridian: Crossing Aesthetics), (Stanford University Press). p.65-68

⁵⁵³ See Malabou, Catherine (2004), *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, (Routledge) p.130

⁵⁵⁴ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books) p.290

⁵⁵⁵ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View (Short Circuits)*, (MIT Press). p.106

⁵⁵⁶ "The United States cannot annihilate the Chinese nation with its small stack of atom bombs. Even if the U.S. atom bombs were so powerful that, when dropped on China, they would make a hole right through the earth, or even blow it up, that would hardly mean anything to the universe as a whole, though it might be a major event for the solar system." Žižek apud Mao in the Preface to Tse-Tung, Mao (2007), *On Practice and Contradiction (Revolutions)*, (Verso).

The “completion” of cyclical Time would do nothing more than to ground what was already *possible* to think - since, in a way, perfection was already *thinkable* - on actuality, but it would not change the conceptual coordinates of the world, let alone of the universe as such. The logic of Incarnation, on the other hand, the manifestation of God *as appearance* - under the Law of appearance, that is, the Law of self-difference⁵⁵⁷ - brings about precisely such an Universal Event: through it, *negativity as such* can be grasped. Impossibility itself - the impossibility for Man *and for God*, to coincide either with each other or themselves - is born into the world as a Concept, as Holy Spirit.

This distinction, we argue, perfectly demonstrates how Hegel’s position is not simply ‘different’ from its Kojévian presentation: it encompasses the previous position and solves the *negative* inconsistency of placing finitude as a self-consistent realm by affirming the conceptual centrality of a *positive* inconsistency, a certain “logical writing of death”⁵⁵⁸ which immerses the infinite into the finite, in a movement that disrupts both realms. This radical inconsistency, we believe, is only truly recuperated with Žižek’s Lacanian conceptual framework and is the pivot of his Christian atheism - or, to put it in Hegel’s terms, the pivot of the shift from the *historical* to the *speculative* Good Friday:

“But the pure concept or infinity as the abyss of nothingness in which all being is engulfed, must signify the infinite grief [of the finite] purely as a moment of the supreme Idea, and no more than a moment. Formerly, the infinite grief only existed historically in the formative process of culture. It existed as the feeling that “God Himself is dead,” upon which the religion of more recent times rests; the same feeling that Pascal expressed in so to speak sheerly empirical form: “*la nature est telle qu’elle marque partout un Dieu perdu et dans l’homme et hors de l’homme.*” [Nature is such that it *signifies* everywhere a lost God both within and outside man.] By marking this feeling as a moment of the supreme Idea, the pure concept must give philosophical existence to what used to be either the moral

⁵⁵⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §160-165 and Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books) p.499 - 511

⁵⁵⁸ See Jarczyk, Gwendoline (2002), *Au confluent de la mort : L’universel et le singulier dans la philosophie de Hegel*, (Ellipses Marketing).

precept that we must sacrifice the empirical being (*Wesen*), or the concept of formal abstraction [e.g., the categorical imperative].

Thereby it must re-establish for philosophy the Idea of absolute freedom and along with it the absolute Passion, the speculative Good Friday in place of the historic Good Friday. Good Friday must be speculatively re-established in the whole truth and harshness of its God-forsakenness. Since the [more] serene, less well grounded, and more individual style of the dogmatic philosophies and of the natural religions must vanish, the highest totality can and must achieve its resurrection solely from this harsh consciousness of loss, encompassing everything, and ascending in all its earnestness and out of its deepest ground to the most serene freedom of its shape"⁵⁵⁹

3.2 "Essence appears"

We have shown that Chesterton's paradoxical 'four words' - "He was made man" - find their dialectical counterpart in Hegel's statement "Christ has appeared", a proposition which takes place at the precise intersection of the logic of Incarnation and the logic of appearance⁵⁶⁰. Here, in the tense oscillation between the One-that-is-Three (of the trinity) and the-Nothing-that-is-Two (of appearance), the core of Žižek's philosophy is articulated.

In the Doctrine of Essence, in the *Science of Logic*, we find a statement that directly echoes the Christological one from the *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*: "Essence appears" [So erscheint das Wesen]⁵⁶¹. This dense proposition holds some of Hegel's central philosophical claims. In the first chapter of *The Parallax View*, Žižek writes:

⁵⁵⁹ Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1977), *Faith and Knowledge* (English and German Edition), (State University of New York Press). p.190-191

⁵⁶⁰ For a brilliant analysis of the relation between appearance or representation and the Christian religion in Hegel's philosophy, please refer to the first two chapters of Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard).

⁵⁶¹ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books) p.479

“The fundamental lesson of Hegel is that the key ontological problem is not that of reality, but that of appearance: not “Are we condemned to the interminable play of appearances, or can we penetrate their veil to the underlying true reality?”, but “How could—in the middle of the flat, stupid reality which just is there—something like appearance emerge?””⁵⁶²

In short: why is it that grasping an appearance *includes* grasping it *as* an appearance? The emergence of an appearance is not only the placing of a veil over reality - something in this veil must itself be *real* if we are grasping it as an appearance, and not simply mistaking appearance for that which we presuppose to be hidden behind it. It is as if it was written on the veil itself: ‘This a veil’.⁵⁶³

Hegel sums up the relation between appearance and ‘what there is’ in the following passage from the *Science of Logic*:

“Appearance is the *thing* as the negative *mediation* of itself with itself; the differences it contains are *self-subsistent* matters which are the contradiction of being an immediate subsistence and at the same time only in an alien self-subsistence, of therefore having their subsistence in the negation of their own self-subsistence, and again for that very reason also only in the negation of this alien negation, or in the negation of their own negation. Illusory being is the same mediation, but its unstable moments have, in Appearance, the shape of immediate self-subsistence. On the other hand, the immediate self-subsistence which belongs to Existence is, on its part, reduced to a moment. Appearance is accordingly the unity of illusory being and Existence.”⁵⁶⁴

Therefore, what leads us to conceptualize the difference between “what is” and “what appears” as a distinction between two *separate* realms (on one side, existence and, on the other,

⁵⁶² Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press). p.29

⁵⁶³ “There they are, subject and object, and this ‘beyond’ that is nothing, or even, the symbol, or even the phallus, insofar as it is lacking in a woman. But as one puts a curtain there, onto it one can paint something that states: the object is beyond” Lacan, Jacques (1998), *Séminaire, tome 4 : la Relation d’objet*, (Seuil). - class of 30/01/57

⁵⁶⁴ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books) p.500 - See also Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books) §162- 165

illusory being) is actually an *ontological* inconsistency - or, in the terms we used before, an inscription ('this is a veil') or distortion *in being itself*. Since the thing is grasped in separate *moments* - *positive* being grasped separately from its own *negative* self-disturbance - it is taken to consist of different subsistences, and that which is its innermost restlessness is, at first, grasped as a mediated and alien unessentiality.

Thus, the statement that "appearance is (...) the unity of illusory being and existence" can be also formulated as "the supersensible [the noumenal realm, the thing in-itself] is therefore *appearance qua appearance*"⁵⁶⁵. That is: what we call appearance is actually the thing itself *taken together with its inherent negativity* - an inconsistency mistaken for another realm's hidden consistency.

But when we negate this "alien negation" - the indexed statement that "being lies *behind* seeming" - we do not simply return to that first immediate positing of reality as "what there is", as if dismissing the negative dimension of mediation which was first introduced as the duality of existence and illusory being. On the contrary: we now grasp that a determination includes the reflective operation within itself. Or, as Žižek summarizes it:

"we should always bear in mind that, in Hegel's dialectic of appearance and essence, it is appearance which is the asymmetrical encompassing term: the difference between essence and appearance is internal to appearance, *not* to essence. When Hegel says that essence *has* to appear, that it is only as deep as it appears, this does not mean that essence is a self-mediating power which externalizes itself in its appearing and then "sublates" its otherness, positing it as a moment of its own self movement. On the contrary, "essence appears" means that, with regard to the opposition essence/appearance, immediate "reality" is on the side of appearance: the gap between appearance and reality means that reality itself (what is immediately given to us "out there") appears as an expression of inner essence, that we no longer take reality at its "face value," that we suspect that there is in reality "more than meets the eye," that is to say, that an essence appears to subsist

⁵⁶⁵ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books) §147

somewhere within reality, as its hidden core. This dialectical shift in the meaning of appearance is crucial: first, immediate reality is reduced to a "mere appearance" of an inner essence; then, this essence itself is posited as something that appears in reality as a specter of its hidden core."⁵⁶⁶

At the core of the Hegelian logic of appearance there lies, thus, "the logic of 'minimal difference', of the constitutive non-coincidence of a thing with itself"⁵⁶⁷ - the fundamental figure of a "Twoness" that is neither reducible to "One" nor to "one plus one":

"Is Hegel's dialectics not, in this precise sense, the definitive formulation of the thought of the Twosome? Its ultimate insight is neither the all-encompassing One which contains/mediates/sublates all differences, nor the explosion of multitudes (which - and this is the lesson of Deleuze's philosophy - ultimately amounts to the same: as Alain Badiou pointed out, Deleuze the philosopher of the multitude is at the same time the last great philosopher of the One), but the split of the One into Two. This split has nothing whatsoever to do with the premodern notion that, at all levels of reality, an ontological Whole is always composed of two opposed forces or principles which have to be kept in balance (from Yin and Yang to social freedom and necessity). The Hegelian Twosome, rather, designates a split which cleaves the One from within, not into two parts: the ultimate split is not between two halves, but between Something and Nothing, between the One and the Void of its Place. In this split, the opposition of two species coincides with the opposition between the genus itself and its species: it is the *same* element which encounters *itself* in its "oppositional determination" - or, in other words, the opposition between the One and its Outside is reflected back into the very identity of the One"⁵⁶⁸

Accordingly, Žižek's presentation of the logic of Incarnation focuses on the fundamental dimension of this "split which cleaves the One from within". In *The Monstrosity of Christ*, he presents "the core question of Hegelian Christology":

⁵⁶⁶ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press) p.106

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.30

⁵⁶⁸ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso), p.xxvi

"why the idea of Reconciliation between God and man (the fundamental content of Christianity) has to appear in a single individual, in the guise of an external, contingent, flesh-and-blood person (Christ, the man-God)?"⁵⁶⁹

At stake here, again, is the standard Feuerbachian-Marxist position - recognizable in Kojève's presentation of Hegel - which questions the status of the Incarnation as a singular Event in the process of overcoming alienation: why would there be the necessity for the figure of Christ as one singular individual? "Why not such a direct dis-alienation, by means of which individuals recognize in God qua transcendent substance the 'reified' result of their own activity?"

Keeping in mind the direct interconnection of this question with the problem of appearance, let us re-formulate it in ontological terms: why keep the notion of representation⁵⁷⁰ - or of appearance, for that matter - when we already know there is nothing behind it? Why not such a direct dis-alienation, by means of which individuals recognize in the Thing qua inaccessible beyond the 'reified' result of their own activity of "placing something behind the veil"?

Žižek rephrases the question, emphasizing even more the conjunction of its Christological and political implications:

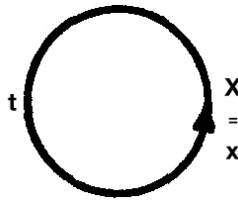
"is not this circle of positing-presupposing the very circle of substance-subject, of the Holy Spirit as a spiritual substance kept alive, effectively existing, arriving at its actuality, only in the activity of living individuals? The status of the Hegelian spiritual substance is properly virtual: it exists only insofar as subjects act as if it exists. As we have already seen, its status is similar to that of an ideological cause like Communism or My Nation: it is the "spiritual substance" of the individuals who recognize themselves in it, the ground of their entire existence,

⁵⁶⁹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.73

⁵⁷⁰ The relation between Christian Religion and Representational thought is thoroughly presented at the end of Chapter VII of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Lebrun's aforementioned book - *The Patience of the Concept* - deals extensively with the function of representation in Christology and the passage to speculative thought in philosophy.

the point of reference which provides the ultimate horizon of meaning to their lives, something for which these individuals are ready to give their lives, yet the only thing that “really exists” are these individuals and their activity, so this substance is actual only insofar as individuals “believe in it” and act accordingly. So, again, why cannot we pass directly from spiritual Substance as presupposed (the naive notion of Spirit or God as existing in itself, without regard to humanity) to its subjective mediation, to the awareness that its very presupposition is retroactively “posited” by the activity of individuals?⁵⁷¹

It is not difficult to recognize in this position the spectre of the Kojévian figure of Absolute Knowledge. We could summarize the “core question of Hegelian Christology” in terms of our discussion of the ‘edge of time’ in Kojève: “why cannot we pass directly from spiritual Substance as presupposed (X) (...) to its subjective mediation (x), to the awareness that its very presupposition is retroactively ‘posited’ by the activity (t) of individuals (x=X)?”



We have already seen how the Hegelian Idea of Incarnation is radically distinct from Kojève’s account of the Christian Event. Let us now see how Žižek’s return to Hegel, thinking together the Hegelian logic of Incarnation and that of Appearance, will allow us to construct a very different figure of Absolute Knowing - one which is based not on the coincidence of the presupposed and the posited ($x=X$), but on the non-coincidence of each term with itself. To understand how the Žižekian reading of Hegel conceptualizes this moment of non-coincidence, in which both infinity and finitude are each inherently split from

⁵⁷¹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.74

each other ($X \neq x$) and from within ($X \neq X$; $x \neq x$), we must first focus on Christ’s *monstrosity*.

3.3 The Monstrosity of Christ

After presenting this crucial question, Žižek continues:

“Here we reach Hegel’s key insight: Reconciliation cannot be direct, it has first to generate (appear in) a *monster*—twice on the same page Hegel uses this unexpectedly strong word, “monstrosity,” to designate the first figure of Reconciliation, the appearance of God in the finite flesh of a human individual: “This is the monstrous [*das Ungeheure*] whose necessity we have seen.” The finite fragile human individual is “inappropriate” to stand for God, it is “*die Unangemessenheit überhaupt* [the inappropriateness in general, as such]”—are we aware of the properly dialectical paradox of what Hegel claims here? The very attempt at reconciliation, in its first move, produces a monster, a grotesque “inappropriateness as such.”⁵⁷²

Reconciliation, thus, requires a double movement: the reconciliation of God and Man must first appear as the inadequate figure of *one* Man, a Man whose being *includes this inadequacy*, so that, after Christ, Man can “accomplish in himself” this reconciliation, not through a future Death, but through the Holy Spirit, which presents itself as the community of believers. Christ is both the One of the identity with God *and* the excess of this unity, the “inappropriateness” of taking place as One. We are tempted to propose that, in Christ’s Death, as the monstrous One, the *commune* was born. To explain this insight

⁵⁷² Ibid. p.74 - Žižek is quoting a passage from Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*: “Christus ist in der Kirche der Gottmensch genannt worden - diese ungeheure Zusammensetzung ist es, die dem Verstande schlechthin widerspricht; aber die Einheit der göttlichen und menschlichen Natur ist dem Menschen darin zum Bewusstsein, zur Gewissheit gebracht worden, dass das Anderssein oder, wie man es auch ausdrückt, die Endlichkeit, Schwäche, Gebrechlichkeit der menschlichen Natur nicht unvereinbar sei mit dieser Einheit, wie in der ewigen Idee das Anderssein keinen Eintrag tue der Einheit, die Gott ist. Dies ist das Ungeheure, dessen Notwendigkeit wir gesehen haben” Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1986), *Werke* in 20 Bänden mit Registerband: 17: *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion II*, (Suhrkamp Verlag) p.272 and p.277-278

into the properly monstrous dimension of the Incarnation, let us refer to a crucial reference made by Žižek to the dialectics of Appearance in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*:

“Does not the passage from external to determinate reflection consist simply in the fact that man has to recognize in ‘God’, in this external, superior, alien Entity, the inverse reflection of his own essence - its own essence in the form of otherness; in other words, the ‘reflexive determination’ of its own essence? And thus to affirm himself as ‘absolute subject’? What is amiss with this conception?”

To explain it, we have to return to the very notion of reflection. The key for the proper understanding of the passage from external to determinate reflection is given by the double meaning of the notion of ‘reflection’ in Hegel - by the fact that in Hegel’s logic of reflection, reflection is always on two levels:

(1) in the first place, ‘reflection’ designates the simple relation between essence and appearance, where the appearance ‘reflects’ the essence - that is to say, where the essence is the negative movement of mediation which sublates and at the same time posits the world of appearing. Here we are still dwelling within the circle of positing and presupposing; the essence posits the objectivity as ‘mere appearance’ and at the same time presupposes it as the starting point of its negative movement;

(2) as soon as we pass from positing to external reflection, however, we encounter quite another kind of reflection. Here the term ‘reflection’ designates the relationship between the essence as self-referential negativity, as the movement of absolute mediation, and the essence in so far as it presupposes itself in the inverse-alienated form of some substantial immediacy, as some transcendent entity excluded from the movement of reflection (which is why reflection is here ‘external’: external reflecting which does not concern the essence itself).⁵⁷³

As we mentioned above, once we grasp Essence as a external positing of Being’s own negativity, we do not return to Being as such - as what it was “all along”, “renaming” ‘Appearance’ and calling it simply ‘Being’ again. Hegel makes a much more

⁵⁷³ Žižek, Slavoj (1989), *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Phronesis), (Verso).p.259

radical and complex point: it is not enough to grasp Essence as the lack of Being - a mere spectre behind an inconsistent thing - one must redouble that movement, grasping that negativity of Essence *itself as an Entity*, as the Being of Lack itself, the very *materiality* of this split. Once *this* is grasped, it becomes clear why immediate and reflexive determinations *do not coincide*⁵⁷⁴:

"The underlying shift here is the one between *positing presuppositions* and *presupposing the positing*: the limit of the Feuerbachian-Marxian logic of dis-alienation is that of positing presuppositions: the subject overcomes its alienation by recognizing itself as the active agent which itself posited what appears to it as its substantial presupposition. In religious terms, this would amount to the direct (re)appropriation of God by humanity: the mystery of God is man, "God" is nothing but the reified / substantialized version of human collective activity, and so on. What is missing here is the properly Christian gesture: in order to posit the presupposition (to "humanize" God, reduce him to an expression / result of human activity), the (human- subjective) *positing itself* should be "presupposed," located in God as the substantial ground-presupposition of man, as its own *becoming- human / finite*. The reason is the subject's constitutive finitude: the full positing of presuppositions would amount to subject's full retroactive positing / generation of its presuppositions, i.e., the subject would be absolutized into the full self-origin.

This is why the difference between Substance and Subject has to reflect / inscribe itself into subjectivity itself as the irreducible gap that separates human subjects from Christ, the "more than human" monstrous subject. This necessity of Christ, the "absolute" subject which adds itself to the series of finite human subjects as the supplementary a ($\$ + \$ + \$. . . + a$), is what differentiates the Hegelian position from the young Marx-Feuerbachian position of the big Other as the virtual Substance posited by collective subjectivity, as its alienated expression. Christ signals the overlapping of the two kenoses: man's alienation from / in God is simultaneously God's alienation from himself in Christ. So it is not only that humanity becomes conscious of itself in the alienated figure of God, but: in human religion, God becomes conscious of himself. It is not enough to say that people (individuals) organize themselves in the Holy Spirit (Party, community of

⁵⁷⁴ For a careful and brilliant reading of this intricate dialectical movement, which we only briefly sketch in this section, please follow its full presentation in the last chapter of *The Sublime Object of Ideology*

believers): in humanity, a trans-subjective “it” organizes itself. The finitude of humanity, of the human subject (collective or individual), is maintained here: Christ is the excess which prohibits simple recognition of the collective Subject in Substance, the reduction of Spirit to objective / virtual entity (presup)posed by humanity.”⁵⁷⁵

Thus, the logic of Incarnation articulates the Idea of a God that is not merely lacking in the World, but of a God who is that very lack *incarnated*, forever splitting Essence from within. To exemplify the claim that something of negativity itself is materially bound and cannot be reduced to a ‘passing illusion’, Žižek remarks how something is missing in Marx’s use of reflective determination when he addresses the ‘fetishist misperception’ of the King by the people:

“of course a king is “in himself” a miserable individual, of course he is a king only insofar as his subjects treat him like one; the point, however, is that the “fetishist illusion” which sustains our veneration of a king has in itself a performative dimension—the very unity of our state, that which the king “embodies,” actualizes itself only in *the person of a king*. That is why it is not enough to insist on the need to avoid the “fetishist trap” and to distinguish between the contingent person of a king and what he stands for: what the king stands for comes into being in his person, just like a couple’s love which (at least within a certain traditional perspective) becomes actual only in their offspring.

And, *mutatis mutandis*, that is the monstrosity of Christ: not only the edifice of a state, but no less than the entire edifice of reality hinges on a contingent singularity through which alone it actualizes itself. When Christ, this miserable individual, this ridiculous and derided clown-king, was walking around, it was as if the navel of the world, the knot which holds the texture of reality together (what Lacan in his late work called the *sinthome*), was walking around. All that remains of reality without Christ is the Void of the meaningless multiplicity of the Real. This monstrosity is the price we have to pay in order to render the Absolute in the medium of external representation (*Vorstellung*), which is the medium of religion.”⁵⁷⁶

⁵⁷⁵ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.75-76

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid.* p.80

So, not only does the immediate positing of Man (as distinct from the Godly essence) not coincide with the determinate reflection of Man (for something of God himself has fallen over into the World, God has *appeared*), but in this same movement something material and finite has split God's Essence as well. God does not simply 'extend' his infinite essence so as to *also* appear as the finite Man on the Cross - Malebranche already fully elaborated the awkward cruelty of this reading⁵⁷⁷ - much more radically, as Hegel repeatedly emphasizes, *God himself, the otherworldly Beyond as such, dies on the Cross*:

"The death of the mediator [that is, Christ] is the death not merely of his *natural aspect*, that is, of his particular being-for itself. What dies is not merely the outer shell stripped of essence but also the *abstraction* of the divine essence, for the mediator is, insofar as his death has not yet consummated the reconciliation, one-sided; he is the one who knows what is simple in thought to be the *essence* in oppositional contrast to actuality. This extreme term of the self is not yet of equivalent value with the essence; it is only as spirit that the self has that value. The death of this representational thought contains at the same time the death of the *abstraction of the divine essence* which is not yet posited as a self."⁵⁷⁸

If Essence were just a spectral negation of Being, there would be no sense to this Death of God, it would be a simple return of God to himself. Only this second reflective 'turn' of Essence - in which nothingness is caught up in the very restlessness it ensues onto Being and gets itself split from within - accounts for and is represented in the Christian Event.

This, then, must be the answer as to why Christ is a singular (monstrous) Event:

"With Christ, the very relationship between the substantial divine content and its representation changes: Christ does not represent this substantial divine content, God, he directly is God, which is why he no longer has to resemble God, to strive to be perfect and "like God". (...) Or, to make the same point in

⁵⁷⁷ Žižek apud Malebranche in Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Plague of Fantasies* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso). p.100-101

⁵⁷⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books) §785

another way, the Greek gods appear to humans in human form, while the Christian God appears as human *to himself*. This is the crucial point: for Hegel the Incarnation is not a move by means of which God makes himself accessible / visible to humans, but a move by means of which Gods looks at himself from the (distorting) human perspective (...) to put in Freudian-Lacanian terms: Christ is God's "partial object," an autonomized organ without a body, as if God picked his eye out of his head and turned it on himself from the outside. We can guess, now, why Hegel insisted on the monstrosity of Christ.

It is therefore crucial to note how the Christian modality of "God seeing himself" has nothing whatsoever to do with the harmonious closed loop of "seeing myself seeing," of an eye seeing itself and enjoying the sight in this perfect self-mirroring: the turn of the eye toward "its" body presupposes the separation of the eye from the body, and what I see through my externalized / autonomized eye is a perspectival, anamorphically distorted image of myself: Christ is an anamorphosis of God.⁵⁷⁹

To put this change in the relation between "the substantial divine content and its representation" in Lacanian terms: with the Christian Event there is a fundamental shift in the very structure of signification, we move from 'the One represents God to Man' - that is, a signifier represents an object to a subject - to 'the One represents Man to the Holy Spirit' - a signifier represents a subject to another signifier, to the chain of signifiers as such⁵⁸⁰. The shift in the very meaning of what 'representation' is becomes thus quite palpable: in the community of believers we are re-presented to God, we are *again in his presence*. Gérard Lebrun makes this precise point very clear:

"in the Christian Revelation, no one comes towards us, nothing comes out of this manifestation, it does not *show* anything. Nothing, except that now the relations 'referred/referrend', 'signifier/signified' do not have a continuation. God does not *become* manifest: he *is*, side by side, *für sich seiende Manifestation*. What is unveiled, if one still wants to use this

⁵⁷⁹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.81-82

⁵⁸⁰ Please refer to Žižek extensive presentation of Lacan's proposition in Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso). p.21

term, is only that there was the necessity of appearing in Him, in the very strict sense of being-for-an-Other, the impossibility of being totally "Him" in the case of remaining solely "in Himself" (...) On the other hand, if one no longer imagines God as an objectifiable content, one also does not incur on the risk of splitting him between His *essence* and his *appearance*, His *before* and His *after*.⁵⁸¹

Lebrun then brilliantly describes the consequences of the Christian revelation to the mechanism of signification itself:

"Everything changes, in fact, once by *Bedeutung* one no longer understands a content *ne varietur* that gives itself to a more acute gaze, but a presence that necessarily finds itself short of representation (imaginative or clear and distinct ones), to which it was ascribed an obvious "sense". This mutation in the *concept* of "signification" brings about two complementary consequences: 1) Every discovery, no matter how dismystifying it intends to be, ignores, by its very essence, that it is *making explicit* the presence of what it re-presents. There cannot be an *entirely lucid representation*. 2) On the other hand, every figure, no matter how aberrant it may seem, never is a complete masking, but always a sketch of the *presence of sense*. There cannot be an *entirely deforming representation*. (...) What is now called the *philosophical sense* is no more rich or complete than the imaginative sense: it is no longer a fixed content, but a totalizing process, that is, it integrates the propositions which, before, (unilaterally) expressed the "sense" such as they preconceived it. In this, the Hegelian reading inverts the critical reading of the classics. (...) As we know, just like the classics, Hegel doesn't like to linger too long on the images as such, but he refuses to separate the image from the true sense. The intercessors of the true are always already the moments; there is no longer *letter*, everything is *spirit*. Hence the necessity to let it arise the *veritas rerum* in each of the points of the discourse and to accompany the slow unfolding of the latter. (...) In second place, "the things said" will no longer be collected in a philological cemetery, aside from the disciplines that say or attempt to say the *veritas rerum*. It is, as one has just seen, already sparse throughout the documents - and, besides, *it is nowhere else*: since there is no longer (separated) *spirit*, everything is *letter*. (...) It is not that the knowledge of the truth

⁵⁸¹ Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard). p.39

of the thing goes through that which is said of it: one and the other are entangled.”⁵⁸²

And, accordingly, if the operation of signification changes, so does the place of the sublime. And Christ, instead of being a ‘mere’ representation of the divine substance, is a monstrous one precisely because he is *thoroughly sublime*:

“In Kant’s philosophy, Beautiful, Sublime and Monstrous [Ungeheure] form a triad which corresponds to the Lacanian triad of Imaginary, Symbolic and Real: the relationship between the three terms is that of a Borromean knot, in which two terms are linked via the third (Beauty makes possible the sublimation of the Monstrous; sublimation mediates between Beautiful and Monstrous; etc.). As in Hegelian dialectics, each term, brought to its extreme - that is fully actualized - changes into the next: an object which is thoroughly beautiful is no longer merely beautiful, it is already sublime; in the same way, an object which is thoroughly sublime turns into something monstrous”⁵⁸³

Christ’s “*anamorphosis* of God” is thus homologous to the anamorphic relation between the Sublime and the Monstrous⁵⁸⁴. The term “monstrosity” ultimately names the way the Sublime dimension itself gets caught up in a material element, through which, given a change of perspective, we are in the presence of the Holy Spirit, made present in the community of believers not merely as a reflection of an other-wordly Other, but as the actual, *real* remainder of the Other’s non-existence:

“the monstrosity of Christ, this contingent singularity interceding between God and man, is the proof that the Holy Ghost is not the big Other which survives as the spirit of the community after the death of the substantial God, but a collective link of love without any support in the big Other. Therein resides the properly Hegelian paradox of the death of God: if God dies directly, as God, he survives as the virtualized big Other; only if he dies in the guise of Christ, his earthly embodiment, he also disintegrates as the big Other.

⁵⁸² Ibid. p.115-116

⁵⁸³ Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Plague of Fantasies* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek) p.280

⁵⁸⁴ Ibid. p.281

When Christ was dying on the cross, earthquake and storm broke out, a sign that the heavenly order itself—the big Other—was disturbed: not only something horrible happened in the world, the very coordinates of the world were shaken. It was as if the *sinthome*, the knot tying the world together, was unravelled, and the audacity of the Christians was to take this as a good omen, or, as Mao put it much later: ‘there is great disorder under heaven, the situation is excellent’. Therein resides what Hegel calls the ‘monstrosity’ of Christ: the insertion of Christ between God and man is strictly equivalent to the fact that ‘there is no big Other’—Christ is inserted as the singular contingency on which the *universal necessity of the ‘big Other’ itself hinges*.⁵⁸⁵

Following this insight, we could say that the Kantian Thing - the noumenal source of the Law and the spectre which shines through the Sublime - becomes, in the Hegelian account of the Holy Spirit, *the substance of the community itself*. Hence, Žižek’s recent *logion*: “in the social field itself, ‘as if’ is the thing itself”.⁵⁸⁶

In this way, Christ’s monstrosity inaugurates the possibility of a subjective position for whom overdetermination (by the Law, by Essence or God) and freedom (both the presupposed freedom of Being and the posited appearance of freedom) are not obscured in the “misty conceit of paradox”, but lit in “dialectical clarity”.⁵⁸⁷ Only in this way can we truly comprehend how, for Lacan, “the collective is the subject of the individual”⁵⁸⁸ - for “it is only in this monstrosity of Christ that human freedom is grounded”.⁵⁸⁹

The following passage from Hegel’s *Who thinks abstractly?* allows us to exemplify this anamorphic shift articulated by Žižek in its proper monstrous dimension:

⁵⁸⁵ Žižek in Bryant, Levi, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (2011), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, (re.press). p.218

⁵⁸⁶ Žižek, Slavoj (2010), *Living in the End Times*, (Verso). p.285

⁵⁸⁷ A reference to the title of Žižek’s second essay in *The Monstrosity of Christ: “Dialectical clarity versus the misty conceit of paradox”*

⁵⁸⁸ Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.175 footnote 6

⁵⁸⁹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.82

“This is abstract thinking: to see nothing in the murderer except the abstract fact that he is a murderer, and to annul all other human essence in him with this simple quality.

It is quite different in refined, sentimental circles — in Leipzig. There they strewed and bound flowers on the wheel and on the criminal who was tied to it. — But this again is the opposite abstraction. The Christians may indeed trifle with Rosicrucianism, or rather cross-rosism, and wreath roses around the cross. The cross is the gallows and wheel that have long been hallowed. It has lost its one-sided significance of being the instrument of dishonorable punishment and, on the contrary, suggests the notion of the highest pain and the deepest rejection together with the most joyous rapture and divine honor. The wheel in Leipzig, on the other hand, wreathed with violets and poppies, is a reconciliation à la Kotzebue, a kind of slovenly sociability between sentimentality and badness.

In quite a different manner I once heard a common old woman who worked in a hospital kill the abstraction of the murderer and bring him to life for honor. The severed head had been placed on the scaffold, and the sun was shining. How beautifully, she said, the sun of God's grace shines on Binder's head! — You are not worthy of having the sun shine on you, one says to a rascal with whom one is angry. This woman saw that the murderer's head was struck by the sunshine and thus was still worthy of it. She raised it from the punishment of the scaffold into the sunny grace of God, and instead of accomplishing the reconciliation with violets and sentimental vanity, saw him accepted in grace in the higher sun.”⁵⁹⁰

This monstrosity is the representation - for it is *not yet philosophy*, it is not “the Idea in and for itself”⁵⁹¹ - of the *dialectical reversal* through which the essence of appearance can give place to the appearance of essence: the Idea itself struggles in the World, universality as such *is concrete*: “Out of the foaming ferment of finitude, spirit rises up fragrantly.” [Aus der

⁵⁹⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. (2000), *Miscellaneous Writings*, (Northwestern University Press). p.286

⁵⁹¹ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §788

Gärung der Endlichkeit, indem sie sich in Schaum verwandelt, duftet der Geist hervor.]⁵⁹²

We can now return to our Žižekian axiom:

S9: *Hegel is the only philosopher to think through the consequences of the Christian Event.*

The fundamental consequence implied in this proposition is precisely that "resurrection is nothing but 'the universalization of the crucifixion'"⁵⁹³. Not the Kojévian "erasure" of God (X) as the centre around which Man (x) revolves - for erasing the geometrical centre of a circle is simply to make it invisible - but the birth of an Universal (X) that partakes in the concrete struggle of Man (x) precisely because Man is not identical to himself ($x \neq x$) and neither is God ($X \neq X$). The crucial proposition which articulates this consequence could be, to paraphrase Lacan, that *there is no outside of the crucifixion*:

"This is why Hegel is *the* Christian philosopher: the supreme example of the dialectical reversal is that of Crucifixion and Resurrection, which should be perceived not as two consecutive events, but as a *purely* formal parallax shift on one and the same event: *Crucifixion is Resurrection—to see this, one has only to include oneself in the picture*. When the believers gather, mourning Christ's death, their shared spirit is the resurrected Christ."⁵⁹⁴

As we mentioned before, we find within the intricate configuration of the Triune and the irreducible Twoness the core of Žižek's dialectical materialism⁵⁹⁵ - an articulation which finds

⁵⁹² Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (1986), *Werke* in 20 Bänden mit Registerband: 17: Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion II, (Suhrkamp Verlag). p.320

⁵⁹³ Žižek apud Altizer in Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.267

⁵⁹⁴ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.291

⁵⁹⁵ "Hegel himself, this is my thesis, knew in a certain way that the condition for the dialectics is a negation that itself cannot be dialecticized. Without this excess (...) there is no dialectics. It doesn't create any problem to me to recognize that the parallax, or even, in another level, the death drive, is not dialectizable. But I

its pivotal element in what is arguably the Žižekian concept *par excellence*, the parallax gap, the “non-dialectic core of the dialectic”⁵⁹⁶:

“an insurmountable *parallax gap*, the confrontation of two closely linked perspectives between which no neutral common ground is possible. In a first approach, such a notion of parallax gap cannot but appear as a kind of Kantian revenge over Hegel: is not “parallax” yet another name for a fundamental *antinomy* which can never be dialectically “mediated/ sublated” into a higher synthesis, since there is no common language, no shared ground, between the two levels? It is the wager of this book that, far from posing an irreducible obstacle to dialectics, the notion of the parallax gap provides the key which enables us to discern its subversive core. To theorize this parallax gap properly is the necessary first step in the rehabilitation of the philosophy of *dialectical materialism*”⁵⁹⁷

And as we grasp the philosophical dimension of his Hegelian account of the Christian Event, we can also proceed to understand its political consequences:

“And we should go to the (political) end here: the same goes for revolution itself. At its most radical, revolutionary “reconciliation” is not a change of reality, but a parallaxic shift in how we relate to it—or, as Hegel put it in his Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, the highest speculative task is not to transform the Cross of miserable contemporary reality into a new rose garden, but ‘to recognize the Rose in the Cross of the present [die Rose im Kreuz der gegenwart zu erkennen]’.”⁵⁹⁸

recognize this to be the limit of my thought.” Žižek, Slavoj (2010), *A travers le réel*, (Nouvelles Editions Lignes).p.58

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid. p.58

⁵⁹⁷ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press). p.4

⁵⁹⁸ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press). p.291 - We can already see how the notion of parallax is central to Žižek’s support of Domenico Losurdo, who claims we should reactivate Hegel’s Idea of the ethical State. A good example of this political position is Žižek’s recent plea for a unified state for the israeli and the palestinians: “What both sides exclude as an impossible dream is the simplest and most obvious solution: a binational secular state, comprising all of Israel plus the occupied territories and Gaza. Many will dismiss this as a utopian dream, disqualified by the history of hatred and violence. *But far from being a utopia, the binational state is already a reality: Israel and the West Bank are one state.* The entire territory is under the de facto control of one sovereign power - Israel - and divided by internal borders. So let’s abolish the apartheid that exists and transform this land into a secular,

Also, once our axiom reveals what is at stake in the obliteration of Hegel's thought, we already find ourselves on the path to further demonstrate our fifth statement as well:

S12: *Death drive is that which allows us to serve ourselves of Death.*

We know now that we are allowed to think and to desire to know what it means 'to serve ourselves of Death'. But we are yet to give it is Freudian name.

3.4 Death Drive

Keeping in mind the passage from the Greek religion of art to Christianity - a dialectical movement that underlined our introductory remarks on the Žižekian Hegel - let us quote the following passage from *The Plague of Fantasies*, in which Žižek speaks of "the paradox of moving images" in a way that directly echoes Spirit's passage from the Greek statue, which is "perfectly free motionless being"⁵⁹⁹, to the Christian Incarnation:

"This paradox of moving statues, of dead objects coming alive and/or of petrified living objects, is possible only within the space of the death drive which, according to Lacan, is the space between the two deaths, symbolic and real. For a human being

democratic state." (<http://www.newstatesman.com/middle-east/2011/03/jewish-girls-israel-arab-state>)

⁵⁹⁹ "What is here is the *abstract* moment of the living *embodiment* of essence just as formerly there was the unity of both in an unconscious enthusiastic rapture. In place of the statuary column, man thus places himself as the shape educated and developed for perfectly free *movement*, just as the statue is the perfectly free state of *motionless being*. If every individual knows at least how to play the part of a torchbearer, then one of them stands out from the rest, namely, he who is the shaped movement itself, the smooth elaboration and fluent force of all the members. – He is an ensouled, living work of art, who pairs his beauty with strength, and to whom, as the prize for his power, is accorded the adornment with which the statuary column was honored; moreover, instead of the honor due to god set in stone, he is accorded the honor of being among his people the highest bodily representation of their essence" Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §725

to be 'dead while alive' is to be colonized by the 'dead' symbolic order; to be 'alive while dead' is to give body to the remainder of Life-Substance which has escaped the symbolic colonization ('lamella'). What we are dealing with here is thus the split between A and J, between the 'dead' symbolic order which mortifies the body and the non-symbolic Life-Substance of jouissance.

These two notions in Freud and Lacan are not what they are in our everyday or standard scientific discourse: in psychoanalysis, they both designate a properly monstrous dimension. Life is the horrible palpitation of the 'lamella', of the non-subjective ('acephalous') 'undead' drive which persists beyond ordinary death; death is the symbolic order itself, the structure which, as a parasite, colonizes the living entity. What defines the death drive in Lacan is this double gap: not the simple opposition between life and death, but the split of life itself into 'normal' life and horrifying 'undead' life, and the split of the dead into 'ordinary' dead and the 'undead' machine. The basic opposition between Life and Death is thus supplemented by the parasitical symbolic machine (language as a dead entity which 'behaves as if it possesses a life of its own') and its counterpoint, the 'living dead' (the monstrous Life-Substance which persists in the Real outside the Symbolic) - this split which runs within the domains of Life and Death constitutes the space of the death drive."⁶⁰⁰

Žižek's reference to the *vivifying* dimension of death drive invites us to make a short "detour" through the writings of Freud. This would give us the chance to investigate in more detail how it is that the Hegelian logic of Incarnation - in which we find the monstrous appearance of death within life - relates to Freud account of the theory of the drives.

In fact, as early as *On the Introduction of Narcissism*⁶⁰¹, when Freud was struggling with the conceptualization of an auto-erotism that pre-dates the unity of the ego, there was already the need to properly conceptualize the precise logic of a drive that "runs within the domains of Life and Death".

⁶⁰⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Plague of Fantasies* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek) p.113

⁶⁰¹ Freud, Sigmund (2003), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, (Penguin Classics) p.36 - It is important to note that we are closely following here Lacan, Jacques (1991), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique* (Vol. Book I), (W. W. Norton & Company). p.107-129

The study of psychosis had brought to open view an apparent contradiction between the economy of the psychotic and the general theory of libido: there should be a division internal to the libido, because the precarious ego of the psychotic makes it quite clear that the whole theory required a re-elaboration - "a unity comparable to the ego cannot exist in the individual from the start; the ego has to be developed. The auto-erotic drives, however, are there from the very first". How then to understand the relation between the individual narcissism and the drive? How can there be an auto-erotism without the pre-existence of the ego, towards which the drive would then 'turn itself'? Faced with this problem, Freud remarked that "there must be something added to auto-erotism - a new psychical action - in order to bring about narcissism"⁶⁰².

He went on to postulate a certain differentiation of the libido - between sexual drive and ego-drive⁶⁰³ - based on the study of the characteristics of neurosis and psychosis. But to articulate them - the economy of the drive and the formation of the ego - Freud needed the support of a more structured conceptual apparatus and, according to his own ideal of scientificity, he turned to the advances of his time in the field of biology. Here, Freud quoted the theories of a certain August Weissmann on the existence of an immortal germ-plasm:

"In our view, the most interesting treatment of the topic of the lifespan and death of organisms is to be found in the publications of August Weissmann (1882, 1884, 1892 etc.). It was Weismann who proposed the differentiation of living matter into two parts: the mortal and the immortal. The mortal part is the body in the narrower sense of the word, the 'soma'; it alone is subject to natural death. The germ-cells, however, are potentially immortal inasmuch as they are capable under certain favourable conditions of developing into a new individual, or - to put it another way - of enveloping themselves with a new soma.

⁶⁰² Ibid. p.39

⁶⁰³ Ibid. p.41

What is truly fascinating here is the unexpected similarity of this to the view that we ourselves arrived at by such a very different route. Weissmann, who looks at living matter in morphological terms, discerns in it one part that is doomed to die the soma, the entire body except the element concerned with sexuality and heredity and another that is immortal, precisely this latter element, the germ-plasm, that serves to preserve the species by reproducing it. We for our part focused not on living matter itself but on the forces at work within it, and this led us to identify two different kinds of drives: those that seek to guide life towards death; and others, the sexual drives, that continually seek and achieve the renewal of life. This sounds very much like a dynamic corollary to Weissmann's morphological theory."⁶⁰⁴

And, with this corollary in mind, Freud manages to articulate in more precise terms what is at stake in the problem of the libido:

"The individual does actually carry on a twofold existence: one to serve his own purposes and the other as a link in a chain, which he serves against his will, or at least involuntarily. The individual himself regards sexuality as one of his own ends; whereas from another point of view he is an appendage to his germ plasm, at whose disposal he puts his energies in return for a bonus of pleasure. He is the mortal vehicle of a (possibly) immortal substance - like the inheritor of an entailed property, who is only the temporary holder of an estate which survives him. The separation of the sexual drive from the ego-drive would simply reflect this twofold function of the individual"⁶⁰⁵

The individual would be the carrier of this immortal plasm, that "links him in a[n infinite] chain", while he is left to "his own [finite] purposes". So the sexual-drive moves towards the reproduction of the type (X) while the ego-drive is the parasitic domain of the ego (x) which is never truly reproduced as such - it is an "appendage" which is, as Lacan puts it, *already dead*:

"What follows from endorsing the Weissmannian notion of the immortality of the germ-plasm? If the individual which develops is quite distinct from the fundamental living substance which the germ-plasm constitutes, and which does not perish, if the individual is parasitic, what function does it have in the propagation of life? None. From the point of view

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid. p.84-85

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid. p.42

of the species, individuals are, if one can put it this way, already dead. An individual is worth nothing alongside the immortal substance hidden deep inside it, which is the only thing to be perpetuated and which authentically and substantially represents such life as there is."⁶⁰⁶

This brief reference to the early stages of the development of Freud's theory of the drives already shows the proximity between the inherent contradiction that led to the notion of death drive and the Hegelian concept of negativity, which deeply resonates with the logical structure that Freud was articulating. If Freud recognized in Weissmann's biology - otherwise at best curious and easily dismissible - the thread of something worthy of being called a "biological support" to his conceptual developments it was surely because it made possible to think the unity of the ego as traversed by an economic principle to which it was itself secondary, that is, to conceptualize the life of the individual *as already traversed by death*.

If "man generates man", it is nevertheless not in the mode of man (x) following from man (x=x): *paternity is first and foremost a cut*. The immortality of the type Man (X) is postulated on the mortality of the individual man (x), which will not remain equal to itself in this immortal economy of "plasm" (x≠x). Not only because the individual is different from another individual, who follows him in the "chain", but also because he is different from himself: he is the son of the previous *and* the father of the next, the bearer of something immortal and an unessential "appendage". Furthermore, the very type (X) which passes from man to man also changes, given that the immortal character of ancestrality is also always other to itself (X≠X), always changing, contaminated by the individuals which "parasite" it, transversed, as we are, by immortality.

Weissmann offered Freud a precarious conceptual model - one Freud would soon dismiss, given the strict demands of his own project - to articulate the complex relation between the individual and this immortal drive in which Life and Death are

⁶⁰⁶ Lacan, Jacques (1991), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Freud's Papers on Technique* (Vol. Book I), (W. W. Norton & Company) p.122

intertwined. But the logic required to think this drive - which would later be named *death drive* - can already be found at play, as we have seen, in Hegel's account of negativity and Spirit ⁶⁰⁷:

"this is what always happens with things in nature: the subject that begins and the existence that forms the term (the fruit, the grain) are two separate individuals. This duality has as an apparent result a scission between two individuals: as for the content, they are the same. The same happens with animal life: father and sons are different individuals, but of the same nature. It is from the standpoint of Spirit these things take place differently. Spirit is consciousness; it is free, so that in it the beginning and the end are intertwined. (...) While the fruit and the grain are not such for the germ, but only for us, in Spirit it is not only in itself that one and the other are of the same nature: they are one being one-for-another, and, because of that, one-for-themselves. For Spirit, for whom there is an Other, one is itself an Other. It is only then that Spirit is at home."⁶⁰⁸

⁶⁰⁷ Another point where this relation can be seen is in the comparison between Freud's "Anatomy is Destiny" and Hegel's "Spirit is a Bone". On this point, please refer to Mladen Dolar's "The Phrenology of Spirit" in Copjec, Joan (1994), *Supposing the Subject*, (Verso).

⁶⁰⁸ Lebrun apud Hegel in Lebrun, Gérard (2004), *L'Envers de la dialectique : Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche*, (Seuil); We also offer the following passage from Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit*, surprising in its deep resonance with the Freudian use of Weissmann: "In the animal this subjectivity is still present in an immediate way, substantiality lacks the dimension of being for itself [Fürsichseins]. The animal is this contradiction; the subjectivity is simple relation to itself that is concrete, and the process of the animal is to suspend this contradiction so that the substantial universal (the species) as such comes to existence. The species is thus the drive, this negation [added later: in its universality, to destroy the immediate individual existence through the process of the species, the begetting, that suspends the immediate individuality of the animal. It has the feeling that it is not satisfied as a self-sufficient individual and gives up its independent individual existence. In begetting the species realizes itself]. The species itself is that which is efficacious and which suspends the unyielding character of its particularity. [added: the individual is otherwise self-seeking.] In this process the animal does not want to preserve itself as an individual, but in identity with an other. In this identity with other the contradiction is suspended. In nature, the species, this universality, does not come to an enduring existence, and falls back to a mere individual, something produced. The concept of spirit is precisely this: this unity of its universality with itself, a concrete unity that includes subjectivity in itself but which has equalized itself with itself through the negation of individuality. This concrete universality is what we have had as freedom." Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich (2007),

Spirit is "at home" precisely when it "runs within the domains of Life and Death", when "one is itself an Other", and through it, negativity cuts *unevenly* across life and death, individual and social, father and son, man and woman⁶⁰⁹. Freud's theory of the drive, here still insipid in scope and form, would later blossom to become the very pivot of his second topography, even if Freud never truly managed to dissipate entirely its aura of a conceptual enigma⁶¹⁰:

"We have reckoned as though there existed in the mind - wether in the ego or in the id - a displaceable energy, which, neutral in itself, can be added to a qualitatively differentiated erotic or destructive impulse, and augment in total cathexis. Wlthout assuming the existence of a displaceable energy of this kind we can make no headway. The only question is where it comes from, what it belongs to, and what it signifies."⁶¹¹

In the form of a question, Freud's *Todestrieb* carried forward Hegel's essential insight in a time when philosophy itself had turned away from the core dimension of his thought. Not only did the question of "what [does] it signifies" end up becoming, for Lacan, its own very answer⁶¹², but the visible tension which runs across Freud's elaborations on metapsychology - a struggle to avoid fixating the idea of two opposing drives and at the same time avoiding to relapse into the Jungian notion of a unified,

Lectures on the Philosophy of Spirit 1827-8 (Hegel Lectures), (Oxford University Press) p.76

⁶⁰⁹ As Žižek remarks, it is quite symptomatic that Hegel project failed precisely where Freud came to his own: madness and sexuality. Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso) p.82-83 and footnote 9, p.120

⁶¹⁰ For a brilliant historical and conceptual analysis of Freud's metapsychology from a Lacanian-Žižekian perspective, focusing specially on the temporal logic of at play in the freudian theory of the drives, please refer to Johnston, Adrian (2005), *Time Driven: Metapsychology and the Splitting of the Drive* (SPEP), (Northwestern University Press)

⁶¹¹ Freud, Sigmund (2003), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle and Other Writings*, (Penguin Classics) p.166

⁶¹² We refer the reader here to Lacan's developments a propos of the formula of the drive and its relation to the demand for signification in *Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectics of Desire* in Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.671

asexual libidinal force - also ended up itself already implying an homology with Hegel: to paraphrase Zupančič, Freud had to account for a concept of the drive as “more than One, but less than Two”⁶¹³.

We can now return to our previous statement:

S11: *Žižek occupies a position within contemporary philosophy which includes the conceptual apparatus necessary to distinguish transmission from obliteration.*

We should be able to recognize now that such “conceptual apparatus” is precisely the psychoanalytical one - an assessment which, in turn, gives the appropriate support to the following proposition:

S12: *Death drive is that which allows us to serve ourselves of Death.*

We can also see that the Hegelian concept of negativity - insofar as it names an inconsistency at the level of being as such - must already be strictly implicated in the psychoanalytical typology of the subjective structures, which can therefore be conceptualized as “ontological attitudes” of the subject:

“This is my first thesis: Lacan’s basic move is to elevate psychoanalysis to the level of philosophy. For Lacan, when he talks about philosophy, apparently clinical categories like psychosis, like neurosis, hysteria, these are not just subjective pathologies, these are disturbances in the basic ontological relationship between the subject and the world. Here Lacan is maybe close to Heidegger who, in his conversations with the Swiss psychiatrist Medard Boss, claims, for example, to understand psychosis. You must know how a human being ontologically stands in the world, how the world is open for you because psychosis is a basic ontological disturbance of your relationship with reality. Reality no longer exists for you as ontologically constituted. So this is what Lacan did. For him

⁶¹³ Please refer to Zupančič, Alenka (2003), *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche’s Philosophy of the Two* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press)

basic clinical categories are ontological attitudes of the subject."⁶¹⁴

Starting from our second axiom (S9) we have arrived at the conclusion that the articulation of the logic of Incarnation and the logic of appearance - brought together under the figure of *monstrosity* - is a crucial dimension of Hegelian thought, one whose consequences have remained mostly undeveloped until Žižek's return to Hegel. Our second corollary allowed us to see how the Freudian discovery served as the conduit of this essential, obliterated articulation, kept alive as the - mostly unrecognized - "philosophical dignity"⁶¹⁵ of the concept of death drive, later fully developed by Lacan. It follows, then, as our corollary did, that unearthing the philosophical status of the death drive should constitute another central axis of Žižek's philosophical project :

"My basic thesis is that the central feature of subjectivity in German idealism - this desubstantialized notion of subjectivity as a gap in the order of being - is consonant with the notion of the ' object small a' which, as we all know, for Lacan is a failure. It's not that we fail to encounter the object, but that the object itself is just a trace of a certain failure. What I am asserting here is that this notion of self-relating negativity, as it has been articulated from Kant to Hegel, means philosophically the same as Freud's notion of death drive - this is my fundamental perspective."⁶¹⁶

We are now in position to accompany Žižek in his return to Hegel. So let us once more refer back to him - to the most famous passage of the preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* - so that we can put to the test our subjective engagement with Žižek, recognizing in Hegel's text the "foaming ferment" of Freud's and Lacan's "fragrant development":

"the life of spirit is not a life afraid of death and austere saving itself from ruin; rather, it bears death calmly, and in

⁶¹⁴ Interview by Michael Hauser with Žižek - available at <http://www.Žižekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/viewFile/211/310>

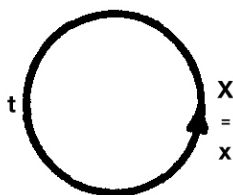
⁶¹⁵ Žižek, Slavoj and Glyn Daly (2004), *Conversations with Žižek* (Conversations), (Polity). p.60

⁶¹⁶ Ibid. p.61

death, it sustains itself. Spirit only wins its truth when it finds its feet within its absolute disruption. Spirit is not this power which, as the positive, avoids looking at the negative, as is the case when we say of something that it is nothing or that it is false, and then, being done with it, go off on our own way on to something else. No, spirit is this power only when it looks the negative in the face and tarries with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. – This power is the same as what in the preceding was called the subject, which, by virtue of giving existence to determinateness in its own element, sublates abstract immediacy, that is, merely existing immediacy, and, by doing so, is itself the true substance, is being, that is, is the immediacy which does not have mediation external to itself but is itself this mediation.”⁶¹⁷

3.5 Absolute Knowing

In our presentation of the Kojèbian figure of Absolute Knowledge we focused on the immediate coincidence between the Concept (X) and its becoming-in-Time (x , in t) that occurs at the point where the circle of knowledge closed on itself ($X=x$):



We then affirmed that this immediate coincidence of Concept and Time does not correspond to Hegel’s actual elaborations - an affirmation which has the consequence of opening another field of enquiry regarding the Hegelian influence on Lacanian psychoanalysis, given that we must now learn to discern in Lacan’s teaching what is Kojèbian from what is Hegelian.

Both of these points were later confirmed in our analysis of Žižek’s Hegelianism: the first through the description of the shift

⁶¹⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §32

which must follow the positing of presuppositions - the *presupposing of the posited* - and which fundamentally disrupts the transparent coincidence of Being and Appearance. The latter, through the recognition that beyond the affinity Freud recognized between his theory of the drives and Weissmann's "germ-plasm" there lies an even deeper articulation between the logic of the drives and Hegel's philosophy of Spirit.

However, in order to properly account for Žižek's fidelity to Hegel and for the emptying out of this scarecrow image of the "philosopher of total knowledge", we must now attempt to develop a new figure of Absolute Knowledge, one in which the shift from the Kojévian point of immediate identity ($X=x$) - let us call it "absolute wisdom" - to the Žižekian point of the incarnation of non-coincidence ($x\neq x$; $X\neq X$) - which we will call "absolute knowing" - would allow us to demonstrate how Žižek's reading of Hegel also encompasses the previous, Kojévian interpretation. If the Kojévian absolute wisdom supposedly takes place at the threshold of History, announcing its End, the figure of absolute knowing must be grasped as the way this End itself falls into History. It has the End of History as its *beginning*.

As we briefly mentioned in our analysis of Kojève, Hegel related the notion of a transparent self-knowledge with the figure of the beautiful soul - and at the beginning of the chapter on Absolute Knowledge, he returns once more to this point:

"The unification that is still lacking is the simple unity of the concept. This concept is also already on hand in the aspect of self-consciousness, but, just as it previously come before us, it has, like all the other moments, the form of a *particular shape of consciousness*. - It is that part of the shape of self-certain spirit which stands path within its concept and which was called the *beautiful soul*. The beautiful soul is its own knowledge of itself within its pure and transparent unity - the self-consciousness which knows this pure knowledge of *pure inwardly-turned-being* as spirit - not merely the intuition of the divine but the divine's self-intuition. - Since this concept steadfastly holds itself in opposition to its realization, it is the

one-sided shape which we saw not merely disappear into thin air but also positively empty itself and move forward."⁶¹⁸

Thus, the unification that is missing here, distinguishing the beautiful soul from the figure of Absolute Knowledge, is precisely the one which would *include its own blind spot* into the totality of knowledge, for "self-consciousness is the concept in its truth, that is, *in the unity with its self-emptying*":

"It is the knowing of pure knowledge not as abstract *essence*, which is what duty is – but the knowing of this pure knowledge as an essence which is *this* knowing, *this* individual pure self-consciousness, which is therefore at the same time the genuinely true *object*, for this concept is the self existing-for-itself."⁶¹⁹

In *For they know not what they do*, Žižek emphasizes this essential point and relates it to the Kojévian absolute wisdom and the beautiful soul:

"what is false and too pretentious is precisely the apparently modest relativistic standpoint *a la* Karl Popper which purports to be aware of its limitations ("the truth can only be approached in an asymptote, what is accessible to us are fragments of knowledge which could be proved false at any moment"): the very position of enunciation of such statements belies their modest enunciation, since it assumes a neutral, exempted standpoint from which it can pass a judgement on the limitation of its content. For Hegel, on the contrary, there is no contradiction between our absorption into the historical process and the fact that we not only can but are obliged to speak from the standpoint of the "end of history": precisely because we are absorbed into history *without remainder*, we perceive our present standpoint as "absolute" - that is, we cannot maintain an external distance towards it.

In other words, absolute historicism sublates itself: historicity consists in the very fact that, at every given historical moment, we speak from within a finite horizon that we perceive as absolute - every epoch experiences itself as the "end of history". And "absolute knowledge" is nothing other than the explication of this historically specified field that absolutely limits our horizon: as such, it is "finite", it can be contained in

⁶¹⁸ Ibid §795

⁶¹⁹ Ibid §795

a finite book - in the works of the individual named Hegel, for example. This is the reason why, at the very end of his system, on the last page of his *Lessons on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel says: "This is now the standpoint of our time, and the series of spiritual formations is thereby *for the time being* [*für jetzt*] completed." - a proposition which is totally meaningless if we read it against the background of the standard notion of "absolute knowledge".⁶²⁰

We see, thus, that a 'totality' requires a radical a step beyond the configuration of a 'whole': it requires us to include ourselves in the picture as an unsurmountable hiatus which stands for the impossibility of immediately grasping our own position of enunciation. This inclusion opens up "a perspective of historical reality not as a positive order, but as a 'non-all', an incomplete texture which tends to its own future. It is this inclusion of the future within the present, its inscription as a hiatus within the order of 'what there is' that makes the present into an ontologically incomplete 'non-all'".⁶²¹ In this sense, to quote the heading of a sub-chapter of one of Žižek's books, we must affirm that *a totality is done with failures*.⁶²²

Rather than dismissing the 'End of History' or resisting it, Žižek's position is that we always speak from the end of history simply because *we are in History*. And, as we have already seen, this *abandonment* in history is what we share with God - this, in fact, is the reason why

"in history proper (...) the universal Principle is caught into the 'infinite' struggle with itself, i.e., the struggle is each time the struggle for the fate of the universality itself. (...) it is not that a temporal deployment merely actualizes some pre-existing atemporal conceptual structure—this atemporal conceptual

⁶²⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso).p.217-218

⁶²¹ Žižek's "The Idea of Communism as a Concrete Universality" in Badiou, Alain and Slavoj Žižek (2011), *L'idée du communisme : Volume 2*, conférence de Berlin 2010, (Nouvelles Editions Lignes). p.308

⁶²² Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso). p.98

structure itself is the result of contingent temporal decisions.”⁶²³

What we (re)encounter here is the logic that ties together truth and the real through the concrete engagement with the impossibilities of a field of knowledge. This can also be stated in the following terms: as we struggle with and for an Idea, the Idea itself struggles, with and for us.

By focusing on the importance of the emptying out of self-consciousness in the figure of absolute knowing, Žižek reminds us that Hegel’s configuration of the relation between the Concept and Time, as elaborated in the notion of concrete universality, requires of us an engagement that is postulated upon this irremovable hiatus at the core of history itself:

“not only did Hegel have no problem with taking sides (with an often very violent partiality) in the political debates of his time; his entire mode of thinking is deeply ‘polemical’, always intervening, attacking, taking sides, and, as such, as far as possible from a detached position of Wisdom which observes the ongoing struggles from a neutral distance, aware of their nullity *sub specie aeternitatis*. For Hegel, the true (‘concrete’) universality is accessible only from an engaged ‘partial’ standpoint.”⁶²⁴

Let us now follow Žižek’s formulations in *For they know not what they do* and “risk a topological specification of the Kant-Hegel relationship” focusing on the relation between finitude and totality.

Žižek begins:

“The structure of the Kantian transcendental field is that of a circle with a gap, since man as a finite being does not have access to the totality of beings”⁶²⁵

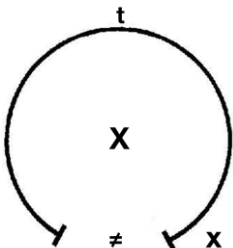
⁶²³ Žižek in Bryant, Levi, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (2011), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, (re.press). p.211

⁶²⁴ *Ibid.* p.214

⁶²⁵ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso). p.218

This first figure already varies from its Kojèveian version, since Kojève's account of Kant's "skepticism and criticism"⁶²⁶ has marked over this gap with a dotted line, which "hypothetically"⁶²⁷ closes the circle of knowledge. Kojève, as we have already seen, did not theorize how negativity as such could be part of the restless economy of determinations - in Kant's case, how finitude could be "ontologically constitutive" - choosing instead to explain Kant's transcendental constitution as an hypothetical realm, filled with abstract determinations, rather than one which constituted reality precisely in its inaccessibility⁶²⁸.

Žižek's account of Kant's position should be presented as the following⁶²⁹:



In which the transcendental horizon (X) appears as a "missing link" that separates (\neq) the noumenal from the phenomena (x, in t). Žižek continues:

"However, contrary to common view, the passage from Kant to Hegel does *not* consist in closing the circle.

If this were the case, Hegel would simply return to pre-Kantian, pre-critical metaphysics. Hegel does indeed "close the

⁶²⁶ Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press). p.119

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.* p.128-129

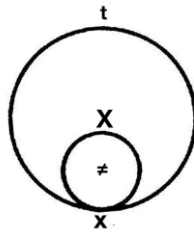
⁶²⁸ Kant, I. (2002), *The Critique Of Practical Reason*, (Hackett Publishing). p.184; See also Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View (Short Circuits)*, (MIT Press). p.22-23

⁶²⁹ Again, the figure itself is presented here as it is in the author's work, but we have added the letters (X;x;t) and operations (\neq ; \neq) to it.

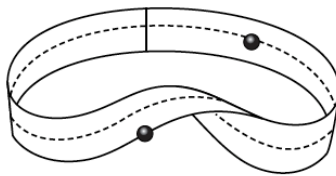
circle”, but this very closure introduces a supplementary loop transforming it into the “inner eight” of the Moebius band.

In other words, Hegel definitely *maintains* the gap around which the transcendental field is structured: the very retroactivity of the dialectical process (the “positing of presuppositions”) attests to it. The point is just that he *displaces* it: the external limit preventing the closure of the circle changes into a curvature which makes the very closed circle vicious.⁶³⁰

Accordingly, Žižek presents a figure that is no longer *geometrical*, but properly *topological*, since it is no longer defined by the geometry of its centre, but by the invariance of a hole. In it, the gap (\neq) that prevented the closure of the circle is displaced to the very curvature of the figure, binding its beginning and its end through the twisting of the line:



In fact, the most precise definition of this figure is that it is the bi-dimensional representation of the border of a Moebius Strip:



At first, in Kojève’s account of Plato’s “monotheism”, **X** was the “other side” of **x**, and their relation **r** cut across the circle **t**. Then, in the Kojévian absolute wisdom there was no relation **r**,

⁶³⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.218-219

but an immediate identity of **X** and **x** at the end of history. Here, in this first presentation of the Žižekian absolute knowing, we return to the platonic distinction between **X** and **x**, but with a (literal) twist: **X** and **x** do not coincide, and yet, there is no inner/outer duality in the circle. Lacan, who introduced the use of topology in the structuring of the Freudian theory of the drive, summarizes this precise point very clearly in an "Escherian fable" presented in his 10th Seminar:

"the insect who moves along the surface of the Moebius strip (...) this insect can believe that at every moment, if this insect has the representation of what a surface is, there is a face, the one always on the reverse side of the one on which he is moving, that he has not explored. He can believe in this reverse side. Now as you know there is not one. He, without knowing it, explores what is not the two faces, explores the single face that is there: and nevertheless at every instant, there is indeed a reverse."⁶³¹

Žižek's presentation of Hegel's Absolute Knowledge thus solves a representational issue we had encountered before, since it no longer requires us to account for the geometrical centre which gave rise to the duality between **X** as ineffable beyond or as immanent coincidence with its manifestation. As made clear by Lacan's explanation, in the Moebius band **X** is always the "other side" of **x**, but this non-coincidence is supported by the curvature of the strip, which, at a more fundamental level, brings **x** and **X** together.

The most important point, however, as highlighted by Zupančič, is that this figure remains strictly within the Kantian universe because it does not do away with the hiatus of finitude in favor of a continuous circle, on the contrary, it *universalizes* the missing link:

"The value of the topological model of the Möbius strip lies in the fact that the structural or constitutive missing link is precisely not something that one could see as a missing link or a lack. After all, the Möbius strip presents us with nothing

⁶³¹ Lacan, Jacques (2004), *Le séminaire, livre 10 : L'angoisse*, (Seuil) - class of 30/1/63

more than a smooth continuity of the same surface, with no interruptions, lacks, or leaps. The leap, the paradoxical distance between its two sides, is “built into” its very structure; it is perceptible only in the fact that we *do* come to change sides, even though we never actually change them. In other words, the whole point of the Möbius strip is to help us think a singular kind of missing link: not a link that is missing from a chain (which would be thus interrupted), but a link which is missing in a way that enables the very linking of the existing elements, their being bound, attached to one another, their forming a chain, a smooth (causal) sequence. The missing nature of this link is never visible, perceptible, but is implicated in the way the chain is (“positively”) formed, what elements it links together and at what points; it is not a missing link between two neighbor elements, the connection between which would thus be interrupted— instead, its very missing *is* the linkage between two neighbor elements, it is what makes it possible for them to fit into each other, so to speak”⁶³²

Furthermore, the inner eight of the Moebius strip shines a new light on Hegel’s famous mention of a “circle of circles” as the proper figuration of the dialectical method, at the end of *Science of Logic*:

“By virtue of the nature of the method just indicated, the science exhibits itself as a circle returning upon itself, the end being wound back into the beginning, the simple ground, by the mediation; this circle is moreover a circle of circles, for each individual member as ensouled by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning into the beginning it is at the same time the beginning of a new member”⁶³³

However, we are still to understand how to articulate the concept of parallax within this figure of absolute knowing. In the preface for the second edition of *For they know not what they do*, written eleven years after the book, Žižek remarks that the “philosophical weakness” of his first international publications -

⁶³² Zupančič, Alenka (2008), *The Odd One In: On Comedy (Short Circuits)*, (The MIT Press). p.56

⁶³³ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books). p.842 For a very compelling use of knot theory, which resonates deeply with Lacan and Žižek’s take on Hegel, as well as gives another interesting twist to the idea of a “circle of circles”, please refer to Carlson, D.G. (2007), *A Commentary on Hegel’s Science of Logic*, (Palgrave Macmillan).

The Sublime Object of Ideology especially⁶³⁴ - lies in having missed the "ridiculous inadequacy" at play in the articulation of the object a with the Kantian-Lacanian notion of Real qua Thing⁶³⁵.

As we have seen, this 'inadequacy' - echoing Hegel's "*Unangemessenheit*" - is the (monstrous) name of the object that is caught up in the dialectical reversal of the positing of presupposition into the presupposing of the posited: it names that of essence (X) which gets caught up in its material support (x). Moreover, marking a veritable shift of position in Žižek's philosophical project, this inadequacy came to be the very pivot of Žižek's concept of parallax, in which Lacan's later elaborations on the notion of the Real are evidently at play⁶³⁶.

Thus, though the Beyond (X) is no longer conceptualized as the ineffable centre of the circle of Appearances (x), it remains to be presented how the "missing link" which constitutes the torsion of the Möbius band relates to the indelible semblance of the beyond that remains operative in it. Even though the real is now "extimate"⁶³⁷ to the concept, we must still account for the way

⁶³⁴ In fact, *For They Know Not What They Do* already takes a very different stance to *Sublime Object of Ideology* (and should be read together with it, as Žižek himself advises us to) already developing some fundamental aspects of the "non-dialectizable" place of the excess in Hegel, but we believe that it was only much later, in the conjunction of Žižek's close reading of the Christian Event in Hegel, together with a consistent shift of axis from Lacan's 7th Seminar to the 17th - a shift that coincides with the appearance of the concept of parallax Real, which gives full support to Lacan's later conception of jouissance as surplus enjoyment - that we find Žižek's new philosophical position in its most consistent form. This new position also marks a shift from the emphasis on radical democracy and a dialogue with Laclau to a direct re-affirmation of the Communist Idea and a continuous exchange with Badiou.

⁶³⁵ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.xii-xviii

⁶³⁶ This notion of the real, in which the real is primarily defined as the non-coincidence or minimal difference that is inherent to the symbolic itself begins to be properly formalized in Lacan's 16th Seminar. The basic statement which supports it is that "the structure (...) is the real itself", found in Lacan, J. (2005), *Le Séminaire livre XVI: D'un Autre à l'autre*, (Seuil). - class 20/11/68

⁶³⁷ Lacan, Jacques (1986), *L'éthique de la psychanalyse, 1959-1960*, (Seuil) - class of 10/2/60 See also Miller's "Extimacy", available at <http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?p=36>

the Beyond itself is *split* and caught up in the restlessness of Appearance.

In *The Parallax View*, while further elaborating on the shift from Kant to Hegel, Žižek presents his new account of the transition from the Real as being beyond signification to the Real as missing gap or non-coincidence of the signifier with itself, a shift operated by the concept of the parallax Real, of which the ineffable Thing is but one of its moments:

“The Real is thus the disavowed X on account of which our vision of reality is anamorphically distorted; it is simultaneously the Thing to which direct access is not possible and the obstacle which prevents this direct access, the Thing which eludes our grasp and the distorting screen which makes us miss the Thing. More precisely, the Real is ultimately the very shift of perspective from the first standpoint to the second. Recall Adorno’s well-known analysis of the antagonistic character of the notion of society: in a first approach, the split between the two notions of society (the Anglo-Saxon individualistic-nominalistic notion and the Durkheimian organicist notion of society as a totality which preexists individuals) seems irreducible; we seem to be dealing with a true Kantian antinomy which cannot be resolved via a higher “dialectical synthesis”, and elevates society into an inaccessible Thing-in-itself; in a second approach, however, we should merely take note of how this radical antinomy which seems to preclude our access to the Thing is already the Thing itself—the fundamental feature of today’s society *is* the irreconcilable antagonism between Totality and the individual. This means that, ultimately, the status of the Real is purely parallaxic and, as such, nonsubstantial: it has no substantial density in itself, it is just a gap between two points of perspective, perceptible only in the shift from the one to the other. The parallax Real is thus opposed to the standard (Lacanian) notion of the Real as that which “always returns to its place”—as that which remains the same in all possible (symbolic) universes: the parallax Real is, rather, that which accounts for the very *multiplicity* of appearances of the same underlying Real—it is not the hard core which persists as the Same, but the hard bone of contention which pulverizes the sameness into the multitude of appearances. In a first move, the Real is the impossible hard core which we cannot confront directly, but only through the lenses of a multitude of symbolic fictions, virtual formations. In a second move, this very hard core is purely virtual, actually nonexistent, an X which can be reconstructed only

retroactively, from the multitude of symbolic formations which are 'all that there actually is.'"

He continues:

In other words, Hegel's move is not to "overcome" the Kantian division but, rather, to assert it "as such," to *drop the need for its "overcoming,"* for the additional "reconciliation" of opposites: to gain insight—through a purely formal parallax shift—into how positing the distinction "as such" already *is* the looked-for "reconciliation." The limitation of Kant is not in his remaining within the confines of finite oppositions, in his inability to reach the Infinite, but, on the contrary, in his very search for a transcendent domain beyond the realm of finite oppositions: Kant is not unable to reach the Infinite—he is unable to see how he *already has what he is looking for.*"⁶³⁸

It is important to note that Žižek is not dismissing his previous position - the Real as an inaccessible Thing-in-itself is not a "mere" illusion. As we previously discussed, regarding Hegel's logic of appearance, the negation of the Essence must be doubled, otherwise we simply return to our immediate positing in the guise of a reflection. It is not enough to grasp the Beyond separately from Illusory Being: one must include in this external positing the very split between Illusory Being and Essence, only when the very obstacle to the Absolute is understood as partaking in the Absolute itself⁶³⁹ - that is, when the pure negativity is itself caught in a material element - do we truly grasp the determinate reflection. Accordingly, Žižek states that the Real is "simultaneously the Thing to which direct access is not possible and the obstacle which prevents this direct access". The parallax Real can only be properly thought of if we grasp the Real qua Thing as one of its (retroactive) moments:

"the true problem is not how to reach the Real when we are confined to the interplay of the (inconsistent) multitude of appearances, but, more radically, the properly Hegelian one: *how does appearance itself emerge from the interplay of the Real?* The thesis that the Real is just the cut, the gap of

⁶³⁸ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press). p.26-27

⁶³⁹ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §73-75

inconsistency, the stellar parallax: the traps of ontological difference between the two appearances has thus to be supplemented by its opposite: appearance is the cut, the gap, between the two Reals, or, more precisely, *something that emerges in the gap that separates the Real from itself.*⁶⁴⁰

This shift from Thing to parallaxian object is precisely what we must include in the Žižekian figure of absolute knowing.

The previous figure demonstrated that Hegel remains within the Kantian horizon of finitude ($x \neq X$)⁶⁴¹, for we do not have direct access to the infinite ($x = X$). What is left to be properly presented - and here Žižek's increasing emphasis on Hegel's account of Christianity appears as a way of articulating this second step - is how to include in the figure of absolute knowing the way something eludes both the Beyond ($X \neq X$) and the Appearance ($x \neq x$), thus tying the two together.

$X \neq X$, because we have learned from the Hegelian logic of Incarnation that the external positing *is above all the positing of a split within Essence*. $x \neq x$, because it follows from $X \neq X$ that, when we grasp Appearance, we are not simply "returning" to Being - as if without the spectre of a Beyond, grasping man as a self-transparent individual -, we are also grasping the way an inconsistency, a negativity, is inherently bound to that being, a minimal difference through which "reality turns into its *own appearance*"⁶⁴².

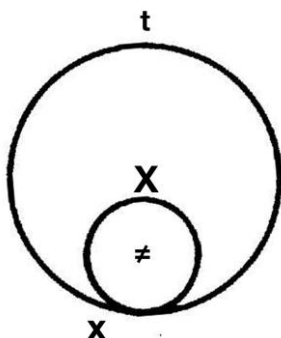
Let us take up again the previous figure, elaborated by Žižek in *For they know not what they do*. There, the difference between the phenomena (x) and the noumena (X) is presented not as that of a gap opening up to another realm, but as the very "curvature" of a temporality (t) that is not reducible to historicism, and which maintains the noumenal always beyond our access

⁶⁴⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press) p.106-107

⁶⁴¹ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.217

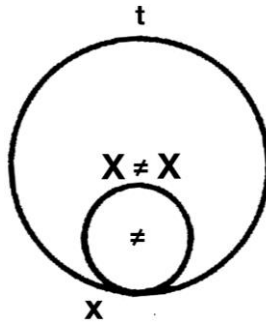
⁶⁴² Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press) p.28

without having to constitute it as an independent realm, passive of disclosure or dismissal:

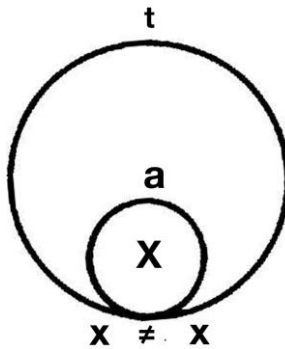


However, as we have seen, the noumena itself is caught up in the distortion that it ensues over the phenomena. So to speak, once we have completed the “walk” from one side to the other of the Moebius strip, though we do not encounter the “other side”, for it does not strictly exist, we do not simply retreat into our own “one-sidedness”: something of that other side is caught up in actuality. In this sense, not only does *x* not have access to **X**, but **X** does not coincide with itself⁶⁴³: it *appears* as the very negativity of phenomena - as the inconsistent quality of appearance qua appearance. So, not only $x \neq X$ but also $X \neq X$ - in which the second **X** could be for now understood as an **X** *after t*, that is, after we have faced the non-existence of the “other side”:

⁶⁴³ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.133

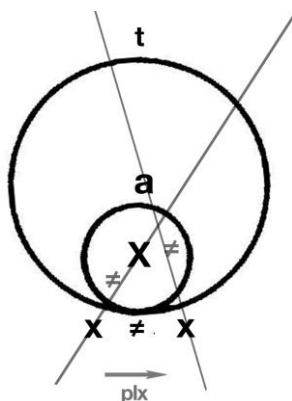


Now, the difference between Essence and itself ($X \neq X$) - the difference between the essence of appearance and the appearance of essence - is already the new background against which we grasp the determination of appearance as such: the way Essence has spilled over into Appearance amounts to the determinate reflection not coinciding with its immediate positing ($x \neq x$). Let us write, then, this inadequate material support of Essence's emptying out as the letter *a*. According to this, the next step of the construction of our figure would be the following:



In this construction, $X \neq X$ - not being a "self-sufficient" extension into appearance, but a true inscription of Essence itself into the law of self-difference - can be split into **X**, the first external positing, grasped as such only from the standpoint of *x*

as *immediately posited*, and **a**, the material left-over of the emptying out of **X**, the object which retroactively supports Essence as such⁶⁴⁴. It is with **a** as our object that we can understand what Žižek means by *parallax Real*, which is "ultimately the very shift of perspective (plx) from the first standpoint ($x \neq X$) to the second ($x \neq a$)":



We can now properly grasp why Žižek, following Hegel's famous remark on the quadruplicity of the method, at the end of the *Science of Logic*⁶⁴⁵, reminds us that a *dialectician should learn to count to four*⁶⁴⁶:

⁶⁴⁴ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.190

⁶⁴⁵ Hegel, G.W.F. (1989), *Science of Logic*, (Prometheus Books) p.836: "In this turning point of the method, the course of cognition at the same time returns into itself. As self-sublating contradiction this negativity is the *restoration* of the *first immediacy*, of simple universality; for the other of the other, the negative of the negative, is immediately the *positive*, the *identical*, the *universal*. If one insists on *counting*, this *second* immediate is, in the course of the method as a whole, the *third* term to the first immediate and the mediated. It is also, however, the third term to the first or formal negative and to absolute negativity or the second negative; now as the first negative is already the second term, the term reckoned as *third* can also be reckoned as *fourth*, and instead of a *triplicity*, the abstract form may be taken as a quadruplicity; in this way, the negative or the difference is counted as a *duality*."

⁶⁴⁶ And why, ultimately, "the overall structure of Logic should, rather, have been *quadruple*" Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of*

“How far must a Hegelian dialectician learn to count? Most of the interpreters of Hegel, not to mention his critics, try to convince us in unison that the right answer reads: to three (the dialectical triad, and so on) . Moreover, they vie with each other in who will call our attention more convincingly to the “fourth side”, the non-dialecticizable excess, the place of death (of the dummy - in French *le mort* - in bridge), supposedly eluding the dialectical grasp, although (or, more precisely, in so far as) it is the inherent condition of possibility of the dialectical movement: the negativity of a pure expenditure that cannot be sublated [*aufgehoben*], re-collected, in its Result.

Unfortunately, as is the custom with criticism of Hegel, the trouble with Hegel is here the same as the trouble with Harry in Alfred in Hitchcock's film of the same title: he does not consent to his burial so easily - on a closer look, it soon becomes obvious that the supposedly annihilating reproach drawn by the critics from their hats actually forms the crucial aspect of the very dialectical movement.”⁶⁴⁷

It is only by conceptualizing *a* that we can understand the properly *retroactive* dimension of presupposing the posited. It is because *a* is not a lacking object, but the lack *as object* - not death as the “outside” of life, but death as that which, within life, marks the utter universality of non-coincidence - that we can retroactively presuppose the place of an Essence which *will have been* self-identical⁶⁴⁸:

“as long as contingency is reduced to the form of appearance of an underlying necessity, to an appearance through which a deeper necessity is realized we are still on the level of Substance: the substantial necessity is that which prevails. “Substance conceived as Subject”, on the contrary, is that moment when this substantial necessity reveals itself to be the retroactive effect of a contingent process. (...) The core of Hegel's “positing the presupposition” consists precisely in this retroactive conversion of contingency into necessity, in this

Political Ontology (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso).p.82 See also “Why are there four Hegelian Judgements?” in Carlson, D.G. (2006), Hegel's Theory of the Subject, (Palgrave Macmillan).

⁶⁴⁷ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor, (Verso) p.179

⁶⁴⁸ Here we can see how a confusion concerning this last step is what can lead us to fetishize Hegel's Absolute Knowledge into its Kojévian formulation

conferring of a form of necessity on the contingent circumstances”⁶⁴⁹

We have already mentioned the centrality of Lacan’s conceptualization of the Real as non-coincidence for Žižekian philosophy. If we indulge for a moment in a detour through the Lacanian conceptual framework, we can find a fundamental passage from *The Parallax View* in which the Hegelian logic finds direct resonance with the Lacanian one. Žižek’s precise account of the distinction between the object cause of Desire and the object of the drive in Lacan’s later thought clearly evokes the logical separation/articulation between *X* and *a* as developed in the Žižekian Absolute Knowing:

“in the case of *objet petit a* as the object cause of *desire* we have an object which is originally lost, which coincides with its own loss, which emerges as lost; while in the case of *objet petit a* as the object of drive, the “object” is directly loss itself—in the shift from desire to drive, we pass from the *lost object* to *loss itself as an object*. That is to say: the weird movement called “drive” is not driven by the “impossible” quest for the lost object; it is a *push to enact “loss”—the gap, cut, distance— itself directly*. There is thus a *double* distinction to be drawn here: not only between *objet petit a* in its fantasmatic and post-fantasmatic status, but also, within this post-fantasmatic domain itself, between the lost object-cause of desire and the object-loss of drive.

This is why we should not confuse the death drive with the so-called “*nirvana* principle,” the thrust toward destruction or self-obliteration: the Freudian death drive has nothing whatsoever to do with the craving for self-annihilation, for the return to the inorganic absence of any life-tension; it is, on the contrary, the very opposite of dying—a name for the “undead” eternal life itself, for the horrible fate of being caught in the endless repetitive cycle of wandering around in guilt and pain. The paradox of the Freudian “death drive” is therefore that it is Freud’s name for its very opposite, for the way immortality appears within psychoanalysis, for an uncanny *excess* of life, for an “undead” urge which persists beyond the (biological) cycle of life and death, of generation and corruption. The ultimate lesson of psychoanalysis is that human life is never “just life”: humans are not simply alive, they are possessed by

⁶⁴⁹ See “How necessity arises out of contingency” in Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.126

the strange drive to enjoy life in excess, passionately attached to a surplus which sticks out and derails the ordinary run of things. (...) Consequently, the concept of drive makes the alternative “either burned by the Thing or maintaining a distance towards it” false: in a drive, the “thing itself” is a circulation around the Void (or, rather, hole, not void). To put it even more pointedly: the object of drive is not related to the Thing as a filler of its void: drive is literally a countermovement to desire, it does not strive toward impossible fullness and, being forced to renounce it, gets stuck onto a partial object as its remainder—drive is quite literally *the very “drive” to break the All of continuity in which we are embedded*, to introduce a radical imbalance into it, and the difference between drive and desire is precisely that, in desire, this cut, this fixation on a partial object, is as it were “transcendentalized,” transposed into a stand-in for the Void of the Thing.⁶⁵⁰

We do not intend to develop this point any further, but we believe that the Žižekian conception of a parallaxian Real, when read together with the figure of Absolute Knowing presented above, already points to the fact that we would have to effect some changes in it so that the homology between Hegel and Lacan would be truly preserved. To properly present what is at stake here - without relying so much on the *metaphorical* use of topology⁶⁵¹ - we must go a step further and affirm that Absolute Knowing can only be structured as the topological object known as a *cross cap*⁶⁵², of which a Moebius strip is but a certain cut of the surface⁶⁵³ - it can also be defined as a “pierced cross cap”⁶⁵⁴.

⁶⁵⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press) p.62-63

⁶⁵¹ See Rona, P.M. (2010), ‘A topologia na psicanálise de Jacques Lacan: O Significante, o conjunto e o número’, (USP).

⁶⁵² Lacan presents the relation between the object *a* and the cross cap in the unpublished seminar on *Identification* from 1961-1962; On the subject, please refer to: Nasio, J.D. in Ragland, Ellie (2004), *Lacan: Topologically Speaking*, (Other Press). (see page 106-107); Darmon, Marc (2004), *Essais sur la topologie lacanienne*, (Éd. de l'Association lacanienne internationale). (see page 364); Granon-Lafont, Jeanne (1999), *La topologie ordinaire de Jacques Lacan*, (Erès).

⁶⁵³ Barr, Stephen (1989), *Experiments in Topology*, (Dover Publications). p.103

⁶⁵⁴ Granon-Lafont, Jeanne (1999), *La topologie ordinaire de Jacques Lacan*, (Erès). p.75

However, the reference to the *extrinsic* dimension - that is, to the dimension in which the topological surface itself is built⁶⁵⁵ - which is brought into play when we refer in such a imaginary way to a hole in the centre of the Moebius band can only be rigorously accounted for if we consider the structure of the cross cap, which is itself a *Moebian space*⁶⁵⁶.

In his 20th Seminar, Lacan emphasized that one should not forget that the requirement of cuts and recompositions in order to create a knot out of a piece of string is not valid for any surface. Though a torus cannot itself be turned into a knot without ruptures and mendings, if we have take it to be the space in which we work, then, differently from a spherical or plane surface, one can make a knot without having to cut and recompose a line. Lacan then claims that, insofar as the toric structure allows for the creation of knots, "the torus is reason"⁶⁵⁷ - that is, it bears in its very constitution a certain gap which makes it possible for incommensurable figures to be formed without one having to conjure yet another spatial dimension to account for the distortions and intertwinings that are proper to language as such. We believe that a further investigation of the Žižekian Absolute Knowing would have to deal with these questions of structure both in Hegel and Lacan in order to develop a reading of Lacan's late teaching which does not

⁶⁵⁵ "It is important to be aware of the difference between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* dimension. As the ant on a surface will tell you, it is locally 2-dimensional—the intrinsic dimension of a surface is two. However, for us to build a physical copy of this surface, the surface must live somewhere, and the dimension of this enveloping space is the extrinsic dimension. The sphere and the torus have an intrinsic dimension of two, but they must live in 3-dimensional space, so their extrinsic dimension is three. Shortly we will encounter bizarre surfaces that cannot be constructed in 3-dimensional space. Their extrinsic dimension is four. From a topological point of view, the intrinsic dimension of a surface is the most important; that is why we say that surfaces are 2-dimensional." Richeson, David S. (2008), *Euler's Gem: The Polyhedron Formula and the Birth of Topology*, (Princeton University Press). p.158-159

⁶⁵⁶ Granon-Lafont, Jeanne (1999), *La topologie ordinaire de Jacques Lacan*, (Erès) p.76

⁶⁵⁷ Lacan, Jacques (1999), *Encore : Le séminaire, livre XX*, (Seuil) - class of 15/5/73

require us to abandon certain insights from his most Hegelian moment - around 1970⁶⁵⁸.

Even so, in relation to our current comparison between Kojève and Žižek, it is enough to recognize in the above mentioned fragment on the Lacanian theory of the drives how Žižek's account of the monstrous accomplishment of the Sublime within appearances, written in our figure as *a*, presents itself as a "drive [that] is quite literally the very 'drive' to break the All of continuity in which we are embedded", a torsion which simultaneously introduces a discontinuity and prevents it from being thought as a self-identical Beyond. This fundamental split introduced at the heart of the Hegelian edifice confirms our previous claims regarding the double temporality founded by the Christian Event and further stresses that, rather than resisting it, Žižek's return to Hegel simultaneously accounts for the Kojévian interpretation of Absolute Knowledge and renders it superfluous.

4. Scilicet

We have presented the proposition "there is no outside of crucifixion" as another way of affirming the "universalization of the crucifixion"⁶⁵⁹. At stake in this statement was the proper formulation of how the Christian Event penetrates the Beyond in such a radical way that, after Christ, Death itself has been permeated by the restlessness of language - that is: after Christ, we partake on the Holy Spirit through a certain impossibility shared with God itself.

But to properly grasp the structure at play in this logic of universalization we must not forget that we have been dealing since the beginning with the difference between a whole and a

⁶⁵⁸ As we have said before, we find this thesis regarding the rupture between the mathemic and the theory of knots most explicitly developed in Milner, Jean-Claude (1998), *L'oeuvre claire*, (Seuil).

⁶⁵⁹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.267

totality, and while the first implicates the figure of the All, the second is inherently inconsistent - in it, the failure of the totalizing principle *falls into* that which it totalizes - a logical conception which appears in Lacan's teaching under the name of "pastout", "non-all"⁶⁶⁰.

Indeed, many times throughout the present work we have implicitly accomplished a certain shift of perspective through which a given duality - such as that of inside/outside - revealed itself to be founded upon an asymmetrical tension which demanded us to allocate *within* this antagonism the principle which was supposed to hover above it - including our own reading of Žižek, which we fully assume to be partial and engaged.

In the case of the relation between inside/outside, we can clearly discern the operation of this precise shift in the way Freud accounted for the duality between the psychic apparatus and the external reality, especially in *Drive and its Vicissitudes*⁶⁶¹: in it, Freud invites us to think this duality on the basis of a "constant force"⁶⁶² which disrupts the "smooth" functioning of the psyche. The essential breakthrough implicit in the concept of the drive is that the source of this "pressure" is not the outside world as the already constituted realm beyond the psychic apparatus: it emerges from the way the very material basis of the psyche gets

⁶⁶⁰ For a detailed explanation of Lacan's logic of the non-all, please refer to Darian Leader's "The Not-All" in Rubinstein, Raphael (1994), *Lacanian Ink* 8, (The Wooster Press).- available at http://www.jcfar.org/past_papers/The%20Not-All%20-%20Darian%20Leader.pdf ;

Given a common confusion that this logic ensues, on the difference between the real and *privation* (a constitutive non-all and a constituted one), we also suggest the reading of Jean-Pierre Lebrun's annex explaining this precise difference in Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2008), *Clinique de l'institution : Ce que peut la psychanalyse pour la vie collective*, (Erès). We also refer the reader to a comprehensive presentation of the concept of the non-all in Gaufey, Guy Le (2006), *Le Pastout de Lacan : consistance logique, conséquences cliniques*, (EPEL).

⁶⁶¹ "Instinct and its Vicissitudes" in Freud, Sigmund (1968), *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology, and Other Works*, (London).

⁶⁶² *Ibid.* p.70

caught up in the psychic representations, *a consequence from the psyche's full embedding in the world.*

It is in order to properly grasp an asymmetrical cut such as the one which gave rise to the concept of the death drive that the reference to this singular logic of the universal is properly justified. Strictly speaking, there is *no outside of the death drive*. And this, none the less, does *not* imply that the death drive is 'All there is',⁶⁶³.

The elements of this parallaxian shift were already recognizable in our early reference to Althusser's *On Marx and Freud* and to his claim that the knowledge of totality requires us to occupy certain positions rather than others in the field of struggle⁶⁶⁴. We should now be able to grasp the proper conceptual foundation of this singular sort of engagement in the Žižekian conception of Absolute Knowing, in which the material surplus produced by the impossibility of "seeing oneself see oneself"⁶⁶⁵ becomes the very pivot of universality. In this sense, the move from Althusser to Žižek could be understood as the additional twist which allows us to grasp not only how totality is distinguishable from totalization only from an engaged position, but also how this shift alters the very concept of engagement: a shift from

⁶⁶³ As a brief addendum: a way to understand the relation between the logic of the non-all and the statement "there is no outside of..." is to meditate a bit on the topological properties of a torus. In a plane or spherical space (such as the one from a blank page of paper) if we draw two intersecting circles, they will touch each other twice: imagining that there is a first drawn circle and we delineate the second afterwards, this following circle will "enter" the previous one and "exit" it through a second intersection. In a torus, on the other hand, it is possible to draw two intersecting circles that only touch each other *once* - all we have to do is to draw a circle around the meridian of the torus and the other across the equator. This can serve as an interesting example of how the consideration of an ontological inconsistency (the hole in the otherwise spherical surface) allows us to think an intersection that does not correspond to the duality inside/outside. A very clear explanation of this point concerning topological surfaces and jordan curves (the name of these "lines" drawn on the surface) can be found in Barr, Stephen (1989), *Experiments in Topology*, (Dover Publications) p.6-7

⁶⁶⁴ Althusser, L. 'On Marx and Freud' in (1991), *Rethinking Marxism* Spring 1991 Vol 4, No 1, (Association for Economic and Social Analysis). p.21

⁶⁶⁵ Lacan, Jacques (1973), *Les Quatre Concepts Fondamentaux De La Psychanalyse* (French Edition), (Editions du Seuil). - class of 26/2/64

engagement as *necessity* - we can only see from a certain position - to engagement as *impossibility* - we can only see from a certain position... from which we are essentially blind.

The link between a fundamental impossibility and a position which can serve itself of it was articulated in our twelfth statement, the one which paved the way to our investigation of the relation between Hegel's logic of the incarnation and Freud's theory of the drives:

S12: *Death drive is that which allows us to serve ourselves of Death.*

And it can now find its proper and strictly philosophical formulation as follows:

S13: *The Žižekian parallax is a rational thought of the non-All.*

We believe that this reformulation has been implicitly elaborated through our comparison of Kojève and Žižek: what allowed us to move beyond the - supposedly Hegelian - framework which had the "End of History" as its horizon was precisely the parallaxian thought which supplemented this End with its own non-coincidence. Not giving in to the revisionist or correlationist stances - which ultimately dismiss the place and function of the Absolute - Žižek's position accounts for the possibility of a rational relation to the Absolute precisely through the articulation of the absolute failure inherent to this relation itself.

Accordingly, Žižek himself emphasizes that the thorough theorization of the parallax gap is one of the fundamental tasks today in the rehabilitation of dialectical materialism⁶⁶⁶: the notion of minimal difference, of the non-coincidence of the One with itself, allows us to re-state the importance of the struggle of opposites for philosophical and political thought without giving in to the holistic conception of complementary opposites and its avatars⁶⁶⁷.

⁶⁶⁶ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press) p.3

⁶⁶⁷ *Ibid.* p.7

Against the more common movement - even amongst Lacanians - of “dehegelianizing Marx’s materialism”⁶⁶⁸, Žižek’s return to Hegel, specially through the conceptualization of the parallaxian shift, opens up the path to what the philosopher calls a “materialist reversal of Marx”:

“Today’s crisis of Marxism is not due only to the sociopolitical defeats of Marxist movements; at an inherent theoretical level, the crisis can (and *should*) also be indexed through the decline (virtual disappearance, even) of dialectical materialism as the philosophical underpinning of Marxism—dialectical materialism, *not* the much more acceptable, and much less embarrassing, “materialist dialectic”: the shift from determinate reflection to reflective determination is crucial here—this is another case where a word or the position of words decides everything. The shift we are dealing with here is the key dialectical shift—the one which is most difficult to grasp for a “negative dialectics” in love with explosions of negativity, with all imaginable forms of “resistance” and “subversion,” but unable to overcome its own parasitizing on the preceding positive order—from the wild dance of the liberation from the (oppressive) System to (what German Idealists called) the System of Liberty.”⁶⁶⁹

We focused our presentation of the Žižekian Hegel on the “Idea in and for itself” that rises out of Christ’s monstrosity, an Idea which finds its perfect representation in the Hegelian parallax of the Cross and the Rose. But there is also another important consequence that can be derived from the Žižekian concept of parallax to the rehabilitation of dialectical materialist philosophy, specially if we are to rigorously think the shift from the “(oppressive) System to (...) the System of Liberty”: the possibility of pursuing our twelfth statement into the further recognition of the strict relation between totality and Reason. This, we believe, is what is at stake in what is probably Hegel’s most infamous statement, found in the Preface to the *Philosophy of Right*:

⁶⁶⁸ Alemán, J. (2009), Para una Izquierda Lacaniana, (Grama Ediciones). p.22

⁶⁶⁹ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), The Parallax View (Short Circuits), (MIT Press) p.5

"what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational [Was vernünftig ist, das ist wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig]"⁶⁷⁰

We would like to propose that this statement too should be understood under the light of the logic of universalization that Žižek's assertion of a constitutive non-coincidence allows us to think. From the "universalization of the crucifixion" it should also follow that "there is no outside of Reason".

In fact, it is Hegel himself who brings together Reason and the thought of the Cross:

"To comprehend *what is* is the task of philosophy, for *what is* is reason. As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a *child of his time*; thus philosophy too, is *its own time comprehended in thoughts*. It is just as foolish to imagine that any philosophy can transcend its contemporary world as that an individual can overlap his own time or leap over Rhodes. If his theory does indeed transcend his own time, if it builds itself a world *as it ought to be*, then it certainly has an existence, but only within his opinions - a pliant medium in which the imagination can construct anything it pleases. With little alteration, the saying just quoted ['Here is the Rhodes, jump here'] would read:

Here is the rose, dance here.

What lies between reason as self-conscious spirit and reason as present actuality, what separates the former from the latter and prevents it from finding satisfaction in it, is the fetter of some abstraction or other which has not been liberated into [the form of] the concept. To recognize the reason as the rose in the cross of the present and thereby to delight in the present - this rational insight is the *reconciliation* with actuality which philosophy grants to those who have received the inner call *to comprehend*, to preserve their subjective freedom in the realm of the substantial, and at the same time to stand with their

⁶⁷⁰ Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press) p.20; Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich and Eva Moldenhauer (2000), *Werke in 20 Bänden und Register*, Bd.7, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts oder Naturrecht und Staatswissenschaft im Grundrisse*, (Suhrkamp). p.24

subjective freedom not in a particular and contingent situation, but in what has being in and for itself.”⁶⁷¹

To properly understand how the universalization of the crucifixion leads to the universalization of Reason one must first of all not forget that, for Hegel, the difference between Understanding and Reason is not the difference between two different realms or capacities. This difference can itself be defined in parallaxian terms: Understanding relies on positing some lost object beyond what can be grasped, while Reason simply subtracts such illusion from what it does in fact reach⁶⁷², *grasping the loss itself as an object*:

“For Hegel, Reason is not another, 'higher' capacity than that of 'abstract' Understanding; what defines Understanding is the very illusion that, beyond it, there is another domain (either the ineffable Mystical or Reason) which eludes its discursive grasp. In short, to get from Understanding to Reason, one does not have to *add* anything, but, on the contrary, to *subtract* something: what Hegel calls 'Reason' is *Understanding itself*, bereft of the illusion that there is something Beyond it. This is why, in the direct choice between Understanding and Reason, one has first to choose Understanding: not in order to play the stupid game of self-blinding (the absolute subject first has to alienate itself, to posit external reality as independent of itself, in order to supersede/sublate this alienation by way of recognizing in it its own product ...), but for the simple reason that there is nothing outside or beyond Understanding. First, we choose Understanding; then, in the second move, *we choose Understanding again*, only without anything in addition to it (I.e. without the illusion that there is another, 'higher' capacity beyond or beneath it, even if this 'higher capacity is called Reason) - and this Understanding, deprived of the illusion that there is something beyond it, is Reason.”⁶⁷³

⁶⁷¹ Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press) p.21-22 - the reference to the alliteration is better explained in the footnote 26 of this edition: “In Greek, *Rhodos* means either ‘Rhodes’ or ‘rose’ and in Latin, *salta* means either ‘jump’ or ‘dance’.”

⁶⁷² Compare, for example, §165 and §232 in Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA).

⁶⁷³ Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso) p.85-86

In this sense, the passage from *X* to *a*, which we have seen to constitute the core of the dialectical reversal which produces the monstrosity of the crucified God, is strictly homologous to the passage from Understanding to Reason - to paraphrase Hegel himself: through this shift, the *infinite loss* of representation becomes *infinite gain* of the Concept. That is to say, from the standpoint of Reason, the Concept and the Actual do not form a polar opposition of a “subjective” and an “objective” stance, but both are mutually traversed by a negativity that disrupts the empty intersection between pure representation and pure presentation, tying the two together.

Reason holds, then, that “there is no Other of the Concept”⁶⁷⁴ - not because the Concept “digests” all alterity⁶⁷⁵, as an accumulative drive for total knowledge, but because it is always Other to itself: it is not the ever-growing knowledge of a thing, but a knowledge that is disrupted *from within by its own thinghood*. This is why Lebrun reminds us that “the Concept is not tailored to the measure of our knowledge”:

“In short, one turns away from the uncanny dimension of what is known as the Concept when one dismisses the author’s warning: in the Concept, the True does not present itself in the form that was expected by the phenomenal knowledge. Without a doubt, the latter reaches for the True as the identity of the Concept with reality, ‘but it only reaches for it, for here it is only, as in the beginning, a subjective’; ‘it is the *Concept* that exercises its activity on the object, reports to itself and, as it finds its reality close to the object, encounters the truth’ [quote from the Science of Logic]. Therefore, one should not imagine that the finite subject gave place to an omniscient subject, but of the same nature - or that a wiser Cogito took turns with the finite Cogito in the execution of the same enterprise: there is nothing in common between the reconciliation, as imagined by the phenomenal knowledge, and the maturation that transforms in differentiations the differences that it sought to overcome. If the absolute

⁶⁷⁴ Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard), p.365

⁶⁷⁵ See Žižek’s second preface - “The Idea’s Constipation” - in Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (Second Edition) (The Essential Žižek), (Verso).

Knowledge brings to an end the finite knowledge, it is in the sense of a death oath”⁶⁷⁶

If, on one side, this essential insight dispels the naive myth of the immanence of rationality⁶⁷⁷ - which, in truth, tries to guarantee the correspondence of *Understanding* and Being - on the other hand, Actuality itself cannot be understood as a simple immediate presentation: as Béatrice Longuenesse meticulously demonstrates in her book *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*⁶⁷⁸, “actuality is not something that is ontologically given, but the ultimate moment of reflection”⁶⁷⁹. We only truly grasp actuality once we reflect back into the Concept *its own material consequences*, a reflective movement which requires a retroactive temporality, since the consequences of our first attempt at grasping the object can only be seized after the fact. However, as we consent to this constitutive impossibility of knowing and being, the world opens itself to *speculative Reason*⁶⁸⁰, a world which, freed from the abstract and impervious duality between substance and subject, can now accommodate the Idea as “absolutely active as well as actual”⁶⁸¹.

This is why Longuenesse affirms that Hegel's statement in the *Principles of the Philosophy of Right* “does not assert the rational character of ‘what is actual’ by virtue of merely

⁶⁷⁶ Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard). p.350-351

⁶⁷⁷ We should be careful here, though, not to dismiss what of reason *is* in fact “in the world”. Debates over Hegel's statement from the Preface of the *Philosophy of Right* tend to represent mostly two ways of dismissing this fundamental insight into that of Reason which is in fact entwined with actuality as such (For some examples of this, please refer to Stewart, J. “The Hegel Myths and Legends”). Hegel himself warns us against this threat of obliteration, and its political consequences, in the § 6 of Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences With the Zusätze*, (Hackett Publishing).

⁶⁷⁸ See Chapter 4 “What is rational is actual. What is actual is rational” in Longuenesse, Béatrice (2007), *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics* (Modern European Philosophy), (Cambridge University Press).

⁶⁷⁹ *Ibid* p.113

⁶⁸⁰ Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part 1 of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences With the Zusätze*, (Hackett Publishing) §79

⁶⁸¹ *Ibid* §142

observing it. Rather, it asserts a rational character that is actively constituted, as the result of a movement teleologically determined by the search for the unity of the concept. This is what makes Hegel's *Wirklichkeit* the transition towards the concept."⁶⁸² A point summarized by Hegel himself, in a note from the *Encyclopedia* that foreshadows some his later formulations:

"Actuality and thought (or Idea) are often absurdly opposed. How commonly we hear people saying that, though no objection can be urged against the truth and correctness of a certain thought, there is nothing of the kind to be seen in reality, or it cannot be actually carried out! People who use such language only prove that they have not properly apprehended the nature either of thought or of actuality. (...) But when the abstract understanding gets hold of these categories and exaggerates the distinction they imply into a hard and fast line of contrast, when it tells us that in this actual world we must knock ideas out of our heads, it is necessary energetically to protest against these doctrines, alike in the name of science and of sound reason. For on the one hand Ideas are not confined to our heads merely, nor is the Idea, on the whole, so feeble as to leave the question of its actualization or non-actualization dependent on our will. The Idea is rather the absolutely active as well as actual"⁶⁸³

Emphasizing, then, that Hegel's formula of the speculative identity of Reason and Actuality ultimately means that "neither Reason nor Actuality exist 'in itself'", Žižek brings to our attention the essential dimension of the underlying incompatibility between the two terms:

"In a sense, we could say that "absolute knowledge" implies the recognition of an absolute, insurmountable *impossibility*: the impossibility of accordance between knowledge and being. Here, one should reverse Kant's formula of the transcendental "conditions of possibility"; every positively given object is possible. It emerges only against the background of its impossibility, it can never fully "become itself", realize all its potential, achieve full identity with itself. In so far as we accept

⁶⁸² Longuenesse, Béatrice (2007), *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics* (Modern European Philosophy), (Cambridge University Press). p.120

⁶⁸³ Hegel, G.W.F. (1991), *The Encyclopaedia Logic: Part I of the Encyclopaedia of Philosophical Sciences With the Zusätze*, (Hackett Publishing) §142

the Hegelian definition of truth - the accordance of an object with its Notion - we could say that no object is ever "true", ever fully "becomes what it effectively is". This discord is a positive condition of the object's ontological consistency - not because the Notion would be an Ideal never to be achieved by an empirical object, but because Notion itself partakes of the dialectical movement. As soon as an object comes too close to its Notion, this proximity changes, displaces, the Notion itself."⁶⁸⁴

Žižek's reference to a gap or discord that is the "positive condition of the object's ontological consistency" allows us to approach Hegel's "what is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational" in the same way we have been implicitly following another of his fundamental propositions⁶⁸⁵:

"In my view, which must be justified by the exposition of the system itself, everything hangs on apprehending and expressing the truth not merely as *substance* but also equally as *subject*. [Es kömmt nach meiner Einsicht, welche sich durch die Darstellung des Systems selbst rechtfertigen muß, alles darauf an, das Wahre nicht als *Substanz*, sondern ebensosehr als *Subjekt* aufzufassen und auszudrücken.]"⁶⁸⁶

A crucial element in both of these statements is the paradoxical function of the conjunction that binds the two halves of each sentence together: 'what is rational is actual *and* what is actual is rational'... '*not only* as substance but *also* as subject' - and the task of thinking the paradoxical conjunction of incommensurable terms is precisely what guided us through Hegel's account of the Christian Event and beyond, as we now dwell on the thought of Reason's universality.

What we find here is again a parallaxian gap, an unsurmountable impossibility disrupting thought from within. But as we "tarry with the negative", this impossibility itself becomes the pivot of

⁶⁸⁴ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso). p.67-68

⁶⁸⁵ "the infinite judgement can be seen as a necessary consequence of the starting point that substance is subject" Dolar in Copjec, Joan (1994), *Supposing the Subject*, (Verso) p.71

⁶⁸⁶ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §17

the shift from a polar duality of opposites (Reason/Actual) to a logic of "totality without totalization"⁶⁸⁷: there is no outside of Reason - not because Reason is total, but because that which disrupts the Concept does not come from outside, but from within, it is its own "ex-timate" core, the fundamental condition for Reason's universal reach.

And, in a way, as we move from the Cross to Reason - from the historical to the speculative Good Friday - the very passage from revealed Religion to Philosophy offers itself as the parallaxian shift *par excellence*⁶⁸⁸:

"What in religion was *content*, that is, the form of representing an *other*, is here the *self's* own *activity*. The concept makes it binding that the content is that of the self's own activity. – For this concept is, as we see, the knowledge of the self's activity within itself as all essentiality and all existence, the knowledge of *this subject* as *substance* and of the substance as this knowledge of its activity. – Our sole contribution here is in part to *gather together* the individual moments, each of which in its principle exhibits the life of the whole spirit, and in part to cling to the concept in the form of the concept, whose content would already itself have yielded to these moments and to the form of a *shape* of consciousness. This last shape of spirit is that of absolute knowledge, that is, the spirit which at the same time gives to its complete and true content the form of the self,

⁶⁸⁷ Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard), p.351

⁶⁸⁸ Lorenzo Chiesa's sharp critique of Žižek ("Christianisme ou communisme?" in Moati, Raoul (ed.) (2010), *Psychanalyse, marxisme, idéalisme allemand*, autour de Slavoj Žižek, Presses Universitaires de France - PUF) which can be partially summarized in the question "why stick to the religious thought of the community of believers when we already have the young Marx's presentation of the proletariat?" should then be countered with the (Hegelian) point that this is a fake choice, for the "crux" of the matter is to think the very shift from one to another, for only this shift allows us to think the "inadequacy" of the proletariat without first substantializing it into a self-identical class - a move which leads, most of the time, to the conception of the proletariat as the excluded at the cost of not accounting for the proletariat's "inner split", so to speak. Bruno Bosteels has recently formulated a similar critique in a text presented at the "Communism, a New Beginning?" lectures in New York, in October 2011, questioning who Žižek was trying to "convince" with his constant reference to Christianity when looking for examples of emancipatory politics. Žižek's answer was clear: secularists who think the materialist jargon is enough to do away with the believe in the Big Other.

and which precisely as a result realizes its concept as much as it persists within this realization within its concept. It is spirit knowing itself in the shape of spirit, that is, it is comprehending conceptual knowledge.⁶⁸⁹

4.1 Parallaxian Class

Our study of the relation between Hegel's Christology and his conception of Reason served the purpose of grounding the reformulation of our twelfth statement - namely, the statement that the Žižekian parallax allows us to think a rational relation to the Absolute which includes within Reason its own absolute failure. However, while this investigation focused on a specific dimension of the shift from religion to philosophy - the passage from Understanding, or representational thought, to speculative Reason - this same movement also encompasses another side, which touches upon the question of the collective. In the sphere of religion, we have seen that the logic of Incarnation culminates not with Christ, but with the Holy Spirit, the community of believers. But to assume that the modern civil society, as developed in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, is the rational correlate of the religious collective would be going too fast - and too far: already within the notion of Holy Spirit we find the founding traces of a collective logic which consents to Reason's structural inconsistency⁶⁹⁰.

By turning our attention to the relation between Reason and collectivity in Hegelian philosophy, we are, in fact, simultaneously engaging in a new line of inquiry and returning to a previous one. At the end of our previous chapter, we presented a "theorem" that was intended to name Lacan's most

⁶⁸⁹ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §797-798

⁶⁹⁰ In the wake of Frank Ruda's exceptional book on the Hegelian notion of Rabble as an "irritation" at the heart of civil-society - and the Hegelian project itself - we venture the suggestion that it is through the analysis of the rational core of the community of believers that we might understand what is the "social substance" which, in its constitutive excessiveness to civil-society, returns through poverty as the Rabble. See Ruda, F. (2011), *Hegel's Rabble. An Investigation into Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, (Continuum).

direct contribution to the revitalization of the enlightenment's motto *Sapere Aude*:

S8: *Only that which is non-all can truly be for all.*

This proposition brings together the indexes of two logics - "non-all" and "for all" - which, in a first reading, seem to directly oppose each other. The Lacanian might recognize in the "for all" a plea for totalization which turns away from the singularity of the clinical case. The Marxist, on the other hand, might object that the "non-all" is an abstract jargon, a flight of the imagination which has little bearing on what truly can be understood by everyone. The task of thinking the two terms together would, thus, seem to find little support on either one of the two halves of the proposition, and to require a laxity in the rigor of at least one of the logics at play in order to make their conjunction possible.

This is why our elaborations on the Žižekian concept of parallax offer us a chance to return to this implicit impasse of our eighth statement by moving forward in our study of Hegel. The homology between the thought of the Cross and the passage from Understanding to Reason has revealed a dimension in which the Three-that-is-One of Incarnation finds an unlikely identity with the Nothing-that-is-Two of ontology. By attempting to conceptualize the rational core of the community of believers as another side of this same identity, we would not simply be attempting to bring together the "non-all" of Reason with the "for all" of the collective: we would be affirming that *the two logics are intrinsically tied together in their very constitution*. There would be not merely an incompatibility between the two, but an "identity that is based on an absolute non-reciprocity".⁶⁹¹

It is worth noting that, by engaging with this investigation, we are also venturing into a tentative passage from Žižek to Žižekian philosophy. Though we remain within the coordinates

⁶⁹¹ Lacan, J. (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company), p.653

of Žižek's work, by attempting to delineate a movement from Hegel to Lacan, and not the other way around, we are also proposing to extend the consequences of his philosophy in a direction not covered by the letter of his text. Nevertheless, it is from its letter that we depart.

In *The Idea of Communism*, we find the statement which has guided the formulation of our previous proposition:

“It is thus crucial to insist on the communist-egalitarian emancipatory Idea, and insist in a very precise Marxian sense: there are social groups which, on account of their lacking a determinate place in the ‘private’ order of social hierarchy, stand directly for universality; they are what [Jacques] Rancière calls the ‘part of no-part’ of the social body. All truly emancipatory politics is generated by the short circuit between the universality of the ‘public use of reason’ and the universality of the ‘part of no-part’ - this was already the communist dream of the young Marx: to bring together the universality of philosophy with the universality of the proletariat”⁶⁹²

Revealing the first form of the tension identified in our proposition, Žižek claims that the emancipatory Idea is born out of the short-circuit between two different conceptions of universality. The first one - “the universality of philosophy” - is that of the Kantian conception of the public use of Reason.

Kant presents his notion of the *public* in his famous text *Answer to the question ‘What is Enlightenment?’*. In it, he proposes a division between the public and the private spaces that is strictly correlate to his division between duty done for duty's sake [*aus Pflicht*] and the realm of pathological incentives, be them individual or social⁶⁹³:

“The public use of one's reason must always be free, and it alone can bring about enlightenment among men. The private use of one's reason, on the other hand, may often be very narrowly restricted without particularly hindering the progress of enlightenment. By public use of one's reason I understand the use which a person makes of it as a scholar before the

⁶⁹² Žižek, S. and C. Douzinas (2010), *The Idea of Communism*, (Verso), p.215

⁶⁹³ Kant, I. (2002), *The Critique Of Practical Reason*, (Hackett Publishing).

reading public. Private use I call that which one may make of it in a particular civil post or office which is entrusted to him."⁶⁹⁴

This means that someone who addresses the public from the standpoint of his social identity - "a particular civil post or office which is entrusted to him" - remains within the private use of reason even if his statement has the form of a public speech. The public sphere as such only appears when the use of reason is *free* - that is, its use is grounded not on the position wherefrom the speaker is counted into the social body, but on a position of enunciation whose only guarantee is the empty "fact of reason [Factum der Vernunft]", which alone distinguishes between the generalization of a particular maxim and what is properly universal⁶⁹⁵.

The second logic - that of "the universality of the proletariat" - is articulated in the above-mentioned passage in terms of Rancière's notion of the 'part of no-part'⁶⁹⁶, but Žižek also refers to it as the logic of Christian universality, in its Hegelian-Lacanian conception:

"It is this logic of the "minimal difference," of the constitutive noncoincidence of a thing with itself, which provides the key to the central Hegelian category of "concrete universality." Let us take a "mute" abstract universality which encompasses a set of elements all of which somehow subvert, do not fit, this universal frame—in this case, is the "true" concrete universal not this distance itself, the universalized exception? And vice versa, is not the element which directly fits the universal the true exception? Not only—as the cliché would have it—is universality based in an exception; Lacan goes a step further: universality *is* its exception, it "appears as such" in its

⁶⁹⁴ 'Answer to the question 'What is Enlightenment?'' (1784) in Kant, Immanuel (1991), Kant: Political Writings (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press). p.54

⁶⁹⁵ Kant, I. (2002), *The Critique Of Practical Reason*, (Hackett Publishing). p.46

⁶⁹⁶ "As I interpret it, the demos—the political subject as such—has to be identified with the totality made by those who have no "qualification." I called it the count of the uncounted—or the part of those who have no part. It does not mean the population of the poor; it means a supplementary part, an empty part that separates the political community from the count of the parts of the population." Rancière, J. (2004), 'Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol.103, Number 2/3 297-310.

exception. This is what Badiou et al. deployed as the logic of the “supernumerary” element: the exception (the element with no place in the structure) which immediately stands for the universal dimension. Christianity first introduced this notion: Christ, the miserable outcast, *is* man as such (*ecce homo*). Democracy—in its true grandeur, not in its postpolitical logic of administration and compromise among multiple interests—is part of the same tradition: the “part of no-part,” those with no proper place within the social edifice, *are* directly the universality of “people.”⁶⁹⁷

If the Kantian universality appears where the subject recognizes his addressee not in the reciprocity of social identities, but *beyond* them - in the Otherness of the social space itself -, the Christian logic of concrete universality recognizes that *the universal as such is embodied* in that which is in excess to the abstract universality of a given field. The first logic is “for all” because it addresses no one in particular, and it does so from the standpoint of the subject’s evanescent grounding in Reason⁶⁹⁸ - the empty core of the moral law⁶⁹⁹. On the other hand, the logic of Christian universality is held together not by the formal condition beyond social phenomena, but by the actual embodiment of this emptiness in a concrete instance - that is, by the material mark of the “non-all” in the social order:

⁶⁹⁷ Žižek, S. (2006), *The Parallax View (Short Circuits)*, (MIT Press). p.30 On the logic of “supernumerary” and the “part of no-part”, Žižek writes: “In contrast to this 0 which counts as 1, there is the 1 which counts as 0: the symptomatic torsion of a world, its part of no- part. While the 0 which counts as 1 is the point of a world, its suturing feature, the 1 which counts as 0 is, on the contrary, its evental site, the site from which one can undermine the world. One should thus distinguish the Zero which is the correlate of ontological multiplicity from the zero which is the part of no- part of a situation, “a (determinate) zero” of a world; the two are related as the pre- symbolic Real and the real of the remainder / inconsistency of a symbolic order.” in Žižek, S. and J. Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (*Short Circuits*), (The MIT Press). p.107, footnote 137

⁶⁹⁸ We follow here the thesis that the Kantian symbolic logic is homologous to the left side of Lacan’s formulas of sexuation, corresponding to the masculine logic of castration. On this point, please refer to Miller, J.-A. (ed.) (2003), *Lacan*, (Huysmans) p.25

⁶⁹⁹ Župančič, A. (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso). p.163-164

“Christian universality is not the all-encompassing global medium where there is a place for all and everyone—it is, rather, a struggling universality, the site of a constant battle. (...) Christian universality, far from excluding some subjects, *is formulated from the position of those excluded*, of those for whom there is no specific place within the existing order, although they belong to it; universality is strictly codependent with this lack of specific place/determination.”⁷⁰⁰

Therefore, to think the ‘short-circuit’ between these two universalities is also to deal with the main objection raised against our eighth statement.

In *The Monstrosity of Christ*, Žižek gives us the basic coordinates of their conjunction, focusing on the “transnational” character of both Kant’s invitation to the public use of Reason and the Christian community of believers:

“When St. Paul says that, from a Christian standpoint, “there are no men and women, no Jews and Greeks,” he thereby claims that ethnic roots, national identity, etc., are *not a category of truth*, or, to put it in precise Kantian terms, when we reflect upon our ethnic roots, we engage in a *private use of reason*, constrained by contingent dogmatic presuppositions. I.e., we act as “immature” individuals, not as free human beings who dwell in the dimension of the universality of reason. (...) the public space of the “world-civil-society” designates the paradox of the universal singularity, of a singular subject who, in a kind of short circuit, bypassing the mediation of the particular, directly participates in the Universal. This is what Kant, in the famous passage of his “What is Enlightenment?”, means by “public” as opposed to “private”: “private” is not one’s individuality as opposed to communal ties, but the very communal-institutional order of one’s particular identification; while “public” is the transnational universality of the exercise of one’s reason”⁷⁰¹

By bringing together Saint Paul and Kant, Žižek further emphasizes that the community of believers is not supposed to constitute an exception to the universality of the death drive - as if it would serve as a totalizing principle, “stabilizing” and

⁷⁰⁰ Žižek, S. (2006), *The Parallax View (Short Circuits)*, (MIT Press). p.35

⁷⁰¹ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.294

recomposing the de-centered subjects into a new consistent group - on the contrary, just like the Kantian public space, it names the birth of a collectivity “subtracted from the field of organic communities”, the paradox of a community composed of that which is in excess to the social space itself. Accordingly, the logic of the Kantian public use of reason is also born through the entry of the Holy Spirit into the world:

“This space of singular universality is what, within Christianity, appears as the “Holy Spirit,” the space of a collective of believers *subtracted* from the field of organic communities, of particular life- worlds (“neither Greeks nor Jews”). Consequently, is Kant’s “Think freely, but obey!” not a new version of Christ’s “Give to God what belongs to God, and to Caesar what belongs to Caesar”? “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar,” i.e., respect and obey the “private” particular life-world of your community, and “give to God what belongs to God,” i.e., participate in the universal space of the community of believers—the Pauline collective of believers is a proto-model of the Kantian “world-civil-society.” (...) That is to say: what dies on the Cross is precisely the “private” God, the God of our “way of life”, the God who grounds a particular community. The underlying message of Christ’s death is that a “*public*” God can no longer be a *living* God: he has to die as a God (or, as in Judaism, he can be a God of the dead Letter) - public space is by definition “atheist”. The Holy Spirit is thus a “public” God, what remains of God in the public universal space: the radically desubstantialized virtual space of the collective of believers.”⁷⁰²

Although Žižek affirms the collective of believers to be a “proto-model” of the Kantian public space, he does not fail to point out that Kant’s formula ‘Think freely, but obey!’, must also undergo a serious critique of its own, for it “relies on the distinction between the ‘performative’ level of social authority, and the level of free thinking where performativity is suspended”⁷⁰³. That is: Kant still maintains, through the triangulation with the postulates of the immortality of the soul and of the existence of God⁷⁰⁴, that freedom and obedience could be separated as two

⁷⁰² Ibid p.295

⁷⁰³ Ibidem

⁷⁰⁴ Consider, for example: “The proposition concerning the moral vocation of our nature, that we can reach complete adequacy to the moral law solely in an

clearly distinct realms. In this way, Kant defines what is proper of the public space as that which is *beyond* the alienated performance of social tasks - 'beyond' in the same sense that the void of the Thing-in-Itself is *beyond* the phenomena - and thus requires us to maintain the distinction between the pathological attachment to a social identity and a pure, empty ethical stance that, having the impossible as its horizon, would open up to the truly public use of Reason⁷⁰⁵.

In this sense, even though there is no substantial instance governing that which is actually public - Kant reminds us, on this matter, that "only a ruler who is himself enlightened and has no dread of shadows" can truly install an enlightened rule⁷⁰⁶ - we nevertheless require an empty normative principle which serves as the standpoint wherefrom it would be possible to discern the public from the private use of Reason, freedom proper from our regular incentive-driven conduct⁷⁰⁷.

advance proceeding *ad infinitum*, is of the greatest benefit, not merely on account of the present compensation for the inability of speculative reason, but also with regard to religion. In the absence of it, one either degrades the moral law completely from its *holiness* by misconstruing it to oneself *as forbearing* (indulgent) and thus adequate to our comfortableness, or else one stretches one's calling as well as expectation to an unattainable vocation, viz., a hoped-for complete acquisition of holiness of will, and loses oneself in roving theosophical dreams that quite contradict self-cognition—both of which [consequences] only prevent the unceasing *striving* toward meticulous and thoroughgoing compliance with a strict and unbearing but nonetheless true rather than ideal command of reason." Kant, I. (2002), *The Critique Of Practical Reason*, (Hackett Publishing). p.156

⁷⁰⁵ We evidently follow here Lacan's *Kant avec Sade* - but our reading of it, as well as of Kant's ethical thought as such, is profoundly indebted to Zupančič's detailed presentation in Zupančič, Alenka (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso).

⁷⁰⁶ Answer to the question 'What is Enlightenment?' (1784) in Kant, Immanuel (1991), *Kant: Political Writings* (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), (Cambridge University Press) p.61

⁷⁰⁷ "We should stress, however, that this notion of the pathological must not be considered the opposite of the 'normal'. On the contrary, in Kant's view, it is our 'normal', everyday actions that are more or less always pathological. We act pathologically when there is something driving our actions - serving either to propel us forward or to impel us from behind. For this compelling force Kant uses the general term *Triebfeder*, 'drive' or 'incentive'. Anything whatsoever can serve as such a compelling force, from the most basic need to the most elevated and abstract idea; the extension of this concept is the world of

At this point, we must consider the Nietzschean critique of the death of God: not the death of the pagan living God, but the death of the 'dead God' itself, so to speak - the sudden inoperativeness of the empty stance which would guarantee the distinction between the pathological and the ethical conducts⁷⁰⁸. Indeed, there is no greater argument against Kant's conception of the relation between pathological and ethical than its modern subversion, in which "we are no longer guilty just in virtue of a symbolic debt (...) It is the debt itself, in which we have our place, that can be taken from us"⁷⁰⁹. As we have already analyzed in some detail in the previous chapter, the very reference today to an Absolute which could serve as a guiding principle for social and individual organizations is already taken for a "totalitarian" principle. Only the bleak call for the preservation our so-called individual freedoms seems to be a widely recognized ethical imperative: rather than being *formally* empty, the ethical imperative of today seems to be that of emptying out of this form itself.

As a provocation, we could suggest that the ideological inversion of Kant's formulations - such as "you can, because you must"⁷¹⁰ into the driving motto of technological advance "you must, because you can!"⁷¹¹ and the above mentioned "think

'normality' as such . Hence the alternative to the pathological cannot be the normal but will, rather, involve such concepts as freedom, autonomy, and the formal determination of the will." Zupančič, Alenka (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan* (Wo Es War), (Verso). p.8

⁷⁰⁸ See "God is dead" in Zupančič, A. (2003), *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two (Short Circuits)*, (The MIT Press). p.35-45; Žižek brings this point as a counter-argument to his conjunction of Kant and Saint Paul in Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.296

⁷⁰⁹ Lacan, J. (2001), *Le Séminaire, livre VIII : le transfert*, (Seuil). p.354

⁷¹⁰ This legendary statement does not exist in Kant's writings in such a neat form (cf. David Baumgardt, "Legendary Quotations and the Lack of References", (1946) *Journal of the History of Ideas*, VII p.99-102) but statements that express the inference articulated by this proposition abound in his texts, e.g. Kant, Immanuel (2004), *The Critique Of Practical Reason*, (Kessinger Publishing, LLC), 30, p.118-119; Kant, Immanuel (1991), *The Metaphysics of Morals* (Texts in German Philosophy), (Cambridge University Press)., VI, p.380

⁷¹¹ Žižek, Slavoj (2009), *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce*, (Verso). p.58

freely, but obey!" into something like "make the limits of your freedom the limits of your thought!" - is possible because these are statements constructed on top of *subordinating* ("because") or *coordinating* ("but") conjunctions, lacking the incommensurable tension which contaminates each half of the sentence with the other's excess. Lacking this properly Hegelian dimension - which we have encountered when dealing with the infinite judgement, or speculative proposition - these statements are held together by a third instance, their "absolute condition"⁷¹², which guarantees their proper conjunction. A change in the place of the Absolute in contemporary culture, in this sense, would put into question how the two halves of the Kantian imperative relate⁷¹³ - and turn the enlightenment's *Sapere Aude* into another presentation of the superegoic imperative to enjoy: "Continue. March on. Keep on knowing more and more"⁷¹⁴.

Raising this point as a counter-argument to his own reading of Kant with Saint Paul, Žižek summarizes the difficulty at hand in the following question: "is the Holy Spirit still a figure of the big Other, or is it possible to conceive it outside this frame?"⁷¹⁵. That is, if it is the formal place of the Kant's ethical call which opens the space for the public dimension as such, as distinct from the incentive-driven performance of social tasks, can we envision its constitution when the empty name which stands for the absolute condition only functions insofar as it is reduced to another attribution of the subject's pathological attachments? Or, to put it in Lacanian terms: how are we to think a collective

⁷¹² Please refer to Zupančič's articulation of the Lacanian object cause of desire and Kant's ethical imperative in Zupančič, Alenka (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso). - on this precise point, see especially "From pure desire to the drive" p.238

⁷¹³ On the oscillation between the moral law and the superegoic injunction, please refer to its canonical exposition in Lacan's *Kant avec Sade* in Lacan, J. (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company); See also Mladen Dolar's account of the political in modern society in Dolar, M. (2009), 'Freud and the Political', *Theory & Event*, Volume 12, Issue 3

⁷¹⁴ Lacan, J. (2007), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis (Vol. Book XVII)*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.104-105

⁷¹⁵ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.296

organization which is held together not by the semblance of consistency endowed by symbolic identifications, but by that which remains in excess to every name, when the place of authority in the current social link is filtered through the figure of the expert - the “authority” on a given knowledge - and therefore unable to function through its constitutive emptiness?

Though it might be expected that the Pauline conception of the Christian community of believers would suffer most with the Nietzschean reproach, it is, in fact, Kant’s formal universality that is put into question by the shift in the status of the big Other in Nietzsche’s keen diagnosis of modernity. Turning to the Lacanian notion of the real father - which we have dealt with, albeit implicitly, throughout our reading of the Hegelian Christology - Žižek once again maintains that the Christian universality stands for the very overcoming of the indelible duality of the formal, or symbolic, universality:

“It is here that the reference to the undead remainder of the dead Father becomes crucial: for Lacan, the transmutation of the dead Father into the virtual big Other (of the symbolic Law) is never complete, the Law has to remain sustained by the undead remainder (in the guise of the obscene superego supplement to the Law). It is only Christianity which properly completes the Law by, in effect, getting rid of the undead remainder—and, of course, this completion is the Law’s self-sublation, its transmutation into Love.”⁷¹⁶

Therefore, the impasse in the elaboration of Žižek’s ‘emancipatory short-circuit’ lies not in elevating the collective to the dignity of the Kantian Reason, but of conceptualizing how the Kantian universality can articulate itself with what, from its own standpoint, cannot but appear as its very failure - the concrete universality of the ‘part of no-part’. In other words: *the crucial question is not how to secularize the Hegelian community of believers, but how to empty out the religious spectre of secular Reason itself.*

⁷¹⁶ Ibidem

This becomes even clearer when we consider our eighth statement, whose syntactical structure already implies this precise conceptual shift. The statement "*only* that which is non-all is for all" posits an asymmetrical weight in the two clauses, asserting that the tarrying with the ontological inconsistency determines what is for all - while the opposite determination carries much less impact, reduced as it is to the fact that the "non-all" contains something of the One in its very writing. Our wager - in what already delineates itself as the moment of concluding our thesis - is that by reading the Kantian public use of Reason through the Žižekian-Hegelian perspective elaborated thus far, we should be able to understand the collective logic of Hegel's community of believers as a parallax shift which has the Kantian formal universality as its necessary starting point. In providing our previous proposition with its proper conceptual support, this affirmation should simultaneously reveal that the Žižekian concept of parallax allows us to think the shift from the Kantian *Sapere Aude* to the Lacanian *Scilicet*.

Let us now continue our investigation by focusing on the tension between the logics of symbolic and concrete universalities.

In his book *Les noms Indistincts*⁷¹⁷, Jean-Claude Milner discusses the deployment of the Lacanian triad of the Real, Symbolic and Imaginary as three structuring logics of assembling multiplicities. In the chapter *Les rassemblements*⁷¹⁸, Milner first distinguishes between the imaginary and the symbolic classes. The first one is conceptualized as a logic of grouping in which individual elements are brought together under the heading of a common property which can be attributed to them:

"To group different terms under a same class, having a certain property as basis, can only be done through the ways of the Same and the Other: every member of the class should possess

⁷¹⁷ Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier). Let it be noted that our reading of Milner's position contradicts some of his later developments, specially in his more recent critiques of the "history of the universal".

⁷¹⁸ Ibid. p.97

a common property and to pass for the same from this point of view. Inversely, they should pass for mutually other since the class does not reduce itself to one sole member. Thus, be it a finite or infinite class, it is always possible to construct a figure, even if empty, of what does not have a property: that is, an Other, which is the necessary Limit to the Whole.”⁷¹⁹

For example: the class of individuals brought together by a certain recognizable trace in them - the color of their skin - simultaneously constitutes the set of that which does not have that trace. Besides the consequence of establishing an opposition between the Same - the common property - and the Other - the negation of the property -, the imaginary class also requires the reference to a hierarchy of properties and elements:

“The property subsists, thus, in reality, independently from the statement of a judgement: in other words, the property is definable and can, in its turn, become subjected to a judgement of attribution, which analyses it. From this results an hierarchy of the individual x to the property, of the property to the property of the property, etc. In the same movement, we obtain thus the metalanguages and the types.”⁷²⁰

The symbolic class, on the other hand, is organized by a radically distinct principle. In it, the collective logic is structured in such a way that the very uttering of the name convenes the subjects to be represented by that signifier:

“there are those [multiplicities] whose principles share nothing with those of a representable property, but everything with the signifier which names them as a multiplicity. These, therefore, cannot pre-exist the utterance of the signifier itself; the property is reduced to the denomination that we make and the subject only receives it in the very instant in which the link is spoken. In this way, if we want to speak of a class, we should add that it only groups in an incessantly moving way, always affected by the statements that are spoken. These enunciations themselves can resemble an attribution, but this is just pure homonymy: so it is with those insulting utterances in which, at the instant that he is named by them, and insofar as he is, a subject ends up supporting the name that was addressed to him: “pig”, “scum”, “shit”. We know, therefore, that the subject is

⁷¹⁹ Ibidem

⁷²⁰ Ibid. p.98

convened to bear a name, whose content of properties is nothing but the utterance itself."⁷²¹

The symbolic class has an intrinsically "performative"⁷²² dimension, and in a double sense: not only the grouping "cannot pre-exist the utterance of the signifier", but it is the subject's own recognition that the signifier represents something of her that includes her in the multiplicity gathered by the name. The example of the insult, which was developed in great detail by Milner in one of his works on linguistics⁷²³, is particularly clear because it is precisely the subject's active engagement with the signifier that makes the insult so humiliating: the crucial operation is not that the name matches or not an attribute of the individual, but that, given that *a name always partially represents a subject*, the subject herself answers to the invitation to bear that name through the very process of trying to "escape" signification. The insult also allows us to recognize that the uttering of the name not only convenes the multiplicity, but that the symbolic multiplicity is represented by the statement *to* the place of utterance - in the case of the insult, a place marked by the question "why did you call me that?", or "what does the word name in me?".

Milner also emphasizes that the place of utterance of the master-signifier remains both inside and outside the class it founds - a statement in which we can recognize the crucial division pointed out by Freud between Moses, the Jewish leader, and Moses, the Egyptian, in the structuring of the Jewish community⁷²⁴. This division, between the name as preceding the group it forms, and the name as the One of the group itself, points to the fact that the symbolic class is structured by a certain temporal circularity:

"in joy or sadness, the voice [which utters the master-word] itself is no more than a dream. The names are not uttered from a point that is exterior to the chain of names, that is, to

⁷²¹ Ibid. p.99-100

⁷²² Ibid. 100

⁷²³ Milner, Jean-Claude (1978), *De la syntaxe à l'interprétation*, (Seuil).

⁷²⁴ Freud, Sigmund (1940), *Moses and Monotheism*, (Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, London).

llanguage. The subjects who are called upon are so addressed from within the multiplicity in which they count themselves. And we find the circularity, to which the insulting utterances were witnesses, in the order of speech: a logical circularity, to begin with, since the subject is only called to consent to the name if it is already marked by it. This is why the time of consent is always the future anterior or the retrospective: only enters a symbolic class he who already belonged to it. The retroaction is here the concept, whose empirical currencies are the conversions and the becoming-aware. The circularity is not any less spatial: it is from the interior of the class that the name is emitted, thus, for a given member, it is all other members who convene him. As if, disposed in a circle, they became, successively, one to the other, addresser and addressee. As long as the certainty persists, the reciprocity thus constructed, one converses in warm solidarity. But the uncertainty always returns, and with it, the suspicion - inverted and homogenous reflection of solidarity - the true cement of symbolic classes.”⁷²⁵

If, on the one hand, the symbolic class is organized around the convening of the subject by the utterance of a name - that is, through the split which invites the subject to recognize something of herself in the statement -, on the other hand, the unassignable dimension of the utterance itself *never allows the subject to be fully represented by the name*. Milner relates this other side of the symbolic performativity to the notion of *suspicion* and, in clear resonance with our remarks on the superegoic inversion of the Kantian imperative, shows how the symbolic horizon cannot erase the threat of turning this suspicion, sustained by the negative dimension of signification, into the pivot of the group's imaginary *purification* - in other words, the attempt to violently reduce the subject to the name which convened her, leaving nothing lacking or in excess to it⁷²⁶.

We re-encounter here the logic of the Kantian formal universality⁷²⁷. To begin with, we can recognize in the Kantian formulation of the moral law the same split between the utterance and the subjection to the law and the same temporal

⁷²⁵ Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier). p.104-105

⁷²⁶ Ibid. p.103

⁷²⁷ Ibid. p.112

circuit which requires the subject to actively engage with the word of the Other:

“So act that the maxim of your will could always hold at the same time as the principle giving universal law: this is a paradigmatic example of a 'half-said ' which, in order to become a law, has to be supplemented with an actual act of the subject. The moral law as atemporal and trans-subjective 'depends' upon a temporal act of the subject, an act which has no pre-established guarantee in the law (in the 'big Other'), for it is only in this act that the law itself is constituted. This point is absolutely crucial: the law is not always-already there, waiting for the subject to submit herself to it: it is this very submission, the (ethical) act, which constitutes the Law as atemporal and trans-subjective.”⁷²⁸

In the Kantian symbolic class, the impossibility of making the place of utterance of the law coincide either with the identity of any subject, or with a consistent Other of the group, opens up the space for a collective organization which cannot be reduced to social identities and individual incentives - properties which would represent social tasks, nor objects which would fit particular wills. But, at the same time, this same impossibility can turn the Law into a voracious demand for signification. As Lacan develops in *Kant avec Sade*, by displacing the split between enunciation and enunciated to the Other - that is, by dividing the absolute condition of the symbolic class into an imaginary executioner of the law and an Other who demands the law's full satisfaction - the subject can find herself at the mercy of a demand that will stop at nothing to satisfy itself, given that the subject would no longer be grasped as inherently split and would therefore be totally subjected to the imperative's demand⁷²⁹. Zupančič summarizes how this shift, through which the negative dimension of the subject is grasped as a positivity, turns the moral law into the superegoic injunction:

⁷²⁸ Zupančič, A. (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso). p.163

⁷²⁹ Lacan, J. (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company). On the shift from Desire - “the henchmen of the subject's division” - to the executioner of the (Sadean) law, please see p.652

“What, then, would be a way of conceiving of the moral law, as distinct from the superegoic law? As a first approach, one could say that it is a law that wants nothing from us. Yet this 'wanting nothing' can itself be the ultimate form of the superego. When the subject asks 'What do you want', and gets the reply 'Nothing', this can engender the logic of the superego in its pure form : 'What are you aiming at with this "nothing" ? ' The subject understands this ' nothing' as the way the Other invites her to guess Its desire.”⁷³⁰

After describing the imaginary and the symbolic classes, Milner moves on to construct a real multiplicity - what he calls a *paradoxical class* ⁷³¹. Contrary to the symbolic logic of assemblage, in which we have seen oscillation between the signifier always partially representing the subject and simultaneously never fully representing her, the paradoxical class is organized not by the two sides of the name, but by the real of a desire. This means that the paradoxical class is organized by the very thing which disperses its elements, the singular way each subject escapes being totally convened by the name. As Milner writes:

“the very instance which makes them resemble and mix with each other is what disjuncts them; this very thing which disjuncts them is what makes them refer to each other, though they do not resemble nor connect to each other”⁷³²

The paradoxical class is thus not formed as an imaginary consistent group, nor exclusively through the symbolic principle of identification with an unary trait. As examples of such a real multiplicity, Milner refers first to Lacan's sophism of the three prisoners⁷³³ - in which the answer to each prisoner's name lies in each one grasping the negative intersection between them⁷³⁴ -

⁷³⁰ Zupančič, A. (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso). p.164

⁷³¹ “Les classes paradoxales” in Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier). p.107

⁷³² Ibid. p.109

⁷³³ See “Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty” in Lacan, J. (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company) p.161

⁷³⁴ “Each step towards saved life is separated from the precedent by a hiatus where everything is once again questioned, so that there is no sense, in the

and then to the subjective structures conceptualized by psychoanalysis:

"When one says the neurotic, the perverse, the hysteric, the obsessive, it is given to the understanding, under the species of the generic singular, the unicity of a subject, who is homonymous to it: literally, no one can say if, by those names, it is a genre, or an individual, or an archetype which is designated. In this characteristic vacillation, multiplicities are spelled, the mode of which is the dispersion and the principle, the real of a desire. (...) The name of neurotic, perverse, obsessive names, or makes the semblance of naming, the neurotic, perverse, obsessive manner that a subject has of being radically distinct from any other."⁷³⁵

We see, thus, that a certain scansion plays a fundamental role in the paradoxical class, for only a *temporal gap* can allow for the operation of this redoubled identification, through which the first distinction between the name and its excess is then supplemented by the excess itself as a place of enunciation. Take the case of the name "neurotic", for example: the judgement that an individual is neurotic is neither verified by the reciprocity between property and element - for there is no "neurotic" property - nor by the partial representation which convenes the subject - for there is no emblem of neurosis. The only possible verification is that the *neurotic way the subject escapes the name* - which means that there must be a temporal distinction between the utterance of the name and the delineation of a place of enunciation, through the very failure of the name to represent the subject, which answers the name *from the very place of its dispersion*. In the paradoxical class, "the predicate aims only at a subjectivity and this can only come *from the subject*"⁷³⁶ - that is,

moment when one effects the step, in distinguishing a first from a second or a third one: the march is an accumulation of chaotic steps, which gain a finality only in the *après coup* (...) they articulate an absolute disjunction: the real substance of the relation of each one with each one of the other two is made of this very thing which disperses them: not life, but the desire to survive [vie, survie], which depends entirely, to be effective, on the desire of survival of each one of the others, but that, once effective, spells the absolute separation of each to oneself." Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier) p.108-109

⁷³⁵ Ibid. 109-110

⁷³⁶ Ibid. p.110-111

from the very place demarcated by the failure of the name to totalize that which it represents.

This is why Milner emphasizes that the crucial trait of this structure is that the “class that is aimed at by these names is not evoked by them”⁷³⁷: the name of the paradoxical class does not represent the subject, but encounters “the One of real”, which embodies the way the subject is forever *not-all* represented by its emblems. We can recognize here - at the edge of the logic of representation, that is, in the passage from the failure of totalization to the *totality* which is enunciated from place of the failure itself - the precise logic through which Hegel conceptualizes the relation between the community of believers and the Holy Spirit.

Hegel concludes the chapter on Religion in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* with the elaboration of the movement through which the Spirit makes itself present as the community of believers. Let us follow it in schematic terms, for it deploys all the three logics articulated by Milner.

To begin with, the community becomes spiritualized as, in Christ’s death, “his being passes over into *having-been* [geht sein Sein in Gewesensein über]”⁷³⁸. Acquiring a negative moment, the disappearance of Christ becomes the very condition of the religious gathering. But Hegel remarks that this remains another form of the same immediacy of Christ’s life: just as the community was gathered before by the imaginary presence of Christ, now it is assembled by the remembrance of this past presence, which has been merely negated. In both cases, the structure at play is that of an *imaginary class*: insofar as an individual bears the positive trait of Christ’s remembrance, he or she is grouped as part of the community which shares this memory.

⁷³⁷ Ibid. p.112

⁷³⁸ Hegel, G.W.F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (*Galaxy Books*), (Oxford University Press, USA). §763

The shift from the representation of a particular content in thought to the very *form* of representation is what leads Spirit not to be merely the negation of the past immediate presence, but to properly enter the constitution of the community. As the empty form of representation, the absence of Christ becomes the point through which the Holy Spirit is *signified*:

"This *form of representational thinking* constitutes the determinateness within which spirit is conscious of itself within this, its religious community. This form is not yet the self-consciousness of spirit which has advanced to its concept as concept; the mediation is still incomplete. Therefore, in this combination of being and thought, there is a defect present, namely, that the spiritual essence is still burdened by an unreconciled estrangement into a this-worldliness and an other-worldly beyond. The content is the true content, but all of its moments, posited as lying within the element of representational thought, have the character of not having been comprehended."⁷³⁹

Here, the driving force of the community of believers is no longer the memory of Christ's presence, but the formal place evoked by the representational mediation. Christ's absence signifies the Spirit's presence - a presence which gains actuality in the life of the community⁷⁴⁰ and is finally grasped as the "empty word [leeres Wort]"⁷⁴¹ which is "the negative itself (...) the negativity of thought". Here we encounter the basic structure of the *symbolic class*, for it is only through the uttered Word, the actuality of the absent Christ, that the community can be gathered as Spirit:

"It is the *essence's knowledge of itself*, the word, which, when spoken, empties itself from the speaker and leaves him behind as emptied and hollowed out, but which is likewise immediately heard, and it is only this hearing-of-itself which is the existence of the word. In that way, the distinctions which are made are likewise immediately dissolved just as they are made, and they are likewise immediately made just as they are

⁷³⁹ Ibid. §765

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid. §768

⁷⁴¹ Ibid. §769

dissolved, and the true and the actual are this very movement circling around within itself.”⁷⁴²

The Word “empties itself from the speaker” and only in this emptying out does the subject partake in Spirit. In the same way the name represents the subject to the empty place of its utterance, the religious community is formed as a symbolic multiplicity, only the Word representing the devout subject to the Spirit. But Hegel emphasizes that the community confronts the limit of representational thought as such when the very form of its functioning is grasped by thought - that is, when it realizes that it finds *an object* in the formal emptiness of its absolute condition:

“Since in that way it conducts itself *representationally* even within thought itself, the essence is indeed revealed to it, but the moments of this essence, in accordance with this synthetic representation, separate themselves in part from each other such that they are not related to each other through their own concept. In part, this consciousness retreats away from this, its pure object, and it relates itself merely externally to it. The object is then revealed to it by what is alien, and in this thought of spirit, it does not recognize itself, does not take cognizance of the nature of pure self-consciousness. Insofar as the form of representational thought and those relationships derived from the natural must be surpassed, what must especially be surpassed is the way of taking the moments of the very movement which is spirit to be themselves isolated immovable substances or subjects instead of transitional moments. – This surpassing is to be viewed as *conceptual compulsion*”⁷⁴³

In short, the emptying out of the Word becomes a “conceptual compulsion” - that is, the notion’s own “compulsive” emptying out of the subject, who only counts insofar as she is represented by the name. Through this movement, the communal object becomes both too present in thought and radically alien to it, given that it confronts the very structure of representational thought. This excessive actuality of Spirit - not merely represented, but present in thought⁷⁴⁴ - leads the Understanding

⁷⁴² Ibid. §770

⁷⁴³ Ibid. §771

⁷⁴⁴ “Spirit, which is articulated within the element of pure thought, is essentially itself just this, that it does not merely exist within pure thought; it is also *actual*,

to grasp this "thought which has otherness in it"⁷⁴⁵ as its two-sided condition: we enter the dialectics of Good and Evil, in whose struggle the community now recognizes its actuality⁷⁴⁶.

From the imaginary logic, in which the immediate presence remained the attribution of belonging, to the symbolic class convened by the Word, and finally to its inherent limitation: the community of believers only exists insofar as it carries with the split of its condition into Good and Evil, Spirit and Nature⁷⁴⁷.

This is both the limit of the religious community in the chapter on *Revealed Religion* as well as the limit of the symbolic class: positing as an indeterminate future possibility the reconciliation of this duality - just like Kant required the immortality of the soul in order to solve the problem of the oscillation between ethical and pathological conducts - the religious community recognizes itself as held together by *Love*. It knows that "the dead divine man (...) is *in itself* universal self-consciousness", present as such in the thought which binds the community beyond its struggle with the two sides of the moral law.

But even if, at this point, "Spirit is its religious community"⁷⁴⁸ - that is, the community held together by the reconciliation of the two sides of the empty Word *is* Spirit itself - it still can only accomplish this by means of the *representation* of this reconciliation, the positing of Love as "something remote, far away in the future"⁷⁴⁹ which mediates between the concrete existence of the community and its last thread of otherworldly guarantee:

"Just as the *individual* divine man has a father existing-*in-itself* and merely an *actual* mother, so too the universal divine man, the religious community, has as its father its *own activity* and

for lying within the concept of spirit is *otherness* itself, i.e., the sublation of the pure, concept which has merely been thought." Ibid. §772

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid. §775

⁷⁴⁶ Ibid. §776-779

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid. §780

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid. §781

⁷⁴⁹ Is this not, in some way, the status of "democracy to come"?

knowledge, but for its mother it has *eternal love*, which it merely *feels* but does not intuit in its consciousness as an actual immediate *object*. Its reconciliation exists thereby within its heart, but it is still estranged from its consciousness, and its actuality is still fractured. What enters into its consciousness as the *in-itself*, that is, the aspect of pure mediation, is the reconciliation which lies in the otherworldly beyond, but what appears as the *present*, as the aspect of *immediacy* and of *existence*, is the world, which still has to await its transfiguration. The world is indeed *in itself* reconciled with the essence; and it is indeed known of that essence that it no longer takes cognizance of the object as self-alienated, but knows it as the same as itself in its love. However, for self-consciousness, this immediate presence does not yet have spiritual shape. The spirit of the religious community is within its immediate consciousness still separated from its religious consciousness, which indeed declares that *in itself* these two are not supposed to be separated, but that they have become an *in-itself* which is not realized, that is, which has not yet become an equally absolute being-for-itself.”⁷⁵⁰

The passage from *Revealed Religion* to *Absolute Knowing* is concerned precisely with the shift from the *future* to the *present* reconciliation - that is, with how the future presence, mediated by the Word, becomes a concrete and actual presence *by making a hole in knowledge in which the subject recognizes herself more than in knowledge itself*. In other words: the shift from the symbolic universality to the paradoxical class, held together by the real of desire, that which represents the subject more than representation itself.

To sum up this difficult and intricate development, which takes most of the last twenty paragraphs of the *Phenomenology*, let us focus on the relation between knowledge and universality, which finally takes on the form of Science in Absolute Knowing.

Hegel begins by describing how absolute Spirit becomes actual for self-consciousness when the absence of the future Love - the beyond of Good and Evil - is itself grasped as a material presence: neither of the terms remain, only the split between them, which is now grasped as an object. This object, which

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid. §787

splits the name of the symbolic class from within, when grasped within the totality of determinations of the community "makes the object in itself into a spiritual essence"⁷⁵¹. In this way, the self-alienation which convened the subject in the Word becomes knowledge's grasp of the "thinghood [Dingheit]" of community itself:

"This reconciliation of consciousness with self-consciousness is thereby shown to have been brought about from two sides; at one time in the religious spirit and once again in consciousness itself as such. They are distinguished from each other in that the former is this reconciliation in the form of *being-in-itself*, the latter in the form *being-for-itself*. (...) that unification wraps up this series of shapes of spirit, for within it spirit reaches the point where it knows itself not merely as it is *in itself*, that is, in terms of its absolute *content*, and not merely as it is *for itself* in terms of its contentless form, that is, in terms of the aspect of self-consciousness."⁷⁵²

The crucial point here - which defines the logic of the paradoxical class - is that the community of believers is now held together not only by the reference to the Spirit as its mediated essence, but by the subject's participation in knowledge, her recognition that, in the totality of the Concept - that is, in the inscription of the community's actuality within knowledge itself - *Spirit itself speaks*. This self-consciousness "in the unity with its self-emptying"⁷⁵³ is both the figure of self-consciousness known as Absolute Knowing - the subject who, relinquishing her self-sufficiency⁷⁵⁴, "is Spirit knowing itself in the shape of Spirit"⁷⁵⁵ - and the coming forth of "pure universality of knowledge"⁷⁵⁶. The passage from the symbolic class to the paradoxical class is accomplished in the guise of the passage from representational thought to speculative Reason - that is, the activity of the Concept:

⁷⁵¹ Ibid. §788

⁷⁵² Ibid. §794

⁷⁵³ Ibid. §795

⁷⁵⁴ Ibid. §797

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid. §798

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid. §796

“What in religion was *content*, that is, the form of representing an *other*, is here the *self’s own activity*. The concept makes it binding that the content is that of the self’s own activity - For this concept is, as we see, the knowledge of the self’s activity within itself as all essentiality and all existence, the knowledge of *this subject* as *substance* and of the substance as this knowledge of its activity.”⁷⁵⁷

We find here the tying together of Absolute Knowing - “the knowledge of *this subject* as *substance*” - with Spirit - “the substance as this knowledge of its activity”. In sum: there where the singular subject does not recognize herself - where something of substance remains caught up in the subject, impeding its self-transparency - that is where Spirit as community of believers comes to be, as the concrete universality inscribed in knowledge itself as its taint.

With the Hegelian community of believers as our main example of the functioning of the paradoxical class, let us now return to Milner’s account of the shift between symbolic and paradoxical classes and attempt to elaborate in more precise terms the relation between the “for all” and the “non-all” in terms of the distinction between Kant and Hegel.

In fact, it is in this very passage from symbolic to real multiplicity - in which we are required to think the the limit of the logic of representation - that Milner turns to Kant’s “transnational universality”:

“What is also cast aside [from the paradoxical class] is the symbolic ethics, that is, the formal universality, and the demand that all maxims should be valid only insofar as they are valid as a law of the Universe. For it is, on the contrary, the evanescence of every Universe that would be the sign of desire, at a blank [blanc] instant, in which the evidence allies itself to the contentment, as long as the good encounter takes place. Maybe the Cartesian terms are more appropriate than others to spell the unavoidable assertion of anticipated certainty. We would say, willingly, that Kant should let this one pass, he who so strongly incites the symbolic ethics, if we did not also know

⁷⁵⁷ Ibid. §797

that his language sometimes is necessary and the only one capable of creating a truth effect."⁷⁵⁸

As we have seen, Kant's definition of the public space already traverses the imaginary "place of circumstances and conjunctures"⁷⁵⁹ towards the truly singular inscription of each subject in the universal, beyond one's particularities and identifications. By cutting across the imaginary dimension of social identities, the Kantian formal universality also substitutes the oppositional configuration of norms, institutions and groups for a duality inherent to the very space it founds. The Milnerian paradoxical class, on the other hand, takes place at the "evanescence of all Universe"⁷⁶⁰, that is, it is structured *from the standpoint* of what is in excess to the name: it does not answer to the demand that is addressed to us to say 'the true about the truth', but it takes place there where truth itself speaks.

It is crucial to note, however, that even though Kantian ethics is rooted in the absent core of the symbolic, through which every universal declaration *names something* of the subject⁷⁶¹, Milner's shift towards the paradoxical class - rooted in how every emblem necessarily *misses* something of the subject in a singular way - does *not* consist in simply dismissing the Kantian position:

"For, in the game of homonymies, sometimes it is necessary to make the signifiers serve themselves of an ethics which prevents the subject from entangling itself to another ethics. That is why we see that the vocabulary of the symbolic ethics, serving the dis-incarnation of the Universe, ends up splitting from the realist ethics the real ethics - for it prevents the subject, on the pretext of not giving in, from being content in always preferring his stubbornness."⁷⁶²

Milner affirms that Kantian conception of the public use of Reason *does* open up the space for a real multiplicity by

⁷⁵⁸ Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier). p.113

⁷⁵⁹ *Ibid.* p.112

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibidem*

⁷⁶¹ *Ibid.* p.99-100

⁷⁶² *Ibid.* p.113

separating “from the realist ethics the real ethics”, but also that, since this scission can only be accomplished on account of the exceptional character of the ethical call, the price to pay for the “dis-incarnation of the Universe” is that the constitutive impossibility of pure desire, the very emptiness at the origin of the law, is always threatened by its own reversal, the superegoic injunction. Indeed, if we follow Zupančič’s detailed account of Kant’s ethical thought in *The Ethics of the Real*, it is not hard to see that it is precisely the remainder of this scission between Real and reality which, endowing the Absolute with its own pathological force, returns to disrupt the Kantian “symbolic ethics” from within and to give it its truly radical underpinning⁷⁶³.

From a Hegelian standpoint, we could say that Kant’s conception the public use of Reason is actually thought from the perspective of the *Understanding*: the ethical call inviting us to partake on the universal requires the impossible to function in the guise of an *exception*. It stands for the absolute condition for which we would sacrifice of “the ‘all’ of what one is ready to sacrifice”⁷⁶⁴. That is: the fantasy of *reducing oneself to the pure signifier that represents us* - the purity of ‘duty for duty’s sake’ - remains operative, even if only as an absolute and unobtainable reference, supporting “the distinction between the ‘performative’ level of social authority, and the level of free thinking where performativity is suspended”, mentioned above by Žižek. Therefore, the shift from symbolic to paradoxical class can be understood as the passage from the formal, abstract universality to the logic of universality at stake in the Hegelian concept of Reason.

Starting from Lacan’s comments on his 8th Seminar⁷⁶⁵, Zupančič develops this shift in terms of the distinction between

⁷⁶³ See, for example, the subchapter “The Unconditional” in Zupančič, Alenka (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso). p.53-61

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid. p.257

⁷⁶⁵ Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Le Séminaire, livre VIII : le transfert*, (Seuil) - Subsection “The oedipus myth today”; See also Teixeira, A.M.R. (1999), *O topos ético da psicanálise*, (Edipucrs).

the radical ethical acts of Antigone and of Claudel's character from *The Hostage*, Sygne de Coüfountaine - as the passage from the sacrifice of all for the Cause to the sacrifice of the very exceptional character of this absolute condition itself⁷⁶⁶.

Once again, in the case of Sygne, the emptiness of the regulative principle (X) is *supplemented* by the Hegelian infinity of self-difference (a): the realization of the ethical act requires us not only to go to the end for a Cause, but ultimately to recognize that to hold on to the Cause is itself still a pathological attachment, and remains therefore caught in the very logic of satisfaction it was supposed to traverse. It is only by recognizing the *non-coincidence* between the Cause and itself - that is, between Cause as impossibility of enjoyment and Cause as source of *surplus-enjoyment* - and therefore giving away the very attachment to the pivot of "the supreme narcissisms of the lost Cause"⁷⁶⁷ that we can truly envision an act which would break with the coordinates of the pair "freedom/obedience", for the return to the domain of identities and incentives would now be permeated by an irreducible dimension of freedom *inherent to alienation as such*. In other words, beyond the duality between duty and the pathological, there is *the pathological as the name of duty itself*.

In her comparison of Antigone and Sygne, Zupančič makes this shift very clear: while the first abandons everything for the sake of honoring the right to bury the body of her brother, the latter must accomplish a further step: to save the honor of her family, Sygne abandons everything, including the very attachment to her family title and lands, the last threads of their existence. The crucial point of Sygne's act is that this is not a mere letting go or giving up, for she preserves the very place of enunciation of her imperative by *letting desire go in a desiring way*. This is why, when questioned by her husband - who she married just for the sake of saving her family title, later to be taken away by him - as

⁷⁶⁶ Zupančič, Alenka (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan* (Wo Es War), (Verso) p.249

⁷⁶⁷ Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Ecrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.700

to why she saved his life when she could have let him die in the hands of her past lover, she does not answer him with more than a “tic” which stood for a “no”, marking how she embodied the law’s very place of enunciation. In this way, Sygne’s act opens up the space for a different relation between the infinity of the unconditional and the finitude of her being:

“[Antigone’s act] puts an end to the metonymy of desire by realizing, in one go, the infinite potential of this metonymy. As in the case of the sublime, the ‘true’ infinite (the infinite of the unconditional) is evoked here in the violence done to our imagination by the representation of the totality of a series (of conditions) . We do not see the infinite; we see only the effect it has on the figure of Antigone, who functions as its screen. This explains the sublime splendor of her figure, which is the result of the Thing which she hides and announces at the same time .

The ‘abyssal realization’ we find in the case of Sygne de Coufontaine is not at all of the same order. (...)

Here we are dealing with a kind of short circuit which, instead of evoking the infinite by realizing the whole of the finite, suspends the infinite as an exception, and thus renders the finite not-whole - that is, contaminates it with the infinite. The infinite is visible here in a different way from the case of Antigone: not as an absence which illuminates the figure of the heroine with a sublime splendor but, rather, as an embarrassing and ‘out-of-place ’ presence, manifesting itself in the distortions, in the torsions, of a body which is not made in the measure of the infinite (of the jouissance) that inhabits it. During one-third of the play (the last act) we see the heroine (though one could ask whether the term ‘ heroine’ is still appropriate in this case) agitated by a nervous twitch which constitutes a very distressing and poignant image of the infinite that parasitizes the finite.”⁷⁶⁸

The passage from the symbolic to the paradoxical class does not requires us to abandon the “absolute condition” of the symbolic, which introduced the split between “real and realist ethics”, but to *split this condition itself*, recognizing the way the infinite parasitizes the very alienated being of the subject: rather than

⁷⁶⁸ Zupančič, Alenka (2000), *Ethics of The Real: Kant, Lacan (Wo Es War)*, (Verso) p.258

hovering above or beyond semblance and being represented as "absence which illuminates the figure of the heroine with a sublime splendor", the infinite itself appears through "an embarrassing and 'out-of-place' presence, manifesting itself in the distortions, in the torsions, of a body which is not made in the measure of the infinite (of the *jouissance*) that inhabits it".

It is important to pose here the question of why there would be the necessity for this extra step in order to qualify Sygne's act in its ethical dimension, rather than simply conceptualizing it as a completely different operation. In terms of the Milnerian classes, we could also ask: why think the paradoxical class as a supplement of the symbolic one, rather than a totally separate principle of organization?

It is worth noting that, in fact, in Milner's text, the relation between the symbolic and the paradoxical classes is much looser than the one we have been proposing. At times, the two classes seem indissociable, as it is the case in his presentation of Lacan's sophism of the three prisoners⁷⁶⁹, but Milner also repeatedly stresses the function of the contingent encounter in the formation of the real multiplicity⁷⁷⁰, and more than once implies that the fundamental disparity between the two classes is a matter of substitution of the former by the latter rather than a supplementation⁷⁷¹.

However, after presenting the crucial differences between Antigone and Sygne, Zupančič describes an 'ethical triad' which

⁷⁶⁹ Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier). p.107-108

⁷⁷⁰ The real multiplicity "carries such a name [community or class] our of courtesy" Ibid. p.107

⁷⁷¹ "In this way it would solicit the subject to refer itself only to one real and to build, for its singularity, a paradoxical class. Every maxim thus founded will have the form of athetic judgement, whatever the names that support it. What is then set aside is, primarily, the imaginary class: the subject is obliged to never convert the thesis into a synthesis or an antithesis, and to never answer to the incessant demand which all, as delimited All, addresses it, demanding to make a Bond: the question of knowing if one must consent or not to such a representable property in order to belong to such a realist class is frivolity itself, though it is also the place of circumstances and of conjectures."Ibid. p.112

might delineate an answer to this question from the standpoint we have been pursuing:

“At the beginning of our discussion of tragedy, we suggested that there is a kind of triad that could be established between Oedipus, Hamlet and Sygne - a triad which is precisely a result of a change in the status of knowledge. We can see in Sygne de Coufontaine an Oedipus who knows, at the two decisive moments of the play, that he is about to kill his father and sleep with his mother; that he is about to do that which absolutely belies all his beliefs, without being able to escape the calamity of these acts thanks to this knowledge but, rather, finding himself in a situation where this very knowledge compels him to take the decision to commit them. Oedipus does what he does because he does not know. Hamlet hesitates; he cannot take it upon himself to act, because he knows (that the Other knows). Sygne, on the contrary, finds herself in a situation where she has to take the decision to act in spite of this knowledge, and to commit the very act that this knowledge makes 'impossible'. 'Modern' ethics must be situated in this dimension.”⁷⁷²

Following Zupancic, could we not define modern ethics precisely in terms of a supplementary step which corresponds to the the shift from *totalization to totality*? Is this not the “change in the status of knowledge” to which the author refers? In this sense, “to commit the very act that this knowledge makes impossible” implies, first and foremost, that one must consent to the symbolic ethics in which the impossible conjunction of knowledge and being is articulated as an absolute condition *because* we already know beforehand that the Absolute is parasitized by its inherent self-difference. The philosopher continues, relating the Nietzschean counter-argument to formal universality, mentioned above, to the crucial task of conceptualizing ethics today:

“If, today, we are 'men (and women) who know too much', does this imply that as far as ethics is concerned, we are confined to a nostalgia for an era when it was still 'worth the trouble' to realize one's desire or, at best, that we are confined to the tentative reaffirmation of such an ethics? Not exactly. First, we must recognize that a change in the symbolic

⁷⁷² Ibid. p.256

constellation has in fact taken place; this change can be summed up in the fact that the point of view of the Last Judgement no longer exists (for us). What is at stake is not simply that 'God is dead' - as Lacan pointed out, God was dead from the very beginning, and it was precisely His death that invested us with a symbolic debt. What has changed today is that this very debt where we had our place can be taken from us; that it is losing its symbolic grip, its unconditional value, its once-effective power to engage us. 'Highbrow relativism' (we have too much knowledge and historic experience to take anything as absolute) may well be regrettable, but it is nevertheless real. By attacking it directly and lamenting it, we will not change much. The fact is that not only do we know that 'God is dead' (that the Other does not exist) , He knows it too . We find ourselves in a kind of Hamletian burlesque, saturated with ghosts of ancient authorities and ideals that haunt us in order to say to us: 'We are dead' , or 'We are impotent' . (A typical figure of public authority today is a leader who openly admits to being incapable of deciding anything before consulting experts or opinion polls.) In this situation one should ask, rather, whether it is not possible to formulate an ethics which could face up to this reality 'from the inside' . And it is in this perspective that the example of Sygne de Coufontaine is illuminating.⁷⁷³

The public use of (the Hegelian) Reason would require, thus, a radicalization of the Kantian position, for *concrete* universality - just as Milner's real multiplicity - can only be grounded on the singular way the subject *fails* to fully inscribe herself in the formal universal and, even more essentially, recognizes herself to partake in the Absolute through this very failure. Is this not the direction to "formulate an ethics which could face up to this reality 'from the inside'"? Not *despite* knowledge, but *through* knowledge.

Just as Lebrun described the Hegelian Concept as something which is "not tailored in the measure of our knowledge"⁷⁷⁴ - for Actuality "inhabits" it from within - Zupančič also resorts to the same expression to designate how this shift to a real ethics gives rise to "a body which is not made in the measure of the infinite". Finally, we cannot but hear in this incommensurability between

⁷⁷³ Ibid. p.255-256

⁷⁷⁴ Lebrun, G. (1972), *La patience du concept : essai sur le discours hégélien*, (Gallimard). p.350-351

the body and the infinite the echo of psychoanalysis' paradoxical typology of the subject, used above by Milner as an example of a paradoxical class.

Indeed, this reference to a fundamental *inadequacy* is not at all strange to us: we have already seen how Christ's monstrosity stands for the inscription in the world of an absolute "*unangemessenheit*", around which the dialectical reversal of failed reflection into reflective failure⁷⁷⁵ revolves. As we have also mentioned, Hegel places a fundamental division between Christ and the community of believers gathered in the Holy Spirit: while Christ had to die, after Christ we must accomplish this history "*in ourselves* in order to exist as Spirit, or to become a child of God, a citizen of his kingdom"⁷⁷⁶ - we are "inhabited" *in life* by an incommensurable excess that is proper of infinity.

The task of thinking the relation between Kantian philosophy and Christianity was already at the core of Hegel's early writings, such as *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* and *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*⁷⁷⁷, where the Kantian "invisible church"⁷⁷⁸ of Reason was the product of the philosophical overcoming of the positive and alienating dimension of Christian Church⁷⁷⁹. However, in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, as we have seen, the passage from the Revealed Religion to Absolute Knowledge is no longer conceived as the shift from positive to negative representation of the law - this passage is now understood as constitutive of the

⁷⁷⁵ Žižek, Slavoj (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso), p.85

⁷⁷⁶ Hegel, G W F (1995), *Filosofia Da História*, (Editora Universidade de Brasília).

⁷⁷⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1971), *Early Theological Writings* (Works in Continental Philosophy), (University of Pennsylvania Press).

⁷⁷⁸ See *Religion in the Limits of Reason Alone* p.176 in Kant, Immanuel (2001), *Religion and Rational Theology* (The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant), (Cambridge University Press).

⁷⁷⁹ See *The Positivity of the Christian Religion* p.100-101 in Hegel, G. W. F. (1971), *Early Theological Writings* (Works in Continental Philosophy), (University of Pennsylvania Press).

Jewish Spirit itself⁷⁸⁰ - but precisely as the parallaxian shift through which the inadequacy of representational thought itself, incarnated in the figure of Christ, *falls into knowledge*, radically subverting the very core of Reason:

"What belongs to the element of representational thought, namely, that absolute spirit represents the nature of spirit in its existence as *an individual spirit* or, rather, as a particular spirit, is therefore shifted here into self-consciousness itself, into the knowledge that sustains itself in its *otherness*. This self-consciousness thus does not therefore actually *die* in the way that the *particular* is represented to have *actually* died; rather, its particularity dies away within its universality, which is to say, in its *knowledge*, which is the essence reconciling itself with itself."⁷⁸¹

In fact, Hegel explicitly presents the constitution of self-consciousness qua Absolute Knowing as an infinite judgement, in which the I is placed in an incommensurable relation with the communal Thing:

"The thing is I: In fact, in this infinite judgement, the thing is sublated. The thing is nothing in itself; it only has meaning in relationships, only *by virtue of the I* and *its relation to the I*. - In fact, this moment emerged for consciousness in pure insight and Enlightenment. Things are purely and simply *useful* and are merely to be considered in terms of their utility. - The *culturally matured* self-consciousness, which traversed the

⁷⁸⁰ "But is *this* shift from the living gods of the real to the dead God of the Law really what happens in Christianity? Is it not that this shift already takes place in Judaism, so that the death of Christ cannot stand for this shift, but for something much more radical— precisely for the death of the symbolic-'dead' big Other itself? The key question is thus: is the Holy Spirit still a figure of the big Other, or is it possible to conceive it outside this frame? If the dead God were to morph directly into the Holy Ghost, then we would still have the symbolic big Other. But the monstrosity of Christ, this contingent singularity interceding between God and man, is the proof that the Holy Ghost is not the big Other which survives as the spirit of the community after the death of the substantial God, but a collective link of love without any support in the big Other. Therein resides the properly Hegelian paradox of the death of God: if God dies directly, as God, he survives as the virtualized big Other; only if he dies in the guise of Christ, his earthly embodiment, he also disintegrates as the big Other." Žižek in Bryant, Levi, Nick Srnicek, and Graham Harman (2011), *The Speculative Turn: Continental Materialism and Realism*, (re.press). p.218

⁷⁸¹ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA) §785

world of self-alienated spirit, has by way of its self-emptying created the thing as itself. It thus still retains itself within the thing, and it knows the thing to have no self-sufficiency, that is, it knows that the thing is *essentially* merely *being for others*.⁷⁸²

Absolute Knowing is only formed when it “retains itself within the thing” - Spirit as the real of the community, the “as if” which, in the social field “is the thing itself”⁷⁸³ - and, on the other hand, the community itself is only formed because self-consciousness’ impurity reveals its utility in “being for others”. Following this passage, we propose that a Hegelian reading of the Kantian conception of the public use of Reason, thought of against the background of the dialectical move from religion to philosophy, could be condensed in the following speculative proposition - which clearly resonates with our eighth statement as well: “collectivity is Reason”⁷⁸⁴.

Substituting the coordinate or subordinate conjunction of the two terms for the paradoxical tension of their very incommensurability, this formulation relies on the very excess of each term over itself in order to constitute a relation between the two. Reason’s universality endows the collective with its truly public dimension - for we dwell in the Holy Spirit when, parasitized as we are by infinity, we must account for that in us which is not tailored in our own measure “within its universality, which is to say, in its knowledge” - and the collectivity serves as the only true ground of Reason - for Reason can only be thoroughly distinguished from Understanding when the community disrupts from within the very formal universality of the symbolic class, which remains depended on the logic of

⁷⁸² Ibid. §791

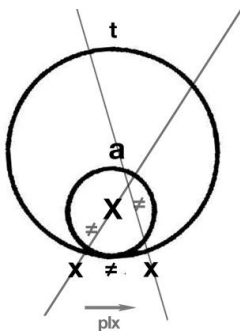
⁷⁸³ Žižek, S. (2010), *Living in the End Times*, (Verso). p.285

⁷⁸⁴ This statement could itself be understood as a Žižekian version of Rancière’s “equality and intelligence are synonymous terms” (in Rancière, Jacques (1991), *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation*, (Stanford University Press) p.73) Hopefully this argument helps shedding some light as to why it is an essential element of Žižekian philosophy to engage with so-called “pop culture”, specially with examples which do not present any “sublime splendour”, but are “not made in the measure of the infinite which inhabits [them]”.

representation, always haunted by its superegoic inversion. In sum, there is only community where the inconsistency of the social field itself speaks, and does so *in a rational way* - and there is only Reason where the subject tarries with the inadequacy of enjoyment to the body in terms of the inadequacy of the Concept to knowledge. A psychoanalyst might recognize here a certain fundamental operation of the mechanism of the *passe*.

This, however, also means that we should not think the paradoxical class as being *beyond* the symbolic one: one of the most important consequences of thinking Kant's notion of the public use of Reason from the Hegelian standpoint is that the "beyond" is no longer to be understood in the sense of a transcendental term regulating from without the social space, but as that which is "in between"⁷⁸⁵, as the very non-coincidence at play in one's alienated social activity. As Žižek puts it "one is truly universal only when radically singular, in the *interstices* of communal identities."⁷⁸⁶

In order to make this point more clear, and to relate it to our twelfth statement, let us attempt to map this development to the Žižekian figure of Absolute Knowing:



⁷⁸⁵ Badiou, Alain (1998), *Court traité d'ontologie transitoire*, (Seuil) p.64; See also Zupančič, Alenka (2003), *The Shortest Shadow: Nietzsche's Philosophy of the Two* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press) p.87

⁷⁸⁶ Žižek, Slavoj and John Milbank (2009), *The Monstrosity of Christ: Paradox or Dialectic?* (Short Circuits), (The MIT Press). p.295

We first developed this figure in order to account for the Žižekian conception of the parallax real: not only the real as the Beyond (X), but the real as non-coincidence (a). If we now concentrate on the passage from the symbolic to the paradoxical class, the figure should allow us to map how it is that the real multiplicity is constituted by the shift through which the absolute condition (X) of the symbolic class is itself caught up in the order it ensues (x) and is sustained through this absolute failure, the One of a desire to know (a).

Furthermore, the temporal gap we have previously mentioned, when first describing the passage to the paradoxical class, is itself mapped here, as the *t* which is required so that absolute disjunction between knowledge and being, in a *second moment*, can be itself grasped as an object. This parallaxian shift (plx) allows us to think the absolute condition of an ethical imperative by supplementing the *symbolic* absence with a *paradoxical* presence, in Milner's sense, through which "pure duty" no longer remains strictly beyond the pathological, but whose domain only constitutes itself insofar as the excess of the symbolic identities themselves are made to speak.

This figure also allows us to better grasp the passage from the "beyond" to the "in between". We can understand this shift as the distinction between two attitudes of knowledge towards the communal - the Kantian 'dare to...' and the Lacanian 'you may...'. In the case of the *Sapere Aude*, the public use of Reason redefines the relation between the public and the private, but the principle of transmission, the empty core of the law (X), does not affect knowledge itself - it does not change what knowledge is permitted and prohibited to know ($x \neq X$). In the case of the Lacanian *Scilicet*, the principle of transmission (X) is itself caught up in what is transmitted (a), opening up the space for the articulation of truth and knowledge. Žižek makes this point very clear in *For they know not what they do*:

"We can see, now, how far Lacanian psychoanalysis is from the pluralist-pragmatic 'liberalism' of the Rortyan kind: Lacan's final lesson is not relativity and plurality of truths but the hard, traumatic fact that in every concrete constellation

truth is bound to emerge in some contingent detail. In other words, although truth is context-dependent - although there is no truth in general, but always the truth *of* some situation - there is none the less in every plural field a particular point which articulates its truth and as such *cannot* be relativized; in this precise sense, truth is always *One*. (...)

We even lack an appropriate term for this 'X' [which is neither prescribed, nor prohibited, nor permitted, but contingent], for the strange status of what is 'not prescribed', 'facultative', and yet not simply 'permitted' - like, for example, the emergence of some hitherto forbidden knowledge in the psychoanalytic cure which holds up to ridicule the Prohibition, lays bare its hidden mechanism, without thereby changing into a neutral 'permissiveness'. The difference between the two pertains to the different relationships towards the universal Order: 'permissiveness' is warranted by it, whereas this guarantee lacks in the case of 'you may...' which Lacan designates as *Scilicet*: you may know (the truth about your desire) - if you take the risk upon yourself. This *Scilicet* is perhaps the ultimate recourse of the critical thought⁷⁸⁷

Our wager is that this crucial dimension is precisely what is at stake in the rational core of Hegel's account of the community of believers:

"The movement of propelling forward the form of its self-knowledge is the work which spirit accomplishes as *actual history*. The religious community, insofar as it is initially the substance of absolute spirit, is the brutish consciousness which, the deeper its inner spirit is, both has an existence all the more harsh and barbaric and its dull and expressionless self an even more difficult labor in dealing with its essence, that is, with the alien content of its consciousness. *Not until it has abandoned the hope of sublating that way of being alien in an external, I.e., alien, manner, and because the sublated alien manner is itself the return into self-consciousness, does that consciousness in itself turn to itself, turn to its own world and present time, and discover that world to be its own property.* When it has done this, it will have taken the first step to climb down from the *intellectual world*, or, to a greater degree, to spiritualize the abstract element of the intellectual world with the actual self."⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁷ Žižek, S. (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso). p.196-197

⁷⁸⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1979), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Galaxy Books), (Oxford University Press, USA). §803

There is an essentially “brutish consciousness” at play in the collectivity organized by a negative condition, but it is only *in it* and *through it*, that we can recognize ourselves in the “alien content” which in vain we attempt to sublate. Hegel clearly relates this second step to the passage of Understanding - the “abstract element of the intellectual world” - to its spiritualization, in its descent to the “actual self”, that is, to Reason.

The crucial point in Hegel’s description of the collective is, thus, the properly dialectical step through which the public space is constituted not as a domain beyond the social, but *between* the social identities. Rather than a dialectical “overcoming” of the formal universality, the paradoxical class introduces a further split into it, adding to the logic of imaginary opposition and the twofold logic of the symbolic ethics, a third division, that of the parallax real: the impossible beyond the symbolic being *supplemented* by the impossible inherent to Reason itself.

We can now evoke again our previous proposition:

S8: *Only that which is non-all is for all*

We should be able to recognize in the tense conjunction of the Kantian public use of Reason and of the Christian community of believers *not* the mere substitution of the symbolic universality for the paradoxical class - a position which seems to have been adopted by Milner himself later on - but the affirmation that *the real multiplicity is nothing but the parallaxian shift itself* - a ‘parallaxian’ class, so to speak.

The relation between a supplementary logic of organization of the social space and the access to a dimension of truth which only comes into play when one engages oneself with a knowledge of totality can also be recognized “in the interstices” of Milner’s final remarks on the paradoxical class. After Hegel, it is our task to discern in Lacan’s teaching some of the

fundamental traits of the speculative dimension of the community of believers :

"This is where the discourse of psychoanalysis gives its testimony and deals with its own natal margins: one is allowed to interpret, it says, that is, to knot the real One of a desire to the symbolic One of a signifier, which lets itself be heard in the knitted texture of an Imaginary semblance. Which also says: truth speaks, or even, a signifier of speech can have truth effects, or even, there are encounters, or even, there is real naming, or even *Scilicet* - it is permitted that, in a second moment, truth shall align itself amongst the speakable knowledges."⁷⁸⁹

Here, we decide to interrupt our investigations.

⁷⁸⁹ Milner, Jean-Claude (2007), *Les noms indistincts*, (Editions Verdier) p.93-94

3

Time as the ambiguity of the legible

1. Introduction

“The thesis that being a philosopher means being interested in what everyone is interested in without knowing it has the interesting peculiarity that its relevance does not imply that it can be settled either way. For it can only be settled if everyone becomes a philosopher.”⁷⁹⁰

The quote which begins this chapter articulates the enigmatic nature of our project. Lacan introduces a certain unresolved thesis that the universality of philosophy is derived from the fact that everyone unknowingly directs their interests at it. Not only is everyone interested in philosophy, but no one really knows why or even that it is philosophy. Lacan then adds a second twist by saying that the only way to resolve this issue is for everyone to become a philosopher. If we put aside the problem of how we could become what we already in some sense are, another obvious question arises: wouldn't the philosopher, unlike the others, know his interests? A moment's thought would demonstrate that if this is the case, the thesis would be provably false, since if it were true and everyone became a philosopher, the universality of philosophy – the very support of the philosopher – would disappear. Therefore, to become a philosopher does not imply one will know more about one's interests than before, perhaps not even that the thesis is true. The situation, then, seems quite hopeless. Either the philosopher is not exceptional with regards to the unconscious and Lacan's thesis *might* be true (but no one would be able to say either

⁷⁹⁰ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 671

way), or the philosopher is exceptional and the thesis is *necessarily* false.

As with many of Lacan's sayings, there is a wide gulf between the subjective implications of this statement and its rather tautological structure. This disparity is not new to psychoanalysis: it was Freud who said that the only reliable measure of a successful analysis was the patient's continued interest in his or her unconscious – a tautology if there ever was one, since the unconscious is what caused the suffering that brings him or her to the couch in the first place.⁷⁹¹ Yet, Freud's key insight was precisely that the cure is not a revelation removing all symptoms but a ceaseless participation in these very disruptions. Likewise, Lacan puts forth a condition to philosophy that it should be interested with that which cannot ever become a direct object of its reflections.

To complicate things further, we might read this perplexing quote not only as a psychoanalytic commentary on philosophy, but also as what we could justifiably call the *political* project of making everybody a philosopher. For if this problem about the relevance of philosophy should be settled, it would require the emergence of a mass philosophy – “philosophy for all”, an unexpected political slogan to say the least. Perhaps, then, the knowledge at stake is not one which can or cannot be known by individuals, but something which remains irreducibly common and inherently political. It would be knowledge in the form of an unresolved proposition – one which can only be settled collectively because its subject is the collective itself.

What lends weight to this reading of Lacan's rather offhand remark is his own emphasis, during his later work, on the creation and sustenance of a school for psychoanalysis. This concern for transmitting the knowledge of psychoanalysis cannot be fully detached from what Lacan named the university

⁷⁹¹ Freud, S. (1937). Analysis Terminable and Interminable. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII (1937-1939): Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works, 209-254.

discourse, which is both a period in history – the rise of the commodification of knowledge, ongoing today – and a moment formalized from his own teaching concerning the unconscious. In the bifurcation of his efforts, both to critique the existing knowledge apparatuses, and to conceive of a transmission which could resist them, we find the full scope of Lacan's engagement in politics. Despite this, psychoanalysis today does find a renewed popularity in certain niches of academia and beyond, almost entirely due to the work of a single thinker, Slavoj Žižek⁷⁹². On the one hand, Žižek marks the possibility of a widespread interest in Lacanian concepts “beyond the clinic”, that is, in the domains of politics and philosophy. On the other, the “purity” of his strand of psychoanalysis, not to mention his deployment of Hegel, has been criticized by both psychoanalysts and philosophers alike.⁷⁹³

The question to be answered then is: does Žižek represent the ultimate failure of Lacan's project to separate psychoanalysis from the university, or does his work point to its surprising fulfillment, in the sense of a step towards “mass philosophy”?

In support of the latter, we endeavor to conceptualize the intersection between two fields, philosophy and politics: our major premise is that this point can be conceived as a field of its own, with problems that are often too difficult to place in either of the previous two. These are problems which concern a necessary misrecognition of philosophy which emerges from the process of ideation itself. Following Lacan, properly raising this misrecognition to the status of a philosophical question would itself have surprisingly political consequences. To justify the pairing of necessity with misrecognition, we will examine a certain position which has many faces today: the one which counts philosophy as an extreme form of ideology.

⁷⁹² Our position is owed not only to Žižek, but to the Slovene Lacanians which he belongs, whose works far extend the scope of the present introduction.

⁷⁹³ See Parker, I. (2004) Slavoj Žižek: A Critical Introduction, London: Pluto Press, p. 78 and Critchley, S. (2009) “Violent Thoughts about Slavoj Žižek.” *Naked Punch*, no. 11 (accessible at: <http://www.nakedpunch.com/articles/39>) [accessed July 12th, 2012]

To refute such a position, it is not enough to reverse its criticism by arguing that they who perceive philosophy as ideology only do so because they are themselves stuck in obfuscated ideological presuppositions. True as this is, it risks generalizing the notion of ideology to a matter of perspectives, in which every position is in some sense equivalent. Rather, we should accept that the philosopher does indeed have his own ideology, but one which is somehow grounded in the failure of every ideology, including his own. The emblematic figure of this move was Socrates, who drew out the explanations of his interlocutors before negating them through a series of questions, revealing their internal inconsistency. Even though philosophy means “love of wisdom”, it was not the wisdom of explanations that Socrates sought, but the wisdom contained in the act of undermining and dissolving them. One could say that while Socrates’ opponents thought they possessed wisdom, Socrates knew that one loves precisely what one cannot possess.

Only from this definition of philosophy can we truly appreciate Žižek’s statements on Hegel:

“The matrix of the dialectical process is not that of excrementation-externalization followed by a swallowing (reappropriation) of the externalized content, but, on the contrary, of appropriation followed by the excremental move of dropping it, releasing it, letting it go. What this means is that one should not equate externalization with alienation. The externalization which concludes a cycle of dialectical process is not alienation, it is the highest point of dis-alienation: one really reconciles oneself with some objective content not when one still has to strive to master and control it, but when one can afford the supreme sovereign gesture of releasing this content from oneself, of setting it free.”⁷⁹⁴

In other words, there is only philosophy when something becomes unhinged from the exchange of wisdom and begins to move on its own with unforeseen consequences. Ideology and “exchange of wisdoms” are here interchangeable: they both draw their argumentative force from a false opposition,

⁷⁹⁴ Žižek, S. (2008) *Sublime Object of Ideology*, Verso, p. xxii

something which “one still has to strive to master”. Indeed, we agree with the hypothetical ideological opponent that the danger of the Hegelian position is that it cannot be refuted. In fact, we suggest an even further criticism: do we not find a resemblance between the above description of dialectics and the psychoanalytic definition of the *pervert* as the one who becomes an instrument for the Other? That is, a pervert is one who allows the Other’s enjoyment to “freely deploy” itself. The following quote by Žižek deals precisely with this problem, in the figure of Christ:

“When, in *Being and Time*, Heidegger insists that death is the only event which cannot be taken over by another subject for me – another cannot die for me, in my place – the obvious counterexample is Christ himself: did not Christ, in the ultimate gesture of interpassivity, take over for us the ultimate passive experience of dying? Christ dies so that we are given a chance of living forever... The problem here is not only the fact that, obviously, we don’t live forever, but the subjective status of Christ: when he was dying on the cross, did he know about his Resurrection-to-come? If he did, then it was all a game, the supreme divine comedy, since Christ knew that his suffering was just a spectacle with a guaranteed good outcome – in short, Christ was faking despair in his ‘Father, why hast thou forsaken me?’ If he didn’t, then in what precise sense was Christ (also) divine?”⁷⁹⁵

Several commentators⁷⁹⁶ have questioned the validity of such a “theological turn” in Žižek’s work – what exactly does it provide for atheists beyond an interesting propaedeutic? A precise response involves turning the Žižekian question of Christ’s status on philosophy itself. That is, if the philosophical act is to allow a concept to deploy its inherent potential – giving it a chance to live forever, one might say – what could possibly

⁷⁹⁵ Žižek, S (2008) *For They Know Not What They Do*, Verso, p. li

⁷⁹⁶ See Bosteels’ commentary at Verso’s conference in New York, 2011 (available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=utmZmKzwqyQ>) [accessed July 7th, 2012] Also, see John Milbank’s text in Žižek, S. Milbank, J. (2009) *The Monstrosity of Christ*. MIT, p. 110

verify that this act is authentic and not a “fake deployment”? This same issue plagues the political act – its authenticity by definition cannot be pre-calculated (there is always a chance that it is “more of the same”), but must reside at a certain limit of non-knowledge, or again, of necessary misrecognition. This limit is therefore what both politics and philosophy share, and what psychoanalysis can illuminate.

So then, what can psychoanalysis tell us about what it names the unconscious, and how could this be relevant in domains outside of the clinic? The basic axiom of Freud is that there is knowledge at work even when we don’t know it, determining us in a myriad of subtle, surprising ways – a fact which should entice any true lover of wisdom, or political thinker, to re-examine the fundamental precepts of his own activity. Instead of proving that any quest for the absolute is futile, it is the materialist wager that once this passage through psychoanalysis has been completed, philosophy will be freed from its fear of misrepresentation. It is this travail which will determine if the hypothetical project of a mass philosophy can occur at all.

To begin with, when we speak of philosophy in materialist terms, we are invoking an objective, social existence of concepts themselves:

“Materialism is not the direct assertion of my inclusion in objective reality (such an assertion presupposes that my position of enunciation is that of an external observer who can grasp the whole of reality); rather, it resides in the reflexive twist by means of which I myself am included in the picture constituted by me – it is this reflexive short circuit, this necessary redoubling of myself as standing both inside and outside my picture, that bears witness to my ‘material existence’. Materialism means that the reality I see is never ‘whole’ - not because a large part of it eludes me, but because it contains a stain, a blind spot, which indicates my inclusion in it.”⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁷ Žižek, S. (2009) *The Parallax View*. MIT. p. 17

The materialist position thus asserts that the unsurpassable limit of thought's attempts to grasp reality is inherent to reality itself. Since perversion only functions when a limit is posited subjectively, materialism is inherently subversive to it. Our work is to outline, given these coordinates, a new way to formulate philosophical ideas from the very material of ideological fantasy. Our proposition is that there is a methodology which is the proper counterpart to a *materialist rigor of philosophy*, one which is capable of being universally transmitted as knowledge according to the doctrines of Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Let us again begin with a common, naïve position – this time regarding the intervention of philosophy *upon* political matters. Several criticisms today are reducible to the following: that theory fails to align with practice. This failure can occur in two rather contradictory ways. The philosopher both indulges in abstractions which have no impact on the practical life and seduces others with dogmatic ideas which might actually change things for the worse. What is shared by both configurations is the fear of deviation – whether it has effects or not, thinking for thought's sake distracts us from what is at stake in reality.

Alain Badiou provides a precise definition of both a leftist and rightist deviation in one of his earliest books, *Theory of the Subject* – the leftist denies the old inherent to the new, while the rightist denies the new inherent in the old. What both fail to realize is that “*everything that belongs to a whole is an obstacle to this whole insofar as it is included in it.*”⁷⁹⁸ In other words, what is “at stake” is already determined by the obstacles to its realization. The Freudian correlate to this maxim is that this includes *thinking* too – the unconscious is an obstacle, in the form of thought, to thought itself.

An essential fact for the psychoanalytic treatment is that this obstacle can also act as a stimulant. Perhaps then, the failure of our attempts to think the entirety of the current situation is already the mark of something new, that is, a fragment of the old

⁷⁹⁸ Badiou, A. (2009) *Theory of the Subject*, Continuum, p. 12

whose time has only just arrived. The purpose of the following text is to develop a notion of time that is implied by the existence of ideology. It is both the condition and result of the objectivity of concepts, and is therefore a two-fold, materialist problem. What we have proposed – a methodology of philosophy – can be found in the procedure by which thought isolates this problematic time.

2. The temporal postulate of ideation

We define the temporal postulate of ideation:

S14: *The formation of ideas requires the abstraction of time.*

This is a postulate which we derive from the Freudian discovery of the unconscious, primarily his metapsychological writings of the early 1920s. The *raison d'être* of metapsychology is derived not from empirical observation but through its theoretical structuring of the facts of psychology, a distinction which is itself embodied in Freud's theory of repression. That is, repression is not simply a psychological phenomenon among others, but structures the very way we can read phenomena as such. We will develop this point in our examination of the postulate.

What is the "abstraction of time"? The first remark is that there is no adequate philosophical definition of time. There may be physical descriptions, such as the quantity of entropy of a system, but even these do not describe what time "is" – only what of it is measurable. Our proposal is to not begin from a definition of time itself, but from one of thought, which will illuminate in a second moment the question at hand. Thought is defined for us by its elementary operation: that of *sequencing moments*, discerning in them a "before" and an "after". Freud's discovery of the unconscious implies that this sequencing of thought itself requires an effort of thought – the repression, or *Verdrängung*. What we term "abstraction" can be developed

directly from Freud's discovery, though our explicit focus is on the temporal aspect of it.⁷⁹⁹

Thinking and ideation are two different processes. The former encompasses unconscious thoughts, while the latter is only *representational* thought. If we define representation as moments of succession, we obtain an interesting reformulation of the division: thought itself cannot be reduced to a pure sequence, though its primary function is to generate sequences. Yet, this is not to say that thought exceeds time. The division between thinking and ideation can also be transposed onto time itself, such that there is also a non-sequential, non-representable time. It intrudes into the chronological vision of time and disrupts it without replacing it. In order for ideas to form, there must be representable succession – thus our postulate states that time must be abstracted for an unconscious thought to become represented.

Following the old psychoanalytic adage, there is no abstraction without a return of abstracted. In the following discussion, we will develop what such a disruption entails. First, we may ask the obvious question: is the unconscious not itself the domain of pure representations as such? After all, the parapraxis seems to hinge on its representing a hidden meaning. Yet, to take the unconscious as the place where hidden truths are stored is to miss the point.

Rather, Freud defined the unconscious as a *rebus*, a definition which Lacan would develop into the notion of the signifier:

“The first clause, articulated already in the introductory chapter because its exposition cannot be postponed, is that the dream is a rebus. And Freud stipulates that it must be understood quite literally, as I said earlier. This is related to the instance in the dream of the same ‘literating’ (in other words, phonemic) structure in which the signifier is articulated and analyzed in discourse. Like the unnatural figures of the boat on the roof, or the man with a comma for a head, which

⁷⁹⁹ Freud himself refers to this aspect in his brief and enigmatic “Note On ‘The Mystic Writing Pad’”.

are expressly mentioned by Freud, dream images to be taken up only on the basis of their value as signifiers, that is, only insofar as they allow us to spell out the 'proverb' presented by the oneiric rebus.⁸⁰⁰

What is crucial here is the fact of the legibility of dreams which can only appear upon the basis of language. Lacan offers here his famous definition of the signifier as that which "represents the subject to another signifier" - the subject is precisely what is spelled out by the unconscious. This was developed from, but explicitly opposed to, Saussure's definition of the sign as composed of the signifier and signified. What Lacan sought to rectify in the notion of sign was the fact that this division between the two levels actually takes precedence over any supposed correspondence - it is precisely a division prior to the terms it divided. This is brilliantly evoked in the following description of dreams:

"Let us say, then, that dreams are like the parlor game in which each person, in turn, is supposed to get the spectators to guess some well-known saying or variant of it solely by silent gestures. The fact that dreams have speech at their disposal makes no difference since, for the unconscious, speech is but one staging element among others. It is precisely when games and dreams alike run up against the lack of taxemic material by which to represent logical relationships such as causality, contradiction, hypothesis, and so on that they prove they have to do with writing, not mime."⁸⁰¹

If the "silent gestures" are to signify anything, it can only be what is supposed in the spectator who is actually deaf to them. This constitutes what Lacan calls the Other, the entity that determines in lieu of "taxemic material" what is to be made of these signifiers. Signification is the product of a detour through this Other in which signifiers form a rebus.⁸⁰² In addition, these signifiers - when they have arrived at their meaning for the Other - are unified by a single signifier representing the loss of direct meaning. Freud named the detouring aspect of the

⁸⁰⁰ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 424

⁸⁰¹ *Ibid.* p. 425

⁸⁰² Lacan called this a "dialectic of pointing". See Lacan, J. (1991) *Freud's Papers on Technique*, W. W. Norton & Company, p. 253

signifier *Verschiebung*, “displacement”, and the unifying aspect *Verdichtung*, “condensation”.

The division between signifier and signified is fundamentally temporal – to speak of lost meaning necessitates a past in which the subject was not barred, and a future in which it can be regained. However, for Lacan this identity between signifier and signified does not strictly exist – meaning is always produced as lost and no special articulation of signifiers will ever reverse this. Thus we must question why a promise of literal self-identity occurs in the first place. While signifiers precede and produce meaning, this cannot be any kind of meaning whatsoever. In fact, the closer we approach the “nucleus” of the unconscious, the more meaningless the signifier becomes. Lacan would say that these signifiers must borrow something from language which could serve as their support, namely, the letter.

The beginning of his *Seminar on the Purloined Letter* marks his first conception of their relation:

“My research has led me to the realization that repetition automatism has its basis in what I have called the insistence of the signifying chain. I have isolated this notion as a correlate of the ex-sistence (that is, of the eccentric place) in which we must necessarily locate the subject of the unconscious, if we are to take Freud’s discovery seriously. As we know, it is in the experience inaugurated by psychoanalysis that we can grasp by what oblique imaginary means the symbolic takes hold in even the deepest recesses of the human organism.”⁸⁰³

Though it is subtle, we see that this “eccentric place” is distinct from that of the signifier, a problem which will lead us to the notion of the real as distinct from the symbolic. The first formulation of this can be extracted from the fact that signifiers do not fully account for their own *insistence*, which actively points to the non-signifying and non-representational dimension of language. In Freudian terms, repetition always points to that which resists symbolization, trauma, which is the true source of the bar of the Lacanian subject. It is within this gap between

⁸⁰³ Ibid. p. 6

structure and insistence, or symbolic and real, that we situate our postulate.

Before Deleuze, it was Lacan who identified that pure difference is produced in repetition, insofar as subtracting all predicative differences from a thing does not simply leave us with nothing, but a thing temporally separated from itself. The result is the “place” of a thing which becomes visible once a thing is stripped to its most essential characteristic: the possibility of its absence. More importantly, it was his insight that this gap related to the impossibility at the heart of symbolic effects, from which one could re-authorize the Cartesian subject. That the signifier represents a subject to another signifier can be read as a thesis on repetition – to repeat is to evoke the subject qua absence of a signifier to another signifier.⁸⁰⁴

For Lacan this means that Descartes’ maneuver of securing the certainty of the cogito is irrevocably blocked. If the subject is defined by being the absence of a signifier, then its existence cannot be “fully” symbolized. This absence, as pure difference, can only appear via repetition. Freud had already, in 1915, identified a strange antinomy between repetition and symbolization:

“The process of repression is not to be regarded as an event which takes place once, the results of which are permanent, as when some living thing has been killed and from that time onward is dead; repression demands a persistent expenditure of force, and if this were to cease the success of the repression would be jeopardized, so that a fresh act of repression would be necessary. We may suppose that the repressed exercises a continuous pressure in the direction of the conscious, so that this pressure must be balanced by an unceasing counter-pressure. Thus the maintenance of a repression involves an uninterrupted expenditure of force, while its removal results in a saving from an economic point of view.”⁸⁰⁵

⁸⁰⁴ More precisely, a signifier is already the mark of an absence, so the subject is actually the redoubled possibility of an absence being absent. See for example Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 17, 228.

⁸⁰⁵ Strachey, J. (1957). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the*

We are thus not dealing with another version of the problem of finitude (of being's inaccessibility to thought), a reading which would effectively reduce repression to a purely psychological phenomenon. Rather, repression involves a "non-economical" expenditure, an infinitude that somehow always springs forth from the signifier in excess to the signified. This lead Lacan to formalize in many different ways the "signifier without signified", the originary mark of the subject's entry into language.

Such a pure, primordial difference can only be identified upon the basis of all other signifiers, since the operation of subtracting differences requires that there be a field of differences in the first place. The master signifier – one of Lacan's names for the signifier without signified – is what makes a consistent totality of the others, but is itself the signifier of repression. So we should ask: does repression imply that there exists a knowledge that would, if discovered, introduce a final consistency to reality? This question of the status of repression is crucial – it determines to what extent the subject subsists independently of representation:

"This 'reflective' signifier 'totalizes' the battery of 'all the others' – makes out of them a totality of 'all the others': we could say that all signifiers represent the subject for the signifier which in advance represents for them their own ultimate failure and is precisely as such – as the representation of the failure of representation – 'closer' to the subject than all the others (since the Lacanian 'subject of the signifier' is not a positive, substantive entity persisting outside the series of its representations: it coincides with its own impossibility; it 'is' nothing but the void opened up by the failure of its representations). The logic of this vicious circle is actually that of the old theological formula 'you would not be looking for me if you had not already found me': all signifiers are in search of the subject for a signifier which has already found it for them."⁸⁰⁶

Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works, ii-viii, The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-analysis, p. 147

⁸⁰⁶ Žižek, S. (2008) *For They Know Not What They Do*. Verso, p. 24

The subject is thus, on the first level, misrepresented – its barring takes on the alienating or divisive character of finitude – but when the entire series of misrepresentations is “totalized”, we reach the “reflective” stage in which the lack of proper symbolization becomes its own symbol. Repression is not the loss of consistency of representation but the indicator that representation was never consistent in the first place. This is why myths do not make any clearer why something in the past happened – the origin of the world for example – they repeat it metaphorically. There is no consistent version of the origins, and this is what constitutes the truth of the myth.

However, if representation as such was never consistent, how did the expectation of consistency arise in the first place? We have, in fact, two separate philosophical strategies by which we can give a materialist reading of this birth of representation. The first is the transcendental, in which the sensible features of the object (to be represented) are eliminated, leaving only its so-called conditions of possibility. These conditions are effectively “repressed” since they make possible the very means of ideation by which they could be expressed in the first place. This was the proper Kantian strategy, as Beatrice Longuenesse examines:

“Kant is the first to have focused his attention on the mode of thinking that elaborates metaphysical concepts and thus determines their content. He criticizes metaphysics not so much for forming the ideas of the soul, the world, and God, as for the erroneous view that these ideas might have an object distinct from them or be anything beyond the expression of peculiar demands of reason. Or as Hegel might say: Kant criticizes the erroneous view according to which these ideas are representational, i.e. according to which they define objects that actually exist outside these ideas, which must thus be evaluated as to their truth by their adequacy to those objects.”⁸⁰⁷

In other words, Kant sought to cut the knot between thought and the “beyond thought” which was the source of skepticism at the time. The difficulty is apparent: is this not a recipe for all sorts

⁸⁰⁷ Longuenesse, B. (2007) *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*. Cambridge University Press, p. 13

of fabrications unfounded by empirical evidence, leading to inevitable obscurity? That thinking should be its own measure seems tautological to the point of comedy – we can very well imagine a scene from a cartoon in which the cat misrecognizes its own tail as being the mouse it is after as exemplary of the criticisms of dialectics throughout the 20th century. Kant himself resorted to limiting knowledge of the Thing-in-itself, the “non-sensible ground of sensible representations”⁸⁰⁸, as a way of coping with these criticisms.

The second strategy is Hegel’s, which extended Kant’s insight by separating the *ground* of the concept from its *origin*:

“But Kant, says Hegel, falls back into the element of representation by maintaining the dependence of concept on sensation and intuition. However, Hegel objects, intuition and sensation do not constitute the content of the concept. It is absurd to think that they can remain a component in the object of cognition when this object is thought. As we might say today: to define water as H₂O, or gold as the element of atomic number 79, is to move away from any sensible intuition of the object – even, and especially, if these definitions then allow us to return to sensible intuition and explain its characteristics. In the same way, Hegel does not deny the importance of sensible intuition as a starting point of cognition. But, he says, we must not confuse the origin and the truth of the thought process: if sensible intuition is the condition of all cognition, it is destined to be absorbed or digested in the concept which is its ground. For the concept can provide the reason or ground both for itself and for sensible intuition.”⁸⁰⁹

The brilliance of such a move lies in its “temporal inversion” of Thing-in-itself and concept: the former is the most abstract by being original – it is nothing but the contradictory flux of sensible representations that we first experience – while the latter is what conveys order and necessity upon sensible experience, and in doing so, actually engenders the sensible as sensible. In other words, since there is no domain of the sensible prior to the transcendental conditions, and since these conditions

⁸⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 21

⁸⁰⁹ Ibid, p. 23

belong to the concept (they cohere only in cognition, which results in the Kantian unity of apperception), the origins are themselves grounded in a “pre-original” moment only *to be determined* by the concept.

Therefore, if we side with Hegel, the passage between thinking and representation can only occur if we make reference to a temporality which exceeds the chronological. In political terms, power is never justified in the present but through the future and past – power resides in naming the anticipations of the people, and through that determining the content of the “the people” itself. The concept is the very activity of thought in the process of determining itself, but such a process is by definition non-representable, mythical, or as we are arguing, metapsychological. Our postulate asserts that any apparent teleology one could draw from this process is the outcome of a struggle in the present.

The difference between Kant and Hegel is both thin and dramatic – the dialectical strategy affirms the transcendental without resorting to dependence upon an external object by affirming that thought is always already acting as its own object. This is, following Žižek, the key to the logic of the signifier as well. A quote from Hegel’s famous preface to the *Phenomenology of Spirit* provides a vivid mental experiment:

“The bud disappears in the bursting-forth of the blossom, and one might say that the former is refuted by the latter; similarly, when the fruit appears, the blossom is shown up in its turn as a false manifestation of the plant, and the fruit now emerges as the truth of it instead. These forms are not just distinguished from one another, they also supplant one another as mutually incompatible. Yet at the same time their fluid nature makes them moments of an organic unity in which they not only do not conflict, but in which each is as necessary as the other; and this mutual necessity alone constitutes the life of the whole.”⁸¹⁰

In this light, the “bar” of the subject concerns the move from contradiction to mutual necessity – the series of features have

⁸¹⁰ Hegel, GWF. (1977) *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford University Press, p. 2

nothing in common until “the life of the whole” is revealed. What links them is in fact not a new property, but the necessity, rendered legible at each step, of their lacking this common property. However, if the concept’s primary action is to convey necessity, what guarantees that it itself even exists? This is the question which our postulate attempts to tackle.

We begin this by applying the categories of contingency and necessity to the most basic and well-known Freudian event, that of the dream. Freud, as is well-known, distinguished between the manifest and latent content – the details of the dream as reported by the analysand versus the underlying associations pointing to unconscious complexes. The standard reading supposes that the former is contingent whereas the latter is necessary. Quickly, we arrive at a very familiar criticism: that Freud unjustifiably interprets the essentially innocent manifest content into sexually-charged latent content. This, in fact, is the same one directed at Hegel, but with interpretation replacing systematization – both are guilty of reducing contingency to necessity.

However, how exactly is such a reductive operation possible in the first place? Here, representational thought faces a certain limit – in order to support the possibility of a deviation from reality in thought, it must be measured from without. That is, if we want to posit the world untouched by thought, we must be able to gauge thought’s influence and subtract or compensate for it. Thus, in representational terms, the path from contingent phenomena to the necessary system is one of removing the distortion introduced by thought itself – conversely, thought itself is always a deviation which must continuously be corrected.⁸¹¹

⁸¹¹ Hegel provides an excellent critique of this method when he says (§74): “To be specific, it takes for granted certain ideas about cognition as an instrument and as a medium, and assumes that there is a difference between ourselves and this cognition. Above all, it presupposes that the Absolute stands on one side and cognition on the other, independent and separated from it, and yet is something real; or in other words, it presupposes that cognition which, since it is excluded from the Absolute, is surely outside of the truth as well is nevertheless true, an assumption whereby what calls itself fear of error reveals itself rather as fear of the truth.” *Ibid*, p. 47

Freud's method was quite different than the above – by taking dreams and other unconscious processes as objects of enquiry, he reasoned that the proper move was not to remove, but to *add* a second distortion which made clear the first. This is the analyst's interpretation, which retroactively sheds light on the obscured link between latent and manifest content – a link he termed the “dream work”:

“The only essential thing about dreams is the dream-work that has influenced the thought-material. We have no right to ignore it in our theory, even though we may disregard it in certain practical situations. Analytic observation shows further that the dream-work never restricts itself to translating these thoughts into the archaic or regressive mode of expression that is familiar to you. In addition, it regularly takes possession of something else, which is not part of the latent thoughts of the previous day, but which is the true motive force for the construction of the dream. This indispensable addition [unentbehrliche Zutat] is the equally unconscious wish for the fulfillment of which the content of the dream is given its new form. A dream may thus be any sort of thing in so far as you are only taking into account the thoughts it represents – a warning, an intention, a preparation, and so on; but it is always also the fulfillment of an unconscious wish and, if you are considering it as a product of the dream-work, it is only that. A dream is therefore never simply an intention, or a warning, but always an intention, etc., translated into the archaic mode of thought by the help of an unconscious wish and transformed to fulfill that wish. The one characteristic, the wish-fulfillment, is the invariable one; the other may vary. It may for its part once more be a wish, in which case the dream will, with the help of an unconscious wish, represent as fulfilled a latent wish of the previous day.”⁸¹²

Thus, for Freud, what is necessary is neither the latent nor manifest content, but the work of distortion itself – the process of passing from the former to the latter is always a negative one, the removal of some content. The efficacy of interpretation lies in “undoing the dream work”, not in revealing its true content by eliminating distortion, but through positing distortion as a “content” of its own, an unfulfilled wish for example. The final

⁸¹² Freud, S. (1973) *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, Penguin Books, p. 261-262.

sentence is crucial since it implies that, even when a representation of this underlying wish is achieved, it does not fully represent the desire which is its true source.

Freud's answer to the accusations of "fabricating necessity" is that necessity appears in the *failure* to account for how the dream elements appear from their latent content – there can only be a dream work in rendering contradictory representations coherent if the link between them is not simply misplaced, but constitutively missing. A particular interpretation is itself contingent – nothing guarantees that the one will be found – but its effect can only be accounted for if the unconscious has done its work properly and made this link disappear in the first place.

This revealing of the movement from latent to manifest as a gap, in Hegel's terms, reveals the "the life of the whole" of unconscious processes. And it is this place between representations that justifies the usage of the term metapsychology. Just as Hegel separated ground from origins in the dialectical strategy, Freud separated interpretation from the content of the dream, thereby keeping the space open for subjectivity prior to representation.

This is also the point at which Lacan would later introduce his conception of the letter, as the ceaseless work which supports the domain of the symbolic, producing coherence. What we are interested in is the relation between the letter and what we have named in our postulate the "abstraction of time". Two texts are fundamental in this regard – *Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty* and *Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* and – both found in *Écrits*.

2.1 Logical Time

Logical Time and the Assertion of Anticipated Certainty appears in the middle of *Écrits*, though it is one of Lacan's earliest texts. Originally produced in 1945, the text underwent a major revision in '66, which was the year *Écrits* was first published. Significantly, the itinerary of *Écrits* does not heed the actual dates of publication of its texts - it opens with the *Seminar on*

the Purloined Letter, which was also heavily revised, with *Logical Time* situated as the eighth or ninth text, depending on if one counts the Overture. The peculiar re-arrangement of the texts in *Écrits* is something which Lacan himself comments on in the epigraph:

“May it resound with the right note here where I am placing it, between the before and the after, even if it demonstrates that the after was kept waiting so that the before could assume its own place.”⁸¹³

This alignment of the texts can be used to grasp the basic distinction at stake, the difference between *logical* and *chronological* time. Rather than being an artifact of his discourse to be supplanted by later developments, we argue that this distinction is the fundamental decision of Lacanian thought, perhaps awaiting its repetition in philosophy. History as something not yet able to assume its own place is a theme recurrent in Freud, encapsulated by his famous dictum “*Wo es war, soll ich werden*” [where it was, there I shall have been]. The *es* and *ich* are incompatible versions of the same moment: it is the past qua traumatic Thing versus the subjectivized past. We could say that logical time concerns the temporality *between* these two versions of the past, a time within time.

Lacan approaches this problem of the split temporality by first opposing what he designates as “spatializing”⁸¹⁴ classical logic. Time is not accounted for in a mathematical proof, for example – it stands apart from the circumstances of its construction. This is because it takes its object as both separate from it and eternal. On the other hand, it is clear that a powerful discipline must be cultivated to do mathematics, one which can span generations and withstand the crises of history. This conditioning can be regarded as subjective, which is irrelevant for mathematics but of supreme interest for psychoanalysis.

⁸¹³ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 161

⁸¹⁴ *Ibid.* p. 166

A classical logician, if he has philosophical pretensions, may defend himself by saying that truth can be neither temporary nor subjective, since both are a step towards relativism.⁸¹⁵ However, Lacan's conception of truth is not a matter of negotiating the multiplicity of discourses of a given moment, nor is it only valid from a certain individual's or historical perspective. What we are concerned with here is a truth which must incorporate time to become true. That the discoveries of science are valid for eternity should be made distinct from their status as appearing within time, a distinction which is itself temporalized in what Lacan calls the cut. This is what in psychoanalysis operates the division between atemporal truths and temporal, subjective experience.

It is a profound methodological point to consider that a truly new discovery is both *substance* and *subject*: it is both an external "thing" which we discover and something which actively awaited our discovery. In theological terms, God as divine truth is what Man must discover, but He also presides over, and ultimately desires to be discovered. For psychoanalysis, this is an apt description of the event of *castration*, which introduces both the subject to the Other and language to the body. The empiricist standpoint clings to the one-sidedness of substance and as such cannot verify that this event actually took place. The psychoanalyst, being more devout than a theologian and more rational than an empiricist, can thereby discern it in speech.

The question of the relation between truth and verification is the very object of Logical Time. Significantly, it begins and ends with the speech of prisoners who have just accomplished something impossible under the classical logic. Lacan interprets their reasoning as he would an analysand, by questioning what, or who, this reasoning appeals to. This interpretation, as we've

⁸¹⁵ Lacan conceives of the logician in a quite different way when he says: "I will now place myself under the auspices of he who sometimes dons the philosopher's garb, who – ambiguous – is more often to be sought in the comedian's banter, but who is always encountered in the politician's secretive action: the good logician, odious to the world."

established in our discussion of the dream work, makes apparent a distortion which was already at play in their tribulations. Speech, in another sense, suspends the division above between the atemporal and finite temporality, since with it, one can realize what has already been lost.

What matters in psychoanalysis is how history will come to subjectively matter, but the status of this "will have come to matter" both appears in the analytic moment and outside time. The evidence lies in the following: though the obscure meaning of one's own history can (through a long and difficult process) be clarified, or "subjectively integrated", something nevertheless always remains unelucidated - the very thing which provoked these clarifications.

What is named castration, then, is not something that simply occurred in the past - it is the name for how the past itself will always return to disrupt the present. Thus, we are concerned here, as Freud was when he commented on the Oedipal drama, with a *temporality of castration*:

S15: *The past qua trauma is atemporal insofar as it actively intervenes on temporal existence from a place that never goes away – what Freud called the “other scene” [ein anderer Schauplatz].*

Psychoanalysis does not aim to "put the past to rest" but to allow the patient to know his own symptoms – which amounts to a certain knowledge about one's ignorance – enough to put them to work.

We can, by thinking this “other scene”, draw a limit between science and psychoanalysis – for science, there is only the eternal and the historical, i.e. the time of theory and experimentation respectively. In psychoanalysis, these two must always be supplemented by their mediation, the subject of Science, which Lacan affirms is the Cartesian subject⁸¹⁶. For

⁸¹⁶ Ibid. p. 727

Freud, the subject is at home in this other scene, but as his problematic dictum implies, we cannot begin with the *Ich*, but must arrive at the *Es*. Now we put into question how this logical process is constructed.

2.1.1 The sophism

Three prisoners are brought into a room by the warden and told that one of them has a chance to be freed, a chance dependent on a game they must play. There are five disks: three white and two black, and each prisoner must wear one without knowing what color it is, though the others can see it. The first to exit the room, name the color of their disk correctly, and give a logical reason for how he came to the conclusion, shall be set free. The prisoners may not signal each other, a final rule which seems superfluous, given that only one of them will win.

Each receives white disks. They look at each other for a “certain time”, and proceed to the door simultaneously, each giving the same reason for why they are white:

“I am a white, and here is how I know it. Since my companions were whites, I thought that, had I been a black, each of them would have been able to infer the following: ‘If I too were a black, the other would have necessarily realized straight away that he was a white and would have left immediately; therefore I am not a black.’ And they both would have left together, convinced they were whites. As they did nothing of the kind, I must be a white like them. At that, I made for the door to make my conclusion known.”⁸¹⁷

Let us mark the crucial aspects of the problem. First, the sophism itself provides both the premise and solution of the game – it is told more like a joke or story than as a riddle for the reader to solve. In other words, there is no question in the sophism except in the ambiguity of its solution, from which Lacan’s own discussion begins. Second, the ending of the sophism in some sense subverts its own premises: only one

⁸¹⁷ Ibid. p. 162

prisoner is allowed to leave, yet all exit together and provide the same reasoning. How will the warden handle this situation, since it doesn't seem to be part of the law which he supposedly upholds? Lacan presents two "alternate endings" seemingly as replacements for the perfect solution of the sophism itself, but leaves the relation between these endings and the original one ambiguous, a fact which seems to resonate with the enigmatic ambiguity of the sophism itself.

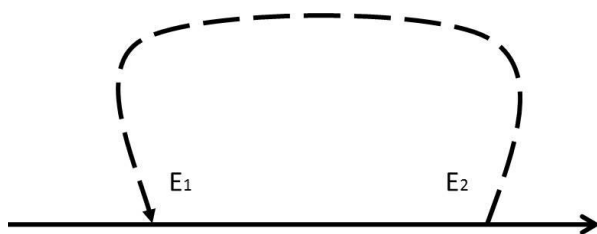
2.1.2 The reasoning as contradiction

The ambiguity of the perfect solution is found italicized in the point of the explanation which converts the reasoning of the prisoner to the conclusion of his action. That is, "*as they did nothing of the kind*" is the reason, in terms of the lack of evidence for what was hypothesized. We have something like a proof by contradiction in temporal terms: if I was black, the others should have left together immediately, and since they didn't, I must be white. The obvious question is: how long is immediately?

We have at hand a variable upon the entire reasoning hinges, but whose value is unknown at the outset of the game. Yet, it is impossible for this variable to remain unknown, since all three prisoners were able to conclude. In fact, the chronological (i.e. measurable) value of "immediate" can only be known once it is no longer useful, that is, once all three prisoners move.

Here we locate the first contradiction – the reasoning requires that a variable be calculated so that the one can move, but one cannot complete the calculation until after the decision to move occurs. We could describe it as an "inconsistent causality", in which an event E1 causes an event E2 only after E2 has occurred. In this case, E1 is "the others did nothing of the kind" and E2 is "I moved, along with the others".

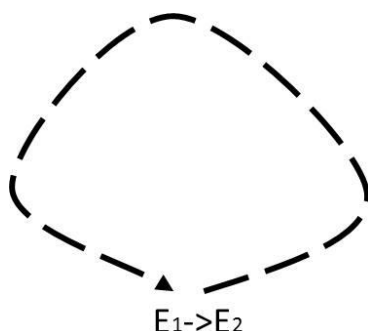
This is illustrated in the following diagram:



Lacan's solution is a strange one – to introduce three times and two scansions within this “nothing of a kind”, making it a veritable triad of nothingness: the instance of the glance, the time for comprehending, and the moment of concluding. These three times do not occur sequentially, but in a hierarchical manner – each seems to include the others, and in each case, what is highlighted as the principal inconsistency is different.

The instance of the glance is characterized by the “fulguration time” of zero, the measurable quantity of elapsed moments between E1 and E2. This brings us again to the distinction between *temporary* and *temporal*. The former can be conceived of as the time elapsed from a bystander's position, one not embroiled in the drama of prison life, while the latter is the enigmatic dimension of nothingness only accessible to the prisoners.

In diagrammatic terms, the solid line is temporary while the dotted one is temporal. Now, we could be content to condense the solid line such that only an instant would separate E1 and E2. If we were to go further and collapse the two events into a single one, would we thus lose our schema? In other words, *what can secure that the outcome and the premises are different?* This is the question whose answer is the movement which constitutes itself by the repeated attempts to keep our loop from closing. For now, it suffices to denote the event in time as a single point $E1 \rightarrow E2$:



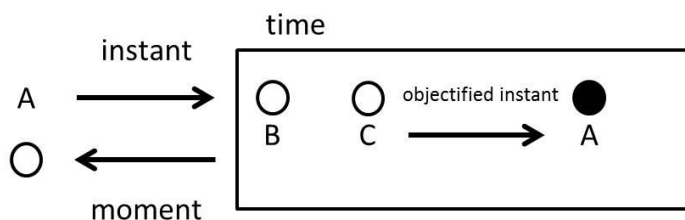
So how do we situate the triad of times and the doubled interruptions which separate them? Let us follow Lacan's exegesis. It is clear from the premises that there are only three logical combinations possible: three whites, two whites and one black, or two blacks and one white. In the first instant, what is seen is the fact that the others have white disks - A seeing B and C, in Lacan's nomenclature – thus *excluding the last case*. It is important to note that A, B, and C are positions valid for every prisoner, and that A is whoever is in the “hot seat”, the position of subjective engagement.

At the instant of the glance, A has not yet formulated a question about his own disk, but finds in the infinitely receding instant an intuition which has some relation to the excluded element: that seeing two blacks is logically equivalent to having a white disk. This equivalency, while not existing in his field of vision, is nevertheless true by a newly emerging logical process. In fact, Lacan's point is precisely that the disappearance of a combination from the game makes possible its logical value (which Lacan situates between the apodosis “I see two blacks” and the protasis “I am a white”).

But the caveat is that this value emerges not simply “for A”, but only “for B and C if A has a black disk.” That is, A cannot fully assume the value of the missing combination but needs to

suppose that the others assume it first. This supposition is marked as the first scansion, and it inaugurates a reciprocity between A and the others which will determine the next time.

As if reiterating the lesson that the best form of concealment is in plain sight, what is excluded by A's glance (two black disks) becomes in turn the crux of an intuition for B and C in the time for comprehending - if A has a black disk, B and C's glance will exclude the combination of three whites. The objectification of the instant of the glance for A into the "redoubled" instant for B and C is what is marked as the first scansion. Our process so far is depicted in the following:



In the time for comprehending, the hypothesis "I am black" is put to the test, revealing a new asymmetry, this time in temporal terms, between one's own time for comprehending and that of the other prisoners.

This stage of the process goes as follows: if A is black, B and C will now see a black and a white disk – B will reason that if he were also black, C would leave immediately (and C would reason the same about B). We find here the emergence of our above mentioned variable which is entangled in a problematic causality. That is, B and C must wait until this moment passes – which Lacan calls the *time of meditation* – before they make their decision, but they will not know until they make their decision how much time they must wait. Transitively, A must also wait until this moment passes too, but he cannot know when this moment is until B and C move.

All three prisoners seem to be bound by the same variable, but only if we do not consider the time that it took for A to formulate this very hypothesis. The others, in fact, do not have to hypothesize that A is black, since they would instantly see it and thus be ahead of him in concluding that they were whites. It becomes apparent that what is the time for comprehending for A may be the instant of the glance for the others. Therefore, they might precede him by what Lacan calls the *temps de battement*, or “logical beat”.

Expressed in a formula, the time that A has to wait before knowing when to move is equivalent to the time B and C take to make their deduction plus his own time for comprehending the situation. Though the variable is not any closer to being definite, it is clear that it denotes that A is, logically speaking, already out of time. At this point, the function of the first scansion meets an impasse: it is now to be counted as an element within its own domain.

In A's hypothesis, if B and C move, they will precede A not by the first scansion, which represents the unknown time for meditation that is equivalent for all three, but by the very time of the first scansion's constitution. Therefore, this scansion has value for A as long as it is not fully actualized, integrated into the chain of reasoning – it must remain a hypothesis. The only way to preserve this value is for A to move himself. He is provoked to haste because of the *possibility* that he might be behind. If they leave before him, he won't be able to reason any further, and as such, the entire basis of his reasoning lies in the veritable absence of a lagging behind.

The solution to the problem of the first scansion actually lies in its repetition: the variable is indeed incalculable for A, but through A's move to exit, he “unknowingly” prevents this variable from being calculated by the Other as well. This is the moment of pure difference suspended between the first and second scansion, or to put it in dialectical materialist terms, the moment when one scansion becomes two. Lacan calls this pure

difference the ontological form of anguish⁸¹⁸, and links it to the originality of the subject:

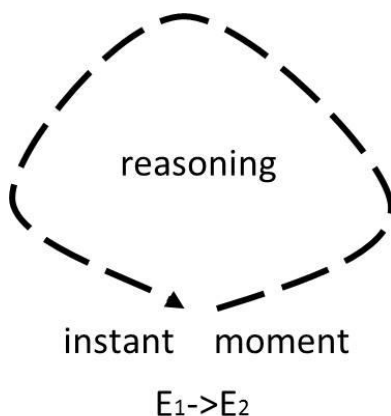
“The ‘I,’ subject of the conclusive assertion, is isolated from the other – that is, from the relation of reciprocity – by a logical beat [battement de temps]. This movement of the logical genesis of the ‘I’ through a decanting of its own logical time largely parallels its psychological birth. Just as, let us recall, the psychological ‘I’ emerges from an indeterminate specular transitivity, assisted by an awakened jealous tendency, the ‘I’ in question here defines itself through a subjectification of competition with the other, in the function of logical time.”⁸¹⁹

A rift appears as A realizes that his hypothesis does not only have a spatial value, but also a temporal one, which puts him “under the clock” versus the others. Yet, fortunately, this “logical beat” by which A is potentially behind is modulated by the second scansion to become haste. The value of the first scansion is the amount by which a prisoner is behind the others, yet the value of the second is that the first remains immeasurable for everyone. Since A can be any of the prisoners, we cannot define this in simple psychological terms. It is rather the “subjectivization” of a logical form in which none of the prisoners may move forward except synchronously, since the validity of their reasoning can only remain operative if no one precedes the others.

We could say that, while the spatial value of the hypothesis lies in how it separates A from the others, its temporal value is what binds all three. The second scansion does not close the loop we’ve thus constructed, but is the mark of the way the loop cannot be closed. As such, it marks the path of the reasoning thus far. We thus can answer the initial question posed – it is the subject as reasoning that keeps open the division between premise and outcome. The following diagram shows the final state of the movement:

⁸¹⁸ Ibid, p. 169

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, p. 170



Lacan summarizes this syncopation of moments:

“First of all, we witness the reappearance of the objective time of the initial intuition of the movement which, as though sucked up between the instant of its beginning and the haste of its end, had seemed to burst like a bubble. Owing to the force of doubt, which exfoliates the subjective certainty of the moment of concluding, objective time condenses here like a nucleus in the interval of the first suspended motion, and manifests to the subject its limit in the time for comprehending that, for the two others, the instant of the glance has passed and that the moment of concluding has returned.”⁸²⁰

The value of a certain time is not given until it becomes objectivized in a different one – there is never a full quantification of the three times. Rather, there is only the effect of the two modulating scansiones that render visible their role in the logical genesis of the subject. However, these scansiones can also be thought as the outcome of those times themselves. It seems that the problem of circular causality has only been displaced onto the level between the times and the scansiones. However, this is solved apropos the time for comprehending, when Lacan says:

⁸²⁰ Ibid. p. 171

“But how can we measure the limit of this time whose meaning has been thus objectified? The time for comprehending can be reduced to the instant of the glance, but this glance can include in its instant all the time needed for comprehending. The objectivity of this time thus vacillates with its limit. Its meaning alone subsists, along with the form it engenders of subjects who are undefined except by their reciprocity, and whose action is suspended by mutual causality in a time which gives way due to the very return of the intuition that it has objectified.”⁸²¹

The time for comprehending is the *amplification* of the instant of the glance, while the moment of concluding can be thought of thus as the *reduction* of the time for comprehending to the same instant. Reduction, while formally inverse of the amplification, leaves behind a distortion in the formal reality itself – for example, the “nothing of the kind” of the first solution. This is what remains to be interpreted.

Lacan describes this opening and closing as the pulsation of the unconscious: “*Discontinuity, then, is the essential form in which the unconscious first appears to us as a phenomenon - discontinuity, in which something is manifested as a vacillation.*”⁸²²

Time in fact undergoes two metamorphoses, from being that which is disappearing in the instance of the glance, to that which has always been lost in the time for comprehending, to a time which has yet to be determined in the moment of concluding.⁸²³ What changes in each stage is its logical value, its “usefulness” in solving the problem. However, something subsists in this discontinuity, which seems to precede all distortions.

Yet, this form cannot serve as an ontological grounding for the entire process. Lacan, for instance, rejects the idea that the unconscious springs from a neutral background: “*Where is the*

⁸²¹ Ibid. p. 168

⁸²² Lacan, J. (1998) *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. W.W Norton and Co. p. 25

⁸²³ A fourth time exists but remains concealed, that of the time of interpretation itself, a time without duration.

*background? Is it absent? No. Rupture, split, the stroke of the opening makes absence emerge—just as the cry does not stand out against a background of silence, but on the contrary makes the silence emerge as silence.*⁸²⁴

In the case of the prisoners, it is their form of reciprocity which is produced by the vacillation of time. In other words, it is only by showing that, for the others, there could be no time (or plenty) taken at all to reach a conclusion, can the meaning of my own time for comprehending (that I must move now) emerge. The logic thus relies not on a vacillation between absence and presence, but on that which is anterior to both, bestowing the very form of the opposition. At the heart of the contradiction is a pure difference logically prior to its terms. We now turn to a description of this difference.

Two alternate solutions are provided by Lacan – the first is the *subjective assertion*:

“I hastened to conclude that I was a white, because otherwise they would have preceded me in reciprocally recognizing themselves to be whites (and had I given them the time to do so, they would have led me astray, which would have been my undoing).”⁸²⁵

And the *desubjectivized* verification:

“One must know that one is a white when the others have hesitated twice in leaving.”⁸²⁶

The difficulty is apparent when we attempt to think the two together. That is, if the latter is correct, then why is there a need for haste on the part of the subject – and likewise, if the former is true, what necessitates the “one must know” of the latter? Rather than attempt to eliminate this contradiction, one should grasp it as the fundamental division of the Lacanian subject. In

⁸²⁴ Ibid, p. 26

⁸²⁵ Ibid, p. 172

⁸²⁶ Ibid.

the terms we introduced at the beginning of the chapter, it is the irreducible gap between truth and verification.

This division is the answer to the latent question of metapsychology. The requirement of adding three times and two scansions is one which is imposed by the structure of this articulation, another name for which is the subject. We should not confuse subject with subjective, but rather that which objectively articulates itself as a contradiction. What begins as an unknown variable, the time it takes for “nothing of the kind” to occur, is not solved in the sense of a calculation, but is formalized as unsolvable. This formalization makes clear that the problem is not simply a subjective blind spot, but also objective – this is apparent if we consider the place in which the warden is now put. There are no criteria by which to judge which prisoner should be set free, since all three have discovered the color of their disks in the same way. This shows again that the ambiguity of the sophism is not merely a psychologizing feature of its participants, but something which reaches the core of its articulation.

Where is the subject? Lacan says we can find it “slipping away (...) within a formal exigency”⁸²⁷. A demand for formalization appears at the points of ambiguity. At the utmost point of this formalizing process, it becomes the “one” of “one must know”. What Lacan has accomplished is the connection between the “one” (*un*) and “nothing of the kind”, its negative form. Something of this can be grasped by the prisoners themselves, but they are also excluded from the verification which suspends any need for formalizing further.

In our logic, the correct answer was the product of two exclusions - first, the glance of A excluding the combination two blacks, one white, and then the objectified glance of B and C excluding three whites. The subject is the very trajectory of these two exclusions – it is literally what falls away in the formalizing process of the prisoners’ reasoning. The act thus lies

⁸²⁷ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 166

in integrating these excluded moments back into the logical process, an act which is accomplished in the verificatory movement.

Let us proceed with a classic theological question which illustrates the contradiction inherent to the act: *can God create a stone which he cannot lift?* The very gap between this question and its answer constitutes a border or frame by which Lacan's point can be clarified.

As with the prisoners, what is at stake is God's freedom – essentially, freedom itself – in a game which he must compete against his own will. In other words, to play it would be to lose. The impossible is found to be lying dormant in his omnipotence – where ultimate power, which is ultimately causal, meets infinite mercy, the sublimity of submission to fate. A vacillation occurs in this problem, showing us that God's forfeiture is the only outcome – a disaster which must already, or always, have happened, since we are dealing with a contradiction which cannot be settled in chronological terms.

The proper answer is one which subverts the relation between power and weakness. The limit of freedom, God's inability to create the stone, is also the freedom to limit oneself. The impossibility of this problem can be grasped as real, since it determines the very notion of freedom as distinct from will. Will, as a spurious causal capacity, must vanish in order for true freedom to appear. Freedom is thus always marked by an irreducible uselessness, since one only achieves it by giving up precisely what we wanted to attain with it. This uselessness is the formal distortion at the heart of the concept, left behind by the subjective articulation.

The concept is thus necessarily split from within between its formal principles and its material realization, a division which marks the structure of the act in logical time. What was a forced choice for the prisoner engenders another forced choice, this time for the warden who, acting as the guarantor for the symbolic premises of the game, must either free all or none of

the prisoners, either way contradicting those premises. This is then the two-fold significance of Lacan's later phrase "subversion of the subject" – not only does language "subvert" the subject in castration, but the subject returns the favor, rendering the symbolic field inconsistent.

To summarize, the "abstraction of time" follows this process of enchaining thoughts in which time plays two roles. The first is that of a time disappearing in the formalization of the logic underlying thought. That is, to take the activity of thought as a form of reasoning, something of the materiality of time must disappear. The second is that of an objectivized time that exists within this now objectivized logic but remains fundamentally ambiguous or out-of-joint. This latter time attests to the now temporalized disappearance of the former.

2.2. Ideation

We can now formalize the temporal postulate in terms of logical time:

1. Ideation is both the subjective act in which a certain representation is asserted and the desubjectivized verification of this representation
2. These two levels never meet, they remain inconsistent, or non-representable – their solution lies in a temporal-logical process known as unconscious fantasy
3. Fantasy stages this intersection such that it appears as an ambiguous term of the process

What we named earlier as the "abstraction of time" is thus the production of two separate, but formally equivalent moments which sustain the consistency of the ideational content by appearing as a single moment. However, the correlate of our postulate is that:

S16: *There is no ideation without inconsistency.*

This is the core issue that psychoanalysis brings to the table for both politics and philosophy. What exceeds representation – of “the people” or of truth – is the bivalence of thought between subject and object⁸²⁸ marked by the “ambiguous term”.

Lacan breaks with the Parmenidean doctrine of the sameness of Being and Thought precisely by supplementing it with fantasy. Fantasy, in this sense, is neither a being nor a non-being but a *method* of dealing with the inherently inconsistent reality of ideation. Though we will not delve too deeply into this important psychoanalytic concept, it is important to note that there is no fantasy other than that of sexual relation. One way to understand this strange statement is to consider that there is no outside to fantasy. Fantasy cannot be dispelled by correct knowledge, and any attempt to “think realistically” is already included in it.

One might be tempted to ask why we shouldn’t then just call it “reality”. The reason is that fantasy denotes both reality and the *irreducible activity of someone who engages in it*. An obstacle to the pure deduction of causal relations in reality exists precisely where there is ideation. One event may cause another, but the very assertion of this is occurring elsewhere. It is this obstacle to uniting the two levels of ideation that allows us to pinpoint our responsibility as subjects.

Regarding the last point, it is interesting to note that part of the function of the master signifier is to represent the impossibility of anyone to act with full causal capacity. If this is so, what would such an act be in the first place? If no one can ever be the *causa sui*, then why bother naming the master? This is essentially an inverse to the question posed above regarding fantasy and reality. The temporal postulate enables us to situate this question as a dialectic between assertion and verification. There is strictly no relation between these levels, but this is perhaps why it is such a pertinent question. In other words, the

⁸²⁸ The subject and object only receive their proper Lacanian connotations when we conceive of them at the level of fantasy.

master signifier poses this question because it represents both the act of fantasizing and the very fantasy of the act, the latter including the gaze under which an act is an act.

The idea of freedom, for example, is comprised of both of the capacity to act (Decision) and the objective conditions grounding this capacity (Law), with either the former or latter acting as the determining factor. We either get the so-called *idealist* position, in which Decision stands as an exception to the Law, or the *realist* one, where the Decision is generated by the Law. The concept of fantasy allows us to think of these positions as methods by which the inconsistency of Freedom can be handled. An idealist is defined not by going beyond the Law, but by his assertion of its stable borders so that any transgression is even possible. The realist, on the other hand, is literally divided by the Law – he both denies that anything exists beyond the Law, while “hastening” to be the first to be represented by it.⁸²⁹

The psychoanalytic question emerges on close inspection of this divided response – who does the realist act for? That is, the Law represents not just a violent imposition on subjective decision, but also the act, which has always already occurred, of abdicating the decision to the Law. Freedom is thus always freedom in choosing what was already chosen for us – it is a purely formal gesture which nevertheless reconfigures the relation between Law and agency. As Žižek explains:

⁸²⁹ G.K. Chesterton brilliantly diagnoses these two subjective positions in his *Orthodoxy*: “When I was a boy there were two curious men running about who were called the optimist and the pessimist. I constantly used the words myself, but I cheerfully confess that I never had any very special idea of what they meant. The only thing which might be considered evident was that they could not mean what they said; for the ordinary verbal explanation was that the optimist thought this world as good as it could be, while the pessimist thought it as bad as it could be. Both these statements being obviously raving nonsense, one had to cast about for other explanations. An optimist could not mean a man who thought everything right and nothing wrong. For that is meaningless; it is like calling everything right and nothing left. Upon the whole, I came to the conclusion that the optimist thought everything good except the pessimist, and that the pessimist thought everything bad, except himself.” See Chesterton, G.K. (1994) *Orthodoxy*, Project Gutenberg, available at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/130/pg130.html> [accessed September 1st, 2012]

“The subject ‘liberates’ itself not by ‘overcoming’ the negative power of the Other to which it is submitted, but by experiencing its self-referential character: the negativity which the Other directed against the subject is actually directed against the Other itself, which means that this Other is already in itself split, marked by a self-referring negative relationship, submitted to its own negativity. The relationship of the subject to the Other thus ceases to be that of direct subordination, since the Other is no longer a figure of full omnipotence: what the subject obeys is no longer the Other’s will but a Law which regulates its relationship to the Other – the Law imposed by the Other is simultaneously the Law which the Other itself must obey.”⁸³⁰

The structure of Law and its exception is thus no longer required – Law becomes both the expression of the Other’s will and the very exception to it. This contradiction does not negate our premises (as it would in classical logic), but rather reveals the stage, or frame, that supports the idea. The idea is as much the process of thinking as its end product, but necessarily appears either as one or the other. The equivalence of the two sides can only be made in the “self-referring negative relationship”.

We have already seen how Lacan traverses the sophism by marking, via the double scansion, how the indeterminate status of the other prisoners for a given prisoner becomes a reason to act. It is of interest to study how these scansions constitute the frame by which the logic is constituted. This leaves us to question the role of the analyst – he is neither the subject nor the Other, yet functions to make their lack of relationship clear.

Lacan’s famous matheme $\$ \diamond a$ (to be read as “barred S punction a”) expresses this very idea: it is impossible to tell whether it is the subject which desires the object or the other way around⁸³¹. In other words, desire is the desire of the Other,

⁸³⁰ Žižek, S (2008) *For They Know Not What They Do*, Verso, p. 266

⁸³¹ From *Kant with Sade*: “Fantasy is defined by the most general form it receives in an algebra I have constructed for this purpose – namely, the formula $(\$ \diamond a)$, in which the lozenge \diamond is to be read as “desire for”, being read right to left in the same way, introducing that is based on an absolute non-reciprocity.

both of what is lacking in the Other and of having desire recognized by the Other. Psychoanalysis does not seek to erase this ambiguity, but rather to elevate it to the level of being a cause of desire itself. Time and again, Lacan would make an impassioned appeal to this dimension located in the phenomenon of speech.

2.3 Speech and Language

As we suggested in the previous chapter, speech and logical time form respectively the ontic and ontological dimensions of psychoanalysis. In *Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis* (FF), Lacan makes his famous call to the psychoanalytic institutions for the “return to Freud” in the revaluation of speech as the primary source of analytic experience. For Lacan, problems have arisen due to a certain deterioration of the “teacher function”⁸³², threatening the coherence and effectiveness of Freud’s concepts:

“If this function is neglected, the meaning of an action whose effects derive solely from meaning is obliterated, and the rules of analytic technique, being reduced to mere recipes, rob analytic experience of any status as knowledge and even of any criterion of reality.”⁸³³

He asks why there is a widespread aversion with studying Freud’s actual writings. Has Freud been discredited, or have his disciples surpassed him in their understanding of his original discoveries? Lacan sees proof of neither, but rather the “ceremonious” use of the Freudian vocabulary without any comprehension of their meaning. This is an effect of the forgetting of the history of Freud’s concepts, a history which cannot be separated from their content without incurring a loss of rigor. From this follows the comparison between psychoanalysis and obsessive neurosis:

(This relation is coextensive with the subject’s formations.)” See Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 653.

⁸³² Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 200

⁸³³ *Ibid.*

“When we consider the literature that this activity produces for its own nourishment, the analogy becomes even more marked: the impression is often that of a curious closed circuit in which ignorance of the origin of terms generates problems in reconciling them, and in which the effort to solve these problems reinforces the original ignorance.”⁸³⁴

As a solution to this, Lacan proposes that psychoanalysis must be applied to its own foundations.⁸³⁵ Since speech is the only medium proper for analysis, such a project implies that there is a speech of the community of analysts as such. This explains to some extent why the “return to Freud” not only consisted of passages in Freud’s texts, but also extensive critiques of the psychologists and analysts of his time (Pavlov, Piaget, Kris, Ferenczi, Klein, Balint, etc.). These critiques, when viewed as interpretations of the Freudian field, are also investigations into what extent the unconscious might necessarily be misrecognized even by those who seem to be the most qualified to handle it.⁸³⁶

Lacan’s first comment about speech is that it always calls for and receives a response, even if that response is silence.⁸³⁷ Yet, this creates a temptation for the analyst to respond to the call with his own speech, to fill in the “perceived echo of his own nothingness.”⁸³⁸ To respond in such an instance would be to miss the only thing which might adequately answer, namely, truth.

Where does truth come from, if not from the analyst’s response? For Lacan, it is produced from the elaborations of the patient herself, which can be split into two categories: empty and full speech.⁸³⁹ Empty speech is that which projects its meaning beyond the speaker - it is defined by the frustration incurred by its own unfulfilled conditions. Full speech does not quite oppose

⁸³⁴ Ibid. p. 203

⁸³⁵ Ibid.

⁸³⁶ Lacan would directly address this problem later in a text entitled *The Mistaking of the Subject Supposed to Know* [*La méprise du sujet suppose savoir*]

⁸³⁷ Ibid. p. 206

⁸³⁸ Ibid.

⁸³⁹ Ibid. p. 211

the former, but elucidates what is true in it by counting its emptiness – and not a supposed meaning – as the determinate category. This renders problematic the commonplace notion of interpretation as drawing out hidden meanings. On the contrary, a proper interpretation is one which further delimits what is lacking in speech, making it more precise.

In other words, empty speech and full speech are not qualitatively different but imply two different moments in analysis. In the first moment, something is missing and in the second, this very lack articulates itself. It is in this way that speech makes a continuity that suspends the very rules for what is meaningful:

“To Freud’s mind, it is not a question of biological memory, nor of its intuitionist mystification, nor of the paramnesia of the symptom, but of remembering, that is, of history; he rests the scales – in which conjectures about the past make promises about the future oscillate – on the knife-edge of chronological certainties alone. Let’s be categorical: in psychoanalytic anamnesis ,what is at stake is not reality, but truth, because the effect of full speech is to reorder past contingencies by conferring on them the sense of necessities to come, such as they are constituted by the scant freedom through which the subject makes them present.”⁸⁴⁰

If speech enables us to re-order past events, it is because it incessantly refers to the true sequence of those events. By listening to the slips, omissions, and distortions of speech, one is able to put to question the source of error, which is always a question about what repeats. When Freud uses the term *durcharbeiten*, or “working through”, it is a sequence which must be reconstructed. This sequence is both lost in the sense of having being repressed, and renewed in the “sense of necessities to come”.

The “knife-edge of chronological certainties” is likely a reference to the crucial passage in *Studies on Hysteria* in which

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 213

Freud recounts how he had first discovered the method which allowed him to bypass the use of hypnosis:

"I decided to start from the assumption that my patients knew everything that was of any pathogenic significance and that it was only a question of obliging them to communicate it. Thus when I reached a point at which, after asking a patient some question such as: 'How long have you had this symptom?' or: 'What was its origin?', I was met with the answer: 'I really don't know', I proceeded as follows. I placed my hand on the patient's forehead or took her head between my hands and said: 'You will think of it under the pressure of my hand. At the moment at which I relax my pressure you will see something in front of you or something will come into your head. Catch hold of it. It will be what we are looking for. - Well what have you seen or what has occurred to you?'"⁸⁴¹

Freud's assumption was therefore an absolute trust in speech, and he observed that this had an effect on the patient. It is this "chronological certainty" that, once assumed by the patient in speaking, activates a continuity that was otherwise hidden in her history. Using the terms developed previously, we could say that speech makes palpable the difference between our *temporary* past and the past which is *temporal*, that is, existing in the present to be "caught hold of" and imbued with the enigma of the future. This enigma is that of something which has not yet found its proper place.⁸⁴² As in Logical Time, what is missing

⁸⁴¹ Freud, S. (1895) Studies on Hysteria. The Complete Works, trans. by Strachley, p. 99

⁸⁴² Nietzsche points out that history is always subordinated to the *unhistorical*, that is, to a method: "Insofar as history stands in the service of life, it stands in the service of an unhistorical power and will therefore, in this subordinate position, never be able to (and should never be able to) become pure science, the way mathematics is, for example. However, the problem to what degree living generally requires the services of history is one of the most important questions and concerns with respect to the health of a human being, a people, or a culture. For with a certain excess of history, living crumbles away and degenerates, and through this decay history itself also finally degenerates. However, the fact that living requires the services of history must be understood just as clearly as the principle, which will be demonstrated later, that an excess of history harms the living person. In three respects history belongs to the living person: it belongs to him as an active and striving person; it belongs to him as a person who preserves and reveres; it belongs to him as a suffering person in need of emancipation. This trinity of relationships corresponds to a trinity of methods for history, to the

must first be posited through the Other – the analyst occupies the place of the prisoners who can see my “black disk” – and only when this culminates in an anticipation can a conclusion be reached.

However, the notion of “place” itself is non-trivial for Lacan, for whom it is clear that the past does not simply cease to exist, nor is the future a matter of pure ignorance, but that both are bound and determined by a dialectics of speech and language in the present. It is here that we can find the germ of what would become his theory of discourses. At the time of *Function and Field*, this is best isolated in a critique Lacan gives of Masserman, who asserts that animals also possess the capabilities of language. First a quote by Masserman:

“Man has always been inordinately proud of his ability to communicate by words and signs, and has often liked to think that this differentiated him from the rest of all creation. Philosophers, who designate themselves man's professional apologists and protagonists, have therefore been traditionally pre-occupied with extensive ruminations—as various as they have been voluminous—about the significance of language as an exclusively human function. On the other hand, observant biologists, from hunters and herders to professors of comparative zoology, have inevitably noted many types of intra- and inter-species communication among animals of nearly every order, and have consequently not been so certain as to man's monopoly of the essentials of language.”⁸⁴³

Lacan points out that he has no issue with the idea that the origins of symbolic behavior are to be found outside of the human sphere.⁸⁴⁴ However, he adds that something else must be included in order to make possible speech, namely the division between signifier and signified. Masserman's experiments showed, akin to Pavlov, that human physiological behavior

extent that one may make the distinctions, a monumental method, an antiquarian method, and a critical method.” From Nietzsche, F. (2010) *On the Use and Abuse of History for Life*. Trans. by Ian Johnston, available at: <http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/nietzsche/history.htm> [accessed September 28th, 2012]

⁸⁴³ Masserman, J.H. (1944). *Language, Behaviour and Dynamic Psychiatry*. Int. J. Psycho-Anal., 25:1-8.

⁸⁴⁴ *Écrits*. p. 225

could be trained and regulated by “idea-symbols” – for example, one could make the pupils contract by shining a light on them while repeating the word “contract” until eventually the light is no longer required. Lacan however asks the following – would it be possible to replace “contract” with “marriage contract”, “contract bridge”, or “breach of contract”, or an abbreviation such as “contra”? If the effects cease, then it is not a matter of meaning at all (hence no idea-symbol is involved), and if they continue, we must account for the limits of meaning within the symbolic itself and not solely through physiological effects:

“...I could remark to the author that what defines any element whatsoever of a language as belonging to language is that, for all the users of the language, this element is distinguished as such in the supposedly constituted set of homologous elements.

Thus, the particular effects of this element of language are linked to the existence of this set, prior to any possible link with any of the subject’s particular experiences. And to consider this last link independently of any reference to the first is simply to deny the characteristic function of language to this element.”⁸⁴⁵

In other words, elements of language are negatively linked to the set of language as such – a signifier represents *what it is not* to all other signifiers. The idea-symbol “do not contract” would presumably have the same effect in Masserman’s experiments as simply saying “contract”, but have opposite or tangential significations in ordinary language. Language therefore displays a plasticity which seems to defy essentialism, but on the other hand, cannot be reduced to conventionalism either (since if history was a matter of convention, there would be no need for psychoanalysis).

Lacan argues rather that the function of speech is to make the reality of language emerge through absence. This power of negativity in speech is famously exemplified in a young child’s game which Freud witnessed. The child was described as seeming not to mind being left alone by his mother for short

⁸⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 227

periods. However, he would often throw a wooden reel with a string attached over his crib, making it disappear, shouting “Fort! [gone!]” only to make it re-appear, pulling it back and shouting “Da! [there!]”. Freud interpreted this as the staging of the disappearance of the mother, such that the child would have mastery over her re-appearance.⁸⁴⁶

Lacan adds furthermore that this implies the destruction of the actual object – the child’s interest gains independence from the actual mother only when the satisfaction of attaining her is forever lost. The child’s action does not require an object outside of itself, since it no longer deals with absence and presence in the original sense, but with an “absence within presence” and “presence within absence”.⁸⁴⁷

This moment of the child’s introduction to language enables the only psychoanalytically valid notion of freedom to manifest. This moment, not simply being one within time, is effective for all time.

“We always come back, then, to our twofold reference to speech and language. In order to free the subject’s speech, we introduce him to the language of his desire, that is, to the primary language in which – beyond what he tells us of himself – he is already speaking to us unbeknown to himself, first and foremost, in the symbols of his symptom.”⁸⁴⁸

The language of one’s desire and the symbols of one’s symptom are defined negatively with respect to language as such. An absolute trust in speech is therefore not a trust that some important meaning will be conveyed, but rather that something has already escaped this meaning. What guides the direction of treatment is a knowledge not known by the analysand, but an “acephalic” knowledge, as Lacan puts it. This is, in fact, the very knowledge embodied or codified in the symptom itself. The

⁸⁴⁶ Freud, S. (1920) *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. vol. 18 Standard Edition, p. 14-17

⁸⁴⁷ Lacan, J. (1991) *Freud’s Papers on Technique*. London: W.W. Norton and Co. p. 173

⁸⁴⁸ *Ibid.* p. 243

patient in analysis does not simply begin by speaking about his suffering, but only arrives at it when speech mobilizes the “primary language”.

The difference between psychology and psychoanalysis is illustrative here. The former today attempts to catalogue the infinite forms of psychic suffering that exist, and differentiate them by signs which can lead to specialized treatment. However, this differentiation always has a limit – there is always a point where it is ultimately impossible to tell between two different conditions. Psychoanalysis does not simply oppose psychology, but begins from the latter’s failure to write the encyclopedia of illness. Darian Leader points out the ideological motivations of the former approach:

“To treat a depression on the same model as, say, an infection requiring antibiotics, is always a dangerous decision. The medicine will not cure what has made the person depressed in the first place, and the more that the symptoms are seen as signs of deviance or unadapted behavior, the more the sufferer will feel the weight of the norm, of what they are supposed to be. They become casualties of today’s view of human beings as ‘resources’, in which a person is just a unit of energy, a packet of skills and competencies which can be bought and sold in the market-place. If that is what human life has become, is it surprising that so many people choose to refuse this fate, losing their energy and their market potential as they fall in depression and misery?”⁸⁴⁹

Leader goes on to describe what is called depression today as the effect of improper mourning. Just as the child’s game was premised on the absence of the mother, the process of working through is always one of loss. Meaning can only do so much to attenuate this structural fact. It is no wonder then that the question of nihilism has become so interesting for philosophy. For this question always has two sides – not only why the universe seems devoid of meaning, but also where this expectation of meaning came from in the first place.

⁸⁴⁹ Leader, D. (2009) *The New Black: Mourning, Melancholia, and Depression*. Graywolf Press. p. 3

It is in this other side that psychoanalysis enters, since what is fundamentally at stake is the place from where loss emerges, and how it can be symbolized. Though every speaking being has a singular “primary language”, this does not imply that it is private. That is, speech always references language as such, confronting us with the irreducibly social character of the symptom. By isolating this language of the symptom, it is possible to renew the problem of nihilism, though it will not be by the routes paved by an existentialism or vitalism of any kind.

Certainly, the analyst does not propose that he knows the meaning of life – even better, he or she proposes a method which overrides the need for any such meaning. This method works because there is something beyond meaning, that is, there is an excess of the signifier over the signified. A lack of meaning is no obstacle to speech, but is even presupposed by it. Since a signifier is defined by being a specific lack in language, a negative among negatives, it does not require a content of its own. The following section will deal with these dynamics and link them to the temporal postulate we began with.

2.4 Transference and Transmission

We now take a closer look at how the function of speech and the temporal postulate are to be situated together. We have visited how speech realizes the order of language by making its absences present. Yet, in order to do this, speech must have effects on language as such, and not simply the mind of the individual. However, what exactly permits us to speak of language as an independent entity of its own?

What we earlier termed ideation is in fact the process by which the dialectic of speech and language finds its resolution in fantasy. When an idea is formed, it is always in reference to something imputed to the Other, the guarantor of the objective substrate of the idea. This imputation manifests in the analytic session, for example, when the patient notices the presence of

the analyst arising in silence.⁸⁵⁰ What this presence indicates, this excess of non-responsiveness which disrupts the speech, is the formation of an idea in the form of the thought of another. In other words, beyond what is spoken, speech evokes whom it addresses. This is known as transference and constitutes perhaps the central question of analysis.

It is not the enunciated content of speech but what it misses which leads the patient to assume it as full speech. This assumption of the inconsistent ground of the idea is what we will term transmission. Temporally speaking, a decision always precedes and grounds the idea. The analyst's work is precisely to punctuate these moments, by silence or interpretation (indeed both are, with respect to the working-through, strictly equivalent).

We begin with St. Augustine, who provides the singular account of the separation between sign and knowledge in his text *De Magistro*. Indeed, Lacan in 1954 claims that the most modern problems of linguistics can be found already elaborated here in the dialogue between Augustine and his son, Adeodatus.⁸⁵¹

The text begins with the insight that speech is always used to either teach or to indicate that one wishes to be taught something. The two are ultimately indistinguishable, as Lacan points out⁸⁵² – teaching someone is also teaching oneself and indicating one's desire to learn something is already a form of transmission of knowledge. However, Adeodatus counters with

⁸⁵⁰ "Just when he seems ready to come out with something more authentic, more to the point than he has ever managed to come up with up to then, the subject, in some cases, breaks off, and utters a statement, which might be the following - *I am aware all of a sudden of the fact of your presence.*" See Lacan, J. (1991) Freud's Papers on Technique, W.W. Norton and Co. p. 40

⁸⁵¹ "Everything I have been telling you about the signifier and the signified is there, expounded with a sensational lucidity, so sensational that I am afraid that the spiritual commentators who have given themselves over to its exegesis have not always perceived all of its subtlety. They think that the profound Doctor of the Church has strayed off his path into rather futile things. These futile things are nothing other than the latest developments in modern thought on language." Ibid. p. 249

⁸⁵² Ibid. p. 251

the example of prayer – it is impossible to teach God, therefore speech must be superfluous. Augustine responds by saying that prayer is not intended to teach God, but to make men remember what they pray for and to whom. This leads the discussion towards the relation between signs and memory:

“Aug.—And you are not disturbed by the fact that our great Master, in teaching his disciples to pray, taught them certain words, so that it looks as if he had taught them actually what words to use in prayer?

Ad.—No. That does not disturb me. For he did not teach them words merely, but by words, by means of which they could keep themselves in constant remembrance, he taught them realities—what they should pray for, and from whom, when they prayed in their inmost mind, as we said.”⁸⁵³

We already have here a properly Lacanian notion of language – its main function is not to inform but to evoke reality. This is why the conformity and repetition of prayer does not reduce its authenticity, but is a testament to its power of inciting the memory. Yet, to make something emerge from memory is to make it emerge as lost. The difference between this and Masserman’s experiment of associating words with physical reactions can be encapsulated in an example that Augustine gives later in the text. To teach someone how to walk without using any words, it seems that one would just demonstrate it. However, in the case where one is already walking, a difficulty appears. As Adeodatus reasons, one would need to first stop and then walk again, or speed up the walking. From this, we can conclude that the knowledge of walking is not evoked so much by what demonstrates it in the present, as by the signifier, which is its *possible absence*.

In the second half of the text, Augustine situates this relation between knowledge and absence at the level of truth. That is, when we hear something from a teacher, how do we know he is telling the truth? What could justify our trust in this entity,

⁸⁵³ Augustine, St. (1953) *Augustine: Earlier Writings*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press. p. 70

which seems like another version of Descartes' deceptive God? Augustine's answer is as follows:

"Now the question is, does he also learn that the words spoken are true? Do teachers profess that it is their thoughts that are learned and retained, and not the disciplines which they imagine they transmit by their speaking? Who is so foolishly curious as to send his son to school to learn what the teacher thinks? When the teachers have expounded by means of words all the disciplines which they profess to teach, the disciplines also of virtue and wisdom, then their pupils take thought within themselves whether what they have been told is true, looking to the inward truth, that is to say, so far as they are able. In this way they learn. And when they find inwardly that what they have been told is true they praise their teachers, not knowing that they really praise not teachers but learned men, if the teachers really know what they express in words. Men are wrong when they call those teachers who are not. But because very often there is no interval between the moment of speaking and the moment of knowing, and because they inwardly learn immediately after the speaker has given his admonition, they suppose that they have been taught in an external fashion by him who gave the admonition."⁸⁵⁴

Thus, the teacher is not the one who speaks but is rather internal to the student already. In fact, Augustine goes further and states that individuals are only ever "learned men" – there is only the teacher within. The interval between speaking and learning is where this third instance resides. One can draw several parallels between this passage and what Lacan would later term the "subject supposed to know". For both Lacan and Augustine, the trust that a patient places in a person is a mistaken one, but necessary. The question to ask is: where does knowledge reside before there is a knower? For Augustine, this implies none other than the teacher – God – immanent to speech itself:

"Concerning universals of which we can have knowledge, we do not listen to anyone speaking and making sounds outside ourselves. We listen to Truth which presides over our minds within us, though of course we may be bidden to listen by someone using words. Our real Teacher is he who is so listened to, who is said to dwell in the inner man, namely Christ, that is, the unchangeable power and eternal wisdom of

⁸⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 100

God. To this wisdom every rational soul gives heed, but to each is given only so much as he is able to receive, according to his own good or evil will. If anyone is ever deceived it is not the fault of Truth, any more than it is the fault of the common light of day that the bodily eyes are often deceived. Confessedly we must pay heed to the light that it may let us discern visible things so far as we are able.”⁸⁵⁵

The gap between the moment of speaking and the moment of knowing is here where we should situate the temporal postulate. The quantity of time in this interval can be nothing – indeed Lacan claims that one only ever learns “in a flash”. Yet a certain non-quantifiable time has passed for Truth to appear, though it “dwell in the inner man”. When it appears, it is as if it had always been there, and this is the effect which we are concerned with now. While Truth is exterior to signs, it is not exterior to the student:

“When you understand what is expressed in the signs of the language, it is always, in the end, on account of light coming to you from outside of the signs - either through an inner truth which allows you to recognize what is borne by signs, or by the presentation of an object which is correlated, in a repeated and insistent manner, with a sign. And here we have the perspective turned upside down. The truth is outside of the signs, elsewhere. This see-saw of the Augustinian dialectic directs us towards the recognition of the authentic magister, of the inner master of truth.”⁸⁵⁶

In what sense does truth manifest itself internally? Lacan states that it is precisely in error:

“It is clear that error is only definable in terms of the truth. But the point is not that there would be no error if there were no truth, as there would be no white if there were no black. There is more to it than that - there is no error which does not present and promulgate itself as truth. In short, error is the habitual incarnation of the truth. And if we wanted to be entirely rigorous, we would say that, as long as the truth isn't entirely revealed, that is to say in all probability until the end

⁸⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 95

⁸⁵⁶ Lacan, J. (1991) *Freud's Papers on Technique*, W.W. Norton and Co. p. 262

of time, its nature will be to propagate itself in the form of error⁸⁵⁷

In other words, beyond the opposition of true and false, the question of recognition is always posed. That some statements have the status of true or false is secondary to the question of the being that would be able to discern this difference, a being of language itself. The discovery of the unconscious permits us the idea that this being is constrained by thought. The “truth status” of the thing under consideration is dependent on the reference made to the system of language as a whole. An entire universe of discourse must exist for there to be a simple thing as a false statement. However, for Lacan there is no such “whole” of language but rather only an error, or lack, which repeatedly appears. Thus truth is a moving target, its trajectory the outline of the subject.

Lacan points out quite ingeniously that in order to be a good liar one must have a much better memory than those that are simply honest.⁸⁵⁸ This is because a fidelity to the truth is already forming in the work to maintain the lie as consistent. Each additional lie must reference all the previous ones, such that one can speak of “systematic lies” but rarely of “systematic truths”. This is a cornerstone of the analytic experience. The wager of the analyst is that in building such a system, the analysand is unknowingly constructing the truth which will emerge upon the dissolution of the former.

A somewhat analogous example is the technique used by mathematicians of proving a statement by first affirming its negation and then finding a contradiction. Since no contradictions are allowed in mathematical thinking, the only option that remains must be true. We could say likewise that a successful psychoanalysis is one which proves to the patient the truth of his desire by inviting him to speak all the lies he wants. In doing so, the speaker will find that his “free association” begins to assume all the rigor of a mathematical proof.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 263

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid.

Contradiction is also at play in the proof-by-speech, but it should be interpreted rather than eliminated.

Lacan states that Freud's notion of condensation [*Verdichtung*] should be examined alongside the manifestation of truth in error: an entire system of signifiers represents the subject to a single "master" signifier, which is the truth of the rest.⁸⁵⁹

In his text *The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious*, Lacan links condensation to the function of metaphor in poetic writing.⁸⁶⁰ Signification emerges in the substitution of one signifier for another, which in an inversion of Saussure's original formula, is tantamount to the signifier "crossing over" into the domain of the signified itself. The truth of one's desire does not emerge from an opening but a radical closure in language, one which blocks the multitude of different perspectives and meanings. A closure however should not be considered to be a full representation – condensation proceeds not by making a signifier represent itself but something inherent to everything else.

One way to understand this strange formulation is to consider that an interpretation does not explain away the contradictions of what a patient says, but rather highlights that these contradictions do not constitute a terminal point, as it would in classical logic.⁸⁶¹ We could say that analysis occurs only in the situation in which a very specific contradiction is maintained –

⁸⁵⁹ The justification for inverting Lacan's definition lies in the fact that, before being multiple or singular, the signifier is irreducibly Two. It is only insofar as it represents to another – so as soon as we can speak of a multiplicity of signifiers, we are already relying on the master signifier. It is interesting to think of Freud's condensation as a version of that paradox which plagued set theory prior to its axiomatization – it posits the existence of a "signifier of all signifiers".

⁸⁶⁰ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 421

⁸⁶¹ "What Freud means when he talks about the suspension of the principle of non-contradiction in the unconscious is that the genuine speech that we are supposed to uncover, not through observation, but through interpretation, in the symptom, in the dream, in the slip, in the Witz, obeys laws other than those of discourse, which is subject to the condition of having to move within error up to the moment when it encounters contradiction. Authentic speech has other modes, other means, than everyday speech." Ibid. p. 267

that the patient both knows and doesn't know what he's saying. The effect of this is that the role of knowledge itself is suspended – but truth of one's desire subsists. In other words, though desire is fundamentally metonymical – it never achieves any identity – the metaphor puts to work this obstacle to identity. Lacan says:

“We see that metaphor is situated at the precise point at which meaning is produced in nonmeaning – that is, at the passage which, as Freud discovered, when crossed in the opposite direction, gives rise to the word that is ‘the word’ [*le mot*] par excellence in French, the word that has no other patronage there than the signifier *esprit* – and at which it becomes palpable that, in deriding the signifier, man defies his very destiny.”⁸⁶²

The functioning of the metaphor is illustrative of the temporal postulate. Meaning produced by non-meaning is only possible if there is a return movement which is the very path of the subject. This “crossing in the opposite direction” evokes the *esprit* of language – it is fundamentally poetic. In our terms, it is the subjective assertion which is articulated when the temporal path of the signifier is traced backwards. For a metaphor to “work” there must be a desire animating the signifiers – this supposition is enacted by the speaker in addressing someone. The speaking being is called on to come to terms with what appears in his speech but which he cannot master – it is a position of castration which prompts his path through the “defiles” of the Other. Finally, the significance of the original impetus to speak is found, a movement which “loops back” onto itself (yet it is not a circle). The time of this movement is captured by the metaphor. The possibility of inscribing time, of making it literal, is the fundamental breakthrough of the Freudian-Lacanian discourse. Chronological time is an object of measurement – it *elapses*, while temporality proper is a *lapsus*, a mistake provoking interpretation. The effect of a proper interpretation is not to solidify this gap into another signifier, but to show the inconsistency of all signifiers that represent it. Desire cannot be satisfied by any representation of its object, and the Freudian

⁸⁶² Ibid. p. 423

durcharbeiten is the exhaustive affirmation of this. Interestingly, at the end of analysis what we are left with is not a statement or set of statements which are universally valid, but rather the psychoanalyst him or herself.

What matters for the mathematician is not so much the route taken, as there could be other modes of proof, nor even what is ultimately proven, but that the system remains free of contradictions. Things are different for the psychoanalyst, who sees in the contradiction itself the “habitual incarnation of the truth”. This is because he or she locates at the locus of the system of language a point which is shared by the speaking being. The act of speaking emanates from here, and because of this, one cannot directly deduce it from starting premises, since any discourse already presupposes it. It must be rather inferred in a second moment, after the empty speech has exhausted itself. The analyst is the evidence of what subsists after this process has run its course and a deadlock is reached. We now focus our attention on the structure of this impasse.

3. Ambiguity as the Real

The psychoanalytic conception of truth begins where knowledge ends – that is, it begins at the latter’s inconsistency. In the previous chapters we dealt with how this inconsistency has to do with the exclusivity of the subjective and objective sides of ideation. The truth resides in between these two dimensions, and as such, no idea proper can be rid of a certain ambiguity. This is also what is at stake in desire as Lacan conceived it. The ethics of psychoanalysis is developed from the motto that one should not “give up” on one’s desire. This may be quite perplexing given the anti-epistemological nature of the notions we’ve been dealing with. Alenka Zupančič argues that a separation from knowledge is in fact the condition of ethics, and that this is the properly Kantian dilemma:

“‘Act so that the maxim of your will can always hold at the same time as the principle giving universal law’ – what is the

paradox implicit in this formulation of the categorical imperative? The paradox is that, despite its 'categorical' character, it somehow leaves everything wide open. For how am I to decide if (the maxim of) my action can hold as a principle providing a universal law, if I do not accept the presupposition that I am originally guided by some notion of the good (i.e. some notion of what is universally acceptable)? In other words, there is no a priori criterion of universality. It is true that Kant was convinced that he had found this criterion in the principle of non-contradiction. However, there is an impressive body of commentary demonstrating the weakness of this criterion. As Henry E. Allison has pointed out, many critics have already shown that virtually any maxim, suitably formulated, can be made to pass the universalizability test. In other words: anything can be transformed into a universal claim; nothing is a priori excluded from ethics."⁸⁶³

Thus, the process of universalizing a maxim is itself plagued by the fact that the universal has no symbolic criterion. This criterion can only be found in the Real of desire which is ultimately ambiguous. No one can articulate what they desire, and this impossibility itself causes desire to articulate itself. It is as if the only way to discern the universal good is to accept that one can only be a secondary cause of it. Psychoanalysis suggests that one can successfully accept this position precisely when one becomes an analyst, that is, when one can desire the ambiguity of truth itself. Contrary to first appearances, the position of the analyst is not one of pure negativity. Rather, the analyst affirms that within and from negativity, an ethical project can emerge, one which can never be decided in advance.

3.1 Transmission of Desire

The difficulty of course is how this could possibly be transmitted – it seems to be an ethics devoid of prescriptions. Yet, the wager which founded the Lacanian school is that such a transmission is possible. One's own psychoanalysis can be used as an example of the unconscious, without attempting to transmit the experiences themselves. The very structure of the unconscious

⁸⁶³ Zupančič, A. (2000) *Ethics of the Real*. London: Verso, p. 92

prevents it from being known, but we can – with some attunement – speak its language.

Transference and transmission are two moments of the analytic situation. The first appears as a demand for signification from the Other, while the second articulates a desire which is ultimately ignorant, or blind to, this demand. We could say that, while the origins of transference lie in the ignorance of the analysand, it is when this ignorance is redoubled in the Other that a transmission of desire occurs. The significance of Lacan's formulation of the metaphor and its evocation of desire is to be found in this transmission, which he spent the later period of his teaching reformulating.

One of the most striking connections in Lacan's text entitled *Lituraterre* is the one between writing and politeness. Lacan says that there is something of the letter at work already in the customs of the Japanese people, such that "the subject composes itself precisely in being able to decompose itself".⁸⁶⁴ This self-referential definition is characteristic of many of Lacan's late period. Daunting as they might seem, they follow logically from the linguistic structure of the unconscious. The subject of the unconscious is both a subject of metaphor and of metonymy, yet it can only be represented in the former. In metonymy, on the other hand, there is only the disappearance of the subject. Thus we can read this "composition in decomposition" as the conjunction of the two dimensions – the subject is represented as disappearing.

For anything to disappear, it must "pass through" time. Yet, time is not an empty container of beings, but also what writes itself negatively. We have up until now focusing on the movement of abstraction by which a certain subjectivized time disappears in the construction of a logic. We now take the inverse position and consider time itself as that which negatively writes itself. This is the true import of the temporal postulate:

⁸⁶⁴ Lacan, J. (1971) *Lituraterre*. Trans. by Jack Stone, available at <http://web.missouri.edu/~stonej/Lituraterre.pdf> [accessed May 1st, 2012] p. 8

S17: *Representational thought actively makes legible the path by which it results.*

Along these lines, Lacan draws a distinction between two versions of the support of such a subject: on the one hand, the unary trait – the minimal marking that enables subjectivization – and on the other, the “constellated heaven” in which *jouissance* is linked to the “rupture of semblance”.⁸⁶⁵ To better situate this shift in the conception of the subject, Lacan compares science to literature:

“There is the question only proposed by the literature called avant-garde, which is itself made of the littoral: and thus does not sustain itself by the semblant, but for all that proves nothing but the breakage, which only a discourse can produce, with an effect of production. This to which a literature seems to aspire in its ambition to *lituraterre*, is to order itself from a movement it calls scientific.”⁸⁶⁶

Here we find a model in literature (avant-garde) which seems to fulfill the conditions for a new support of the subject – namely, it is not sustained by the semblant, which translates for us into representational thought. In other words, it proposes that desire can continue beyond knowledge.

Yet, Lacan adds that it only “proves the breakage”, indicating that it does not fulfill its own ambition, but is part of the same discourse as that of science. It does not carry desire any further than knowledge, but only produces further “ruptures” of semblance. In other words, avant-garde is for Lacan the unfulfilled project of literature as it takes science as its ideal. At first glance, these two fields seem to be absolutely opposed, but Lacan’s point is that avant-garde is the movement of *methodical experimentation* in literature. For him, the letter, insofar as it constitutes a discourse, points at a homology between the scientific and literary experiment.

⁸⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 7

This key insight does not offer any easy solutions, however, since there is already the question of the difference of objects in the experiments. Science seeks repeatability and thus “purifies” itself of the contingent, while literature seems to revel in contingency, in non-repeatability.⁸⁶⁷ Furthermore, in what sense does the experiment in either field “prove the breakage”, and why does it not seem to suffice to be a support of the subject? Let’s consider Lacan’s remarks on writing:

“It is from the same effect that writing is in the real the furrowing of the signified, which has more of the semblant insofar as it makes the signifier. Writing does not trace (décalque) the signifier, but its effects of language (langue), what is forged by whoever speaks it. It only climbs back in taking a name there, as happens in those effects among things that the signifying battery names (dénomme) to have them numbered (dénombrées).”⁸⁶⁸

First, the distinction between the signified and its *furrowing* appears. We know that Lacan calls the letter the “material medium that concrete discourse borrows from language”⁸⁶⁹ – here he puts into question the very place where this materiality came from. It does not pre-exist the signifier, but is created by the very form of the “taking a name”, assuming a certain place in the symbolic. That the letter is anterior to naming and also of the same material as language seems paradoxical – what is the material of language if not the signifiers themselves?

A second paradox emerges, since Lacan is suggesting that there are effects of language “beyond” these networks, effects which exceed their signified content. In other words, that someone might experience a revelation in analysis is not as important as what this effectively changes in their subjectivity. As with the categorical imperative, there are no external criteria which could validate this change.

⁸⁶⁷ Recall the famous story of a young Beckett transcribing Joyce’s words on the typewriter. When the doorbell rang, Joyce answered “Come in,” and Beckett accidentally typed this. Upon seeing the printed words, Joyce simply stated: “Let it stand.”

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 7

⁸⁶⁹ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 413

The path by which we follow Lacan here is based on the following premise: that language continually posits an origin of itself. However, this act of furrowing is one step removed from an actual starting point. Every origin is a fantasy of origin. Yet origins play an important part in both science and literature – to achieve an understanding of reality, we must trace back to a point in which deduction stops. As Lacan writes:

“How would the shortest path from one point to another be shown if not by the cloud the wind pushes without it changing its heading? Neither the amoeba, nor man, nor the branch, nor the fly, nor the ant would have served as an example before light was proven in solidarity with a universal curvature, where the straight line only sustains itself by inscribing distance in the effective factors of a dynamic of the cascade. There is no straight line except in writing, as if from a surveying come from heaven.”⁸⁷⁰

Compare this with the following quote from *Logical Time*:

“The suspended motions represent nothing, in effect, but levels of degradation whose necessity brings out the increasing order of temporal instances that are registered within the logical process so as to be integrated into its conclusion. This can be seen in the logical determination of the interruptions they constitute, this determination – whether logician’s objection or subject’s doubt – revealing itself at each moment as the subjective unfolding of a temporal instance, or more aptly stated, as the slipping away [*fuïte*] of the subject within a formal exigency.”⁸⁷¹

To substitute terms between the two Lacans, the “shortest path between two points”, while being a simple unary construction, must nevertheless be unfolded in time. As a logical movement, it must receive something from the “constellated heavens” mentioned above, namely, desire – yet this doesn’t present itself except as what is erased. Here, the reference to calligraphy approaches this limit of the un-presented as closely as possible,

⁸⁷⁰ Lituraterre, p. 6

⁸⁷¹ Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits*, W.W. Norton and Co., p. 166

by making a play of the brushstroke - as Lacan remarks, in calligraphy “the singular of the hand crushes the universal”.⁸⁷²

What is excluded by our hand when we write if not the half-written, the abortions of the letters – in other words, the failed attempts in the process of writing? Yet, Lacan is suggesting with calligraphy that this “litter” could be something different, whether half-formed or not – the very style with which one writes. A style bypasses the measure of failure, integrating a mistake into something fundamentally affirmative. By affirming that there is a desire at stake, style thus acts as the support of the subject beyond any name. There is something of the subject which emerges not by relying on the meaning of the letter, which is of the order of semblant, but on the very deftness of the brushstroke.

To return to the first of our paradoxes, we can conceive of the materiality of the symbolic which is not yet named the anticipation of naming. It is in this anticipation that the subject resides, in suspension between the time of names and their origins.

The Japanese according to Lacan have two “instances of the letter” – in writing, calligraphy, and in speech, politeness. In both cases, the aim of the use of language is not to nominate a meaning, but to keep open the gap required for the subject to subsist. Just as there is no foundation in the alphabet for calligraphy, there is no manual for politeness – it is an improvisation of the order of style. For Lacan, it is an ethical matter.

Politeness is not simply a noble silence or aversion, which themselves can be inelegant at times. A superposition of garrulousness and silence is possible on the basis of the letter, since the subject “composes itself in being able to decompose itself.” If this gap is temporal, it nevertheless does not have to do with speed – it is not time measured in space but time inscribed

⁸⁷² Lituraterre, p. 5

in space, in letters which are inherently a repetition even if they are uttered only once. For this same reason, they are inherently transmissible. We thus arrive at the proposition:

S18: *The letter is logical time made flesh.*

3.2 Letter contra Signification

Lacan famously stated that the letter “always arrives at its destination”. This should be read alongside the definition of the signifier. The signifier always represents the subject to another signifier, implying a circuit which terminates where it began, within language. Yet, this circuit itself traces something that resists symbolization. The letter is both what begins, ends, and hangs in suspense – it embodies the very movement of the discursive process. It is thus more a trajectory than a message, but one which ceaselessly “writes” itself. We oppose this writing to any kind of renewed meaning – it is efficacy without signification.

As we developed previously, time is abstracted in order for representation to emerge from thought. With the letter, we can use different terms to achieve the same postulate. We shall say that a representation carries with it a moment in which it is not clear what is being represented. The parapraxis is a model for the letter – it generates a signification which leads to further analytic work. This work presupposes transference, and therefore the analyst is able to return this signification back to the speaker. If the destination of the letter, or the significance of a parapraxis, is already meant for the patient, why does a detour through the Other have to occur?

It is because the place of the subject is within the Other, the field of language. This field is without origin, yet the letter is precisely what never ceases writing this lack. The atemporal lack of origin of the Other is posited temporally in the subject. Namely, it appears as the unquantified time of the prisoners’

understanding. The objective origin is articulated by the Other – it is the field of language as such that gives birth to signification. However, no objective verification can include itself without falling into contradiction.

There is another kind of origin at stake, which begins where the former ends – it is the subjective origin. Lacan makes two major claims which exemplify the radical contradiction in both:

1. There is no metalanguage.
2. The letter is the consequence of language that those who speak must inhabit it.

The first says that an origin based in the Other alone is impossible for the reason that any attempt to verify this origin would already be supposing it. It is futile to use language to describe the origins of language, yet this does not prevent us from doing so. The second is a consequence of the first – Speech attests to the real of language, that the origin actively “writes” itself.

But if those who speak are to take up this place at a certain time, does this not put us back to the same problem regarding origins? In other words, to have arrived at one’s place through speech, there must have been another place that one began from. Since there is nothing besides language, our conclusion is that the fantasy of origin is both the place where the letter emerges and where it returns to. As Lacan says, fantasy is irrevocably linked to an act:

"An act is linked to the determination of the beginning, and very especially where there is need to make one, because, precisely, one does not exist. To offer you my wishes for a good year is something that enters into the field of the act."⁸⁷³

⁸⁷³ Lacan, J. (1968) The Psychoanalytic Act. Class of 1/10/68. Trans. by Gallagher. Available at: http://www.lacaninireland.com/web/?page_id=123 [accessed October 31st, 2012]

Freud obtained the key to this when he proclaimed that the dream is a rebus – it makes legible a desire that is the true origin of the dream, precisely because such an origin doesn't exist. The letter authorizes the interpretation of the dream. There is nothing "behind" the legibility of desire, only the possibility that it might have consequences. A certain freedom is implied by this – truth may always be liberated from what is known about the current state of affairs, even if it is only to yield another state. It is the freedom of the autodidact.

"Erasure of no trace that might be in advance, this is what makes the shore (*terre*) of the littoral. Pure *Litura*, this is the literal. To produce it, is to reproduce that half without complement (*paire*) by which the subject subsists."⁸⁷⁴

The subject is thus the result of the fact that language has no counterpart, no metalanguage by which to situate its origins. The consequences of this cannot be "traced" in advance. This is why the letter is both *literal* and *littoral*. It is not simply a dividing line between the subjective and objective, but also that which erases anything which might tell us of its subjective consequences in advance. This erasure attests to the literalizing dimension of the unconscious.

3.3 The Question of Rigor in Writing

In the beginning of our treatment of the temporal postulate, we stated that the elementary operation of thought is to put into sequence. By the hypothesis that repression exists, it is possible that the true history of the patient is reconstructed. Yet, this construction proceeds by assembling essentially false memories – whether verifiable or not – that are strewn throughout his or her discourse. The relation between the history which has disappeared and these fragments, or what Freud called "screen memories", is what constitutes the dialectic of the working through.

⁸⁷⁴ *Lituraterre*, p. 5

It is not a matter of “applying” psychoanalysis to politics to see that the same holds true for world history. The cherished origins of peoples, traditions, and parties are falsifications of something which does not exist, namely the harmonious social order. Culture, as Lacan would say, is essentially trash. If there is a political act, it is the re-arrangement of these falsifications without hope of ever getting better material, and with the addendum that novelty is not necessarily the mark of truth. It is presently unfashionable to adhere to any kind of truth “above” the multitude of perspectives and property values. To emphasize again, truth is not a set of statements clarifying what is to be done. It is rather the truth of repetition and systematization in speech and writing. We end the present work on the idea that these activities deserve a notion of rigor, defined as the question of being in accordance with the universality of a desire.

4

The political surplus of psychoanalysis

In a short conference titled *Petit Discours aux Psychiatres*, from 1967, Lacan spoke of a veritable “recipe for invention”⁸⁷⁵ in psychoanalysis:

“There is something quite astounding, which is that those who do quite well the work of transmission, [by doing it] without actually naming me, regularly lose the opportunity, which is quite visible in the text, of contributing with the little idea that they could have presented there! Little or even quite big. (...) Why is it that they would produce a small innovation? It is because, in citing me, in the very fact of citing me, they would presentify (...) the context of struggle [“contexte de bagarre”] in which I produced all of this. From the sole fact of stating it within the context of struggle, this would put me in my place, and would allow them to produce then a small innovation”⁸⁷⁶

Lacan articulates here the relation between transmission and invention in terms of the function of the proper noun in the recognition of a certain impasse at the heart of knowledge formations. Rather than an “alienating” pressure, demanding that we refer the products of the work of transmission back to its original author, Lacan argues that the fidelity to a name in the process of transmission turns this same name into the index of an antagonism, evoking the “context of struggle” in which something came to be and putting the author of a certain idea “back in its place”.

⁸⁷⁵ Porge, Erik (2005), *Transmettre la clinique psychanalytique : Freud, Lacan, aujourd’hui*, (Erès).

⁸⁷⁶ Lacan, J. (1979), ‘Petit Discours aux Psychiatres’, *Lettres de l’École*, Vol 2, n.25 (our translation)

This brief passage, we believe, summarizes some of the crucial notions we have tried to articulate in the course of our work. Lacan's suggestion relies not in the overcoming of the One of the name, but in the parallaxian shift which makes this name stand for the very split between the One of authorship and the excess of invention. Something of the new is only accessible once we consent to the condition that transmission must be accomplished from within the struggle demarcated by an emblem.

Let us now put to work the conceptual framework we have elaborated thus far by seeking to ground the relation between Lacan and Hegel in the relation between Lacan and the antagonisms which repeatedly returned to disrupt the institutional history of his teaching. Our wager is that, by discerning the contours of this case and of its impasses, we might also encounter the first traits of *the moment to conclude the time for understanding* - the traces which turn the uncoupling of politics and psychoanalysis into the first anticipatory sign of their future alliance.

One name offers itself here as our guide as we attempt to identify the "context de bagarre" which motivates the history of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Indeed, the story of the Lacanian field was marked twice, and in a twofold way, by Louis Althusser: it was to him that Lacan turned when he was "excommunicated"⁸⁷⁷ from the *International Psychoanalytic Association*, in 1963, and it was away from him that those involved in the dissolution of the *École Freudienne de Paris*, in 1980, turned away.

The first words exchanged between Lacan and Althusser, before they even met, came in a letter by Lacan: "Our relations are old, Althusser"⁸⁷⁸. Lacan had just been given the forced choice of either remaining connected to the IPA, but without a proper symbolic place from which to continue his teaching, or to leave

⁸⁷⁷ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company). p.3

⁸⁷⁸ Althusser, Louis (1999), *Writings on Psychoanalysis*, (Columbia University Press) p.147

the association founded by Freud, and continue his work somewhere else⁸⁷⁹. Having chosen, after all negotiations proved themselves unfruitful⁸⁸⁰, to leave the institution founded by his master - a move which was not without its own impossible demands⁸⁸¹ - Lacan was offered by Althusser a place as a lecturer at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE)* and a room to teach at the *École Normale Supérieure (ENS)*.

Althusser's first encounter with Lacan, a dinner on the 3rd of December of 1963⁸⁸², led him to write a long letter to Lacan on the next day. Very affected by their conversation, which seems to have revolved mostly around Lacan's critical situation, Althusser offered "a few reflections spoken out loud, precisely in the name of the exteriority that constitutes the witness that I am":

"My question: what did they understand of your discourse - a question that others (and first of all Delay) must have had to repeat. That question has a very profound meaning to me. I will tell you why: it calls into question the issue of the access to theory (that of any discipline whatever: I am treating a very general question) of those who are plunged into the horizon of a practice, either because they pursue it or because they are, dare I say, its material. A very, very particular practice, because before you that theory did not exist. How can one accede, from the very heart of a practice pursued or

⁸⁷⁹ Roudinesco, Elisabeth (1997), Jacques Lacan, (Columbia University Press) Part VII, Chapter I (which page in the american edition?)

⁸⁸⁰ Porge, E. (1998), 'Os Nomes do Pai em Jacques Lacan', (Companhia de Freud), p.71

⁸⁸¹ See Porge, Erik (1998) p.71-72 and Roudinesco, E. (1994), *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France*, tome 2 : 1925-1985, (Fayard). p.374: "It is known, in effect, that the originality of Lacan's reading of Freud resides in the affirmation of his freudian orthodoxy and in his refusal of all post-freudian "detours". According to this perspective, his entry into dissidence was not possible if not as a renewal of the freudian rupture, and only it. Well, by creating a school in his own name, Lacan finds himself constrained, if not to confess himself a lacanian, at least to validate the political existence of a "lacanism". Through this self-recognition, his movement entered into a contradiction with the very doctrine which sustains it and which defines itself as Freudian."

⁸⁸² Althusser, Louis (1999), *Writings on Psychoanalysis*, (Columbia University Press). p.151

experienced, blindly pursued or experienced, to its *concept*?
 “⁸⁸³

Even before of this letter, Althusser had already sent to Lacan his recently published text *On the Materialist Dialectic*⁸⁸⁴, and in it we can find the definition of theory that he is referring to in his reflections about Lacan's crisis:

“I shall call Theory (with a capital T), general theory, that is, the Theory of practice in general, itself elaborated on the basis of the Theory of existing theoretical practices (of the sciences), which transforms into ‘knowledges’ (scientific truths) the ideological product of existing ‘empirical’ practices (the concrete activity of men). This Theory is the materialist *dialectic* which is none other than dialectical materialism. These definitions are necessary for us to be able to give an answer to this question: what is the use of a theoretical expression of a solution which already exists in the practical state? (...)The exact theoretical expression of the dialectic is relevant first of all to those practices in which the Marxist dialectic is active; for these practices (Marxist ‘theory’ and politics) need the concept of their practice (of the dialectic) in their development, if they are not to find themselves defenseless in the face of qualitatively new forms of this development (new situations, new ‘problems’) – or to lapse, or relapse, into the various forms of opportunism, theoretical or practical. These ‘surprises’ and deviations, attributable in the last resort to ‘ideological errors’, that is, to a *theoretical* deficiency, are always costly, and may be very costly.”⁸⁸⁵

Theory - “with a capital T” - is thus not the counter-part of a practice, a determinant, parallel thread, but the conceptual expression of the knowledge already at play in practice as such: it stands for the dialectical reflection of practice's presuppositions into practice itself, transforming it into a theoretical engagement.

The essential difference between theory as Althusser understands it and our more “spontaneous” conception of it lies in the passage from *duality* to *totality*: rather than composing a

⁸⁸³ Althusser, Louis (1999), *Writings on Psychoanalysis*, (Columbia University Press) p.151

⁸⁸⁴ First appeared in *La Pensée*, in August of 1963

⁸⁸⁵ Althusser, Louis (1965), *For Marx*, (The Penguin Press), p.168-169

polarity in which theory would be an abstraction from practice, a way of coding what actually happens in experience, theory stands here for the very ground of practice itself, a way of accounting for the “unknown knowns”⁸⁸⁶ at play in the unreflected experience of a given know-how.

This is why Althusser argues that certain practices require “the concept of their practice in their development” to defend themselves against revisionism - “the various forms of opportunism, theoretical or practical”: the very distinction between structured critical theory and the revisionist stance of “critical criticism”, hinges on the possibility of accounting for the excess of a given field of knowledge over the emblem which structures it without having to give away on theory’s structural specificity.

Presenting some of the arguments which would constitute the backbone of his two main articles on psychoanalytic theory - *Freud and Lacan*⁸⁸⁷ and *On Marx and Freud*⁸⁸⁸ - Althusser continued his letter both praising Lacan’s properly *theoretical* development of psychoanalytic practice and recognizing in his recent excommunication a dangerous revisionist ideology:

“You have admirably shown that problems of analytic technique cannot be resolved at the level of technique, that a *leap* was needed - the recourse to theory - and that in the final analysis only theory decides and determines the problems of technique; (...) The conflict is not between a pure technique *without theory* and pure theory. There is no pure technique, and that too you have shown. Any technique that wants to be pure technique is, in fact, and *ideology* of technique, that is, a false theory.”⁸⁸⁹

⁸⁸⁶ See Žižek, S. “What Rumsfeld Doesn’t Know That He Knows About Abu Ghraib” for Žižek’s use of the expression “unknown knowns” as the ideological, unconscious presuppositions of a given discourse. The text is available at: <http://www.lacan.com/Žižekrumsfeld.htm>

⁸⁸⁷ Althusser sent a typed version of this article to Lacan before its publication in *La Nouvelle Critique*

⁸⁸⁸ Althusser, L. ‘On Marx and Freud’ in (1991), *Rethinking Marxism* Spring 1991 Vol 4, No 1, (Association for Economic and Social Analysis).

⁸⁸⁹ Althusser, Louis (1999), *Writings on Psychoanalysis*, (Columbia University Press) p.152

Althusser was aware that, in his return to Freud, Lacan was not concerned with establishing a “pure” practice - his return was not a blind repetition of Freud’s technique, but the addition of further twist: now that there was such a thing as a Freudian clinic, the time had come to learn from it what had constituted the idea of the Freudian Event. This is why there could be no true transmission of psychoanalysis without the transmission of a certain break with the ideological support of its un-reflected practices: “every pedagogy is necessarily a *break*, and to be something other than a compromise or an illusion, it must be pursued within the conscious forms of this *break*”⁸⁹⁰. Accordingly, Althusser interpreted Lacan’s rupture with the IPA as a response to this necessary theoretical cut that is at stake in the field of critical knowledge.

For Althusser, the rupture inherent to psychoanalytic theory, having not been followed through by Lacan’s students and his peers, had thus appeared as a break with psychoanalysis itself⁸⁹¹, an actual split interrupting Lacan’s teaching. And, in his book *Les Nomes du Père chez Jacques Lacan*, Erik Porge

⁸⁹⁰ “Now what distinguishes an explicit and conscious scientific theory from the implicit and spontaneous ideology it must *replace* is a radical *discontinuity*. In a precise sense, it can be said that pedagogy has nothing of a phenomenology, even a *disguised* one: there is no internal *transition* from ideology to science. (...) In certain precise cases the theory of pedagogy, and thus the theory of the break (or of the absolute discontinuity existing between science and ideology), must be theoretically developed and spelled out, since it is organically part of the *science* that is, precisely, to be taught.” Ibid. p.153

⁸⁹¹ It is worth to recall that first quote from Althusser’s *On Marx and Freud*, with which we began our investigation in the previous chapter: “It is a fact of experience that Freudian theory is a conflictual theory. From the time of its birth, and the phenomenon has not ceased to reproduce itself, it has provoked not only strong resistance, not only attacks and criticisms but, what is more interesting, attempts at annexation and revision. I say that the attempts at annexation and revision are more interesting than simple attacks and criticisms, for they signify that Freudian theory contains, by the admission of its adversaries, something true and dangerous. Where there is nothing true, there is no reason to annex or revise. There is therefore something true in Freud that must be appropriated but in order that its meaning may be revised, for this truth is dangerous: it must be revised in order to be neutralized.” Althusser, L. ‘On Marx and Freud’ in (1991), *Rethinking Marxism* Spring 1991 Vol 4, No 1, (Association for Economic and Social Analysis). p.19

convincingly suggests that Lacan himself regarded this rupture in similar terms: the question of the names of the father in psychoanalysis - which cannot but touch upon the question of the name of the father *of* psychoanalysis itself⁸⁹² - had at that point for Lacan “no other purpose, in fact, than to put into question the origin, to discover by what privilege Freud’s desire was able to find the entrance into the field of experience he designates as the unconscious”.

Thus, to raise the question of Freud’s desire, the question what came to be inscribed under the singular mark of his name, was Lacan’s own way of affirming the essential place within psychoanalysis of the concept of its practice, of affirming psychoanalysis’ true theoretical vocation, in the sense given to it by Althusser: there were still deeper consequences of the Freudian break to be brought to light, for “the truth is perhaps simply one thing, the desire of Freud himself, the fact that something, in Freud, was never analyzed”. To which Lacan added: “I had reached precisely this point when, by a strange coincidence, I was put into the position of having to give up my seminar.”⁸⁹³

But if Lacan seemed to agree with Althusser on the theoretical status of psychoanalysis and on the diagnosis that the interruption of his seminar was not without relation to the centrality of its topic to psychoanalysis’ theoretical status, he nevertheless would certainly disagree with Althusser’s celebration of his new-found position.

In that same letter from the 3rd of December, after re-affirming the necessity for psychoanalysis of accounting for the

⁸⁹² Porge, E. (1998), ‘Os Nomes do Pai em Jacques Lacan’, (Companhia de Freud) p.70 - as references to Lacan’s enunciated regarding the interruption and the topic of the seminar which was interrupted, Porge mentions in a footnote page 12 of Seminar 11; the class of 22/1/69 of Seminar 16 and the text “Pre-Proposition of 1967”, published in *Analytica*, vol.8, april of 1978, supplement to *Orincar?* n.13, Paris, Lyse

⁸⁹³ All the quotes in this paragraph are from Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company). p.12

consequences of the very break which founded its discourse, and recognizing in Lacan the first one to have ventured into this project, Althusser claims that “it is not from within but *from without* that one can announce that a *break* has come, that the break is consummated, and that one must, to understand the very interiority one is living, *begin by it*”.⁸⁹⁴ And, in what cannot but display a certain inconsistency with the more complex topography of his own dialectical configuration of practice-ideology-Theory, Althusser praises Lacan’s exteriority to the Freudian field as a condition to the elaboration of psychoanalytic Theory:

“You were, whatever you did, for them, *someone from the inside*. At the limit bearing witness about an outside, about the outside. Agreed. But they had in advance delegated to you the portfolio of External Relations without themselves going to take a look. You were their guarantor. They acknowledged that portfolio and that function in you, but on the tacit (radical) condition that you leave them the hell alone by leaving them at home. (...) All this to give some meaning to what, at the end of our conversation, when we were walking through the streets before the tobacco stands closed, I was saying to you precisely *about the outside*. Yes, there is an outside, thank God. And one day, willingly or unwillingly (unwillingly, but they will manage one day to put a good face to it), they will have to recognize directly, without an intermediary charged with that impossible mission, without being able to depend on someone who was protecting them from the outside that he was announcing, that such an outside exists.

Outside. You are henceforth outside. In your true place: that of your reasons, of Reason.”⁸⁹⁵

Though Althusser envisioned the passage from ideology to Theory as a discontinuity, he nevertheless still thought this as the discontinuity between the “inside” and the “outside” of a given field of knowledge, an opposition which, serving as the ground both for the polarity of theory/practice and the totality of a Theory which arises from practice itself, required him to think the fundamental rupture between ideology and Theory as

⁸⁹⁴ Althusser, L. (1999) Writings on Psychoanalysis. (Columbia University Press). p.157

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid. p.158

happening either *inside* the field of knowledge embedded in that un-reflected practice or *outside* of that field. The consequences of the first, drawing too close to the operations of revisionism, led Althusser to equate the recognition of the rupture with an exteriority to the field organized by this founding cut.

But in the first class of his seminar at the EPHE, while implicitly addressing several of the points raised by Althusser in his reflections, Lacan clearly distanced himself from such a direct equation between the fidelity to the Freudian break and “the outside”:

“the questions that I raise in it [in the text “Variations on the Standard Treatment”, from 1955] are the very same as those that I shall be grappling with here, and which are resuscitated by the fact that here I am, in the present circumstances, still asking that very same question - *what is psychoanalysis?*”

No doubt there are certain ambiguities in all this, and the question - as I pointed out in the article - still has a certain bat-like quality. To examine it in broad daylight is what I proposed to do then and, whatever position I am in, it is what I propose to do today.

The position I refer to has changed, in fact; it is not wholly inside, but whether it is outside it is not known”⁸⁹⁶

For Lacan, even if the question “what is psychoanalysis?” stood for a radical fidelity to the Freudian event, this nevertheless did not place him automatically on the outside of the field founded by this question and its provisional solutions. In fact, it could be affirmed that, with Lacan, not only did psychoanalytic practice for the first time “accede to its concept”, but that, with him, this theoretical movement was inherently connected with the conceptualization of a *new place* for Theory.

One of the fundamental traits which defines the object of the psychoanalytic discourse - the object upon which this discourse was founded - is its irreducibility to both poles of the pair ‘interior/exterior’. From Freud’s fundamental insight regarding

⁸⁹⁶ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company). p.3

the place and function of the German word *unheimlich*⁸⁹⁷ to his very definition of the “kernel of our being”, in *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*⁸⁹⁸, what Lacan taught us to decant there was the discovery of a new place - that of the *extimate*⁸⁹⁹ - a “dimension where all the concepts of psychoanalysis come together, where its diverse lines of argument form a knot.”⁹⁰⁰

Lacan began his eleventh seminar with the claim that, even though his excommunication did not allow him to speak any longer from the inside of the Freudian field, whether his new position was now on outside was “not known”. Later, in the last class of this same seminar, presented on the 24th of June of 1964, he returned to the matter of his excommunication to offer a more precise elaboration of this unknown place:

⁸⁹⁷ “The word [unheimlich] is the standard German negation of heimlich and is thus supposed to be its opposite. But it turns out that it is actually directly implied by heimlich, which means familiar, homely, cozy, intimate, “arousing a sense of agreeable restfulness and security as in one within the four walls of his house”; by extension, what is familiar and securely tucked away is also hidden, concealed from the outside, secret, “kept from sight . . . withheld from others”; and by a further extension, what is hidden and secret is also threatening, fearful, occult, “uncomfortable, uneasy, gloomy, dismal . . . ghastly” – that is, unheimlich, uncanny. There is a point where the two meanings directly coincide and become undistinguishable, and the negation does not count-as indeed it does not count in the unconscious. The English translation, “the uncanny,” largely retains the essential ambiguity of the German term, but French doesn’t possess an equivalent, *l’inquiétante étrangeté* being the standard translation. So Lacan had to invent one, *extimité*.” Dolar, M. “I shall be with you on your Wedding Night - Lacan and the Uncanny” in Žižek, Slavoj and Jerry Aline Flieger (2002), Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory, Vol.III (Routledge).p.63 Also available at: <http://www.jstor.org/pss/778795>

⁸⁹⁸ Freud, Sigmund (2003), *An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (Penguin Modern Classics), (Penguin Classics). p.31

⁸⁹⁹ As we mentioned before, this word appears only three times in Lacan’s seminars, but, as Miller notes, it “has a great potential for crystallization”, putting into place several otherwise disperse elements of Lacan’s teaching. Mladen Dolar, in his above mentioned paper on the Uncanny, also highlights the centrality of this notion to Lacanian theory.

⁹⁰⁰ Dolar, M. “I shall be with you on your Wedding Night - Lacan and the Uncanny” in Žižek, Slavoj and Jerry Aline Flieger (2002), Jacques Lacan: Critical Evaluations in Cultural Theory, Vol.III (Routledge). p.63

“So I had to postpone dealing with a subject that I was preparing to embark on with those who were following my course on the Names-of-the-father, and to return here, before a rather different audience, to the question that has been at issue from the outset of this teaching, my teaching, namely, *what is the order of truth that our praxis engenders?* (...) Has that which our praxis engenders the right to map out for itself necessities, even contradictory ones, from the standpoint of truth? This question may be transposed in the esoteric formula: *how can we be sure that we are not impostors?*”⁹⁰¹

By juxtaposing the Althusserian question of the truth of a practice to the “esoteric formula” of questioning one’s own imposture, Lacan was already shifting the clear-cut coordinates which would place him either inside the Freudian field or outside of it: if the truth of the Freudian doctrine was irreducibly linked to the emergence of an object which disrupted every dualism⁹⁰², would this not also have consequences for the position of fidelity to the Freudian event itself? What would it mean to *belong* or to be represented by this emblem that stands precisely for the discovery of the un-representable core of every representation, for the imposture inherent to any positing?

For Lacan, the position of Reason was not that of the outside of the representations engendered by the theoretical break, but - to paraphrase the title of that very class, “In you more than yourself” - of *that in representation which is more than representation itself*⁹⁰³. This is perhaps why he ends this lesson, and his first seminar given from this new position of enunciation, with the following affirmation:

⁹⁰¹ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company) p.263

⁹⁰² “if we introduce the ‘object a’ as essential in the relation with desire, the question of the dualism and of the non-dualism will assume completely different features. If that which is most exists of myself is on the outside, not because I projected it there, but because it has been cut from me, then the paths I might take for its recovery would take on an entirely new variety” (our translation) Lacan, Jacques (2004), *O Seminário a angustia* livro 10, (Jorge Zahar Editor). p.246

⁹⁰³ Zupančič, A. “The Fifth Condition” in Hallward, Peter (2004), *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy* (Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers Series), (Continuum). p.199

“The analyst’s desire is not a pure desire. It is a desire to obtain absolute difference, a desire which intervenes when, confronted with the primary signifier, the subject is, for the first time, in a position to subject himself to it. There only may the signification of a limitless love emerge, because it is outside the limits of the law, where alone it may live.”⁹⁰⁴

Only there where engagement with the emblem is no longer sheltered by the guarantee of belonging to it - that is, there where “the subject is, for the first time, in a position to submit himself to it” - does the analyst’s desire gain its contours. Lacan’s reference to what is “outside the limits of the law” should therefore be understood in the strict Paulinian sense: a desire sustained beyond *both* law and transgression, beyond their very duality⁹⁰⁵.

This is why “the analyst’s desire is not a pure desire”: pure desire, the total inscription in a symbolic class *is the moral law itself*⁹⁰⁶ - “that is why I wrote *Kant avec Sade*”⁹⁰⁷, Lacan reminds us. The analyst’s desire requires thus “another effort”⁹⁰⁸: it requires that one makes do with what resists representation, what somehow exceeds it. To have been represented by the Freudian emblem, and failed: only thus could Lacan found a School whose very ground upheld the affirmation “there is a Reason *after Freud*”⁹⁰⁹ - for *before* Freud, the place upon which

⁹⁰⁴ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company) p.276

⁹⁰⁵ Badiou, Alain (2003), *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Cultural Memory in the Present), (Stanford University Press). p.76-77.

⁹⁰⁶ In “*Kant avec Sade*”, Lacan clearly demarcates the equation between desire and the law: “the bipolarity upon which the moral law is founded is nothing but the split in the subject brought about by any and every intervention of the signifier: the split between the enunciating subject and the subject of the statement” Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.650

⁹⁰⁷ Lacan, Jacques (1998), *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11), (W. W. Norton & Company) p.275

⁹⁰⁸ “Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If You Would Become Republicans”, subtitle of a lengthy section within the fifth dialog of *Sade, Marquis de* (2006), *Philosophy in the Boudoir: Or, The Immoral Mentors* (Penguin Classics Deluxe Edition), (Penguin Classics).

⁹⁰⁹ “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason since Freud” in *Écrits* (english version) p.412

the *École Freudienne de Paris* was founded simply did not have a name.

However, if Lacan's exchange with Althusser in 1963 marked the inscription of the extimate into the institutional realm of psychoanalysis - an inscription which inaugurated the space for several of Lacan's inventions, the *passe* and *Scilicet* being the most relevant of them - their brief shake of hands in 1980, on the occasion of a meeting which followed Lacan's decision to dissolve the EFP⁹¹⁰, took on a very different character.

Althusser's participation in this "small historical event"⁹¹¹ tends to be taken for a meaningless encounter. This is the case of Elisabeth Roudinesco's biography of Lacan and José Attal's book *La non-Excommunication de Jacques Lacan*⁹¹², both of which mention the episode solely through the reference to an article, written by Catherine Clément and published in the *Le Matin* on the day after the meeting, titled: "Louis Althusser Attacks the Lacan Fortress"⁹¹³.

On the 5th of January a letter was sent to the members of the EFP, and it began as follows:

"I speak without any hope - especially of making myself heard. I know what I do - being fitting to add to this what it holds of the unconscious.

This is my advantage over the man who thinks and does not realize that he speaks in the first place. Advantage which I only owe to my experience.

Because, in the unknown interval of speech in which he believes to produce thought, the man stumbles, and that is discouraging.

⁹¹⁰ Roudinesco, E. (1997) Jacques Lacan.(Columbia University Press). p.401

⁹¹¹ Althusser, L. (1999) Writings on Psychoanalysis. (Columbia University Press). p.141

⁹¹² Attal, José (2010), *La non-excommunication de Jacques Lacan : Quand la psychanalyse a perdu Spinoza*, (L'Unebêvue éditeur).

⁹¹³ Althusser, L. (1999) Writings on Psychoanalysis. (Columbia University Press) p.125

It is so that man thinks feebly [débile], even more feebly when he is enraged... precisely because he stumbles.

There is a problem of the School. It is not an enigma. I orient myself regarding it, and about time.

This problem shows itself such as to have a solution: it is the *dis* - the dissolution.”⁹¹⁴

Lacan argued that he had to step away, “unknotting” the School, for otherwise “it would function (...) as the reverse of why I founded it” and that the work of dissolution “redirects the original practice which he [Freud] instituted under the name of psychoanalysis towards its rightful duty in the world; which, through an assiduous critique, denounces the deviations and the compromises which cushion its progress, degrading its employment.”⁹¹⁵

And a couple of months after the *Lettre de dissolution*, Lacan presented a little note, addressed to those who were members of the EFP, in which he announced that the dissolution of the *École Freudienne de Paris* was to be followed by the institution of the *Cause Freudienne*⁹¹⁶.

The ECF was not to be simply a “reformed” School, but a new institutional form, which Lacan defined as a *field*⁹¹⁷: correcting what he believed to have been a mistake also made by Freud with the IPA, Lacan decided this time to found a psychoanalytic institution even more radically removed from the principle of imaginary representation, for this sort of organization “left

⁹¹⁴ Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.317 (our translation)

⁹¹⁵ “Soit pour un travail, je l’ai dit – qui, dans le champ que Freud a ouvert, restaure le soc tranchant de sa vérité – qui ramène la praxis originale qu’il a instituée sous le nom de psychanalyse dans le devoir qui lui revient en notre monde – qui, par une critique assidue, y dénonce les déviations et les compromissions qui amortissent son progrès en dégradant son emploi. Objectif que je maintiens.” Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.317 (our translation)

⁹¹⁶ Lacan, J. “D’Écolage” in Rocha, A.T. (2011) *Manual de Cartéis Editora Scriptum*, p.13 - also available at http://www.wapol.org/fr/las_escuelas/Template.asp

⁹¹⁷ Ibid. p.15

analysts with no resources and, therefore, with no other need than that of unionizing themselves”⁹¹⁸. In the *Cause Freudienne*, the cartel was elected the “base organ” of the community - “where each one will have the freedom to demonstrate what is done to the knowledge that experience deposits”⁹¹⁹ - so that belonging to the field of Lacanian psychoanalysis was to be understood as a *consequence* (and not only the authorization) of the transmission of knowledge and of the inventions produced in the study groups.

On the 15th of March, less than a week after announcing that the work of grieving the dissolution of the EFP could be accomplished already within a new institution, Lacan met with the members of the School in a hotel in Paris. This was the meeting attended by Althusser - even though he had been invited to it, as he told the doorman, “by the Holy Ghost and not by God the Father”⁹²⁰.

His intervention was reduced to an anecdotal article in a newspaper, in which the emphasis was put especially on his statement that Lacan was an “unfortunate and pitiful Harlequin”, giving the impression that Althusser’s purpose there had been to complain about Lacan’s decision to dissolve his School. In fact, the article was almost solely based on an unpublished note written by Althusser, titled *Open Letter to Analysts and Analysts in Solidarity with Jacques Lacan*, a sketched description of the contents of his improvised speech at the gathering. Catherine Clément, who wrote the article though she was not present at the discussion, seems to have trusted the confusing and sometimes violent tone of the notes to account for the totality of what was actually said. Althusser, shocked after reading her article, set to writing some complementary remarks - of which only an incomplete version is known - with the intention of making clear that he “said nothing against Lacan, against his decision, against his theory, or against the

⁹¹⁸ Ibid. p.14

⁹¹⁹ Ibid. p.14

⁹²⁰ Althusser, L. (1999) *Writings on Psychoanalysis*. (Columbia University Press). p.127

organizations he founded and then dissolved in order to refund them in other new ones, like Freud in former times”⁹²¹.

Beyond the juridical and individual matters which seem to have taken up most of the meeting, the crucial point which Althusser could not let go by in silence was not unlike that of those first “few reflections spoken out loud” from 1963.

At the time of Lacan’s excommunication, Althusser had been concerned not so much with Lacan’s teaching itself but with its consequences for a group which, being organized around that teaching, was not prepared to face the rise of a psychoanalytic *Theory* out of “the ocean of false science” in which the practice had until then been submersed. Now, at the moment of the dissolution of the psychoanalytic school which first attempted to live up to its foundations, a very similar point seemed to require his intervention in order to make itself heard:

“I intervened to say that the affair of dissolving of the EFP was not my business, but from listening to you, there is a juridical procedure that Lacan has clearly started, whether he wants it or not, and he must know it, for he knows the law, and the whole business is simple: knowing whether one should vote yes or no tomorrow on the subject of dissolution. On that I have no opinion, but it is a political act, and such an act is not taken alone, as Lacan did, but should be reflected on and discussed democratically by all the interested parties, in the first rank of which are your “masses,” who are the analysands, your “masses” and your “real teachers” which the analysands are, and not by a single individual in the secrecy of 5 rue de Lille; otherwise, it’s despotism, even if it’s enlightened.”

⁹²²

To begin with, the shift from the question of *pedagogy* in psychoanalysis to the *political* concern with the institutional positioning of the analytical community must be understood in relation to the different moments of Althusser’s own philosophy. If in 1963 his main concern was with grounding the distinction

⁹²¹ Ibid. p.135

⁹²² Ibid. p.132

between ideology and theory - between continuity and discontinuity in knowledge and social practices - in 1980 his conception of the revisionist threat in both psychoanalysis and Marxism was much more firmly constituted⁹²³ and could not be countered solely with the fidelity to a theoretical rupture, as already operative in his notion of “the concept of practice”, but also required the fidelity to singular positions within the very field of struggle:

“Marxist science and the Marxist researcher must *take a position* in the conflict of which Marxist theory is the object and must occupy proletarian theoretical *class* positions, antagonistic to any theoretical position of the bourgeois class, to constitute and develop their science. What are these theoretical class positions, indispensable to the constitution and development of Marxist theory? They are *philosophical positions*, dialectical and materialist, that permit one to see what bourgeois ideology necessarily *occults*: the class structure and class exploitation that characterize the social formation. For these philosophical positions are always and necessarily antagonistic to bourgeois positions. (...)”

The idea is, at bottom, that *to see* and *to understand* what happens in class societies, it is indispensable to occupy proletarian class theoretical positions; there is the simple postulate that *in a necessarily conflictual reality*, such as a society *one cannot see everything, from everywhere*; the essence of this conflictual reality can only be discovered on the condition that one occupies certain positions and not others in the conflict itself. For to passively occupy other positions is to allow oneself to participate in the logic of the dominant ideology⁹²⁴.

For quite some time this had been Althusser’s conflict with the French Communist party. Since the beginning of the 70’s, Althusser struggled to elevate the dictatorship of the proletariat to the dimension of a fundamental concept of Marxism - against the general tendency in the Party to abandon such a notion - for the “compromise on the question of working-class dictatorship

⁹²³ See “On Marx and Freud”, from 1977, in Althusser, L. and Montag, W. (1991) ‘On Marx and Freud’, *Rethinking Marxism*, 4: 1, 17 — 30

⁹²⁴ *Ibid.* p.21

inevitably saps the very foundations of revolutionary socialism”⁹²⁵.

Althusser’s intervention, by bringing attention to the “real teachers” of psychoanalysis, its “masses”, was thus not far removed from his most profound political and philosophical concerns - as he himself attested to, by making reference to his experiences in the *Action Catholique* and the Communist party⁹²⁶ - and answered to his firm belief that it was not enough to organize oneself around an emblem to guarantee that one would not serve oneself of that insignia to render inoperative that very organization.

And even if his first reflections concerning Lacan’s dissidence from the IPA - his claim that the “great Outside” was Lacan’s proper place - failed to grasp the true dimension and consequences of the Freudian break as conceptualized by Lacan⁹²⁷, his reference to the real workers of the psychoanalytic community brought into the meeting’s agenda the very thought of that third, irreducible place, in excess to the duality of inside/outside.

For Althusser, the question of the political is not that of the institution, but of that very field in which the Party settles its distinction between “members” and “non-members”⁹²⁸. The

⁹²⁵ Althusser, Louis (2006), *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings*, 1978-1987, (Verso) p.xx

⁹²⁶ Althusser, L. (1999) *Writings on Psychoanalysis*. (Columbia University Press). p.132

⁹²⁷ A careful reading of Althusser’s letters to Lacan, as well as of his most detailed analysis of the lacanian teaching in “Freud and Lacan” shows that Althusser’s understanding of the symbolic was mainly grounded on its distinction from the imaginary - most references praise Lacan’s break with the domain of imaginary identifications and display a certain distant wonder for Lacan’s more obscure claims on the relation between the symbolic and the real. The comparison of the lacanian and the althusserian notions of overdetermination also display this significant distance between Lacan and the Althusserian reading. On this, please refer to Žižek, Slavoj (1993), *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Post-Contemporary Interventions), (Duke University Press Books). p.73

⁹²⁸ Althusser, Louis (2006), *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings*, 1978-1987, (Verso) p.150

proletariat are neither included nor excluded from the Party - and, in a way, the same goes for the analysands of the psychoanalytic community. This is why Althusser insisted that those who recognize the “label Lacan”⁹²⁹ as an emblem should, *because of it*, not fail to recognize

“the analysands' positions in all this, for it is on them, finally, that everything rests, that is, falls back, and [it is they who] pay, not only in money but in work and birth pangs and mourning, in brief, in the work of analysis, and, as is known, if the analyst doesn't bring all the attention required to his task, things can turn out very badly, or simply stall and lead to an impasse, or end up in a suicide.”⁹³⁰

Rather than criticizing Lacan's act, Althusser's criticism was directed at the overall response of his audience and followers, who failed to rise to the consequences of such an act, for the dissolution of the School did nothing if not answer to the dangerous tendency of conflating the analyst and his position as an analysand - which Lacan dealt with in the *Lettre de Dissolution* in terms of the threat of turning psychoanalysis into a religion⁹³¹.

Althusser's question, “what do you want on your own behalf?”, should therefore not be reduced to an hysterical *Che Voi?* - as it seems to have happened, given the obscene interpretations he received as a response⁹³² - but taken as an intervention whose principal function was to indicate that, if no emblem can fully represent those it gathers, on the other hand *there is no institutional positioning which does not partially represent the subjects it assembles*. Being an analyst does not exclude one

⁹²⁹ “Allocution Prononcée par Lacan au P.L.M. Saint Jacques” available at www.ecole-lacanienne.net/documents/1980-03-15.doc

⁹³⁰ Althusser, L. (1999) *Writings on Psychoanalysis*. (Columbia University Press). p.137

⁹³¹ Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). p.318

⁹³² “One may wonder on which couch *you* are in order to speak as you do” in Althusser, L. (1999) *Writings on Psychoanalysis*. (Columbia University Press) p.182

from being a political subject⁹³³. And if Lacan's *political* excommunication had not been without relation to his crucial elaborations on the very core of the *analytical* theory - as Althusser did not fail to point out back then - at the moment of the dissolution of the EFP, the *analytical act was not without political consequences*:

“Whatever the case, I told them, in point of fact, you are doing politics and nothing else; you are in the process of doing politics and nothing else, (...) In any event, when one does politics, as Lacan and you are doing, it is never without consequences. If you think you are not doing any, wait a little; it will come crashing down on your heads or rather, and alas, it won't come crashing down on your heads, since you are well protected and know how to lie low. In fact, it will come crashing down on the unfortunates who come to stretch out on your couch and on all their intimates and the intimates of their intimates and on to infinity.”⁹³⁴

Twice did Althusser's name stand for the inescapable articulation between the political and the analytical dimensions. At the core of his two interventions there was a crucial question, a more precise reformulation of the problem of the singular and the universal which has accompanied us in our investigations both of the Žižekian reading of the Hegelian totality and of the philosophical import of its temporal paradoxes: how can a community take place within the very field of struggles it conceptualizes without neither neutralizing its own emblem nor disavowing the excessive dimension inherently produced by its maintenance?

It is important to note that, for Althusser, this question might have implied a direct coincidence between the psychoanalytic

⁹³³ The common retort to this statement - supported by Lacan's reference to Lamennais' treatise on religious indifference (see Seminar 11, class of 24/6/64) - should first consider that indifference is not an abstention of position when the field one is indifferent to is under the sign of the Two: “indifference in politics is not an indifference to politics”, Milner reminds us in Milner, J.C. (1996) *A Obra Clara: Lacan, a ciência, a filosofia* Editora Jorge Zahar, p.124. Consider, for example, what it might mean for a psychoanalyst to be indifferent in the matter of sexuality - it surely cannot be read as an indifference to sexuality as such.

⁹³⁴ Althusser, L. (1999) *Writings on Psychoanalysis*. (Columbia University Press), p.133

community and the communist party that any analyst would be quick to dismiss: just like in the case of the “great Outside” as in the case of the analytical dimension of the dissolution of the EFP, there was certainly a dimension at stake in the two crises of psychoanalysis that was not addressed by Althusser, given the exteriority he was the first to claim for himself, and which complicates the issue of the analytical organization even further. But let us also not forget that even if practically all philosophical attempts of thinking the intersection of politics and psychoanalysis had, until then, mostly sought to patch up the inconsistencies of one field through the other, there is a crucial difference between “external” interventions which require further elaboration in order to properly articulate the matter at hand and remarks which ultimately obliterate that which they do not reach.

In fact, Lacan’s first mention to the term “anti-philosophy” - one of the recurrent words evoked against the intrusion of the political dimension into the analytical one - was made in his text *Peut-être à Vincennes*⁹³⁵ and, as François Regnault pointed out⁹³⁶, was certainly a response to his profound disappointment with *L’Anti-Oedipus*, a philosophical work which operated precisely such an unheard-of revisionist movement of psychoanalysis under the guise of the thought of its articulation with politics. And not more than three days after Althusser’s intervention, Lacan published his text *Monsieur A*. There, after mentioning “Monsieur A., philosopher, who appeared I don’t from where to shake my hand last Sunday”, he writes that this unexpected intervention brought to his mind the title of Tristan Tzara’s *Monsieur Aa, l’antiphilosophie*⁹³⁷. Lacan comments that his association bothered him a bit - for Tzara was someone he

⁹³⁵ “*Anti-philosophy*: As I would gladly title the investigations of what the university discourse owes to its “educational” supposition. It is not the history of ideas, sad as it is, that will account for it.” Lacan, Jacques (2001), *Autres écrits*, (Seuil). - also available, in french, at <http://espace.freud.pagesperso-orange.fr/topos/psych/psysem/vincenne.htm>

⁹³⁶ See “Logique de l’assentiment” p.340 in Ramon, C. ed. (2002) Alain Badiou: *Penser le Multiple*. L’Hartmann

⁹³⁷ Tzara, T. (1949) *Monsieur Aa L’Antiphilosophie* in *L’antitête*, Vol. I Bondar, Paris

mistakenly thought to be interested in his work - and then, distancing himself from the “delirium” which took place in the meeting at the hotel, he famously stated:

“That Monsieur Aa is an anti-philosopher. It is my case.

I rise, if I can say so, against philosophy. What is certain is that it is a finished thing. Even if I expect that which rebounds as a rejection.

These surprises occur often with finished things. Take a look at this archi-finished School, up to now, there were jurists turned analysts, and now, one becomes a jurist in the failure to become an analyst.”⁹³⁸

It is quite evident that the mention to anti-philosophy appears here once more as a way of affirming that there is no complementarity between the political and the analytical. Even though this philosophical aspiration - “philosophical” in the sense that *L'Anti-Oedipus* is a philosophical work - “is a finished thing”, the consequences of the dissolution of the EFP still demonstrate that it can produce certain effects - for example, that of offering a “jurisdiction” upon which the analyst could ground his desire in a substantial logic of representation. And so, to “Monsieur A” - Althusser, who, as we have seen, actually intervened in the meeting *against* the juridical/analytical coupling - Lacan answers with “Monsieur A...a” - the anti-philosopher. The Lacanian terms are clearly summoned in this passage: not only “A” - the Other as the supposed guarantee of a relation - but also “a” - the object which incarnates the impossibility of a relation.

But even if at that precise moment there was an important point to be made, separating once again psychoanalysis from the attempts to suture its place under the topography of partisanship and representation, Althusser's intervention should not be confused with the projects of Deleuze and Guattari, nor with that of the Frankfurt School, even if he evidently shared a certain common ground with them. There is, after all, a fundamental

⁹³⁸ Lacan, J. “Monsieur A.”, text from 18/3/1980, available, in french, at <http://espace.freud.pagesperso-orange.fr/topos/psych/psysem/dissolu.htm> .

difference between a *revisionist* stance and an *acting out*: while the former disavows the structural inconsistency of an emblem *in name of that very emblem*, the acting out “makes the semblant pass into the scene”⁹³⁹ - that is, even if that which is in excess to a certain situation cannot take place at the level of the articulation of signifiers, the pound of flesh it costs to enact it makes an example out of this excess, redoubling it and marking its place and addressee. In this sense, Althusser’s position might not account for the passage from “A” to “a”, but it does not operate their suture as much as enacts the possibility of one taking place. Lacan, it seems to us, saw it fit to leave the task of differentiating these two positions to his disciples, focusing rather on emphasizing psychoanalysis’ fundamental stakes in face of the crisis it was going through⁹⁴⁰.

On the other hand, the lack of resonance produced by Althusser’s intervention on the Lacanian analysts - especially on those of an Althusserian formation - cannot make itself heard but as a symptom. Lacan has taught us that “repetition already costs and institutes, at the level of [the object] a, the debt of language”⁹⁴¹ and our wager is that the recurrence of a certain revisionist movement which permeates both the conceptual and institutional domains of psychoanalysis is not without relation to the lack of recognition of our debt to Althusser. Still, that his name came to be inscribed in the history of Lacanian psychoanalysis both at the moment of the excommunication and at the moment of the EFP’s dissolution does not seem to us to impose that we consider him a philosophical counter-part to psychoanalysis - it is not a matter of composing a “Lacan avec

⁹³⁹ Lacan, J (2009), ‘O seminário: De um discurso que não fosse semblante (1971). Rio de Janeiro: J. Zahar, p.32

⁹⁴⁰ It should be noted that Lacan had sided with Althusser in a similar matter in a previous comment, in Seminar 25 (class of 22/12/77), when he mentioned that Althusser was “a man of good sense” who remarked that what he, Lacan, does is philosophy - in that situation, Lacan agreed with him: “my borromean knots, that is also philosophy. That is the philosophy which I have handled as I could after the current, if I can say so, the current which results from the philosophy of Freud”. What happened between 1977 and 1980 then? The crisis of the EFP, which was not without relation to certain philosophical trends.

⁹⁴¹ Lacan, Jacques (2007), *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis* (W. W. Norton & Company) p.157

Althusser", for Lacan himself has carried this conjunction beyond its pairing, to a veritable subversion, in his seminar *D'un Autre à l'autre*⁹⁴². It is not so much to a philosophical project that we are indebted, but to a *name* which stands for a certain configuration of fidelity, a precise "context of struggle".

As Erik Porge has carefully demonstrated in his study of the Names-of-the-Father in Lacan's teaching, there is a clear intertwining between Lacan's sparse remarks on his excommunication and his continuous re-elaborations, from 1963 on, of the concept to which he had sought to devote his attention in that interrupted seminar⁹⁴³. We have thus far attempted to sketch the hypothesis that Althusser's name forms another thread in this trajectory, marking along its path the moments in which Lacanian psychoanalysis had to confront itself with a real which insists not on the outskirts of the singularity of the individual, but on the very border where the individual's discontinuity with the social nevertheless binds the two realms together.

This specific thread is most clearly delineated in José Attal's book *La Non-Excommunication de Jacques Lacan*. Attal's thesis is that, under the guise of the excommunication, Lacan's break with the IPA became the master-signifier of one's belonging to the Lacanian community, ultimately grounding the relation of the analyst to the School on the sacrifice of this very institutional relation⁹⁴⁴. As a consequence of this identification, an impasse was installed both at the conceptual and the institutional dimensions of the Lacanian field: the theory would require revision in order to support the direct naming of the position of excess as a position of exclusion, and the Lacanian Schools could only truly recognize themselves as such in their dispersions and scissions.

⁹⁴² Lacan mentions his debt to Althusser in the elaboration of the concept of surplus-enjoyment in his class of 20/11/68). Here, "Monsieur A." was himself included in the articulation of "Aa" - from the Other to the other.

⁹⁴³ Porge, E. (1998), 'Os Nomes do Pai em Jacques Lacan', (Companhia de Freud),

⁹⁴⁴ Attal, José (2010), *La non-excommunication de Jacques Lacan : Quand la psychanalyse a perdu Spinoza*, (L'Unebévée éditeur) p.200-201

As the pivot of this operation, the author curiously diagnosed a case of “Althusserian hypnosis”⁹⁴⁵: Lacan’s identification of his exclusion from the IPA with an excommunication akin to that of Spinoza or Uriel da Costa would have been produced by his encounter with Althusser and the philosopher’s outspoken Spinozism⁹⁴⁶. Althusser would have found in Lacan someone in whom he could suppose the first conjunction of a Machiavellian prince and a Spinoza-like thinker, someone who could both organize a field of knowledge which breaks with the ruling ideology and ground this organization in the exteriority it would require in order to function according to this break⁹⁴⁷. On the other side, under Althusser’s influence, Lacan would have been led to account for his institutional crisis in terms which simultaneously named his personal position and that of the analyst as such, intertwining the two. And even if his own Spinozism would later gradually disappear, grounding this identification less and less in his conceptual framework, Lacan’s excommunication would still stand for the institutional name and model of the analyst’s desire⁹⁴⁸.

Attal finally concludes that, if we distinguish between the Lacan who no longer belonged to the IPA and Lacan as an analyst, then we must come to recognize that, at the properly analytical dimension, there was no such excommunication⁹⁴⁹. And by distinguishing between these two dimensions, we can also better separate the desire of the analyst from its imaginary substitutes, thus de-substantializing the position of the analyst and rendering unnecessary the indirect reference to the IPA as the ground of the Lacanian organization⁹⁵⁰.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid. p.181

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid. 146

⁹⁴⁷ Ibid. p.152

⁹⁴⁸ Ibid. p.181 and p.199

⁹⁴⁹ Ibid p.183

⁹⁵⁰ Attal’s argument resonates very clearly with Freud’s account of the murder of Moses and his position in the Jewish community. Is the split between Lacan the excommunicated individual and Lacan the analyst not analogous to the split between Moses the Egyptian and Moses the Jewish leader? Therefore, we should

But even though the book seeks to ground its claims on the underlying suppositions of the Althusserian project and its “detour” through Spinoza, the absence of any reference to Althusser’s intervention at the dissolution of the EFP in 1980 is quite striking. As we mentioned before, if Althusser’s meeting with Lacan in 1963 was characterized by the missed encounter of their theoretical positions - the radical divergence between two different topographies of fidelity -, Althusser’s speech in 1980 was actually responsible for bringing attention to the very separation which Attal blames Althusser for having helped to suture. What if, given this ambiguity in Althusser’s relation to Lacan, the true influence behind the recurring identification of certain Lacanians with the position of Spinoza is not so much Althusser himself, but Kojève - the most Spinozist of the Hegelians?

If we summarize Attal’s conclusion in more structural terms, we could say that what he identified as the current function of the name “excommunication” in the Lacanian community was that of *fixating the excess of a signifier* - here, that which the emblem of a School does not represent - *as a signifier itself*. This operation could also be understood as the positing of a *synonymy between exclusion and extimacy*, as if this name could always designate one’s removal from the logic of representation and belonging, and never constitute another, more nebulous, emblem itself.

As we have previously studied, this same structure is at play in the Kojévian reading of Hegel. In Kojève’s interpretation of Absolute Knowledge, the coherent and self-transparent discourse of the Wise Man is constituted through the recognition of the *univocity of death* - the absolute master as the master-word which signifies only itself - emptying out every other figure of mastery over self-consciousness. Structurally, what is at stake in this reading of Absolute Knowledge is, again, the direct equation of the signifier and its excess: if, for Hegel, the

ultimately understand Attal’s argument in line with Milner’s notion of the symbolic class.

negative is the “motor” of dialectics, preventing every posited element from coinciding with its immediacy, then Kojève concludes that the negative itself would be the only self-identity - whose concrete name is death. It is precisely this self-coincidence of the negative which closes Kojève’s figure of Absolute Knowledge into a perfect circle.

Kojève’s reading of Hegel differs from his presentation of Spinoza insofar as one would be grounded on the continuity of Time - the being of the concept is its concrete presentations in temporal reality - while the Spinozist one would be grounded on Eternity - the concept is eternal and manifests itself in its different unessential presentations⁹⁵¹ - but both are ultimately represented by Kojève as circular figures⁹⁵²: the Spinozist “a-cosmic” circle as that of pure Oneness, the Hegelian Absolute Knowledge as the circle of pure Otherness. And though we are not interested here in assessing the pertinence of the Kojévian reading of Spinoza, it is important to notice that it was precisely the claim to the *purity* of the concept which we previously criticized as being an essential pivot in the obliteration of the true dimension of the infinite in Hegel, allowing the Hegelian infinite judgment to be turned into a direct equality of the terms involved and Hegel’s position to be taken for the naive overcoming of the constitutive schism between truth and knowledge⁹⁵³.

⁹⁵¹ “Spinoza, like Hegel, identifies Man (that is to say, the Wise Man) and God. It seems, then, that in both cases it could be said indifferently either that there is nothing other than God, or that there is nothing other than Man. Now in point of fact, the two assertions are not identical, and if the first is accepted by Spinoza, only the second expresses Hegel’s thought. And that is what Hegel means by saying that Spinoza’s System is not a pan-theism, but an a-cosmism: it is the Universe or the totality of Being reduced to God alone, but to a God without World and without men. And to say this is to say that everything that is change, becoming, time, does not exist for Science. For if the *Ethics* is, in fact, concerned with these things, how or why they appear in it is not known.” p. 120-121 in Kojève, Alexandre (1980), *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel: Lectures on the Phenomenology of Spirit*, (Cornell University Press).

⁹⁵² See figures 16 and 17, in *Ibid.* p.119

⁹⁵³ On this, see Lacan’s Kojévian-inspired critique of Hegel in *Subversion of the Subject and the Dialectics of Desire* in Lacan, Jacques (2007), *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, (W. W. Norton & Company). p.675

In this sense, what we encounter in José Attal's critique of Lacan's excommunication is the recognition, in the case of the collective of analysts, of a signifier that has been imbued with an excessive purity, requiring us to distort the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis in order to justify the identification of one's relation to a Lacanian School with the active gesture of making oneself not be represented by it. To seek a ground for desire - especially for the analyst's desire - either in the pure Oneness or in the pure Otherness is, from the standpoint of enjoyment, the same⁹⁵⁴. This particular position is more clearly articulated in Kojève's praise of Wisdom at the End of History, or in the "docta ignorantia" on the matter of politics cultivated by us Lacanians, than in Althusser's position of enunciation at the final meeting of the EFP. In fact, the debt we owe to Althusser is that of having inscribed, at the heart of an important event of the psychoanalytic field, the possibility of unraveling the consequences of this constitutive impurity of the One and the Other through the investigation of the following declaration: "the analytical act is not without political consequences".

It is crucial that we do not confuse "political consequences" with "consequences of the order of politics". We understand the latter as the field of social practices which seek to normalize the relation between the individual and the social dimensions. Psychoanalysis, most definitely, does not produce consequences of the order of politics: a symptom, by definition, evokes that which must be elided so that there can be any harmonious *totalization* of the individual and social spheres. The political, on the other hand, is of the order of *totality*. As Žižek states, "the very genesis of society is always "political": a positively existing social system is nothing but a form in which the negativity of a radically contingent Decision assumes positive,

⁹⁵⁴ On the institutional consequences of these two positions, please refer to the brilliant book Lebrun, Jean-Pierre (2009), *Clínica da Instituição. O que a psicanálise contribui para a vida coletiva*. CMC Editora

determinate existence”⁹⁵⁵. The task of recognizing, within the reconstituted positive order, the traces which stand for this initial rupture - that is, the recognition of the proper noun which stands for the context of struggle, of the One which is a placeholder of a nothingness⁹⁵⁶ - is a political task, one which cannot be assigned to any specific social practice consistent with this positive order. Was this not the precise point articulated in Althusser’s intervention? Though psychoanalysis is not political, any operation of fidelity which mobilizes the social field in the name of a rupture or unknotting of social links always touches on a political dimension which must be accounted for.

In his crucial text *Freud and the Political*, Mladen Dolar presents a clear distinction between psychoanalysis and politics in terms of different positions regarding the negative discontinuity of the Political:

“One could put it this way: if psychoanalysis refrains from making a step, from deciding the ambivalence, filling the crack, proposing a new tie for the untied, if there is a missing step where a step would have to be made, then politics makes a step too much. It decides the ambiguity; it proposes a new tie; it engages what Badiou calls fidelity to the event, a subjective stance, a process of truth without a guarantee, a transformation. It turns the negative condition into a positive project, a movement, a party, a militancy. It proposes a new master signifier, although it may well be aware of its contingency. No doubt it thereby obfuscates the crack; it eludes the contingency and the ambiguity; it represents the unrepresentable—that is, it misrepresents it—but this is the price of taking the step. On the other side, psychoanalysis is not simply apolitical; rather, its circumscribing the site of the political is something that calls for politics, for an engagement in that site, for a step too far, although one can only do it at the price of entering into another logic than the one that sustains psychoanalysis. The circumscription of the site is no neutral description; it requires a step, although it itself doesn’t prescribe what this step should be.”⁹⁵⁷

⁹⁵⁵ Žižek, S. (2008), *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, (Verso) p.194

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid. p.195

⁹⁵⁷ Dolar, M. (2009), ‘Freud and the Political’, *Theory & Event*, Volume 12, Issue 3, p.28

Further developing his argument, Dolar quotes a crucial passage from Lacan's seventh Seminar:

"It may well be that analysis prepares us [for the moral action], but at the end of the day it leaves us at its door (...) Why does it stop at this threshold? (...) the ethical limits of analysis coincide with the limits of its practice. Its practice is but a prelude to moral action as such"⁹⁵⁸

And then goes on to propose an hypothesis regarding the relation between psychoanalysis and politics:

"Couldn't one say that an analogous statement can be made about politics? Analysis stops at a threshold - it cannot pass a certain threshold without ceasing to be analysis - but it circumscribes a locus in which a step should be made; but this circumscribing a place is itself a political gesture, a political opening, the opening of a door through which we must make a step.

I suppose one could describe the relation between the two by the term used by Slavoj Žižek, the parallax view: a shifting perspective between two points of view, between which no synthesis or mediation is possible. One can only see the one way or the other, although one is looking at the same thing. The two may be two sides of the same thing, but they can never meet at the same level; there is no neutral common space; there is a non-relation, but this ties them together. There is a parallax gap."⁹⁵⁹

A threshold between a step "too short" and a step "too much": the relation between psychoanalysis and politics is structured around a *moment*, a logical instance whose vestige can only be recognized when we consider the conceptual role of the totality (the master-signifier) in each field.

Aware of the dangers of totalization *in other fields*, we Lacanians commonly distinguish ourselves from the pathetic

⁹⁵⁸ Lacan, Jacques (1986), *L'éthique de la psychanalyse*, 1959-1960, (Seuil). p.30

⁹⁵⁹ Dolar, M. (2009), 'Freud and the Political', *Theory & Event*, Volume 12, Issue 3, p.29

dimension of the One by summoning the reference to Lacan's formulas of sexuation and, through more or less obscene conceptual distortions, opposing the "All" of politics to the "non-All" of psychoanalysis, guaranteeing the limits of our practice at the cost of the supposition of an Other without a One. But what if, following Žižek, Dolar and Zupančič, we consider the political not against the background of totalization, but of totality? What if, as Žižek has put it, "in the [current] constellation in which the Unconscious itself, in the strict Freudian sense, is disappearing, the task of the analyst should no longer be to undermine the hold of the Master-Signifier, but, on the contrary, to construct/propose/install *new* Master-Signifiers?"⁹⁶⁰.

Analysis is not politics, this much is certain, but in circumscribing the locus of the Political - a door it cannot cross - *the analytical dimension encounters its own political surplus*. And while withdrawing from the injunction to participate in the political debates of the civil-society is simply to respect the "ethical limits of analysis", to withdraw from the engagement with the traces which compose this threshold is, by definition, a disavowal.

⁹⁶⁰ Žižek, Slavoj (2006), *The Parallax View* (Short Circuits), (MIT Press). p.307

Statements

S1: *There is a knowledge of totality that is distinct from the fantasy of a total knowledge.*

S2: *The operator of this difference is the concept of master-signifier.*

S3: *Death drive is a philosophical category.*

S4: *There is a knowledge of totality because Hegel has taken place.*

S5: *the obliteration of Hegel threatens to repeat itself in Lacan*

S6: *The current institutional crisis in psychoanalysis must be thought as an impasse of the concept of State itself*

S7: *The current conceptual crisis in psychoanalysis must be thought as an impasse of the order of the libidinal proletariat.*

S8: *only that which is non-all can truly be for all.*

S9: *Hegel is the only philosopher to think through the consequences of the Christian Event.*

S10: *After Hegel the consequences of the Christian Event have been obliterated by the post-metaphysical philosophies.*

S11: *Žižek occupies a position within contemporary philosophy which includes the conceptual apparatus necessary to distinguish transmission from obliteration.*

S12: *Death drive is that which allows us to serve ourselves of Death.*

S13: *The Žižekian parallax is a rational thought of the non-All.*

S14: *The formation of ideas requires the abstraction of time.*

S15: *The past qua trauma is atemporal insofar as it actively intervenes on temporal existence from a place that never goes away – what Freud called the “other scene”.*

S16: *There is no ideation without inconsistency.*

S17: *Representational thought actively makes legible the path by which it results.*

S18: *The letter is logical time made flesh.*

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