

CRISIS & CRITIQUE TIOUUE

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Dialectical Materialism Collective

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Editorial Note

The following texts comprise a special edition of *Crisis and Critique*, created by the editors of a different journal project, entitled *Acheronta Movebo* which is still in its infancy. This latter project, which began about 7 months ago, is comprised of a few students and researchers whose aim was to construct a Freudian journal which was not strictly psychoanalytic, but makes use of the Freudian categories in politics and philosophy as well. As we began to receive submissions from various authors, we decided that *Acheronta* had not sufficiently distinguished itself from other journals with similar commitments, most notably this one, to warrant its own existence. Although the topics covered in this issue are perhaps of a more variegated nature, we believe that they essentially fit into the structure and platform of *Crisis and Critique* better than our own project.

In this sense, our decision to move our first issue under the banner of a different journal is very practical - we simply think that one good journal devoted to Marxist critique is good enough, and that there is no need to further divide an already fragile field. By consolidating with *Crisis and Critique*, we are also motivating a question regarding our future plans - how should *Acheronta Movebo* move forward? The present letter from the editor is an inquiry into this situation - we hope that by outlining the facts of our project, what we aimed to do, and why we thought our end product did not fit the idea, we can engage ourselves and others to re-think our mode of work.

The texts offered here were to be divided into two “camps” – Rings (which are modeled after Žižek’s productive engagement with the borromean knotting of psychoanalysis, philosophy, and ideology) and Conditions (which are further divided into Badiou’s “main” truth procedures – politics, art, science and love). Our thesis (and if you affirm this, we consider you one of us) is that this split between the two thinkers orients the entirety of philosophy today. Their differing perspectives on the same issues is well-documented, but it is not enough to simply “choose” one or the other - it is not a matter of dividing their readers into the same two camps as the thinkers themselves. Rather, we conceive of their disagreement as an example of what the Left should be capable of today - internal dissension (about the role of the State, about the nature of the New, and about the unconscious) which supports, rather than detracts from, our solidarity.

We have also come to realize that the primary marker of distinction for our project should be the novelty maintained in the way we work with our authors, which unfortunately was not upheld this time around. A platform that supports the “contradictions among the people” requires

that we engage the authors by confronting their texts with certain naïve questions about their positions. Namely, we want to ask our authors those questions which would make their point clear *for ourselves* - and therefore to install a certain didactic quality to the editorial process itself. The current texts are the product of intelligent thinkers, and for that reason, they ought to be met with the incomprehension of an engaged student.

Our first attempt was that of a standard Call for Papers – but we soon found that there were certain obstacles inherent to the openness of this request – first and foremost, the lack of submissions, but also the vagueness of the criteria we used to judge whether a text was properly “Zizekian” or “Badiouian”.

In that vein, here is an excerpt from the original editorial note which was planned:

“The goal of this journal is to establish, by means of a self-referring movement, a field of study which can be properly named as Badiouian and Zizekian. This effort requires us to go beyond the work of the thinkers themselves, to expand it in as many dimensions as possible. It is not our job to dissect and disseminate their work, but rather to begin new projects that inherit the problems they’ve posed to us. The first problem is that of fidelity to an Idea - in what sense does a project devoted to extending a thinker’s work actually betray it most fully? It is a sure sign that one is among the left when the charge of “revisionism” is raised, but as the masters have shown us, it is only in rendering this charge undecidable that we make progress. What we need is to acquire the capacity to betray with honesty, to make use of what we grasp as the real contradictions of previous thought. In that sense, the division of the journal into two sections - Rings and Conditions - is a perfect fit for the task. If Badiou’s thesis that truth is always the outcome of certain procedures (and that philosophy must maintain itself upon those procedures) is true, then we can only go as far as our grasp of these procedures (e.g. love, politics, art and science). If Zizek’s thesis that one must close the internal gap of cynicism before one can subvert the existing ideology is true, then we must train ourselves to take the Freudian unconscious seriously. In short, we must confront the contradictions posed by Badiou and Zizek’s respective edifices by establishing our own practice of them. This means to question, as they do, the ontological and ethical premises of the various situations which constitute our time - not simply to satisfy a vain understanding, but so that we may intervene in these situations with boldness.”

We essentially failed in our first attempt to actualize the above points, for reasons that were mostly based on our own inexperience, but also on the inherent problems of the field we are involved in. Our failure confirms for us that this project (Acheronta Movebo) cannot do without the close proximity between the editorial team and the authors of the journal. We rarely contacted the authors to make major changes to their texts or to ask for clarifications – a task which is quite difficult when faced with authors of such erudition – and we didn’t ask ourselves what sort of new criteria would be required to authorize any such changes in the first place. We think that our project should be more devoted to establishing the Zizekian and Badiouian field of study rather than being a format for celebrating already-established figures.

Additionally, we found that good contributions to the “Conditions” section were especially sparse. Though there is a relatively large community of thinkers who engage with Badiou’s work, we could not find many who would write with enough proximity on the truth procedures. Thus, we are today lacking a platform to engage with what is new, and – following Badiou – this contributes to an overall degradation of philosophy. Certain questions, then, have to be confronted. What would be the proper text on love, for example? How would our texts on science be distinguished from those of other formats, and what would compel a scientist to publish with us given other options?

The reasons for “transplanting” our first texts to C&C became clear when we realized that it is genetically identical with AM (in the sense of having similar authors, political and philosophical positions), but without the extraneous structure we are imposing on ourselves. We hope that this decision stands as one of those few examples of the Left “unionizing” rather than dividing in the face of common obstacles, and we affirm our commitment to a new presentation of AM’s idea, one that has learned from the concrete experience of its first attempt.

RINGS

Toward a New Thinking of the Absolute

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

Sina Badiei
Alain Badiou
Raúl Cerdeiras
Christian Ingo Lenz Dunker
Kenneth LaFave
Paul Livingston
Martín López
Frank Ruda
Gabriel Tupinambá

My intention is to establish that a contemporary materialism must assume the existence of an absolute ontology.

By “absolute ontology” I mean the existence of a universe of reference, a place of the thinking of being *qua* being, with four characteristics:

1. It is immobile, in the sense that, while it makes the thinking of movement and, for that matter, all rational thought possible, it is nevertheless foreign, as such, to that category.
2. It is completely intelligible in its being, on the basis of nothing. Or to put it another way: there exists no entity of which it would be the composition. Or again: it is non-atomic.
3. It can therefore only be described, or thought, by means of axioms, or principles, to which it corresponds. There can be no experience of it or any construction of it that depends on an experience. It is radically non-empirical.
4. It obeys a principle of maximality in the following sense: any intellectual entity whose existence can be inferred without contradiction from the axioms that prescribe it exists by that very fact.

Question 1

The four points you mentioned necessary to think the absolute universe of reference, namely, immobility, intelligibility on the basis of nothing, axiomatic prescription and principle of maximality, how do they relate to one another? Is there some sort of a dialectical relationship between them insofar as one could develop the latter three from the first? And/or is there some form of repetition, maybe that the fourth point brings out something as a result of what will have been present as the immediate in the first?

To find an immanent and absolute reference, I have proposed that set theory should be purely and simply incorporated into philosophical meditation as its founding mathematical condition.

Question 2

Just one short intervention here from our side, could you maybe elaborate briefly on your conception of set theoretical ontology as presentation of being *qua* being as pure multiplicity? And could you maybe also relate this to the frequent misreading of your work, which claims that you uphold the thesis that being is itself composed of multiplicities which would imply that being

itself, and not only its mode of discursive presentation, would be substantially multiple?

That set theory obeys the four principles can be demonstrated without much difficulty.

Immobility: The theory deals with sets, for which the notion of movement is meaningless. These sets are extensional, which means that they are wholly defined by their elements, by what belongs to them. Two sets that do not have exactly the same elements are absolutely different. Hence a set cannot change as such, since, by simply changing a single point of its being, it loses that being altogether.

Composition from nothing: the theory introduces no primordial element at the beginning, no atom, no positive singularity. The whole hierarchy of multiples is built upon nothing in the sense that it is enough for it that the existence of an empty set is asserted, a set with no elements, and which is for that very reason the pure name of the indeterminate.

Axiomatic prescription: To begin with, the existence of a given set can only be inferred either from the void as originally pronounced or from constructions allowed by the axioms, and the guarantee of that existence is merely the principle of non-contradiction applied to the consequences of the axioms.

Maximality: One can always add to the theory's axioms an axiom prescribing the existence of a given set, provided it can be proved, if possible, that this addition introduces no logical inconsistency into the overall construction. The additional axioms are usually called axioms of infinity because they define and assert the existence of a whole hierarchy of ever more powerful infinities. We shall come back to this point, which is of the utmost importance.

Our approach will therefore be to speak initially only about the system of axioms. We shall conventionally call V, the letter V, which can be said to formalize the Vacuum, the great void, the place (truly inconsistent since non-multiple) of everything that can be constructed by means of axioms. What is metaphorically "in V" is what can respond to the axiomatic injunction of set theory. This means that V is in reality only the set of propositions that can be proved from the axioms of the theory. It is a being of language exclusively. It is customary to call such beings of language "classes." We shall therefore say that V is the class of sets, but bear in mind that this is a theoretical entity that is unrepresentable, or without a referent, since it is precisely the place of the absolute referent.

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Question 3
What is the difference of the conception you present here of that which you just called "a being of language exclusively" to the conception Heidegger presents of language as in a certain sense expression of being?

Regarding the possibility that V could be an ontological referent, the most important group of opponents is made up of those who have given up the idea of any referent at all and claim that a truth is never anything but relative or local. And if it is objected that a relative truth is an oxymoron, they will declare that indeed there are only opinions.

This current of thought, suited like no other to representative democracy and cultural relativism, is the prevailing one today. It has always existed, always in the democratic context moreover, and, as such, it was able to be a very useful sophistic argument against tyranny. From the dawn of time, even those who acknowledge a sort of practical value in it—because all absoluteness is troublesome, it's true—have objected, with varying degrees of subtlety, that the statement "there are only opinions" must be absolutely true, otherwise something other than opinions might well exist, and an absolute truth would therefore exist. My own version would be: "Nothing in the appearing of objects has any absolute value except that *what* appears is absolutely related to the pure theory of the multiple." And as I call "a truth" what makes appear in a world a fragment of the "what" that appears, a variant of my version is "there are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths."

But as you can see, this maxim is based on the existence of the pure theory of the multiple as an absolute ontological referent. And it is therefore that theory, not the general principle of the existence of truths, that it is a matter of defending here.

Question 4
Why is it that to develop and to defend a contemporary conception of the absolute also makes it necessary to defend theory in a very fundamental sense? And are we correct to understand your claim in that way, namely, that it is only by means of theory that it is possible to think the absolute?

So what about those famous objections I mentioned a moment ago? I know of three that are all fascinating to study and, if possible, to refute: the objection to infinity, the objection to undecidability, and the

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objection to the plurality of logics.

I shall try and clarify all this as much as possible without going into the formidable underlying technical problems.

The objection to infinity has two main forms. The first is the theory of finitude, which, like the theory of the supremacy of opinions, is tailor-made for the ambient democratic world, for its consumerist imperative and the poverty of its speculative ambitions. This theory merely states that our lived experience as mortal human animals is finite and that, as far as science can tell, the universe itself is finite. Then either infinity occurs as divine transcendence (empiricism and minimal religion have always made good bedfellows) or philosophy must lie in an analytic of finitude, even a phenomenology of being-for-death. As for me, I remain Cartesian in the face of these assertions: since a rational, ramified thinking of infinity exists, it is meaningless to propound the theory of finitude. The modern theory of infinity is called the theory of large cardinals. Well, let's just say that the theory of large cardinals is definitely as real as death, if not more so.

The second objection to infinity is much more interesting. It amounts to saying that the thinking of sets is not really able to grasp infinity because it subordinates it to a limited thinking, that of number. Cantor certainly secularized the thinking of infinity by showing that there is an infinite plurality of different infinities, but in subjecting this infinity to mathematics, he failed to grasp the qualitative nature of infinity. This is evidenced by the fact that there is no terminal infinity in set theory, no stopping point, and we are therefore in numerical indifference. Just as after one number there comes another, after a certain type of infinity there comes another. This is a kind of open zoology of infinities, which leads to all kinds of ever more infinite monsters coming one after the other.

Question 5

Just one brief question here: What are the means we have at our disposal today to construct new kinds of infinity?

How is it usually done for constructing a new sort of infinity? Something that measures the size of a set, the number of its elements, whether finite or infinite, is called a cardinal number. Suppose that we manage to define a particular type of infinity, and let k be the cardinal of a set that belongs to this type of infinity. We will then try to determine whether there can exist a type of set absolutely larger than k in the following sense: there exist at least k sets below it whose type of infinity

is k . It can be called super- k . This super- k is such that k is small compared to it, since super- k is so large that it encompasses at least k sets of k size. This procedure is called orthogonal: you use k to exceed k by at least k multiplied by k itself. You then seem to be in a transcendent position vis-à-vis k . And if there is reason to think that k is already very strongly infinite, super- k will open the way to a sort of super-infinity.

The problem is that we have the distinct impression that, each time, the new infinity makes the preceding one finite and so the absoluteness is dissolved at every one of the steps that attempts to constitute its infinite absoluteness.

A basic theorem proved by Kunen in 1971 shows, however, that this endless numerical openness is not the law of infinity in the universe V of sets. This theorem says in substance that the most powerful procedure known to date for defining types of infinities *cannot be orthogonalized without creating a fatal contradiction*. Unless totally new and unpredictable procedures for constructing successive infinities can be devised, there *is* in fact a limit. There exists a point at which the process of reabsorption of successive infinities in an all-enveloping super-infinity has to come to an end.

Question 6

If, at first glance, one were to say that it is impossible to totalize and make a whole out of the infinite series of infinities that are producible, if we understand you correctly, your claim is that there is always a danger to totalize non-totalizability. And therefore your stance seems to be to un-totalize the un-totalizable? Is that correct?

Now let's turn to the objection to undecidability. Gödel and Cohen's famous theorems established that at least one apparently very important property of sets is not decidable in the current state of the theory. This is the so-called Continuum Hypothesis. In substance, this hypothesis concerns the two types of infinity that are used most often in current mathematics: on the one hand, the type of infinity corresponding to the whole set of integers, 1, 2, and so on, which is called discrete infinity and is the smallest type of infinity, and on the other hand, the type of infinity corresponding to the real numbers, or to the points on a geometrical straight line, which is called continuous infinity and, as can be proved, is larger than the discrete type of infinity. But larger by how much? The Continuum Hypothesis says that the continuum is the infinity that comes

right after discrete infinity. The continuum is the second infinity. Let's now take "the basic axioms" of set theory to mean the ordinary operational axioms with no axiom of infinity other than the assertion that infinity exists. By the end of the 1930s Gödel had proved that the Continuum Hypothesis did not introduce any contradiction in the basic axiom system of the theory. So, from a purely logical point of view, we can adopt the hypothesis. In 1963 Cohen proved that the hypothesis could also be explicitly negated without any contradiction with the basic axioms arising. We can therefore assume its negation. So, if we stick with the basic axioms of set theory, there is a very clear and simple property of infinite sets, a question philosophy has been interested in right from the start — the exact relationship between discrete and continuous infinity — that is undecidable. This relationship can be asserted to be a relationship of succession where the first types of infinities are concerned. But it can also be denied that this is so. These opposite choices provide two essentially different universes for thinking the multiple. Then how can the formal theory that prescribes these two different universes of thought claim to be an absolute ontological reference? In actual fact, it is in this suspicious ambivalence of the theory that the starting point of a possible repudiation of any claim to an absolute reference can be found.

Question 7

Again a rather brief question: Why is it that there can be a plurality of different set theories?

Gödel, a convinced Platonist, had said right from the start of this whole affair, it may well be that this "indeterminacy" stems from the fact that we have not yet found a set of axioms that is appropriate to the "real" universe of the thinking of the pure multiple. In other words, our axiomatic determination of the class *V* in which being *qua* being is thought may still be insufficient. The objection would then be purely technical and would not bear on the substance.

By saying that set theory constitutes an absolute reference, I am assuming that there exists a system of axioms, incompletely discovered as yet, which defines the universe *V*, the rational fiction in which all sets are thinkable, and defines it alone. In other words, no important, significant, useful property of sets will remain undecidable once we have been able to fully identify the axioms.

The two properties of the universe *V* that have long been subjected to the most criticism and which lend support to the suspicion about

set theory's indeterminacy (hence the impossibility of regarding it as an absolute referent) are the Axiom of Choice and the Continuum Hypothesis.

First of all, I would like to state that, when it comes to the Axiom of Choice, it is obviously, in my opinion, part of the natural body of axioms prescribing the true properties of *V* in which the pure multiple is thought. This axiom asserts the existence of an infinite multiplicity of a special type, without providing any means of constructing it. Roughly speaking, this axiom says that, from any infinite set, a set composed of an element of each set that is an element of the original set can be extracted. In short, a "representative" of everything that composes the original set can be chosen. It is a sort of electoral axiom: a representative for each region is chosen, but the problem is that the country possesses an infinite number of regions. Let it be noted in passing that in an assembly made up like this of an infinite number of representatives, it would be very hard to know what a majority was. But never mind. What matters is that the Axiom of Choice is purely existential; it does not tell us how to go about having such an election.. Nevertheless, since it has been proved that it does not introduce any contradiction, the principle of maximality requires us to adopt it, in my opinion.

Question 8

Referring back to the first four points that you brought up at the beginning of your lecture, the immobility, the composition from nothing, the axiomatic prescription and the principle of maximality, could one say that the axiom of choice retroactively reveals what will have been present in the first of the points you mentioned? To make this point clearer: This would mean that already the decision to start from the existence of the immobile immediately will have implied what comes out in the fourth point: the principle of maximality related to the axiom of choice?

As for the Continuum Hypothesis, ever since the time when I was working on what was to become *Being and Event* I have thought that it is quite simply false. Why should the set of real numbers be the type of infinity that comes right after the set of integers? Is there really nothing between the discrete and the continuum? It has always seemed to me that adopting this hypothesis led to a restriction of the theory's axiomatic powers and was therefore opposed to the principle of maximality. However, since adopting it would introduce no contradiction, there

were reasons for hesitating. Especially since the mere negation of the hypothesis didn't tell us what type of infinity the continuum really was either.

But in the past twenty years the situation has changed. A return to a sort of absoluteness of set theory is indeed the path being taken today by mathematical research, in particular with Hugh Woodin's spectacular work. Soon, new axioms of infinity and new theoretical conjectures might very well force the falsification of the Continuum Hypothesis and more generally provide a stable and practically complete description of the "true" universe of the pure multiple. As Woodin writes, *There is the very real possibility that we can find a new optimal axiom (from structural and philosophical considerations) that prevents us from undecidability of some important properties of set. In which case, we will have returned, against all odds or reasonable expectation, to the view of truth for set theory that was present at the time when the investigation of set theory began.*¹

Woodin thus prophesies a return to the Cantorian absoluteness of the theoretical framework of pure multiplicity. He tells us: the class V of sets can be adequately and unequivocally prescribed by definitive axioms.

As usual, mathematicians' vocabulary is a very useful guide for us here. Back in the 1930s, Gödel had already introduced the concept of absoluteness into set theory. Woodin bolsters this notion of absoluteness, and, to that end, he chooses the expression, which is surprising for a mathematician, "*the essential truth*" of a formula. Finally, both Gödel and Woodin were sure that it is possible to absolutize set theory or to construct an axiomatic that would make it possible to hold the universe V of the pure multiple as essentially true.

This is precisely what my own philosophical wager has been since the 1980s: to construct a theory of worlds such that modifications in it are only intelligible to the extent that the invariance of the real concept of multiplicity is assumed. To assume, to that end, that the immanent mobility of worlds and the instability of appearing are what happens locally to multiplicities that are in other respects mathematically thinkable in terms of their non-localized being, their pure being, in the determinate framework of set theory, hence in a place where being and being-thought are identical. On this basis, it will be said that to appear is only to come, as a multiple, to a place where absoluteness is topologically particularized.

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¹ Woodin, W. Hugh. The Axiom of Determinacy, Forcing Axioms, and the Nonstationary Ideal (De Gruyter Series in Logic and Its Applications). eds. W.A. Hodges, R. Jensen, S. Lemp, M. Magidor. 2nd ed. Berlin: De Gruyter, 1999.

Question 9

Could one say that thinking the absolute and its localization entails several things because one has to conceive of the relationship between multiplicities that are made out of nothing and the forms of their localization? This then further implies that one needs to give an account of the relationship between the void, nothing and infinity. Could one say that this is a necessary prerequisite of thinking change in general? Because if what appears can necessarily appear in infinitely multiple ways, then the modes of appearance, for example, of the contemporary world, are not at all necessary, therefore, change is thinkable?

There remains the formidable third objection: how can all this be combined with the irresistible current that proposes many different logics, and would thereby seem to render the stabilization and absoluteness of a pure theory of the multiple unlikely?

Today we know that these logics, which have become increasingly prolific, are of three main types: classical logic, which admits the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of the excluded middle; intuitionistic logic, which admits the principle of non-contradiction but not the principle of the excluded middle; and finally, paraconsistent logic, which admits the principle of the excluded middle but not that of non-contradiction. These three logics propose very different concepts of negation in particular. Now, negation plays a key role in set theory. First of all, it establishes the unicity of its point of departure (the unicity of the void), since the void is defined by the negation of an existential proposition: in the void, there are no elements. Then, because infinity itself is introduced by way of the existence of a term with negative properties, which is called a limit ordinal, there exists an ordinal which is not the void but which is nevertheless not the successor of any other ordinal. And finally, because the difference between two sets is defined negatively, one set differs from another if there exists in one of them at least one element that does not exist in the other. The fundamental concept of cardinal numbers is itself essentially negative: any ordinal is a cardinal if no bi-univocal correspondence exists between it and any one or other of its predecessors. Many other examples could be found. It is clear that if the concept of negation changes, fundamental concepts of set theory will change, contextually, in meaning and importance.

Regarding this point, my response is oddly dependent on the response to the so-called undecidability of the Axiom of Choice. I said

a moment ago that the principle of maximality, with respect to infinite potentialities, must prevail, and that therefore there is no reason other than an extrinsic one for refusing to admit the Axiom of Choice.

Let's add that the Axiom of Choice is a statement whose philosophical impact is considerable. Indeed, it validates a choice whose norm does not pre-exist, a representation whose Law is unknown. We might say that it proposes an ontological framework to validate the way the spokesperson of a group, in a time of insurrection, is anonymous, not pre-constructed and not corresponding to any protocol established by the State. This is in every point the exact opposite of electoral representation. The Axiom of Choice is the ontological imperative that gives illegal decision, unconstructible infinity, its absolute referent. What has arrayed so many people against it, in the choice of an ontological orientation of mathematics, has to do with political subjectivity.

Admitting this axiom is not only possible but crucial in terms of the approach adopted in mathematics and elsewhere.

However, it so happens that if you validate the Axiom of Choice, your must admit a classical logic. Set theory resists its logical displacement. That wonderful theorem, so profound and unexpected, was proved in 1975 by the mathematician Diaconescu. It established once and for all that anyone who tries to introduce set theory into a non-classical context abandons the Axiom of Choice and therefore in my view commits a double fault. First of all, he renounces the principle of maximality in infinity. Second of all, relativism in logic and the corresponding abandonment of the Axiom of Choice imply the subordination of the decision to external protocols and indeed submission to State procedures. We must therefore assert that set theory is part and parcel of classical logic and that it is also as such that it can serve, as Parmenides was the first to see, as the absolute ontological referent.

Question 10

Again a rather short question: How would you conceive of the relation between the three forms of negation you just delineated? Maybe also in relation to the Axiom of Choice as being somehow opposed, at least within the realm of appearances, to paraconsistency?

It is altogether extraordinary that three issues in recent mathematical research should thus clarify and consolidate philosophical decisions of such great significance and which still today run counter to the mainstream. The guarantee of a tenable dialectical relationship

between the rejection of power of the One, openness and closure, is contained in Kunen's theorem. It tells us that infinity without God does not consign us to the false infinity of hopeless successions. The possibility that the universe of the multiple might be reasonably univocal and not in the least indeterminate or relative is supported by Woodin's great inventions and results. And finally, the fact that the theory of the pure multiple is part and parcel of a determinate, stable logic is one of the striking consequences of Diaconescu's theorem.

From all this there results a relationship between philosophy and its mathematical condition which can be expressed as follows: yes, the absoluteness of the thinking of the pure multiple, in the atheistic take-over from monotheism, including in the immanent form given it by the great works of Spinoza and Deleuze, is feasible. Yes, a consideration of an absolute ontology of the multiple as the point of reference for philosophical speculation as a whole is the most radically new path that mathematics has opened up for us. It is comparable to the impact of the theory of geometric irrationality on the Platonic theory of Ideas, or to the impact of the premises of integral and differential calculus on the various classical metaphysics.

In this regard, now is surely the time for us to associate ourselves, as Lautréamont did in poetry, with "austere mathematics." We can describe our philosophical situation today: The absolute Idea of the pure multiple is parcelled out in ever vaster infinities. These infinities give their full measure to everything that appears. Only then can philosophical thought not be deedless of the coming event.

Politics, Subjectivity and Cosmological Antinomy: Kant, Badiou and Žižek

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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Frank Ruda
Gabriel Tupinambá

In the “Antinomy” section of the Transcendental Dialectic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant articulates four cosmological antinomies, contradictions of reason with itself with respect to the idea of totality involved in its ongoing search for the conditions of phenomena.¹ The four antinomies, respectively concerning the completeness of the whole of all appearances in space and time, their spatial and temporal divisibility, the origination of phenomena by means of natural causality or spontaneity, and the conditioning of all phenomena by an absolutely necessary being, are further subdivided by Kant into two categories, those of the “mathematical” and the “dynamical” (A 529-32/B 557-560; cf. also A 418-19/B 446-447). According to Kant, in particular, the first two antinomies are “mathematical” in that they are concerned simply with the determination of conditions with respect to their magnitude, whereas the third and fourth, by contrast, are concerned not simply with the magnitude but the conditions for *existence* of appearances and are thus called “dynamical.” Although all four antinomies result in pairs of thesis and antithesis that cannot be held together without contradiction, Kant argues that while the “mathematical” nature of the first two requires both thesis, antithesis, and their common presupposition of a world existing as a whole to be rejected as false, the “dynamical” nature of the second two allows that both thesis and antithesis can be maintained in such a way as to satisfy both reason and the understanding. This is because whereas the first two, “mathematical” antinomies envision an ultimate condition for totality that is homogenous with the terms of the series, and the provision of any such condition would result in a rationally conceived series “either too long or too short for the understanding,” the “dynamical” antinomies envision a possible condition that is heterogeneous with the terms of the series conditioned. They thus allow, according to Kant, for the supposition of a supersensible ultimate cause of appearances that is not itself an appearance. Such a supposition, although it can never be positively verified, allows for the possibility of a causation through freedom that is compatible with deterministic, natural causality (A 558/B 586) and for the possibility of an intelligible being at the ground of all possible appearances (A 561-562/B 589-590). These possible suppositions, particularly that of freedom, provide an opening for the idea of the rational ethics of freedom that Kant would subsequently

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¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. by Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1965), A 407/B 433-34.

pursue in further critical works.

As I shall argue, what is most needed in order to facilitate a renewed ethico-political project of critique with respect to the urgent problems of global life and collective *praxis* today is a problematic repetition of this Kantian antinomic argument, but this time affirming the paradoxical cosmological truth of the “mathematical” rather than the “dynamical” antinomies. Such a repetition allows for the paradoxical core of Kant’s critical argument to be reinterpreted in realist, rather than idealist, terms and displaces its underlying problematic from the familiar antinomy of the natural or cultural basis of subjective freedom to that of the actual structure of collective action with respect to claims and practices of totality and universality. It also, as I shall argue, provides the basis for a realist understanding of temporality that, while maintaining the underlying structure of cosmological antinomy, breaks with the claim of transcendental idealism to maintain an origin of time in the synthetic or auto-affective activity of a self-constituting subjectivity. In the following, I shall show how such a displaced repetition of the Kantian antinomic structure is implicit in or suggested by recent arguments of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, and further motivated by the implications of debates between them about the problematic structural role of what Lacan called the “Real.” I conclude with a brief discussion of the relationship of this structural/temporal problematic to the much-contested Heideggerian ontological inquiry into “Being itself.”

I

In the first pages of *Being and Event*, Badiou declares as the axiomatic foundation of his whole project the decision that the “one is not.”² In particular, according to Badiou, it is necessary to begin the enterprise of set-theoretical ontology by denying the existence of the “One-All,” the unified totality of all that exists. In this way, according to Badiou, is it possible finally to break with the “arcana of the one and the multiple in which philosophy is born and buried, phoenix of its own sophistic consumption.”³ Although this break with the unifying project of philosophy since Parmenides is, according to Badiou, a matter of decision, he finds immediate support for it in the results of twentieth-century set-theoretical formalism, and in particular in the

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2 Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. by Oliver Feltham (London: Continuum, 2005), pp. 23–24.

3 *Being and Event*, p. 23.

implications of Russell’s famous set-theoretical paradox. Familiarly, Russell’s paradox concerns the existence of a set of all sets that are not self-membered; such a set is, contradictorily, a member of itself if it is not and is not a member of itself if it is. According to Badiou, Russell’s paradox demonstrates that it is impossible to consider there to be a set consisting of all other sets, or to suppose that there is always a well-defined set corresponding to any linguistically coherent predicate. In particular, as Russell himself suggested, it is necessary, in order to save the consistency of the language, to maintain that well-formed predicates apparently referring to the totality of all that exists, or more generally to any total collection in which such reference is itself included, in fact fail to refer to or designate their apparent objects.

This conclusion is enshrined in the standard axiom system of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory, which Badiou makes the basis of his own ontological theory of being insofar as it is sayable. In the standard axiomatization, two axioms, the axiom of separation and the axiom of foundation, work together to preclude the possibility of “forming” or countenancing a total set, or a set of all sets. Given Badiou’s metaontological consideration of the structure and boundaries of ontology and the fragile possibility of the extra-ontological “event,” this foreclosure of the One-All on the level of ontology has the consequence that the transformative event, defined by its own reflexive structure of auto-designation, operates in each case at the problematic limit of a situation, insofar as it is ontologically describable at all. Though there is a common formal structure to the situation-transforming events that unfold from the “generic” procedures or “truth” procedures of art, politics, science, and love, “the event” is thus no *singulare tantum* for Badiou. Since situations are irreducibly plural, the possibilities of their punctual transformation are themselves irreducibly many. The implication is reinstated and formally sharpened in Badiou’s more recent *Logics of Worlds*.⁴ Here, in developing a more sophisticated “phenomenology,” or theory of appearance, alongside the ontology of *Being and Event*, Badiou affirms once more the apparent implication of Russell’s paradox: that situations or (as he now terms them) “worlds” are irreducibly local and plural, and accordingly that the possibilities of their transformation are to be located as, in each case, immanent to

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4 Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event II*, trans. by Alberto Toscano (London: Continuum, 2009).

their specific organizing structures.⁵ In particular, Badiou develops, in connection with the categorical theory of topoi, a sophisticated account of the “transcendental” structure that organizes, according to Badiou, the “objective” possibilities of appearance or “degrees of existence” of particular objects within specific worlds, and of the possibility of its transformation by means of a peculiar kind of ontological “retroaction” on the phenomenological.

In connection with Badiou’s conception of the “subject” as the faithful operator of situational transformation, this pluralist conclusion organizes a militant and interventionist politics of the transformation of specifically constrained situations. However, it is in notable tension with some of Badiou’s more specific claims, in a more concrete ethico-political register, with respect to the contemporary “global” situation itself. This tension is perhaps most clearly in view in Badiou’s 2007 discussion of the underlying situation producing of which the election in that year of Nicolas Sarkozy was a sign.⁶ Here, by contrast with the presumptive form of the “international community” – in fact, as Badiou says, the “coalition of the planet’s gendarme states”⁷ and its project of the expansion of primarily electoral “democracy” on “Western” terms, which always name and promulgate the separation between the world of the entitled and that of those who are excluded by various types of walls – Badiou emphasizes the importance of a performative assertion of the *unity* of the world:

Faced with the two artificial and deadly worlds of which the ‘West’ – that damned word! - names the disjunction, we must assert right at the start the existence of the single world, as an axiom and a principle. We must say this very simple sentence: ‘There is only one world.’ This is not an objective conclusion. We know that, under the law of money, there is not a single world of women and men. There is the wall that divides the rich and the poor. This sentence ‘there is only one world’ is performative. It is we who decide that this is how it is for us. And we shall be faithful to this motto ... That is the key point. That is where we reverse the dominant idea of the unity of the world in terms of objects, signs and elections, an idea that leads to persecution and war. The unity

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5 *Logics of Worlds*, pp. 110–113.

6 Badiou, *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, trans. by David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2008).

7 *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, p. 58.

of the world is one of living and acting beings, here and now.⁸

In response to the false universalism of capital and its privileged ethico-political image of an ever-expanding “democracy” of electoral process while in fact constantly working to divide and exclude, it is thus necessary, according to Badiou, to affirm and be faithful to the unity of the one world of “living and acting beings.” In this way alone will it be possible to work toward a politics of emancipation that can affirm the “regulative idea” of communism, a term that Badiou insists upon retaining in opposition to the dominant electoral politics of representation that ultimately represents only capital.

As a calculated and strategic political intervention within a “global” situation actually defined by the law of capital that ruthlessly divides rich from poor, Badiou’s performative appeal to the actual unity of the world of “living and acting bodies” is unexceptionable. It appears to be the necessary condition for the possible affirmation and pursuit of a genuine “global” community, and hence a political future, in our time.⁹ But can Badiou actually make this appeal, given what he has maintained both in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* about the nonexistence of the One-All? On the face of it, he cannot. For, as we have seen, the central underlying claim of both books is that the world does not exist. In fact, on the formal and semantic position that Badiou takes over from Russell and the framers of the standard set-theoretic axiomatization, it must not be (even so much as) *coherent* or *meaningful* to speak of the world as a whole, given that we ourselves are elements of it. In the context of Badiou’s broader project, it is not that this denial, moreover, concerns only a narrowly cosmological idea of the world (such as is involved in physics) or an abstract set-theoretical construction. Since politics is a truth procedure for Badiou (in fact, the exemplary one insofar as his thinking about ontology and truth has long been oriented toward it), the meta-ontological implications of reflection on the structures of set theory, including the question of totality and unity, bear directly and constitutively on it, as Badiou often emphasizes. It is clear, moreover, that in response to the bogus universalism of global capitalism and its associated politics of narrowly electoral representational democracy,

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8 *The Meaning of Sarkozy*, pp. 60–61.

9 It is not clear from what Badiou says whether this unity of “living and acting beings” is meant to extend to what are called (non-human) animals, but it seems clear that it would have to do so in order to invoke a politics capable of addressing the deepest and most characteristic antagonisms of the current global “situation.”

the only possibility of an appropriate counter-claim rests in the appeal to a real universality of the appeal to a single world to come, which Badiou essentially formulates in *The Meaning of Sarkozy*. If this appeal is to be formulated in such a way as to confront the contemporary situation created by “global capitalism” on its own level of definition and effective force, it will have to appeal to an idea of the unity of the world as such. But this appeal is just what Badiou’s set-theoretically motivated ontological decision prevents him from being able to make in a way that draws on his own formal apparatus.

There is, however, an alternative. In fact, it is possible to maintain the formal structure that Badiou convincingly draws upon in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds* while *also* acknowledging the force of the set-theoretical paradoxes and *nevertheless* asserting the existence of the one world. The key to this alternative is to affirm the *contradictory* nature of the totality as such, which the paradoxes demonstrate, without ruling out or excluding that it is possible for a critical politics to *think* this essential contradictoriness itself. In particular, Russell’s paradox and the related set-theoretical and semantical paradoxes can be seen as pointing to an essential structure of *limit-contradiction* or “inclosure” that characterizes, in general, totalities insofar as they are thought, spoken of, or considered from a position within themselves.¹⁰ Clearly, it is plausible that any politics that takes account of the total, global situation and attempts to formulate structurally appropriate responses to the ideologically and structurally-pragmatically maintained claim of capitalism to a totalizing universalism. Moreover, it is on this basis – the affirmation of totality and the structural consideration of the limit-paradoxes to which this leads – that it is uniquely possible to discern the deepest underlying antagonisms that structure the contemporary total situation. These antagonisms – for instance the antagonism between the sphere of “human” interests and the surrounding “more than human” world or that between the service of capital and the pursuit of various conceptions of the good – are not always visible from the perspective of a purely “local” or “situational” politics of emancipation or inclusion, since their “site” is everywhere. Nor are their stakes simply articulable in terms of an expanded realm of human freedom or equality. But if these are the central antagonisms that characterize the

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 10 Cf. the “paradoxico-critical” orientation articulated and defended by Paul Livingston in *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein and the Consequences of Formalism* (New York: Routledge, 2012). For the terminology and structure of inclosure contradictions, see Graham Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (second edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

force and effectiveness of the regime of global capital, which concretely claims totality in the abstract form of monetary equivalence and thereby promulgates its mastery everywhere on earth, then it appears necessary to find forms of response that consider the actual underlying formal structure of totality and the necessity of structural contradiction at its center.

Formally speaking, to take this solution is to reject the various devices of limitation and denegation that Russell and other mathematicians have employed in the context of set theory in order to save its consistency. In particular, it is necessary to affirm that references to self-including or self-referring totalities are not somehow simply incoherent or nonsensical, but are themselves actually coherent and essential, even if (as the paradoxes demonstrate) they invoke the actually contradictory structure of the world as such. More broadly, the paradoxes can be formally understood as pointing toward the necessity of a metalogical choice or duality, on the level of references to wholes, between *completeness* and *consistency*. In the wake of the paradoxes, it is possible to affirm the completeness or totality of a whole of which one is a part, but only on pain of inconsistency at the limits. Alternatively, one can save consistency and deny completeness. This is the choice usually taken by mathematicians, following Russell, and also officially followed by Badiou. It amounts to holding that no situation is total, and that every definable or coherently considerable situation is thus capable of being supplemented or expanded by coming to include what it, as yet, does not. The solution maintains axiomatic consistency with respect to particular, constituted solutions, but it only makes sense if a coherent position can be presupposed from which it is possible to survey these situations, in general, from outside. Where, however, the stakes of political thought and action essentially involve the constitutive reference to a totality which essentially includes the position from which this thought and action themselves take place, and thus generates the essential paradoxes and antinomies of the totality of world as such, it is clear that the other term of the dual (that of completeness and inconsistency) better captures the underlying structural logic that is involved.

In order to maintain the formal structure of Badiou’s set-theoretical approach but also to develop a politics appropriate to the contemporary global situation, it is thus apparently necessary to affirm and maintain the meaningfulness of the paradoxical existence of the world as such. To do so is to affirm what Kant denies in the wake of

the cosmological antinomies, namely that the world exists as an object in itself independent of thought or of the synthetic activity of a subject in constituting it. This Kantian denial of the existence of the world, predicated on the seeming impossibility of accepting a contradiction, is in fact one of Kant's main arguments for transcendental idealism itself. If, on the other hand, the paradoxical structure and the inherent contradiction are affirmed along with the reality of the world, it is possible to pursue a critical politics that interrogates this constitutive structure on a thoroughly realist (rather than idealist) basis. On this position, the concrete reality and unity of the world owes nothing to any kind of subjective conditioning, whether this be thought as epistemological "conditions of possible knowledge" or ontological conditions of existence. It is rather, along with its constitutive structure of limit-paradox, an essential implication of the formal reality of the very idea of totality. It is this idea of totality which conditions the possibility of thought with reference to a world, and thus configures the possible global relationships of thought and being, rather than thought or subjectivity conditioning it. The recognition, now possible in the wake of the twentieth-century development of set theory and its paradoxes, of the underlying metalogical duality of incomplete consistency and inconsistent completeness, reconfigures this relationship of thought to being at the very point of the inherent structural impasse of thought's attempt to grasp the whole in which it takes part.

Moreover, far from being opposed to it, the paradoxical structure of actually existing limit-contradictions is actually in a certain way implied by the Cantorian moment of the creation of set theory and the mathematics of the actual infinite that *it* makes possible. Commentators have often noted the closeness of structure of Russell's paradox with the Kantian antinomies, and especially with the first one, which concerns the beginnings of the world in time and its limits in space. Like Kant himself, Russell proposes to resolve the paradox inherent in the idea of a totality which must be both bounded and yet always larger than any specific location of the boundaries allow by means of a constructivist intuition, according to which such a totality can only be considered to exist insofar as it has actually been completed or constructed by the traversal of some temporal and subjective process of constitution. With respect to the infinite, in both its Russellian and Kantian forms, the intuition rests on the Aristotelian conception according to which infinite wholes can only ever exist potentially, and never actually, so that, in physical reality at least, only finite (but possibly

indefinitely increasable) wholes can be considered actually to exist. This intuition finds expression in Russell's theory of types, according to which sets can be considered to exist only if they can be "formed" from sets at a lower type level; due to this limitation, the set-theoretical universe is pictured as an open hierarchy of ever-higher levels which can always be continued but never completed, and no total set or set of all sets can thus be considered to exist. But the solution flies in the face, in a certain way, of Cantor's discovery itself, which consisted in showing the real mathematical tractability of the actual infinite, against centuries of the Aristotelian prejudice. On its face, this discovery points to the actual existence of infinite totalities up to and including the totality of all totalities, or the total set-theoretical universe itself. This totality is not only put on a rigorous formal foundation through Cantor's set theory, but also is plausibly presupposed in every subsequent set-theoretical discussion of the structure and dynamics of sets themselves. Though he was aware of the paradoxical implications, Cantor himself, more clear-sighted than Russell and others in this respect, designated the "too big" sets such as the set of all sets "inconsistent multiplicities" and identified them with the Absolute. As an inherent implication of the Cantorian thought of the actual infinite, they bear witness, together with their constitutive inconsistency, to the possibility of a post-Cantorian realist thought of the infinite world as such.

Nor is it any longer possible, in the wake of the Cantorian event, to maintain the distinction Kant himself would like to draw, between the "mathematical" antinomies, both of whose terms he would like to reject as false, and the "dynamical" ones which he would like to maintain as possibly jointly true in order to save the possibility of spontaneous causality and of a supersensible creator of the world. As we have seen, Kant's own official ground for the distinction turns on the difference between the kind of conditions that are, and those that need not be, homogenous with the series conditioned. In particular, Kant claims that the mathematical antinomies, as they concern quantity, look toward a quantifiable total condition, which must be contradictory and thus (as Kant sees things) impossible, whereas the "dynamical" ones allow the possibility of a "heterogeneous" total condition that is not measurable in terms of the series itself so conditioned. The claimed possibility of the joint truth of the apparently contradictory terms in the case of the dynamical antinomies is thus preserved by limiting the category of the quantifiable in such a way that it is not seen as applying to the relationship between a free cause of action and the action thereby

caused, or between a supersensible creator and his creation. But Kant does not say why quantity should not apply to these relationships, or indeed how they actually are supposed to be structured or take place. In setting the realm of the quantifiable over against a contrasting realm of properties and relations that escape quantification, his strategy is in fact a typical instance of his more general appeal to a realm of the noumenal that is seen as prior to and incapable of quantification, set over against the realm of what can be counted and numbered. The basis for this strategy within Kant's metaphysics is his specific view of counting and arithmetic as having an ultimately subjective origin in the spatial and ultimately temporal forms of subjective intuition.

If, on the other hand, it is possible today to affirm, along with Badiou, a realist conception of number and arithmetic with respect to the world that is counted and numbered, it is necessary to deny this conception of the subjective origin of the mathematical and affirm, to the contrary, the universal quantifiability and enumerability of everything, even the infinite.¹¹ This is sufficient, by itself, to necessitate the joint (though admittedly contradictory) of the thesis and antithesis of the first and second antinomies, and also to cast doubt on the possibility of supersensible causality heterogenous to the realm of quantification appealed to in defending the possible truth of the third and fourth antinomies. In particular, if it is no longer plausible, given a thoroughly immanent and rational conception of the conditioning of phenomena, to posit the possibility of a heterogeneous "outside" to any of the four series involved in the successive antinomies and situated beyond the possibility of mathematical quantification, it is nevertheless possible (and this possibility is indeed strengthened by the rigorous Cantorian thinking of the actual infinite) to affirm the paradoxical totality of each of these series, even as infinite. This does not mean that something like the ethical conception of freedom and its compatibility with natural causality that Kant derives from the possible truth of the third antinomy cannot be maintained; but it does mean that the ground of this freedom can no longer be thought as a noumenal subject located simply outside the realm of quantifiably conditioned phenomena. More generally, it is possible on this basis to consider the subject's freedom, along with subjectivity itself, to be structurally or formally conditioned by a deeper and more general structure of paradox that characterizes the totality of the world as such. This more general structure can then be

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 11 Cf. *Being and Event*, pp. 265-67.

seen as characterizing the inherent ideas of reflexivity and totality as they themselves formally condition the real existence of the world; they provide the generalized metalogical and topological site of paradox in which something like a reflective subject of reason can first come into being, without being in any way reducible to such a subject or its reflective activity.

The possibility of affirming, in this way, the paradoxical structure of the contradictory totality on the very basis of the set-theoretical paradoxes has the effect of supplementing or modifying Badiou's picture with a realist and critical conception of the *total* situations in which political interventions, and especially any helpful intervention in the contemporary "global" situation, take place. This remedies what has appeared to many commentators to be a significant lack in Badiou's own conception of the basis of political intervention and change, namely the lack of a critique of political economy and, more broadly, the almost total absence of a post-Kantian register of critique in his thought. What the possibility of a paradoxical affirmation of totality ultimately bears witness to is the possibility of a critical politics responsive to the global situation that nevertheless contains no admixture of idealism, but motivates its critical response directly on the basis of formal considerations that bear directly on the structure of real wholes insofar as they can be thought and understood mathematically. Here, moreover, the mathematical is not understood as a subjective form imposed from without on objects and phenomena in themselves independent of it, but as that universal realm of completely transmissible knowledge that can be defined by its privileged relation to the real of what exists in itself. To carry out this affirmation on the basis of rigorous formal thought is also to affirm a variety of realism with respect to forms in their effective capture of matter, and to attest to the capability of formalization paradoxically to capture its own limits with respect to whatever is thought to escape it. Echoing, then, the Lacanian motto according to which "the real is the impasse of formalization," it is possible through the study of the forms of paradox and inherent impasse that have become evident since Cantor to affirm a rigorous realism of this real, a kind of "meta-formal" realism that asserts the absolute reality of forms in their transit with respect to the matter that they capture and structure.¹² Beyond any variety of idealism, constructivism or anti-realism, this realism thus points to the problematic conception of world

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 12 Cf. Paul Livingston, "Realism and the Infinite" in *Speculations IV* (2013), pp. 99-117.

that appears both appropriate to today's most rigorous formal thought and thus requisite to any possible politics to come.

II

If a set-theoretically motivated affirmation of the paradoxical structure of the world as such thus points to, as on Lacan's formulation, the underlying condition of a positive politics in the specific phenomenon in which formalism, at its limits, encounters the Real, then it is possible on the basis of a thought of this structure both to interrogate and displace the characteristically twentieth-century politics that repeatedly seeks to enact by force a direct passage to the Real through and beyond formalization. In *The Century*, Badiou reads the characteristic forms of twentieth century politics, from Stalinism to the contemporary "Restoration" of parliamentary-capitalist "democracy," as dedicated to such an ambiguous "passion for the Real," one which deploys in every domain the "paths of formalization" to enact a kind of "universality without remainder." This universality, according to Badiou, would attempt to produce forms of art, architecture, social institution and practice that would amount to a kind of "inhuman rival of being."¹³ Against this characteristically destructive twentieth-century politics of formalization "at the borders of the real," Badiou suggests his own "generic" politics of subtraction, which, he says, rather than seeking purification or purgation attempts to "measure ... ineluctable negativity" by means of a "construction of minimal differences."¹⁴

This suggestion of a subtractive rather than destructive version of the characteristic twentieth-century politics of the passion for the real allows Badiou to portray his own "generic" politics as a forceful creation of the new that nevertheless avoids the structural violence characteristic of the twentieth-century attempt. However, as Žižek has pointed out in a recent criticism of Badiou, it is not in fact clear that Badiou can square this attempt to distinguish a purgative from a subtractive politics of the Real while maintaining his own central meta-ontological dichotomy between the ontological realm of Being and the extra-ontological Event:

In *The Century*, Badiou seems to oscillate between the plea for a direct fidelity to the twentieth century's "passion of the real," and the prospect of passing from the politics of purification to a politics

¹³ Badiou, *The Century*, trans. Alberto Toscano (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 162.

¹⁴ *The Century*, p. 54.

of subtraction. While he makes it fully clear that the horrors of the twentieth century, from the Holocaust to the gulag, are a necessary outcome of the purification-mode of the "passion of the Real," and while he admits that protests against it are fully legitimate ... he nonetheless stops short of renouncing it. Why? Because *fully to follow the logic of subtraction would force him to abandon the very frame of the opposition between Being and Event*. Within the logic of subtraction, the Event is not external to the order of Being, but located in the "minimal difference" inherent to the order of Being itself. The parallel is strict here between Badiou's two versions of the "passion of the Real" and the two main versions of the Real in Lacan, i.e. the Real as the destructive vortex, the inaccessible/impossible hard kernel which we cannot approach without risking our own destruction and the Real as the pure *Schein* of a minimal difference, as another dimension which shines through in the gaps of an inconsistent reality.¹⁵

As Žižek points out, any possible politics of the Real must deploy a particular conception of its structural place in relation to the powers and limits of possible formalization. There are, of course, various conceptions of the Real and its place in relation to the registers of the Imaginary and the Symbolic in Lacan, and my purpose here is not to articulate or disambiguate them.¹⁶ What is more important is to develop the difference that Žižek notes, between a conception of the Real according to which it represents a kind of "inaccessible/impossible hard kernel" of the indescribable or unformalizable as such, and one according to which it is constitutively connected to, and visible in, the "minimal difference" that appears as the structurally necessary internal "gaps" of an *inconsistent* reality. The distinction corresponds directly to the metalogical duality I have discussed in section I, above: that between a total structural orientation which combines consistency with incompleteness (Badiou's own) and one that affirms the completeness of the world (or reality) as such but *also* its constitutive inconsistency. As we have seen, above, this affirmation of completeness implies that inconsistency is structurally characteristic of the world as such, and thereby indicates the "place" of inconsistency as the site of any possible critical politics of the new. As Žižek rightly points out, as well, this

¹⁵ Slavoj Žižek, "From purification to subtraction: Badiou and the Real" in *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, ed. Peter Hallward (London: Continuum, 2004), p. 179.

¹⁶ For the most comprehensive and helpful extant treatment of Lacan's idea of the real, see Tom Eyers, *Lacan and the Concept of the "Real"* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

implies that the univocal distinction between the “realms” of being and the event which Badiou draws can no longer be maintained, since the site at which the Real structurally appears at the limits of formalization is, now, not simply exterior to being itself, but rather, as implicit in the very logic of totality, distributed or disseminated throughout the world as such, wherever the possibility of its total reflection into itself is at issue.

In this way, Žižek correctly grasps the implications of the inconsistent affirmation of the totality of the world for the structure of reflexivity and the possibility of determinate intervention on its basis. However, does Žižek himself have the theoretical resources fully to grasp the implications of this structure of inconsistent totality for the ontological basis of novelty and structural transformation? It appears that he does not, at least if his own guiding positive conception of “transcendental” subjectivity can be taken as indicative here. By far the most clear, comprehensive and accurate presentation of the “transcendental materialist” theory that is at least implicit in Žižek’s work is given by Adrian Johnston in Žižek’s *Ontology*.¹⁷ The central claim of this theory, as Johnston presents it, is that the structure of the subject is constitutively connected to the “not-All” character of reality or being, whereby it is always “lacking” or “less than total,” and where this non-totally operates not simply as an epistemological but also an ontological condition on the structure of reality as such.¹⁸ However, for Žižek as Johnston reads him, the “crack” in the structure of ontology that this introduces is further connected to an “ontologically constitutive” finitude of the subject whereby the “not-All” character of being for a subject amounts to an essential “finite incompleteness” grounded in the subject’s own mortality.¹⁹ Johnston argues in detail that this determinate ontological structure of this essential incompleteness of reality, introduced by what Lacan called the “hole in the Real” that the fact of mortality opens up, also points to a dimension of the transcendental that is not inconsistent with materialism, and that, in particular, it is possible to foresee or anticipate an account of the actual “emergence” of this “more-than-material” transcendental

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¹⁷ Johnston, Žižek’s *Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern U. Press, 2008).

¹⁸ Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 15.

¹⁹ Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 15; p. 38.

dimension from material reality itself.²⁰

According to Žižek as Johnston reads him, the Kantian antinomies play a decisive role in indicating the structure of the transcendental dimension that is introduced by the subject’s specific finitude in relation to the “not-all” character of reality it produces. In particular, Johnston proposes that a substitution of the “I” for the world in Kant’s first antinomy would result in a “defensively projected working through of the problem of subjective finitude,” a kind of “psychical antinomy” that implies that the subject is “unable reflectively to cognize itself” as the “finite being” that it is and that its “ownmost ontological finitude” can thus only be encountered as an “antinomic deadlock” with respect to the “brute Real” of its own finite temporality and corporeality.²¹ The precise analogy to be drawn here, according to Johnston, is that between the “antinomic deadlock” that the subject thus necessarily faces in trying to present to itself its real structure as embodied and finite material being and the inherent contradiction that, according to Kant, renders the “grand whole of the cosmos ... forever inaccessible,” thus demanding that the totality of the world can figure only as “yet another void in relation to necessarily limited human cognition.”²² As Johnston notes, Žižek himself links the “not-All” character of the cosmos, which is for him constitutive of the structure of subjectivity as such, to the result of the Kantian antinomies. For instance, in a passage from *The Ticklish Subject*, Žižek celebrates the way that Hegel essentially adopts and expands on what he sees as the upshot of the Kantian antinomies for the non-existence of the totality of the cosmos in itself:

All Hegel does is, in a way, to supplement Kant’s well-known motto of the transcendental constitution of reality (“the conditions of possibility of our knowledge are at the same time the conditions of possibility of the object of our knowledge”) by its negative – the limitation of our knowledge (its failure to grasp the Whole of Being, the way our knowledge gets inexorably entangled in contradictions and inconsistencies) is simultaneously the limitation of the very object of our knowledge, that is, the gaps and voids in our knowledge of reality are simultaneously the gaps and voids in the “real” ontological edifice

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²⁰ Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 284.

²¹ Žižek’s *Ontology*, pp. 29–31.

²² Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 31.

itself.²³

For Žižek, the ultimate upshot of the antinomies is thus that the necessary “entanglement” of human knowledge in contradiction that they demonstrate with respect to the idea of the cosmos as a unified whole has the “real” ontological significance of an actual lack, gap or void within reality itself, an ontological incompleteness that is then supplemented (in something like the Derridian sense of the “supplement” as what both makes up for, and shows the irremediable existence of, a lack) by the fantasmatic projection of the subject’s self-identity. Along similar lines, in *The Metastases of Enjoyment*, Žižek reads Lacan as pointing to an “unsurmountable gap” separating “what I am ‘in the real’ from the symbolic mandate that procures my social identity”; this “gap” is, Žižek says, in Kantian terms, the empty unifying form of transcendental apperception that precludes my ability to know myself as the “I or he or it (the thing) that thinks;”²⁴ again, Žižek suggests in a 2001 work, the cogito itself can be understood as a kind of defensive supplement that “fills in” or “sutures” the essentially ontological “ultimate gap” or lack of complete closure characteristic of reality itself by means of the “spiritual fantasy” of its identity.²⁵

In each of these formulations, Žižek suggests that the characteristic ontological structure of the “not-All” correlates directly to the specific structure of a subjectivity which operates as fulfillment of the lack thereby introduced into being or reality, the necessary but ultimate ineffective supplement to being that attempts to heal once more the ontological cleft thereby introduced by total being’s inconsistency with itself. Žižek also recurrently emphasizes that this conjoint structure of world and subjectivity should not be seen simply as epistemological, but rather actually as characterizing in a deep sense the ontological structure of the real in itself as it appears or is thinkable by a subject that is thus structurally defined as “transcendental” in the sense that Žižek and Johnston adumbrate. However, each of these formulations themselves waver somewhat uncertainly, in a way that appears to be symptomatic for Žižek, between two possible conceptions of the basic “gap or lack” characteristic of the “not-All” of reality itself. On one of

23 Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology* (London: Verso, 1999), p. 55; quoted in Johnston, Žižek’s Ontology, p. 130.

24 Žižek, *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Women and Causality* (London: Verso, 1994), p. 144; quoted in Johnston, Žižek’s Ontology, pp. 32-33.

25 Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 62.

these conceptions, it characterizes an essential limitation of the *subject* as such, tracing to a constitutive ontological structure of subjectivity, rooted in finitude; on the other, it is rather the essential outcome of the inherently *inconsistent* structure of the totality of world as such, insofar as it exists at all, and quite independently from any constitutive conception of the powers of the subject or its constitutive limitations. This equivocation or alternation with respect to the actual structural basis of the “non-All” that Žižek sees as the actual basis for the structure of subjectivity as such is replicated in Johnston’s discussion. Thus, for instance, Johnston portrays the “necessary lack of full closure” that characterizes “the domain of manifest, concrete reality” as, on the one hand, “nothing other than the subject itself” (p. 42) but also, on the other, as indicating a “Real of being as a groundless ground shot through with tensions and scissions,” which further suggests (he says) that “Being ‘is’ this very acosmos, this unstable absence of a cohesive, unifying One-All.”²⁶

Given this oscillation between what are on their face different characterizations of what the absence of the One-All ontologically “is” (i.e., whether it “is” the subject or being itself), it is not unreasonable to wonder which is supposed to be logically or ontologically primary. Put another way: is the “failure” of phenomenal reality to “add up” to a jointly complete and consistent totality fundamentally a result of the specifically limited or finite character of the subject, which always points to an essential incompleteness in what can be cognized or constructed for knowledge as a unified whole, or is it rather rooted quite differently in the inherently antinomic and contradictory structure of totality as such, as is indeed suggested by the set-theoretical basis of the antinomies of the whole, regardless of whether this whole is finite or infinite, and prior to and independently of any relation to the subject, its finitude or death? As we have seen, the first suggestion has a positive motivation in Kant’s transcendental idealist resolution of the deadlock that he sees the antinomies as representing; on this alternative, consistency can be saved by means of the conclusion that the world as a whole, being constituted at any time only to some determinate extent by the synthetic activity of the subject, does not exist in itself and is always incomplete with respect to its possible further supplementation. Along the lines of this resolution, Kant is also able to affirm the “dynamical” antinomies by contrast with the “mathematical” ones, thus saving

26 Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 42; p. 130.

the possibilities of subjective freedom and of God, by means of the suggestion of the possibility of an extra-phenomenal, “heterogenous” causality of the whole series of appearances from a noumenal position located outside it. On the other hand, though, if we are suspicious of the very possibility of such a noumenal position, and indeed of the entire idealist configuration in which Kant’s resolution unfolds, we must apparently take the other alternative, that of affirming the *inconsistent* existence of the totality of the world itself.

In fact, the apparent oscillation in Žižek (and Johnston) between these two rather different positions is not surprising from the perspective of the metalogical duality between consistent incompleteness and inconsistent completeness drawn above, for Žižek himself generally fails to distinguish between the two ways thereby witnessed in which the complete and consistent “One-All” can fail to exist. Thus, for instance in the quotation above, Žižek characterizes the upshot of the antinomies as interpreted by Hegel as demonstrating, on the one hand, a matter of the “gaps and voids in our knowledge” and, on the other, as “the way our knowledge gets inexorably entangled in contradictions”; elsewhere, he characterizes the structural failure of reality to amount to a One-All, on the one hand, as the result of an inaccessibility of the Thing in itself which leads to the constant existence of a “gaping hole in (constituted, phenomenal) reality” that then must subsequently be filled by the subject’s construct of its fundamental fantasy,²⁷ and on the other describes the very specter of this “missing” Thing as the “‘reified’ *effect* of the inconsistency of ... phenomena” themselves which results from the characteristic paradox of perspective adhering to the position of a subject which views the world from an immanent position within it.²⁸

As we have seen above, though, by more clearly drawing the distinction between the two formal alternatives that are indicated here, we can see our way, as well, to a clearer sense of the actual implications of each. In particular, by opting for the pole of inconsistent completeness rather than consistent incompleteness, we preserve the constitutive and realist idea of the world that is certainly implicit in everyday thought and practice and allow the real structure of

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27 Žižek, *Enjoy Your Symptom!: Jacques Lacan in Hollywood and Out*. (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 136, quoted in Johnston, Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 32.

28 Žižek, *Organs Without Bodies: On Deleuze and Consequences*. (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 60-61, quoted in Johnston, Žižek’s *Ontology*, p. 143.

antinomy and contradiction characteristic of this idea to appear in clear and rigorous terms. As we have also seen, this logical structure of constitutive contradiction and paradox does not in itself involve or turn on any reference to subjectivity or its constitutive limits, capacities or powers. By contrast, the Kantian conclusion, shared by Badiou, that the paradoxes essentially demonstrate the nonexistence of the world as such and the incompleteness of any constituted totality corresponds to the intuition of an essentially bounded but constituting subjectivity that is “transcendental” with respect to the world so constituted. The essential structure of such a subjectivity is then thought in terms of its finitude, or its inherent limitedness with respect to a world that is itself always thought as essentially incomplete.

Although Žižek himself appears to waver, as we have seen, between the two kinds of structures, and it is not clear that he makes any fundamental decision between them, there are various theoretical motives and goals that might motivate a choice for one or the other. As we have seen above, for example, if the contemporary political situation is characterized by the falsely totalizing claim of global capitalism and its associated representative/democratic political structures, it appears necessary to formulate a response on the basis of a thoroughgoing intuition of the completeness and inconsistency of the world rather than to attempt to re-inscribe, once more, the claim of a free subjectivity set over against the world itself to center and originate the process and possibility of fundamental change. On the other hand, Johnston’s comprehensive and illuminating development of “transcendental materialism,” proceeding largely through a detailed and insightful reading of the legacy of German idealism filtered through Lacan, at least comes close to opting for the other pole, that of consistent incompleteness and the invocation of a supplemental subject filling the “gap” or “void” of incompleteness thus said essentially to characterize reality itself. To a certain extent this is unavoidable given the historical context of the figures Johnston reads, since each of them (although Schelling may be an exception) works in a context in which the basically coherent existence of a transcendental subject can simply be assumed and the basic consistency of the world as such, or the ultimate possibility of reconciling or “dialecticizing” any contradiction between the subject and its object, is not in question. However, Johnston himself appears at least implicitly to endorse the decision to construe the antinomies as pointing to the consistent incompleteness of the world, together with its characteristic subjective supplement,

when he develops his own conception of “transcendental materialism” in detail. On this conception, the “more-than-material” aspects of human consciousness and especially freedom arise *from* the material constitution of the particular kinds of beings we are under the condition that, through a kind of “dysfunctionality” of this material constitution, they become caught up in a symbolic order which pre-exists us individually and conditions the determinate conceptions of ourselves under which we can then, subsequently, operate. The more basic condition of the emergence of this structure, which Johnston identifies with the “ontogenesis of subjective autonomy,” is again understood as the “inherently incomplete and internally inconsistent” character of being in itself, which allows the “excess or surplus” of autonomy to emerge, under these specific conditions, from the basic structure of heteronomous material existence.²⁹

The problem with these formulations is not, as we have seen, the way in which they point to an underlying “inadequacy” in the structure of reality itself and situate the structure of subjectivity as such in relation to it. The basic inconsistency that characterizes the world as such can be rigorously considered to result from the very possibility of its reflexive consideration from a position within it, and so may be considered to lie at the structural basis of any construction or figure of subjectivity that involves the possibility of a reflective consideration of the world at all. The problem is, rather, that the conception of the world in itself as essentially incomplete with respect to a subjective figure that supplements it involves a “transcendental” exteriority of this subject to the (constituted) world itself that cannot easily be justified directly on jointly realist and materialist grounds. Johnston acknowledges the difficulties here, but nevertheless, looking toward various developments of contemporary and possibly future neuroscience, envisions the possibility of an actual account of the real “emergence” of autonomous subjectivity from the material world.

From the perspective of a more directly formal conception of the underlying logical situation at the basis of the “not-All” character of the (actually unified) world in its formal inconsistency with respect to itself, the problem with this conception of “emergent” subjectivity is twofold. First, as we have seen, it necessarily involves the invocation of a problematic empirical moment of “anthropogenesis” or the “ontogenesis” of freedom at which the free and autonomous subject

²⁹ Johnston, Žižek's *Ontology*, p. 273.

actually comes to exist in historical time. It is difficult to imagine that this “moment” of genesis could ever actually be specifically located on the basis of empirical or historical evidence, or that any such location would or could actually settle the question of the ultimate *structural* basis of such apparent phenomena as those of free will and spontaneity. Second, and relatedly, the conception according to which psychological reality, along with freedom and subjectivity themselves, emerge *from* a world at first entirely innocent of them relies on an emergentist picture of the relationships of scientific disciplines that is itself difficult to motivate on the level of fundamental ontology. If, in particular, the world is conceived as basically subject to the materialist constraint that it does not include, on a basic ontological level, such phenomena as consciousness and subjective freedom, then it is difficult to see how their subsequent “emergence” does not simply amount to the arbitrary addition of essentially non-material ontological elements to a world at first lacking them.

On the other hand, as we have seen, an affirmation of the basic cosmological paradox of the inconsistency of the world that is witnessed in the set-theoretical paradoxes allows for the paradoxical basis of these phenomena to be inscribed, from the beginning, in the world as such; and it does so without at any point requiring or calling for any immaterial or even “more-than-material” aspects or elements. Nor is there, on this alternative, any particular “special” moment of the ontogenesis of freedom that has to be documented or accounted for in empirical or historical terms. For the constitutive structure of inconsistency that will make possible anything like a subject, or its reflective freedom, is always already structurally present, since it is metalogically characteristic of the very structure of a world as such insofar as it can be thought from a position within it. On this conception, this structure of possibility is, again, not conceived in terms of either term of the familiar dichotomy of nature and culture, but is instead accorded to the very logical and formal structure of the world as such. It shows up in the mathematical dynamics that capture this structure from the position of a formal reflection on formalism itself, and can be considered to have as “real” an existence as do these mathematically demonstrable forms themselves. If the constitutive inconsistency of the world can indeed be traced to the specific formal structure of the reflection of the totality of the world from a position within it, then this formal structure can indeed be seen as conditioning the specific existence of what is called a “subject” and the various phenomena of consciousness, freedom and autonomy typically

associated with it. But this does not exclude, as well, that the underlying structure is both more general and more deeply rooted in the very formal dynamics that link totality, reflexivity and inconsistency as such. With this, the familiar dilemma of the “natural” or “cultural” origin of the subject is apparently overcome, or at least displaced onto a differently configured and more rigorously thinkable ground.

III

In the previous sections, I have argued that an affirmative position on the structure of the cosmological antinomies – one that affirms the simultaneous truth of both the theses and antitheses of the first two, mathematical antinomies – is requisite for an appropriate politics in our time and for a realist overcoming of the problem of the relationship of nature and culture. In this final section, I argue that it is, further, the necessary condition for a thoroughly realist and anti-humanist doctrine of the structure of cosmological time.

Although the topic of time appears officially in the first antinomy only in parallel with the question of the boundedness of space, the reference is in fact by no means conceptually secondary. For as Kant makes clear, all four antinomies in fact turn on the question of the totality of series of conditions, and this question in each case raises the issue of the structure of priority thought more or less explicitly in temporal terms, either on the side of the subject or the object or both. Thus, the second antinomy involves the question of the possibility of serially *carrying out* a division of the world into simples, the third turns on the question of the causality of appearances by means of nature or freedom, and the fourth concerns the necessary conditioning of any temporal series of appearances by its immediate temporal predecessor.³⁰ In each of these cases, the question of totality presents itself as the question of the boundedness or unboundedness of a temporal series, and thus as an instance of the more general problem of the *givenness of time* whereby any temporal ordering is possible. As we have seen above in connection with the more general issue of totality as such, there is thereby inevitably produced an irreducible antinomy of boundedness and unboundedness, whereby the assumption of the

30 Thus, in the “proof” of the thesis of the fourth antinomy (i.e. of an absolutely necessary being): “The sensible world, as the sum-total of all appearances, contains a series of alterations. For without such a series even the representation of serial time, as a condition of the possibility of the sensible world, would not be given us. But every alteration stands under its condition, which precedes it in time and renders it necessary.” (A 453/B 481).

totality of the series always undermines itself by necessarily invoking the thought of its further, exterior condition, which has not been included in the totality but also, as yet another condition, must be. It is possible to break the deadlock, as Kant himself does in the case of the “dynamical” antinomies, by reference to a subjective principle of conditioning that is “transcendental” in the sense that it both stands outside the totality of the series and nevertheless conditions it as a whole. But in addition to necessarily invoking a position of the transcendental that cannot obviously be accounted for on wholly immanent grounds, the solution in fact replicates the problem that it is designed to solve. For it leaves the possible conditioning of the series of appearances by the exterior element entirely mysterious, most of all with respect to its *own* temporality.

Familiarly, Kant considers time to be the most general subjective form of appearances, insofar as it is the form of both inner and outer sense (by contrast with space, which is only a form of outer sense). This assumption is what allows him, ultimately, to posit a subjective position beyond or before the time of the serial causation of appearances, and which then, in turn, allows him to resolve the third and fourth antinomies in a way that apparently preserves the noncontradictory possibility of freedom and God. With respect to the underlying givenness of time, the solution exemplifies a conception going back at least to Aristotle and deeply involved in the subsequent tradition of thinking about time and the self ever since, which links the origin of time to the structure of the self, soul or subject through the form of the subject’s activity of counting or accounting. This conception of a deeply subjective conditioning of time is also adopted, in contemporary discussions, by those, such as Badiou and (sometimes) Žižek, who also see the deadlock of the cosmological antinomies as broken by means of the positing of an agentive subjectivity exterior to the ontological series of objective appearances.³¹ In his exposition of “transcendental materialism,” Johnston adopts a similar position, holding that in the “movement of

31 Badiou, in particular, draws a conclusion of this form when, in *Being and Event*, he gestures toward a conception of time as founded upon the subjective form of intervention and thereby removed from the possibility of measuring and counting: “This is to say that the theory of intervention forms the kernel of any theory of time. Time -- if not coextensive with structure, if not the sensible form of the Law -- is intervention itself, thought as the gap between two events. The essential historicity of intervention does not refer to time as a measurable milieu. It is established upon interventional capacity inasmuch as the latter only separates itself from the situation by grounding itself on the circulation-which has already been decided-of an eventual multiple.” (*Being and Event*, p. 210).

the monistic One (i.e., the conflict-ridden substance of [human] being) becoming the dualistic Two” amounts to a “subjective negativity” that can be identified with temporality itself.³²

But as we have in fact already seen, under the condition of the assumption of a thoroughgoing temporal immanence of all phenomena, this solution cannot but reproduce the antinomy of the totality of the temporal series as the irresolvable aporia of the empirical “ontogenesis” or anthropogenesis of the “human” subject in historical time. This aporia is probably irreducible, since given the assumption of an underlying origin of temporality that is formally rooted in the subject, it essentially requires the paradoxical possibility of an intratemporal origin of time. Of course, on the current position, it will not be possible to avoid all paradoxes or antinomies in relation to the original structure of time, since such antinomies follow directly from the structure of cosmological totality itself. But it is possible to find the formal ground for a wholly realist conception of the original formal structure of temporality by denying the intuition of a subjective ground for the production of time and affirming the underlying antinomic structure itself as cosmologically and ontologically real.

It is here that, perhaps contrary to initial appearances, Heidegger’s ontological problematic provides the rigorous basis for a realist doctrine of time in relation to the peculiar “relationship” of ontological difference between Being and beings. As is well known, Heidegger’s thought in *Being and Time* combines a deeply-seated resistance to the ontology of the subject that arises in Descartes and is continued in Kant, German Idealism, and neo-Kantianism with the attempt to think time more originally on the basis of a hermeneutics of the factual life of *Dasein*, defined formally by its reflexive relationship to its own Being. This relationship is thought, on the one hand, reflexively as *Dasein*’s constitutive concern for its own project in the structure of care [*Sorge*], and, on the other, as an “average and everyday” but initially implicit and vague understanding of Being itself that is to be explicitly retrieved by the existential analytic. The culmination of *Being and Time*’s second division is the theory of “authentic” temporality as constituted by the three temporal ecstasies, whereby *Dasein* is essentially “outside itself” in its inherent temporal conditioning.

As a radical alternative to what he treats as the “vulgar” or everyday “clock time” which is conceived as an unending series

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32 Johnston, Žižek’s *Ontology*, pp. 236-37.

of discrete now-moments and forms, according to Heidegger, the underlying conceptual basis for the metaphysical tradition since the Greeks, the structure of ecstatic temporality points to a more original structural basis for the counted time of objectivity in the reflexive-ontological structure of *Dasein*, which is itself to be thought not primarily as subjectivity but as fully involving, because always defined by, the structure of world as such. But a maximally rigorous ontological foundation for the idea of a paradoxical unfolding of cosmological time on the basis of the inherent structure of world and the dynamics of the ontological difference itself is to be found, not in *Being in Time* itself, but rather in Heidegger’s 1929 critical reading of Kant in *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*.³³ At the center of Heidegger’s reading is his critique of Kant’s invocation of the transcendental imagination as a mediating third term between sensibility and the understanding and, through the obscure doctrine of the Schematism, the source of a mysterious original power of synthesis ultimately responsible for the givenness of time. As Heidegger demonstrates, Kant’s assumption of an ultimate origin for the “pure image of time” in the synthetic activity of the transcendental imagination forces him to conceive of the subject as both, incoherently, passive and active with respect to an original time that it gives itself in pure self-affection. What this points toward, according to Heidegger, is a more basic posing of the problem of the relation of being and time that owes nothing to the theory of the representing subject, but rather develops this relation on the basis of the fundamental problematic of finitude, here thought not only (as in *Being and Time*) in terms of the individual *Dasein*’s being-toward-death but also, more generally, in terms of *Dasein*’s capacity to be heterogeneously affected and conditioned from without.³⁴ This opens up the problem of an original relation between Being and finitude that does not arise on the basis of the existence of a subject or any figure or type of subjective activity or passivity, but rather *itself* constitutively conditions the possible existence of anything like a human subjectivity. On this basis alone, according to Heidegger, is it possible to develop an ontologically grounded account of being and time that breaks with every philosophical anthropology by preparing the more original basis for any positive thinking of “human”

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33 Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, trans. by Richard Taft. 5th edition, enlarged. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana U. Press, 1990).

34 *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, p. 160.

subjectivity.³⁵

Heidegger thus gestures, already in 1929, to the thought of a more original joint conditioning of experienced time and the human subject in the ontological problematic of being insofar as it is linked basically to the specific structure of truth as unconcealment, *aletheia*, or disclosure. In later works, Heidegger would further radicalize this conception of the ultimate givenness of time as structurally related to the double formal condition of disclosure and concealment that *itself* situates and more deeply conditions the structure of *Dasein* as such, what he describes as the “clearing” (*Lichtung*) of being. This radicalization of the problematic of truth toward the more basic “grounding question” of the topological conditioning for the historical possibility of *Dasein* in the truth of Being, now no longer thought of as the Being of beings but in itself, ultimately leads Heidegger, as well, to reject the whole conception and terminology of “transcendence,” even in relation to what he himself earlier thought as the structural “transcendence” of *Dasein* toward world.³⁶ The

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35 “With the existence of human beings there occurs an irruption into the totality of beings, so that now the being in itself first becomes manifest, i.e. as being, in varying degrees, according to various levels of clarity, in various degrees of certainty. This prerogative, however, of not just being among other beings which are also at hand without these beings becoming manifest as such to themselves, but rather [of being] in the midst of beings, *of being surrendered to it as such, and itself to have been delivered up as a being* – for this prerogative to exist harbors in itself the need to require the understanding of Being... As a mode of Being, existence is in itself finitude, and as such it is only possible on the basis of the understanding of Being. There is and must be something like Being where finitude has come to exist...On the grounds of the understanding of Being, man is the there [das Da], with the Being of which occurs the opening irruption into the being so that it can show itself as such for a self. *More original than man is the finitude of the Dasein in him.* ...Now it appears: we do not even need first to ask about a relationship between the understanding of Being and the finitude in human beings, that it itself is the innermost essence of finitude. With that, however, we have attained the very concept of finitude which is taken as the basis for a problematic laying of the ground for metaphysics. If this ground-laying is based on the question of what the human being should be, then the questionable nature of this question at a first level is now removed, i.e., from now on the question concerning the human being has attained determinacy.

If man is only man on the grounds of the Dasein in him, then in principle the question as to what is more original than man cannot be anthropological. All anthropology, even Philosophical Anthropology, has already assumed that man is man.” *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, pp. 160-161.

36 Cf. the statement of his changing position with respect to “transcendence” in the *Beiträge zur Philosophie: vom Ereignis* of the mid-1930s: “Transcendence in the sense of the ‘fundamental ontology’ of Being and Time. Here the word ‘transcendence’ receives again its original meaning: the surpassing as such, grasped as the distinctive feature of *Da-sein*, indicating thereby that *Da-sein* in each case already stands in the open realm of beings. Connected up to this one and thereby determined more precisely is ‘transcendence’ in the ‘ontological’ sense, inasmuch as the transcendence pertaining to *Dasein* is grasped originally and precisely as an *understanding* of being. Now, however, since understanding is in turn taken to be thrown projection, transcendence means to stand in the truth of being, of course without at first knowing or questioning it. Because *Da-sein* as *Da-sein* originally endures the open realm of concealment, we cannot in the strict sense speak of a transcendence of *Da-sein*; in the sphere of this determination, the

question is here, in other words, no longer one of the structural relationship of the openness of one particular being – *Dasein* – to the givenness of a totality of beings exterior to it, but rather of the more original ontological structure on which something like the givenness of time and *Dasein* alike take place. It is only within this conditioning – thought as the originality of the clearing in which can be located the “*es gibt*” of a givenness of time without subject or object – that it is possible, according to the later Heidegger, to clarify the structure of *Dasein*’s possible relation of beings to begin with.

Heidegger’s latest thought thus points to an ultimately ontological conditioning of given time that is formally indicated as the more original basis for *Dasein* as well as disclosive truth, and thereby conceived as the most general structural condition for anything like a subject that can conceive itself as set off against the world as such. As I have tried to argue, it may be such a conception, unfolded on the basis of the problematic affirmation of the original antinomic structure of totality in relation to the reflexivity that reflects it from a point within, that is requisite to a workable politics and a realist conception of the basis of critical thought and action in our time. If this suggestion is roughly correct, there also arises here in a renewed way the question of the relationship of Heidegger’s ontological problematic of truth and time to psychoanalysis; on the basis of a further development of this questioning, it would be possible to ask, for instance, whether and to what extent the constitutive structure of the *psyche* that Freud designated as the “death drive” can be identified as pointing to something like the specific relationship of time and death that Heidegger understands as “authenticity” in *Being and Time*, or whether, to the contrary, the link between the death drive and the compulsion to repeat that Freud suggests and Lacan further develops could be seen, more along the lines of the later Heidegger but also Derrida and Deleuze, to a more original and a-subjective origin of counted time in an original structural repetition characteristic of the being of language as such. This question and others would also have to be taken up, as I have begun to suggest here, in the context of a renewed investigation of what

representation of ‘transcendence’ in every sense must disappear... ‘Transcendence’ always involves departing from known and familiar ‘beings’ and going out in some way beyond them. From the perspective of the basic question of the truth of being, that amounts to a remaining mired in the mode of inquiry of the guiding question [i.e. the question of beings], i.e. in metaphysics.” (*Contributions to Philosophy: of the Event*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana U. Press, 2012), p. 170.)

links Lacan's register of the Real, as irreducible "hard kernel" of the unformalizable or as the formally indicated limit of formalization itself, to Heidegger's own privileged problematic of Being, thought either (as in the early philosophy) as the being of beings or (as later) in abeyance of the "metaphysical" substitution that replaces it with beings. This would necessarily involve, moreover, a much deeper and more extended analysis than I can give here of Lacan's own implicit and explicit references, in developing his own thought of the Real, to Heidegger's problematic. But it is perhaps possible nevertheless to raise, in closing, the question whether pursuit of the philosophical underpinnings of psychoanalysis eventually thus points to what might be thought of, in connection with the problematic affirmation of the cosmological antinomies that I have argued for here, as a (paradoxical though it sounds) *a-subjective psychoanalysis* of the cosmological or ontological reality that first makes possible anything like the origin of the subject, predicated on what Lacan designated, at the most rigorously formal point of his discourse, as the *formally indicated* paradoxical insistence of the Real over against the imaginary and symbolic.

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Discontent, Suffering and Symptom: Reading Lacanian Diagnostics through Amerindian Perspectivism

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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Introduction

Let us consider that psychoanalytic diagnostics¹ is inserted in the broader frame of a metadiagnostics of the Modern Age. Such metadiagnostics presupposes the existence of a shared element, which both anthropologically characterizes and historically defines the means of subjectivation we name as the Modern Age. The hollow core of these life forms would be composed of narratives, discourses and theories surrounding the loss of experience (*Ehrfahrung*). Both the loss of experience and the experience of loss define modern subject within the space of this reversibility. According to Honneth (2006), there is a twofold interpretation of the Modern Age, which stems from both Philosophical Anthropology: ranging from Montaigne to Rousseau; and Philosophy of History: ranging from Hobbes to Hegel. Both of which share the common idea of a loss of experience, alternatively understood as the subject's incapacity of recognizing oneself in one's own particular history or yet as a difficulty in establishing universally sharable social forms. Alienation and Fetishism would then be two fundamental naming figures for this blockage of the experience.

Every diagnosis - whether it be formal or informal, clinical or critical, disciplinary or discursive - recognizes, names and sanctions *life forms* understood as both a provisional perspective and a hybrid assemblage amongst the demands of language, desire and work. *Social resentment* is a diagnosis (Deuluzian-Nietzschean), *biopolitics* is a diagnosis (Foucaultian), *the authoritarian personality* is a diagnosis (Adornian), *the bare life* is a diagnosis (Agambenian), *the fall of the public man* is a diagnosis (Sennettian), *the culture of narcissism* is a diagnosis (Laschian), and *Cynicism* is a diagnosis (Žižekian). These are examples of partial diagnoses: of the Modern Age, of the public space, of the inception of a discourse, and of the value of a social type. Politzer ([1928]* 1998) and Canguilhem's ([1966] 1990) critiques are also diagnoses that name both this social symptom called *Psychology* and another one called *normal-normality*. However, the idea of a *loss of experience* is a diagnosis (Benjaminian) of another sort, for it conditions the other ones in such a way that they appear before it as particular cases or specific versions.

Never is the diagnosis either universal (the *pathological society* for instance) or particular (this specific social group named as the *resentful* for instance). It actually entails the correlation between the universal and the particular; in other words, the contingent relation between the subject and the law. The diagnosis should not be understood the classification or inclusion of a case in its general clause, but as a reconstruc-

tion of a *life form*.

Let us refer back to an old diagnostic partition found in the classification outlined by Freud regarding the types of symptoms: *transitory, typical and individual* (cf. Freud, [1917] 1988f). This classification is quite uncanny for two reasons: Firstly, its categories are non-excludable: *typical* symptoms are always *individual*, *transitory* symptoms may also be *typical*; besides, there are *individual transitory* symptoms.

Secondly, Freud compares symptoms by following a distinctive criterion, namely the correlation between symptom and time (transitory, permanent, intermittent, chronic), the social regularity of the symptom according to a given historical time, the culture or context (typical, atypical, unique, specific, generic) and its role for the subject (individual, collective, productive, unproductive, creative, pauperizing).

Though uncanny and inconsistent – and perhaps particularly for its incapacity of assembling a frame that would include all possible cases – this classification reveals differential levels for interpreting the pathological, which are not always pointed out by those dedicated to the study of psychoanalytic diagnostics.

Not only does that which is generically designated as a symptom – this category which historically institutes all sorts of possible clinical practices – admit the sense an *experience of suffering* (transitory symptoms), but it also admits the sense of a *signal* for a *pathological process* (typical symptoms). Besides that, the discontentment which has yet to be collectively recognized or named (individual symptoms) is also admitted in this designation.

Just as there are forms of suffering which cannot yet be named – and others which can no longer be recognized – there are individual and collective, transitory and permanent, typical and atypical myths. This enables us to distinguish the *excessively named suffering* – coded under legal, moral or clinical frames and in accordance with the typical symptom – from the *insufficiently named suffering* which presents itself as widespread discontent (*Unbehagen*), floating anguish and disperse anxiety, distress or the incurable condition inherent to a life form.

Taking Freud's inconsistent classification a step further we may notice that the diagnosis is carried out while considering a *life form* which must include or presuppose: its own –productive or unproductive – naming practices (self-diagnosis), its – determinative or undeterminative– social economy of converting suffering into symptoms or discontentment (interdiagnosis), as well as its insertion in practical or instructional settings which aim at providing treatment for either the lack or the

excess (paradiagnosis).

Unlike the medical clinical practice, this partition validates the psychoanalytic appreciation of the spontaneous diagnostics brought in by the patient him/herself. Even if this self-diagnostics should be dismantled and reverted into a heterodiagnostics – and even if it is the signifier nature that should reveal itself, derived from the Other into which the subject will alienate him/herself to – this is the first inescapable step of the psychoanalytic experience and diagnostics. It is for similar reasons that Psychoanalysis values the efforts in naming the symptom, both via transference and via discourse throughout one's treatment (interdiagnostics). But this does not invalidate the fact that there is a theory in Psychoanalysis which concerns diagnosis and which strives for universality, transmissibility, as well as clinical and theoretical justification (paradiagnosis).

The purpose of this article is to present the notion of *life form* as a useful concept for re-contextualizing the psychoanalytic diagnostics (particularly the diagnostics which stems from the work of Jacques Lacan) located within the metadiagnostics frame of the Modern Age. Such frame has been developed by the social theories, particularly those keen on critical extraction.

We have defined a *life form* both by its constitutive negativity and its distinctive formations of recomposition, unit and identity. By relying on these formations of return and constitutive experiences it is possible to propose a social diagnosis that includes both different forms of symptoms and the modalities of suffering and discontent.

In order to justify the underlying clinical and critical usefulness within the concept of *life form* we shall carry out a brief appraisal and a preliminary redescription of some fundamental oppositions concerning psychoanalytic diagnostics: lack and excess, production and misproduction, determination and indetermination. This revisitation will be presented based on a sort of counter-model, which deviates from the naturalistic-totemic occidental diagnostic reasoning in which psychoanalysis is inserted.

In adhering to the notion of structure proposed by Lévi-Strauss ([1949] 1973a, [1949] 1973b), Lacan (1987) also inherits the thesis which entails the primacy of totemism. Such thesis was called into question at more advanced moments of his work through an argument concerning the lack there of parity between the axial myths in psychoanalysis: Oedipus (cf. Freud, [1924] 1988h), Totem and Taboo (cf. Freud, [1912-1913]

1988e), Moses and Monotheism (cf. Freud, [1939] 1988i).

But the internal and external criticism to the structuralist model does not need to be made in such a way that would derogate the advantages of its method, as per shown by post-structuralist anthropology through its latest developments. It is within this context of renovation in structuralist studies and the update of dialectic thought – equally present in Lacan and without which his version of structuralism becomes unintelligible – that we propose this homology between psychoanalytic psychopathology and the notion of amerindian perspectivism which was formulated by Viveiros de Castro (2002).

In this work, such an homology acquires a two-fold goal: 1) addressing both internal (cf. Miller, 2006; Soler, 2009) and external criticism (cf. Deleuze, 1976; Parker, 1999) directed at Lacanian Structuralism in Psychopathology, and 2) Providing the means for the notion of *life form* (cf. Safatle, 2008) to be used as a concept that can justify a social pathology and explain not only the penetrance of certain symptoms as opposed to others, but also their connections with determinative and non-determinative modes of suffering and discontent.

Life forms and loss of experience

Hamlet (1599), Don Quixote (1605), Don Juan (1620), Robinson Crusoe (1719) and Faust (1808) are crucial narratives if we are to think of the kind of subjectivity that characterizes the Modern Age (cf. Dunker, 2010). Each of these heroes, in a particular manner on each case, expresses the same form of monomania. They are exclusive and egoistically interested in their own endeavors - their acts and legacy - defining themselves discursively and making themselves noticed through their desire.

They are defined by the kind of subjective division that characterizes them. Faust, the errant professor, lives the alienation of satisfying himself through an empty soul that no longer belongs to him. Don Quixote becomes mad because he has read an excessive number of cavalry books and dreams of living at a time which is no longer his contemporary.

Robinson Crusoe accomplishes the tragic experience of freedom, in the form of loneliness and abandonment, after visiting his slave farm in Brazil. Hamlet hesitates before the act or vengeance claimed by his father's ghost, whose authority no longer guarantees a legitimate meaning for his action. Don Juan succumbs to his ephemeral desire and the infinite and infinitesimal abyss that surrounds his love choice, which is

always new and laborious.

These are life forms that demand a specific grammar for recognizing and detecting deadlocks and conflicts. In the field of language this contradiction is based on the fundamental opposition between *lack* and *excess*. Derived from such an opposition are both the concept of the pathological (as a deadlock, blockage or suspension of symbolization) and the concept of the symptom as an excessive and unrecognized restitutive form of the failure of an experience.

Derived from the universe of desire is the opposition between *determination* and *indetermination*. In this case the pathological can be defined as a form of structural false achievement (*Überdeterminierung*) of desire, whether it be for its alienation in empirical objects or for the failure of its subjectivation. Lastly, we derive from the world of work the opposition between *production* and *misproduction*. In this case the pathological appears as an effect of either the psychic work or of an elaboration (*Ducharbeiten*) between desire and language which is capable of creating new objects of exchange, consumption, cession or fantasy. However, such objects institute subtractions, deformations and repetitions which result in the dissemination of the loss of experience which they should themselves theoretically restore and repair.

Thus, we find a Lacanian way to designate this loss of experience in the idea of *object petit a*, which simultaneously addresses the lack (as a phallic or traumatic object), the determination of desire (as the object cause of desire) and as the producer of *jouissance* (as the surplus *jouissance* object).

Our heroes – all of whom come from noble lineages – lack neither the features of astuteness and craftsmanship nor the bravery and perseverance for recognizing their own desire; and even less do they lack the discursive or narrative power to rebuild their stories. But the sum of these classic virtues is insufficient to represent them, as that which defines them is their very subjective division recognized as the loss, lack, cut or emptiness.

They are expressions of the morbid paradigm that characterizes modern subjectivity as an inventory of mismatches, false restitutions, doomed promises and melancholic elaborations (cf. Matos, 1989). They are at the same time the masters of their life-stories – presented as feats of self-determination – and slaves to the grief of an experience they cannot remember, recognize or incorporate. They evoke posthumous experiences which are deprived of actual events, such as the case of Machado de Assis' Brás Cubas ; or amnesic experiences, such as with Mário

de Andrade's Macunaíma; or yet an instrumental survival, as per seen in Manuel Antônio de Almeida's Militia Sergeant.

These are not just clinical or literary stories that describe how people managed to bring into reality what they had yearned for by overcoming internal and external obstacles; these are also stories of the contradictory, parody-like or ironic discovery of that which was unknown about their own desire (cf. Watt, 1997).

Such narratives have a formative value to our diagnostic reasoning as they locate the lack between the paternal rule and the social law. These are necessary not only for the formation of symptoms, but also for producing the social legitimization of suffering. Furthermore, these are necessary as the condition for rendering suffering legible as an aspiration for recognition and for determining the discontent as *not-all* named. This would allow its treatment through the discourses, in accordance with the Lacanian typology of social bonds: educating, governing, generating desire, analyzing (cf. Lacan, 1992).

There is no reason for which psychoanalysis – the heir of the lights debate – should not be regarded as a particular chapter in this metadiagnostics of Modern Age. The allegory of the three narcissistic wounds – Copernicus, Darwin... and Psychoanalysis – is an example of how the very history of Psychoanalysis has absorbed such a diagnosis from the outset.

The clinical ambition of Psychoanalysis involves the cure as the accomplishment of an experience. The thesis regarding the decline of the paternal authority (cf. Lacan, 2003) is another good example of how alterations in life forms (patriarchal family) result in reinterpretations of the loss of experiences (liberal, disciplinary, romantic). The latter subsequently result in reformulations of the modes of suffering expressed in the contradiction between the aspirations for recognition and the symbolic determinations through which these would be rendered effective.

For this reason, in the segment of the text in question, Lacan suggests that the probable consequence for the decline of the paternal imago is the fact that in the future, the transference neurosis (with its conversive and dissociative symptoms) will be substituted by the character neurosis (with its personality dispositions, narcissistic variations and impulsiveness). This prediction turned out to be true, but only to the extent in which our civilization has remained totemically organized.

Such is the correlation between the description of the forms of recomposition, degradation, erection, weakening or exaggeration of the

paternal authority and the production of symptoms that in one of his last theoretical reformulations Lacan (2007) names the name-of-the-father (or version of the father) as the sinthome. It is precisely on this space of symbolic determination of the law – and with this regulating and classificatory function of lack – that the father appears as a “totemic” figure in the symptoms of Freud's classic clinical cases. The onsets of Elisabeth von R. or Ana O.'s paralyse occur when they see themselves released from the care rendered to the father (cf. Freud e Breuer, [1895] 1988).

Dora's aphony witnesses that though impotent, her father was still sexually engaged with Mrs. K (cf. Freud, [1905] 1988a). Little Hans' horse phobia is a supplement for the father function (cf. Freud, [1909] 1988b). The Rat Man can only decide to get married and complete his studies so long as he pays off the debt inherited from his father (cf. Freud, [1909] 1988c).

The Wolf Man is possessed by the gaze that he himself adds to the scene of the paternal wolf copulating with his mother (cf. Freud, [1918] 1988g). Schreber constructs a delirium around his transformation into a woman and subsequent copulation with the God/Father to generate a new race of human beings (cf. Freud, [1911] 1988d).

In other words, the symptom is a paternal determination – both as significance and satisfaction – which falls upon discontent, naming it and establishing a grammar in which the suffering it conveys can be recognized as a suppressed, unarticulated or unformulated demand. Not surprisingly then, the clinical name for discontent is distress.

Just as our literary heroes, our psychoanalytic heroes can summon up a conservative moral response for which the enunciation would be: *Beware of what shall happen to those who turn their backs to the cosmic solidarity of life, the community of origin, and to the collective sense of conventionality of meaning. significances.*

Don Quixote's hallucinatory madness, Don Juan and Bovary's erotomania, Kant's obsession, Kafka's paranoia, Faust's melancholy, Baudelaire's depression; Hamlet, Montaigne and Hegel's hysteria; and Crusoe's megalomania are all commensurable versions of the psychoanalytic totemism and their themes are equally related to the loss of experience: transgression, sacrifice, conversion, interdiction, identification and grief.

The lesson inherited from the dialectic between master and slave – brought to psychoanalysis by Lacan (1998b) via an anthropological reading of *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* (as a model for a theory of recognition) – is that the experience is itself dialectic. A dialectic whose

ontological circuit (formed by the loss of experience and its return as an experience of loss) is real.

But for this reason Lacan has named psychoanalysis an experience. Firstly, the psychoanalytic treatment was regarded as a dialectic experience (cf. Lacan, 1998a); then, as the cure - as an experience of subjectivation of the unconscious desire (cf. Lacan, 1998c); then, as an experience of castration, grief and the crossing of the plane of identifications (cf. Lacan, 1988); and lastly, as an experience of the decline of the analyst as an object within both the transference and the analysand's fantasy (cf. Lacan, s/d). Thus, the psychoanalytic treatment – as a truthful and genuine experience of recognition which is coordinated by the logical function represented by paternal totemism – would be a bet on the *production of a productive experience of determination*.

This clinical bet is aligned with a first metadiagnosis of the Modern Age which emphasizes the *excess of unproductive experiences of determination*. In other words, there is a hypertrophy of systems and disciplinary devices in the life form that characterizes the Modern Age (cf. Foucault, [1978-1979] 2008), hence the fact that the field of suffering is indissociable from the experience of alienation – not only in its strand of exteriorization (*Entäusserung*) of the subject, but also in its strand of estrangement (*Entfremdung*) of the desire.

There is an excessive rationalization of work (cf. Marx, [1844] 1973), language (cf. Benjamin, [1936] 1994) and life (cf. Weber, [1946] 1963) which leads to a loss of the organic and authentic aspect of the experience (*Erfahrung*).

There is a generalized reification of consciousness and a hypertrophy identity thinking (cf. Adorno e Horkheimer, [1944] 1985) which spreads as a colonization of the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) via instrumental reasoning (cf. Habermas, 1990).

The strategies of determination and discrimination – characteristic of the world of technique (*Gestell*) – end up generating unproductive lived experiences (*Erlebnis*) (cf. Heidegger, [1953] 2002) which are incapable of producing social symbolic recognition (cf. Jameson, [1981] 1992). This results in greater ambivalence, indetermination, indiscrimination (cf. Bauman, 1999) and a consequential perception of risk (cf. Beck, 1997).

Based on the loss of experience, this first metadiagnosis generally leads to a paranoid lineage – as per seen in Don Quixote, Hamlet, Don Juan, and later on in Henry James (cf. Žižek, 2008), Kafka (cf. Santner, 1997) and Flaubert (cf. Kehl, 2008).

But there is a second metadiagnosis of Modern Age which is based on a *deficit of productive experiences of indetermination*. In other words, certain experiences of indetermination which are necessary so that freedom can be expressed in real acts – and not exclusively via indirect recognition, through the submission and mediation of symbolic systems gathered on a theological-political unit.

It would be possible at this point to return to the decline of the paternal imago as a potentially favorable condition for the production of productive experiences of indetermination. This is a key concern for authors such as Nietzsche and Bataille. In other words, a diagnosis notices deficit exactly where the other locates excess.

An unproductive experience of determination is noticed by one diagnosis on the same area as the other recognizes a productive experience of indetermination. Both metadiagnoses are neither reductive nor complimentary amongst one another, for indetermination isn't just the symmetrical lack of determination (cf. Honneth, 2007).

Indetermination carries its own ontological statute (albeit a negative one) and must not be purely understood as negation, suspension or transgression of the law (*automaton*); but also as contingency and encounter (*tuché*).

This is what can be systematically found in the Lacanian notion of *jouissance*; in other words, an experience of non-identity, informity, estrangement. However, there is a lack of an anthropological model that could describe what a life form (that was based in this other logic of recognition) would be like.

On this second metadiagnostics, we have gathered a critique to the moral resentment (cf. Nietzsche, [1884] 1997), the institutionalization of the experience, and the suffocating dependence which is felt in relation to the instances of representation (cf. Taylor, 1997).

The excess of experiences of determination (in the form of distrust and the feelings of loneliness and social insecurity), and the deficit of productive experiences of indetermination equally emerge as distress – in the forms of non-adaptation, feelings of emptiness and the attribution of value to social anomy.

This diagnosis appears in a descriptive way amongst the scholars of comprehensive sociology - as the colonization of the public realm by either the private grammar of intersubjective recognition (cf. Sennett, [1973] 1993) or the reduction of the romantic love narrative (cf. Giddens, 1993).

Amongst the philosophers of difference, this diagnosis reappears as either the recognition of indetermination in the correlations between beliefs and practices (cf. Deleuze, [1953] 2001), or the recognition of the indetermination of meaning in its iteration (cf. Derrida, [1966] 1973). Cru-soe and Faust are the first ones to be found in this schizoid lineage, fol-lowed by Hölderlin (cf. Laplanche, [1961] 1991), Baudelaire (cf. Jameson, 2005), Joyce (cf. Laberge, 2007); and amongst us, Guimarães Rosa (cf. Rivera, 2005).

Psychoanalysis provides several ways to approach this dual his-torical diagnosis of do Modern Age as both a loss of experience and an experience of loss. The simplest of those -and most broadly employed by Freud - consists of synchronizing the singular experiences of nega-tivity and of non-identity (which impact the constitution of the subject) with the universal experiences that describe the logical inception of the subject, groups, masses and civilization.

For Lacan these negative experiences of loss operate in a slightly different way. In the register of desire, the underlying negativity of the object loss (*Versagung*) is articulated through the lack - as imaginary frustration, real deprivation (*Entbehrung*), and symbolic castration (*Kas-tration*).

This loss of ontological nature (real, symbolic or imaginary) be-comes differentially articulated as the anthropologic realm of the Other is understood as the realm of language and meaning – in which the experiences of alienation, separation and distress (*Angst*) occur - or if we consider the Other as a bodily experience in which the matters of ne-glect (*Hilflosigkeit*), the precariousness of the corporal unit, or the inexis-tence of the sexual relation do not cease to insist.

But this anthropologic dimension of loss can once again be revert-ed into the ontological dimension of emptiness. Here, we speak of the encounter with the real - the truth-trauma (*trumatisme*), the Thing (*das Ding*), and the object of distress.

Therefore, there is an attempt to describe a grammar of *negations of experience* as a reappraisal of the Freudian theory of defense: disavow-al (*Verneinung*), repression (*Verdrängung*), foreclosure (*Verwerfung*) and refusal (*Verleugnung*).

On the other hand, an effort is made to establishing a logic of the *experiences of negation*, as a theoretical reappraisal of the Freudian no-tion of drive: sublimation (*Sublimierung*), the return to the own self (*Wie-derkehr*), the inversion (*Umwendlung*) between sadism-masochism, the fusion and fission of drives, and the degradation of the object in one's

love life (*Erniedrigung*).

In short, Lacan tried to condense the varieties of experiences of loss in the notions of “object *petit a*”, and the split subject – along with its underlying varieties of the loss of experience. The *cut* is a conceptual cornerstone which respects the non-identity between one and the other. This is sufficient to justify the idea that a dual social metadiagnosis of Modern Age is both active and present in the core of the diagnostic ra-tionale created by Lacan.

The notion of *life form* has nothing to add to this logical and anthro-pological articulation of negativity in Lacan. It serves us only as a means of methodologically grouping different clinical assemblages surround-ing the object *petit a* and the subject, while keeping the practical problem of the diagnosis in perspective.

There are different perspectives to doing a diagnosis in psycho-analysis: the structure of defense, the fantasy, the articulations of real, symbolic and imaginary, one's position across from sexuation, one's prevalent modalities of discourse. We would rather assert that a diag-nosis focuses on a life form – thus considering these different perspec-tives not as unifying system, but as a conflict of perspectives to produce the “necessary word” to it.

To diagnose is to reconstruct a life form defined by how it deals with the loss of experience and with the experience of loss. To diagnose is to assert how a form of life presents itself as more determined or more undetermined, how it creates its singularity between lack and excess, and how it relates to other forms of life through exchange and produc-tion.

Language, desire and work are forms of establishing relations; thus, our concept is not adequate for the purpose of relativism. Instead, it is adequate for the purpose of *relationism*.

Psychoanalytic Psychopathology and Amerindian Perspectivism

We must regard a life form exactly as the voyagers who boarded the *Enterprise* spaceship led by Capitan James Kirk (Willian Shatner), on the classic TV series *Star Trek*, produced by Gene Rodenberry from the 60's to the 80's.

The expression life form appeared there not only to designate hu-man beings or humanoids, but also to designate animals, plants, and minerals to which the rule of non-interference would apply. Moreover, the crew of the spaceship was not formed by only a single life form as it

included Russians, Japanese, Americans, as well as Doctor Spock who was half earthling and half Vulcan.

The series was created in the midst of the Cold Wars and rising North-American Multiculturalism. In an inadvertent way, it also anticipated the context in which we wish to introduce the notion of life form; or, in other words: Multiculturalism.

Life forms are not always human. This allows an strategic withdraw from the essentialist efforts made for defining what a man is – which his parameter of rationality and universal dispositions of action are, or how exactly he differs from animals. In order to redescribe psychoanalytic diagnostics we shall make use of what Viveiros de Castro called “amerindian perspectivism”.

We start from the assumption that Lacanian Psychopathology has articulated the theory of clinical structures through a methodological strand of the anthropological concept of structure. It is in this sense that clinical structures are introduced more as individual myths (cf. Lacan, 1987), existential positions (cf. Juranville, 1987), discourses and/or types of transference (cf. Calligaris, 1989); and less as deviations, anomalies or a loss of function.

But along with the structural method Lacan also imported its context of application, namely the totemic premise – which, by the way, was acquired by Lévi-Strauss via Freud. The structural method, coupled with a theory of the dialectics of desire and history, allowed (as we have seen) a redescription of the Freudian father complex theme.

It is possible to pinpoint that the criticism over either the vacuity of content and pure symbolic forms - which has characterized the first chapter of Structuralism – or the discourse pertaining the logical purification of intuition - which marks its second chapter – is potentially conformist in relation with the metadiagnosis of the loss of experience and its most trivial symptom – the hypertrophy of systemic reasoning.

Willing to incorporate the topic of indetermination, Ota (2010) named this third moment of structuralist application as normative formalism. Here, the logical descriptions of structures resolutely abandon their descriptive function and acquire normative, procedural and political features. If the former assumption was that structures conceive men, now we are to conceive men as those who conceive themselves as being conceived by the structures.

The context of diagnostic reasoning was not immune to this movement of perspective inversion (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 2002, p. 353). Psychoanalytic Psychopathology may be criticized for its neurotic-centrism,

androcentrism and naturalistic-totemism.

In a reactive defense psychotic-centrism, feminine-centrism and culturalist-relativism start to be advocated. Here, the idea of center is not substituted for the idea of the ellipsis, nor is the geometry of the ellipsis substituted for the topology of the torus. The inversion of naturalist-totemism expressed in the Freudian myth of *Totem and Taboo* (cf. Freud, 1988e) does not need to generate a monoculturalistic-relativism – as the “culturalistic” psychopathologies of the contemporary age do – but it can give rise to multiculturalistic-animism.

The inversion of neurotic-centrism does not necessarily take place through the admission of the universal character of human psychosis – as per asserted by the theory of generalized foreclosure – but rather, it can occur through the recovery of the category of madness as the pathology of recognition and social suffering.

Also, the inversion of androcentrism does not need to correspond to a substitution for its direct opposite – generalized feminism (stemming from the notion of feminine *jouissance*) – *but it can be contrasted with the notion of a productive experience of indetermination which is a conceptual equivalent to the clinical non-proportionality amongst genders of modalities of jouissance. However, in order to do so we would need to introduce a type of torsion that was different from the symmetric and reflexive torsion that characterizes Totemism.*

This is exactly what we find within *Amerindian Perceptivist Animism*, as per described by Viveiros de Castro (2002, p. 377). The notion of perspective should not deceive us here as it does not regard multiculturalism, but it in fact regards multinaturalism:

[...] multiculturalism presupposes a diversity of subjective and partial representations which impact an external nature – unified and absolute – which is indifferent to representation; amerindians presuppose the opposite: a representative or phenomenical and purely pronominal unit which is indifferently applied onto a real diversity (*Idem*, p. 379).

The notion of perspectivism may be applied to the diagnostic rationale through the notion of life form - so long as it is regarded as perspective, as opposed to representation. The different clinical groups, frames, symptoms and signals that comprise a psychopathology usually describe varieties of spirit gathered into the material and biological unit of the bodies.

On one side we find the objective universality of bodies (mononaturalism), while on the other side is the subjective particularity of meaning (totemism). We may then describe a particular life form according

to the type of organization of meaning that characterizes them. Here is where psychoanalysis specifically convokes the totemic series of the symbolic father, paternal metaphor, master signifier, and version-of-the-father (*père-version*).

This series defines the incidence of *real*- conceived as an epistemologically unified world which is methodologically convenient and logically necessary. Within this universe deixical functions such as “yesterday” or “tomorrow” are as logically valid as family relations such as “the son of”, “the nephew of”, etc. (cf. *Idem*, p. 385) and as natural as a piece of fish or a canoe. This trivial context defines “administrative normality” as a reflexive aptitude: *human beings view humans as humans and animals as animals*.

“Animals” is a logical function of the argument that asserts we may substitute every life form which does not share this totemic law. Historically: madmen, barbarians, foreigners, outcasts, savage men, children, and so forth. It is in this point that animism comes up with an alternative answer.

There aren’t only human beings and animals, but also other life forms which, as “spirits”, may be for instance not-all-humans or not-yet-animals. Totemism recognizes an opposition of the men/animal sort on the same area where animism notices an indeterminate number of forms of life – all of which are “human”- dressed in the most varied sorts of non-human “attire”. To meet with such “naked” forms of life is to come upon a *safe signal that the conditions are not normal* (cf. *Idem*, p. 350). In other words, it means to understand that the perspective is not normal and that never is the *other* not normal.

In an homologous way we may think that psychosis – as opposed to neurosis, yet not symmetrically – applies a similar grammar to the animist folk, who privilege metonym as a regulating function and allies with multiculturalism in order to affirm that the correlations between culture and nature are ultimately cultural.

If paternity is a relation adopted by neurosis as the matrix for all other forms of relations, than objectality – which is a property of bodies or beings – is adopted by psychosis as the matrix for all other forms of objectality. To conceive the psychopathological differences under this scope is to understand that there is no symbolization deficit in psychosis and no deprivation of the representative function. There is only a difference with regard to the incidence of the structural question: the body or the subject.

This is validated by the observation that Amerindian Perspectiv-

ism is somatic, in that the body is understood as attire, outline or semblance which must be continuously produced or created (cf. *Idem*, p. 389). Conceived as the production of a body (cf. *Idem*, p. 393), the attire correlates more with the diving gear that instrumentalizes actions than with a carnival mask which hides an essential identity (cf. *Idem*, p. 394).

In regarding us as non-humans, animals and spirits regard themselves as humans [...], jaguars see the blood as *cauim*, the dead see crickets as fish, vultures see the worms in the rotten flesh as roasted fish, etc.

The psychoanalyst as a shaman: a reformulation

In a renewed form, we come across Lévi-Strauss’ (1973b) former theory that the shaman – or the psychoanalyst in a modern version – is a master in this cosmic schematic patterning who is dedicated to communicating and administrating the crossed perspectives and unformulated states, thus rendering sensitivity to concepts and intelligibility to intuitions.

The shaman is this transpecific, humanoid and androgynous being who is capable of seeing the internal shape under the attire worn by a determined life form while reading their myth; in other words, the *history of the time when men and animals were not distinguished* (cf. Lévi-Strauss, [1988] 2005, p. 193).

While being capable of seeing non-human beings as they see themselves (as humans), shamans can take on the role of active interlocutors on the dialogue. Most importantly, shamans can return to report the story – something the uninitiated could hardly do. The encounter or exchange of perspectives is a dangerous process as well as a political art; in other words, a skill of diplomacy (Viveiros de Castro, 2002, p. 358).

On a former research on the history of the practices that determine the invention of the psychoanalytic treatment, we have insisted on the thesis of the cure as a political art. We tried to demonstrate that from ancient times (Greek medicine, Hellenistic self-care practices, rhetoric) to the modern age (Montaigne, Kant, Hegel), the different cure, treatment and care practices found in the archeology of clinical psychoanalysis share this common political component (cf. Dunker, 2010). Something quite different, however, is to present a diagnostics which is compatible with this political art of the cure.

If political art seems like too broad and uncertain a field, it is worth reminding ourselves that indigenous theories over the process of becoming ill do not diverge that much from the hegemonic conceptions of

modern mononaturalism, and narrow down to a total of four recurrent hypotheses: 1) the loss of one's soul or a possession; 2) the breach of a taboo; 3) the intrusion of an object; 4) the dysregulation of the spirit (cf. Clements, 1932).

Cases 1 and 2 are predominant in totemic forms of life, in which the cure is structured through sacrifice, loneliness and alliance. Cases 3 and 4 prevail amongst the animist population in which cannibalism and incorporation are constant factors. Here, shamanism and body metamorphosis comprise the model for the cure process.

Fear of isolation and loneliness are predominant features of Totemism, while a horror before the experiences of non-differentiation between men and animals are predominant features of Animism (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 2002, p. 391). Once again we encounter the two metadiagnostics of Modern Age. On the totemic-paranoid strand the experience is recomposed by determination, as opposed to the animist-schizoid strand, in which the experience is recovered through indetermin-ation.

The next step is to invert totemic mononaturalism into animist multinaturalism. According to amerindian perspectivism, the "original shared condition between men and animals is not animality, but in fact humanity" (*Idem*, p. 355). Homologically, according to psychoanalytic diagnostics, the shared condition between normality and pathology is in fact pathology, and not normality.

If "humans are those who would remain identical to themselves: animals are in fact extra-humans, and men are not ex-animals". Homologically; neurotic, psychotic and perverse are pathological forms of life which have lost the attributes that have been inherited or maintained by normal humans.

However, such "normal" humans are but an impossible perspective and life form. For this perspective is no longer thought of as neither a common interior essence and nor as universal and consonant with trivial humanism. Animals and all other cosmopathological beings are still human - just as other indeterminate forms of life - for it is the world itself which is transformed by a change of perspective.

While conventional Mononaturalism - which characterizes Modern Age - conceives the subject as an *insufficiently analyzed object*, multinaturalism - present in the Amazon's population - conceives the object as an *incompletely interpreted subject* (cf. *Idem*, p. 360). While on Saussure's perspective the point of view creates an object, on Perspectivism the point of view creates the subject.

Instead of a dispute for establishing hegemony amongst different forms of perspective, representation or concept, this is a struggle for recognizing which world is necessary and compulsory - an effort which is made while keeping a set of undetermined possible perspectives in mind. The subject does not create a perspective; in fact, it is the perspective which creates the subject.

All beings view the world in the same way, what in fact changes is the world they see (multinaturalism). In other words, Epistemology is a constant and Ontology is a variable. There are certain deadlocks within the Lacanian theory of the subject which could be re-dimensioned through amerindian perspectivism (cf. Silva Jr., 1999; Bairrão, 2003).

The asymmetric torsion of perspectivist animism

Thus, that which "we" call blood is actually beer for the jaguar, and what "we" call muddy soil is the great house of ceremonies for the tapirs. The crucial point is that "we" still don't know that, and have rarely seen tapirs without their tapir costumes. It just so occurs that on amerindian perspectivism "we" means less of a reference to nouns and more of an indeterminate pronominal use. Contrary to totemism - in which an ordinary name is perceived as carrying the function of a forename - Animism regards the collective identity of "We" as being subject to undetermined extension - which may range from relatives to a group of origin, and includes unknown beings.

There are restrictions and avoidances calculated as to the use of self-reference and personal onomastics. One's own name is rarely pronounced by its carrier - the subtle difference between saying "I'm X" (totemism) and "X calls me Y" (animism). Thus, every position attributed to a viewpoint or intentionality is also a subject.

Well, it only takes thinking up the topology of the signifier as two necessary points to form a set - from which one point represents the subject - to notice the profound affinity between perspectivist animism and the Lacanian theory. Conversely, it only takes noticing how the self-reference predicament is confounded with the metaphor in Lacan to realize how close the theories of clinical structures and totemism are.

While keeping this approximation into perspective, we may formalize an example of how perspectivist animism adds a new articulation between both the oppositions of lack\excess and determination\indetermination: (a) humans refer to themselves inasmuch as salmon refers to themselves (indentitarian reflexive Mononaturalism; (b) Salmon view themselves as humans, *because* humans see them as salmon seeing themselves as humans (symmetrical torsion of totemism).

Let us compare this dual alternation with the asymmetry of the animist torsion: (a) salmon look like salmon inasmuch as humans look like other humans (animism); (b) salmon do not look human to other humans inasmuch as humans do not look like salmon to other salmon (perspectivism); (c) humans see themselves as humans, but are seen as non-humans (animals, spirits) by non-humans (asymmetric torsion of animism).

The first transformative group reminds us of the canonic formula proposed by Lévi-Strauss to formalize the structure of myths, in which an element is substituted by its function and this function is substituted by the reverse of the element (cf. Lévi-Strauss, [1955] 1973c). Thus, a correlation between reflexive identities explains the appearance of differences – as per asserted by the totemic model.

Lacan absorbed this concept while regarding the structure of the subject as a Möbius strip – defined by its simple torsion. The innovation represented by perspectivist animism would require rewriting the canonic formula, as it would involve a dual asymmetric torsion. Here, the best topological representation would be the Klein bottle – which is composed by two Möbius strips with reversed torsions.

Should this prove itself accurate, we would substitute the idea that the neurosis is an individual myth (cf. Lacan, 1987) for the thesis that the myth does not always reflect the totemic commensurability between humans and non-humans. Moreover, this could point to the animist idea that both humans and non-humans are different from themselves. The correlation between two series of differences is what in fact produces the identity as a symmetric and reversible structure: *if all have got a soul, no one is identical to oneself* (cf. Viveiros de Castro, 2002, p. 377).

Conclusion

We have seen that animist perspectivism is a counterexample of life forms (of totemic prevalence) which has been extensively present in psychoanalytic diagnostics since Freud. If amerindian perspectivism is a consistent orientation for the constant and indeterminate production of a body – as the matrix for the positioning of the subject – than it doesn't in any way come near the realm of psychosis. It only allows us to conceive it in a less deficitary manner.

We have now noticed how – although sustained by a theory of the constitution of the subject in which metonymic processes take on a significant role – the neurotic-centric matrix of psychoanalytic psychopathology understands the symptom as a deficit of recognition regarding

a metaphorical (paternal-totemic) determination. Suffering then may be better understood as an excess of metonymic indetermination – in the form of an unarticulated demand- which can be more easily conceived through animist recognition logic.

The problem within discontent can now be redescribed as a loss of experience which is adopted for its reference to not only the historical opposition between Modern and Pre-Modern Age, but also to the opposition between mononaturalism and multinaturalism.

We have now understood why metadiagnostics – which is centered in the idea of an excess of unproductive experiences of determination – can only notice unproductivity or a deficit of determination within underterminative experiences.

It is because this diagnosis is paired with totemic monoculturalism that it can only notice one very same world, which is identical to itself and in which “we” are the variable element. Thus, the suffering of indetermination tends to be approached with more determinative schemes as opposed to being recognized within the frame of a different dialectic of recognition.

As opposed to ruling out the importance of totemism, recent ethnographic research within this renewed frame of post-structuralism has been revealing how this must be regarded as a particular case which can be contrasted to mono and multiculturalism as well as to totemism. Within the animist-multiculturalist frame, the symptom – and this Lacanian neologism seems now to be a lot more suitable – must be conceived as the excess and metonymic indetermination which are expressed through the fear of cannibalism, the anthropophagic horror and the schizoid lineage of modern age.

While totemism is erected before one's loss of the experience of oneself, animism points to a loss of the experience of the Other. While totemism emphasizes the experience of losing the Other, perspectivist animism is shackled to the experience of losing oneself.

The most interesting result of this mental experiment – which is based on the assumption that there is a homology between anthropologic and historically defined life forms and Lacanian psychoanalysis – is that in both cases the sum of the possibilities does not lead us to encounter a system totality.

We hope to have demonstrated that if the sum of the naturalist (mono and multiple), totemist and animist perspectives is ever to constitute a shared viewpoint, than it must also simultaneously represent a

form of relativism. We can expect nothing but this fractured universality or not-all psychopathology from this new stage of the interface between psychoanalysis and social theory.

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Psychoanalysis as labor: an impossible profession and the Marxist conception of labor

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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Psychoanalysis and the State

Here is a very complicated problem: is there any affinity between psychoanalysis and the State? This question unfolds into at least another two: (1) does psychoanalysis have a public vocation? and (2) is there a possible political model of public management that would share the basic premises of Lacanian psychoanalysis, or, at least, that would be permeable to them? This is, therefore, not merely a complicated problem, but a complex of problems, which could give rise to an extensive research project. But in order to develop even the most basic outline of this project, we must concern ourselves with some initial distinctions - and, to do so, we would do well to refer to the better established and studied relation between psychiatry and psychology and the State.

For example, analyzing in which way the structure of the psychoanalytic clinic and the notion of the symptom developed by Freud and Lacan are distinct from their respective versions in psychiatry and psychology, specially when it comes to the porosity of each field to some of the minimal precepts of public administration, could be a possible starting point for us to begin identifying the local and specific challenges that lie ahead of our investigation. After all, the analytic clinic delimits its scope - in opposition to the notion of clinic at stake in psychological therapy and the psychiatric practice - in a rather paradoxical fashion: yes, the psychoanalyst is concerned with the suffering and health of the analysands, and could therefore be considered another professional of the “mental health” field, but the cure is something like a “collateral effect” – as if the condition for the cure in the analytic clinic *was its own suspension as a finality*, that is, the maintenance of a space where suffering is not antithetical with satisfaction. But what would it mean for a public health system to rely on the services of psychoanalysis and on a clinical space that cannot be directly committed to the amelioration of one’s displeasure?

On the other hand, the idea of the symptom in Lacanian psychoanalysis is strangely alien to both psychological and psychiatric typologies, to both behavioral and neurologic determinants: a symptom does not name a problem or an indeterminate suffering that would refer us to a more fundamental, determinate cause. Rather, the symptom concerns a dimension that psychoanalysts call that of “singularity” because it locates – in an equally paradoxical manner – the way in which a given individual simultaneously escapes and constitutes his or her determinations. In short, in psychoanalysis we do not aim to identify “neurotics” or “psychotics”, but rather the “neurotic” or “psychotic” ways that one equivocates and interprets one’s identifications. And how could a practice

which so systematically eludes the relation between the general category and the particular case be subsumed under the logic of the public and the common, which concerns itself with that which must be offered by the State to everyone, indistinctively? These first demarcations already reveal veritable challenges for the conception of a logic of public service that would be capable of regulating psychoanalysis without sacrificing the rigor of this practice, while at the same time proposing a normative principle of proper public vocation and administrative competence.

Nonetheless, both the lack of finality of the clinic and the typological impasse of the notion of symptom set up the question of psychoanalysis and the State in a similar way, departing from homonymous concepts in different practices – “clinic” and “symptom” as conceived by different discourses – to help us then shed light, in a second moment, on a dimension common to all these fields. In order to really benefit from this comparison, we would need to explore the opposite vector: to depart from a common category, inherently linked to the problem of management and to the categories of the public, and then explore its different deployments in these different fields, most specially in psychoanalysis. It is the wager of this text that the category of *labor* – even in the diffuse commonsensical meaning of the term – allows us to conduct such an investigation.

Psychoanalysis and labor

I would like thus to begin from the following evidence: the psychiatrist, the psychologist and the psychoanalyst *work*. First of all, this means that the three of them are *paid* to perform activities whose respective products are of interest to a third party. From this initial fact we can apprehend the two questions which will concern us for the remainder of this study: (1) the psychologist, the psychiatrist and the psychoanalyst are paid – does this mean that these three activities are professions? and (2) these three labors are activities provided to third parties – does this mean that psychoanalysis is a service?

Labor can be preliminarily defined as an activity whose product has a utility or use beyond the satisfaction of performing it. Either directly or indirectly, the products of labor are useful to someone. The idea of a profession, on the other hand, must be defined not only in reference to utility or to an economic function, but to a certain regulatory or legal criteria, which delimitate with precision the scope of the activity of a given worker. Most economics text-books differentiate “craft” from “profession” based on the level of instruction involved in each of these different sort of ac-

tivities. However, what the term “instruction” determines here is rather the depth of influence of the normative regulation of a labor in the very formation of the worker. A physician holds a higher degree of instruction than a carpenter, but what qualifies the physician is not simply the time of training or study, but the time of training in legally recognized institutions which are capable of verifying certain aspects of his capacitation. That is, if labor is a category determined by the use and exchange values of its production, the category of “profession” rather concerns the insertion of labor in a normative system of productive practices. The field of professions can therefore be divided between “regulated” and “unregulated” activities while the field of labour distinguishes “productive” from “unproductive” activities. Our first question is, therefore, the following: both psychology and psychiatry admit well-regulated training processes – that is, they can be properly regarded as professions – what about psychoanalysis? Is it a profession or a craft?

The second, and most important question, which is in fact intimately articulated to the former one, concerns the problem of the product or the utility of psychoanalysis. Both in the case of psychiatry and psychology, it does not seem problematic to affirm: a person seeks the services of a psychiatrist or a psychologist because he or she needs, for some reason or another, something that these professionals offer. Accordingly, we group these labors under the field of “mental health” because this is what we look for – even if we don’t really know what it could mean – when we demand the services of a psychologist or a psychiatrist. However, the case of psychoanalysis offers a curious obstacle when we try to think this activity in terms of a service: what does the psychoanalyst offer to those who bring their suffering to the analytic couch? As we mentioned before, the formations of the unconscious are not only the indexes of a problem, but also markers that make legible the singular trajectory of a subject, something like a solution, a manner of inhabiting a certain indelible fringe of indetermination. It is therefore no wonder that we usually consider that the analysis only properly begins when the analysand ceases to demand solely the elimination of the symptom and becomes interested in that which, within that strange and unrecognizable formation, seems to indicate something hidden or enigmatic about herself. It is in fact a perplexing inversion: first, when we seek an analysis, we suppose that the utility of the psychoanalyst’s labor would be that of helping us to get rid of the useless symptom, but analysis only really begins when a demand concerning the unconscious use that the symptom might have for us is addressed to the analyst – *a supposition which contradicts the very demand*

which first qualified the labor of the analyst and which led us to seek his service. And, authorized by this supposition of an unconscious utility, we begin to work – *durcharbeiten*, that is, to work through. We must therefore supplement the challenge posed by the regulation of the profession of the psychoanalyst with the more general problem of grasping the utility of this labor, given that the contradiction between the demand which brings us to the couch and the demand that conditions an analysis objects to the understanding of psychoanalysis as a service.

It would seem impossible, therefore, to consider psychoanalysis as a profession. The two impasses that we pointed out so far – the problem of regulation and the problem of utility or service – are actual obstacles currently preventing the inscription of psychoanalysis into the more general administrative mechanisms of society. Unfortunately, this difficulty has not been exactly problematized by us psychoanalysts, who seem strangely comfortable with this ambiguous place we occupy in the field of labor. Without going into too much detail, it suffices to say that, in the most extreme cases, this nebulosity is sometimes evoked as a justification for excusing oneself from taking part in the economic and juridical regulation of productive activities – or, worse, it is taken as a proof of the political dimension of psychoanalysis. But is it really true that we cannot properly conceptualize the status of the psychoanalyst's labor? The productive dimension of every real impasse in thought is that we are simultaneously invited to probe into its obscurity, its paradoxes and limits, and to reconsider the conceptual apparatus with which we approach it. Therefore, before accepting that psychoanalysis, its its very "essence", would be incompatible with *any* normative criteria for regulating professions, it is extremely fruitful for us to also question our conception of labor as such, given that there really are psychoanalysts out there and given that they do in fact engage in this activity in exchange for money.

The Marxist conception of labor

We will now focus on a theme that is apparently extraneous to psychoanalysis or to the field of mental health – and also a little speculative. I apologize in advance for this circumlocution which, although necessary, requires us to turn our attention to Marx and Aristotle. Moreover, this detour towards classical philosophy and the Marxist theory of labor-value will probably seem suspicious even for those who are familiar with these two thinkers, given that I will try to defend a double thesis: (1) the category of labor as developed in Marx's *Capital* is able to grasp the strange role of labour in psychoanalysis – a thesis which has the conse-

quence of turning the difficulty of thinking psychoanalysis as yet another form of work a historical problem, proper to our conjuncture, rather than a structural condition of this practice – and (2) that the confrontation of the labor of the psychoanalyst with the Marxian categories also sheds a light on some of the undeveloped impasses of these categories themselves – more specially, on the fundamental category of "abstract labor. Given the constraints of this text, I will have to be very schematic in my presentation and shall therefore restrict myself to the development of a possible orientation for further investigation of this question.

In the famous first chapter of *Capital*, Marx starts off from the notion of the commodity – that is, of the object of exchange and consumption in our current political-economic system – in order to construct the concept of labor that is presupposed by its functioning. That is, his initial question is something like "what must labor be if commodities exist?". It is at this point that two categories, which had already developed classical economic theorists, enter the picture: the categories of use and exchange value. A commodity is something that has some utility, that is, that may be consumed according to its concrete properties, and also has something that could be exchanged by other commodities. A pencil, for example, is something that could be used in a specific way because of its shape, its material, etc, and something that could also be exchanged for other things, for an eraser or even for money. Marx names *concrete labor* that dimension of human activity responsible for the direct and qualitative transformation of a given useless material into something useful, endowed with certain properties, suitable for certain a determinate utility. But not everything that has use value, and which is the result of concrete, qualitatively defined, labor is a commodity. The commodity has to have not only a use value, but a social use value, that is, it must have a use value *for others*. And if it has use value for others, the commodity therefore has an exchange value.

Here lies the mystery of the commodity – and, consequently, the mystery of the conception of labor at stake in the first chapter of Marx's *Capital*. For something to become a commodity, a specific utility with determinate properties, it has to be exchangeable with another "consumable", of different concrete properties. Exchange always take place between qualitatively distinct things. A given quantity of commodity "a" is exchanged for another quantity of commodity "b". But what is the criteria, the common dimension, that allows these qualitatively heterogeneous commodities to be put into a relation of quantitative equivalence? What does a pencil have in common with a medical consultation that makes

both objects *a priori* capable of being exchanged among themselves or through the mediation of money? This question effectively divides the study of economics. After all, what grounds the equivalence between absolutely heterogeneous use values? Without going too much into the issue of the different schools of thought, we may contrast a more “commonsensical” answer with the answer proposed by Marx.

What allows us, then, to compare, in a purely quantitative way, products or processes that have nothing concrete in common – “x” of commodity “a” being placed in equivalence with “y” of commodity “b”? One way to approach this question, one to which we turn almost spontaneously, is to suppose that what allows this equivalence to take place is the fact that relations of value are, in fact, relations between different needs or desire. The possibility of an abstract, quantitative form of exchange – the form of the “equal sign” in the equation “ $xa = yb$ ” – would therefore be guaranteed by the fact that each person’s will “abstracts” from a given product the expectation of satisfaction that would be achieved once it is later consumed: while the concrete products are qualitatively heterogeneous, the different expectations of satisfaction are not, and, being both abstractions, they can be homogeneously compared and placed into an equivalence relation. If every expectation of satisfaction corresponds to a specific demand or lack – such as, for example, the demand to improve one’s health or to get rid of a certain specific useless symptom – then different demands, insofar as they are equally abstract, can come into relation, allowing heterogeneous products to be compared. The demand for better health would be “subjectively” homogeneous with the demand for a new house, or to the prestige that comes from wearing certain clothes or attending certain restaurants.

This particular approach to the problem of the form of value, intuitive and widespread as it might be, has nevertheless shifted the focus away from labor and the worker and towards the consumer. It suggests that the homogeneity of the economic field is guaranteed by its “end point”, consumption, rather than by the productive circuit – a shift that indelibly organizes economic thinking around the categories of “supply/demand” and the essentially psychological subject whose expectations are paramount to explain equivalence relations between commodities. This position, however, *cannot* help us in our investigation, not only because it can only conceptualize labour starting from the satisfaction of the consumer – which is precisely what the labor of the psychoanalyst contradicts – but also because it is a position which has a conceptual commitment to the very psychological subject that psychoanalysis re-

futes in its practice.

Marx, on the other hand, is not interested in the role of the psychology of the consumer in guaranteeing the consistency of intersubjective economic exchange – his question, as we have seen, is rather “what must labor be if commodities exist?” or “what must labor be if qualitatively distinct products from qualitatively distinct labors can be exchanged among themselves through purely quantitative and homogeneous equivalences?”. And it is precisely at this point that the notion of abstract labor is employed: not a determinate kind of labor, which would produce a specific and determinate commodity – that is, “concrete labor” – but labor as something that every product of labor has in common, the very fact of being a product of the expenditure of human labor. The concept of abstract labor is at the heart of Marx’s answer to the question of the form of value in capitalism, a problem which deeply fascinates him: commodities can be put in relations of quantitative equivalence, despite being concretely heterogeneous, not because of an intersubjective convention that would equate our wills and appetites, but because every commodity is conditioned by the expenditure of labor force – and this “faktum” of labor is a part of the very commodity-form, it is the homogeneity of this labor force which grants this form with its homogeneous formal character. Marx summarizes this position as follows:

“As use values, commodities are, above all, of different qualities, but as exchange values they are merely different quantities, and consequently do not contain an atom of use value.

If then we leave out of consideration the use value of commodities, they have only one common property left, that of being products of labor. But even the product of labor itself has undergone a change in our hands. If we make abstraction from its use value, we make abstraction at the same time from the material elements and shapes that make the product a use value; we see in it no longer a table, a house, yarn, or any other useful thing. Its existence as a material thing is put out of sight. Neither can it any longer be regarded as the product of the labor of the joiner, the mason, the spinner, or of any other definite kind of productive labor. Along with the useful qualities of the products themselves, we put out of sight both the useful character of the various kinds of labor embodied in them, and the concrete forms of that labor; there is nothing left but what is common to them all; all are reduced to one and the same sort of labor, human labor in the abstract.

Let us now consider the residue of each of these products; it consists of the same unsubstantial reality in each, a mere congelation of ho-

mogeneous human labor, of labor power expended without regard to the mode of its expenditure. All that these things now tell us is, that human labor power has been expended in their production, that human labor is embodied in them.

When looked at as crystals of this social substance, common to them all, they are – Values.” (MARX, 2013: 116)

It is evident that, in all of this, the fundamental question for us is the following: what does all of this have to do with psychoanalysis? We should not lose track of our original investigation. We have briefly covered above two possible answers to the problem of the homogeneity inherent to exchange value: we can approach it from the standpoint of the abstract expectation of satisfaction in a given demand – and therefore spouse a certain psychological theory of the consumer – or we can posit that labor itself has a double function, one as concrete labor and another as a “congelation of homogeneous human labor” – which, on its turn, requires us to maintain that the *fact* of labor is somehow a part of the commodity-form. These two approaches in fact correspond to two possible conceptions of the labor of the psychoanalyst. The first holds that labor is defined by the demand which it meets – that is, the psychoanalyst is the one who meets the demand for psychoanalysis. But, as we discussed before, one of the curious features of psychoanalysis is that the analysis starts to work begins precisely when we don’t know what we want from it anymore: the clinic suspends the finality of the cure in order to be able to produce effects of cure, while the symptom brings us to the couch because of the useless suffering it causes us, but keeps us there because of the way it uncovers a certain surreptitious utility. How could we form, out of these contradictions, a non-contradictory demand that would then allow us to think psychoanalysis in terms of supplying a service? It is clear that we arrive with a demand – there is an expectation of satisfaction, and we could even argue that it is largely indistinct from the demand which is satisfied when we buy a new car or go see a physician or a lawyer. But what we receive for the money we paid the psychoanalyst is not what we went there to get in the first place: we discover what we want from the psychoanalyst only once we are already in analysis. Jacques Lacan summarized this paradoxical point with his famous cheekiness:

“In short I have succeeded in doing what in the field of ordinary commerce one would like to be able to do with such ease: with the supply I have created demand.” (LACAN, 1998: 623)

From the standpoint of “the field of ordinary commerce”, organized around the categories of abstract expectations and concrete fulfillments, psychoanalysis does in fact appear as a paradoxical activity: psychoanalysts offer their services, but the demand to which this offer corresponds is built *in analysis*. Considered from this perspective, the mechanism that validates the service of the psychoanalyst is practically indistinguishable from that which justifies the price of a new cellphone, whose appeal is derived from its innovative functions – novelties that we did not know we needed until the new technology was made available to us.

On the other hand, the Marxist conception of the value-form affirms the “meta-economic” hypothesis that the fact of labor is what consolidates the homogeneity of the field of exchange. This hypothesis implies, as we shall see, that any product of labor must bear two distinct forms of determination: the commodity is determined by the qualitative transformations which correspond to the specific labor which created it – the concrete mark of the concrete labor – *and* by the very enigmatic mark left by that which every concrete labor has in common: the abstract or negative mark that makes it legible that every commodity is a fruit of some labor, whatever its concrete form may be. The theory of the value-form that grounds itself on the role of the consumer only needs the first, concrete, determination: a demand is always an expectation of qualified satisfaction, and also it is the supply that corresponds to it. It is precisely the lack of this concrete determination that renders it difficult to conceive of psychoanalysis as a service - whatever concrete determination we assign to our demand, it will, by definition, be substituted by another one, constructed within the analytic process itself. But if this is the limit of the “subjectivist” theory of exchange, this is also where the Marxist conception of labor may come in our aid, because it allows us to suppose yet another sort of determination - which is somehow inscribed in the commodity as well and which gives the different products of labor their commensurability.

Psychoanalysis does not carry the mark of a concrete labor – it does not answer to any concrete demand – but does it carry the mark of being a “human labor in general?”

Four Aristotelian modalities

Our task is now the following: first, to understand how abstract labor inscribes itself in the commodity; then, to investigate if we find this determinate inscription in the labor of the psychoanalyst and; third, to see if this helps us face the challenge of thinking the place of psycho-

analysis in civil society and the State.

I believe that the best way to proceed in our analysis is to give yet another step back, from Marx to Aristotle - more precisely, to a schematization of the Aristotelian treatment of the four modal categories: contingency, possibility, necessity and impossibility. We might understand each of these categories as naming a precise articulation between “actuality” and “potency” – and, as we have seen, abstract labor, the “fact” of labor in general is a strange generic potency, an indistinct, unqualified potency of labor. In order to locate We shall try to describe briefly each of these four modalities.

Let us recall that, for Aristotle, “potentiality preexists the act as a condition of its actuality, and the act preexists the potentiality as what reveals it” (Aubenque, 2012: 410) - this intrinsic articulation allows us to construct a schema of the four modalities using this categorical pair, together with its different negations, as our guideline (Aristotle, 2005: 100-107):

Modality	Actuality/Potency
contingency	the passing into actuality of a potency of not being actual
possibility	the actuality of a potency of being and of not being actual
necessity	negation of potency not to be actual
impossibility	the negation of potency to be actual

Table of four Aristotelian modalities

Let us briefly analyze each case. The modality of the contingent is that of *an actuality which reveals its own potency*. A catastrophe, for example, is contingent because we only come to realize that it could happen after it takes place: it is only after the catastrophic happens that we discover that its looming potential for happening was already there. The contingent is the case of an actuality which also renders legible something about the conditions of its potential taking place.

The possible distinguishes itself from the contingent precisely because it does not depend on its own actualization to reveal its potency. This means that the possible is an ambivalent category, it is that which has both the potency of actualizing itself and of not actualizing itself. For example: a doctor is someone who can both exercise medicine as well

as not do it, who can perform a surgery and not perform it, if he wishes. Other people can, if confronted with an emergency, act as a doctor, but only a doctor remains one even when he is not practicing. The possible is therefore *that which has both the potency to pass into actuality and the potency not to*.

Having understood the ambivalent potency that is inherent to the possible, we can now better comprehend the category of necessity. The necessary is the modality which *negates, in the possible, the potency of not passing into actuality*. What is necessary does not have the potency of not being actual. The paradigmatic example here would be the laws of physics. It would be contradictory to assume that physical laws could suddenly cease being actual - they do not possess the potency of not being actual. And just as it is easy to confuse the possible with the potential as such, it would also be easy to make the necessary into the equivalent of pure actuality - but our previous example helps us to see that this is not the case: the laws of physics do not have the potency not to be actual, but they still retain the potency to be actual. A physical law must not only be always taking place, but it must also carry the potency of being valid for currently unknown phenomena as well.

This leads us, finally, to the impossible - which, we now realize, is not so much the opposite of the possible, but of the necessary. If necessity is that which negates the potency of not being actual, for its potency is that of always passing into actuality, the impossible is that which negates the potency of passing into actuality. This is a very complex idea and it would be easy to simply identify the impossible to impotence, the negation of potency as such - Aristotle himself seems to do so, in his presentation of the modal categories in the *Organon*. But, just like in the case of the necessary, in order to understand this category we must investigate both the dimensions of potency and of actuality. Now, the actuality of the impossible can only be its own paradoxical suspension, *impossibility is that which is actual only in the measure that it has no actual manifestation, its only potency the potency to not reveal its potency* - such is the contradiction: the impossible is actual, but only in the measure that it is not actual, only potent in the measure it does not actualize this potency. In short, the impossible is the way of what *does not cease not passing into being*.

A slightly pathetic but illustrative example of this paradox can be found by considering a slightly altered version of the famous argument put forward by the logician Saul Kripke, who liked to say that unicorns not only did not exist, but in fact *could not* exist, due to the very “essence”

of what we refer to when we say “unicorn”. Even in the case that we came to discover an animal which in fact displays all the the properties of the creature we commonly call an “unicorn” – that is, the body of a horse with a horn on its forehead, etc – this animal *would not still* be a unicorn. Why? Kripke said it was an epistemological limitation: what we refer to as unicorns is just a description, it is not enough to “pick out” from reality an actual entity. But, making use of an alternative theory - notably developed by Alexius Meinong - we could rather present an ontological argument to justify this impossibility: the unicorn could not exist precisely because a “really existing unicorn” lacks one important property that is part of the being of the unicorn: that of being mythical, that is, of *not existing*. The being of the unicorn includes the fact that it does not have a reality: in the case it came into existence, it would stop being what it is, it would rather turn into something else, like a curious breed of equines. In short, the contradiction that characterizes the impossible is that of being something whose actuality, or “quasi-actuality”, depends on the suspension of its very actuality: if it comes to take place, not only would it change its “status”, from potential to actual, but this realized being would cease to correspond to that suspended being of which it is the supposed manifestation.

I would still like mention another example of this paradoxical modality: the Freudian notion of the “Other Scene”, which Lacan later called “fantasy”. An unconscious fantasy is not something ineffable, beyond language: we can describe it, delimitate its contours and its fundamental traces. However, what is the famous reaction of the hysteric when finding in reality the object constructed through fantasy as an object of desire – even if this is exclusively the reality of speech? An unshakeable “that is not it!”. And why is it “not it”? Not because in fantasy the object had other properties, different from those which were articulated by speech, or by its taking place, but because the very fact of a fantasy having become actual contradicts an essential property of it, which is precisely that of not having any actuality. A realized fantasy – the Freudian name for it is nightmare. It is precisely as potency without “actual” actuality that the neurotic enjoys of her fantasy, this *is* its actuality. When we consider this paradox, we see that it is no wonder that neurosis universalizes philosophy!

The labor of the psychoanalyst

At last, we can return to the investigation of the concrete dimension of the psychoanalyst’s labor. As we have seen before, the impasse

we encountered when trying to understand to which demand the psychoanalyst answers with his “service” is that the concrete dimension of analytic labor, by definition, is does not supply the demand which brought us to analysis. Does psychoanalysis provide a service? It does not seem so, since the analyst does not answer to the demand that was addressed him. But this suspension is in fact part of the labor of the psychoanalyst, and, therefore, he does indeed provide a service. This is, thus, the contradiction: if the analyst answered the analysand’s demand for a cure, psychoanalysis would not produce effects of cure. We can now reformulate this contradiction in terms of the Marxist theory of labor: the concrete labor of the psychoanalyst is to suspend every concrete determination of his labor. However, what remains of labor once we suspend all its qualitative determinations? Only abstract labor, that which marks the inscription of an activity in the homogeneous “congelation” of the expenditure of labor power. Would this mean that the psychoanalyst does not have a specific labor? No – but his concrete, determinate labor is to reduce himself to the mark of indistinct labor, as if his specific labor was to merely “authenticate” that there is work – in the strict sense of concrete labor – in the analysand’s working through, therefore offering a chance for the analysand to produce by herself the utility of her symptom. In this sense, we could say that the task of the psychoanalyst is to give back the means of production of the symptom to the subject.

The modality of the impossible is clearly at stake here: the concrete labor of the psychoanalyst is, in a certain sense, that of carrying only the mark of the abstract labor. If this mark were to be actualized, made concrete, so as to correspond to a concrete and determined demand, it would cease being what it is, by the simple fact that its modal statute is one of the properties of this mark. Psychoanalysis is therefore effectively an *impossible* labor, an activity whose production or realization contradicts itself in the sense that, if we are able to trace the path from the product back to its producer – if the product of an analysis was an analysand “marked” by the labor of the psychoanalyst, in the way the health of an ill person who recovers is marked by the labor of the physician, or the way that a table refers us to the labor of a carpenter – then we could be sure that no proper analytical labor effectively took place.

In *Analysis terminable and interminable*, Freud counts psychoanalysis among two other “impossible” professions [unmöglichen Berufe]: the art of educating and governing. Let us return to this important passage of the text:

“Here let us pause for a moment to assure the analyst that he has

our sincere sympathy in the very exacting requirements of his practice. It almost looks as if analysis were the third of those ‘impossible’ professions in which one can be sure only of unsatisfying results. The other two, as has long been agreed, are the bringing-up of children and the government of nations. Obviously we cannot demand that the prospective analyst should be a perfect human being before he takes up analysis, so that only persons of this rare and exalted perfection should enter the profession. But where and how is even the most inadequate of individuals to acquire the ideal qualifications for his work? The answer is: in his own analysis, with which he begins his training. For practical reasons this analysis can be only short and incomplete: the main object of it is to enable the training-analyst to form an opinion whether the candidate should be accepted for further training. The training-analysis has accomplished its purpose if it imparts to the novice a sincere conviction of the existence of the unconscious, enables him through the emergence of repressed material in his own mind to perceive in himself processes which otherwise he would have regarded as incredible and gives him a first sample of the technique which has proved to be the only correct method in conducting analyses. This in itself would not constitute an adequate training, but we hope and believe that the stimuli received in the candidate’s own analysis will not cease to act upon him when that analysis ends, that the processes of ego-transformation will go on of their own accord and that he will bring his new insight to bear upon all his subsequent experience.” (FREUD, [1937] 2006: 244)

Freud mentions two defining traits of the psychoanalyst’s work: first, psychoanalysis is a labor in which we can only count with “unsatisfactory results” [ungenugenden Erfolgs] and, second, it is a labor of which it is impossible to demand an optimal professional, given that the analyst also needs to do his analysis, and this, according to the first property, always produces unsatisfactory results.

The usual Lacanian reading of the Freudian definition claims that the labor of the analyst is inherently “incomplete” or precarious: its results would be unsatisfactory because psychoanalysis deals primarily with failures of identifications, with slips of tongue, misunderstandings, in short, with the singular equivocality of each subject’s determinations. It would follow, then, the impossibility of regulate this labor, given that it is a structurally fragile practice, about which nothing universal could be postulated. We would not be able to verify the psychoanalyst’s activity, prove its success, because it deals with failures, we would not be able

to universally say what a psychoanalyst does because what he does is to bring forth what is not universalizable about a subject. Again, we can “translate” this reading of the Freudian text in terms of Marx’s labor theory: we could say that the concrete labor of the psychoanalyst would be to inscribe or place in evidence that indeterminate or negative dimension which objects to the stability of the identities of a subject. In this sense, we would read the inherent “dissatisfaction” of the psychoanalyst’s labor as one of its qualitative determinations: the analyst’s concrete labor is to give room to failures, faults and equivocality. And thus, given that the regulation of a profession, as we have seen, concerns itself with the standards of *quality*, it would be impossible to propose a properly normative criteria for psychoanalysis, because the qualitative dimension of this labor would be to promote the inscription of an incompleteness into the subject. If legal regulation requires us to identify certain procedures associated with the concrete activities which characterize a certain labor, and if the concrete labor of the psychoanalyst is to introduce ambiguity and equivocality in one’s identification, then it is not possible to regulate this practice without losing that which defines it.

The first problem with this widespread reading is that it does not clarify why this fragility would have led Freud to equate psychoanalysis with the practices of education and government. Not only that, but it also does not clarify an even more fundamental point: the insufficient results produced by psychoanalysis - they are insufficient *from which standpoint?* Are they unsatisfying in contrast to which expectation of satisfaction – that of the analyst of that of the analysand?

The only way to properly deal with this impasse is to seriously consider the logical consequences of Freud’s reference to dissatisfaction in his definition of the analyst’s profession. We are allowed to anticipate that the results of the psychoanalytic practice will be unsatisfactory because, by definition, analysis does not answer to the demand which brings someone to the couch – as we suggested before, the concrete labor of the psychoanalyst “does not cease not to inscribe itself” in its production. In short, while the first reading suggested that the concrete labor of the analyst is *positively incomplete* – because it concretely inscribes a lack in the life and determinations of a given subject - our proposal is rather to consider the analytic work as *inconsistent* or *contradictory*, that is, a labor whose only quality is to have no determinate quality, and therefore to reduce itself to abstract labor. The first position, therefore, sees a contradiction between psychoanalysis and normativity, given that psychoanalysis would be a practice of “undoing” universal laws, while the

latter position affirms the contradiction should be located within psychoanalysis itself.

This might seem like a subtle difference of no great consequence, but if we return now to our initial question, regarding the relation between psychoanalysis and the State, it becomes clear that this distinction leads to two quite divergent positions. The first orientation, which locates the impossible on the side of the “concreteness” of analytic labor, claiming that the analyst *concretely produces* indetermination and equivocality, maintains that psychoanalysis should not be regulated, because this would lead to a direct confrontation between the normative demands of the State and the specificity of psychoanalysis. On the other hand, the second position, which we have attempted to construct throughout this presentation, locates the impossible on the side of abstract labor, on the side of that which does not leave any concrete determination on its product, and the main consequence of this orientation is that it allows us to affirm that psychoanalysis may very well tolerate some regulation - perhaps not the regulations that are currently being proposed, but that becomes a secondary issue, given that we are now allowed to speculate about *another form of State*, one which would propose appropriate normative measures.

This may seem like an untenable thesis, but it follows directly from our previous elaborations: if the labor of the psychoanalyst is impossible because of the structural role of abstract labor in this practice, and if the regulation of productive practices only intervenes on the concrete dimension of any given form of work, then whatever it is that comes to be regulated in psychoanalysis – all the concrete restrictions that may be imposed on this practice – will only intervene upon *the work of the analyst*, and not on the analyst’s labor, which will remain equally free to interpret these new determinations. The consequences of this conclusion are worth exploring – they at least suggest an interesting new way to think about the relation between psychoanalysis and normativity, inviting us to think the critical and social vocation of analysis in more strict and rigorous fashion.

This brings us, finally, to the common trait which binds psychoanalysis to the practices of government, education and - according to an immediately recognizable similarity, mentioned above in our reference to the Freudian “Other Scene” - to the practice of causing the desire of others. What all these different labors have in common is precisely that, in these four fields, the determining criteria for each work is directly associated with one’s capacity to condition a concrete labor which is not - and

cannot be - that of the worker in question. Someone who governs works so that others might exercise their specific and determinate professions and be responsible for their own concrete work. Someone who teaches works so that the student might learn for himself, and not simply repeat what has been presented in the classroom. And someone who seeks to cause desire in someone else does not simply want to convince others to do something: there is a very telling difference between getting someone to do what we want because we want it done and getting others to do it because *they* start wanting it. In short, these are all practices in which, like in the case of psychoanalysis, the concrete labor at stake concerns less a specific production - a qualitatively determinate service, answering to a determinate demand - and more the conditions of work as such.

But what distinguishes psychoanalysis amongst them? Are these simply different fields, equally structured around an impossible invariant, or is there a definite distinction between psychoanalysis and the other three practices? First of all, psychoanalysis claims for itself - but the burden of proof is on us, psychoanalysts - that our practice occupies a double role in this series: it is one of its elements and the place where the very structure of the series is revealed. The proof, it seems to us, would rely on the demonstration that, from these four fields, only psychoanalysis has developed a practice in which the impossible is thought as such, and not only when its passage into actuality - its “acting out” - imposes on us, retroactively, its contradictory character. We can tell when the potency of government passes into actuality as its opposite, impotent violence, but we still cannot think the State as impossible or properly grasp the idea of the “enlightened ruler” and of the “professional revolutionary”. We can tell when a liberal education becomes a superegoic injunction to accumulate meaningless information and credits, but we are still to conceptualize what is the real point of disjunction between the teacher and the student. And we most definitely can tell what it means for a man to “prove” his potency to a woman, only to see it become the sign of his unimpressive acting out, but we have no idea how to think masculinity under the contemporary conditions. The defining trait of psychoanalytic thought, if such a thought can be said to exist, is precisely its capacity to grasp the passage from impotence to impossibility and thereby to affirm the clinic to be a school of the impossible.

The 21st Century Dawns with a Chance

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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Alain Badiou
Raúl Cerdeiras
Christian Ingo Lenz Dunker
Kenneth LaFave
Paul Livingston
Martín López
Frank Ruda
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(A dialogue between emancipatory politics and the philosophy of Alain Badiou)

The past century has ended in a formidable onslaught that condemned humanity to live in the desolated world of selfishness, self-interest, finitude and death. There is a political atmosphere that covered the world after the communist project was sterilized, and it revolves around a central slogan that claims that all attempts to radically change things will end in a catastrophe. Philosophy was not able to elude this avalanche. Moreover, in some cases, philosophy itself was on the cutting edge. In order to get involved in this journey, philosophy subordinated politics, once again, to the dictates of its own matters, and it did not hesitate for a second to incriminate itself as responsible for the political collapse. This is how a new task begins, a task that initially seemed productive and reasonable for the progresist spirits: the task of deconstructing all great absolutes: universality, truths, substantial subject, etc. Deconstructing, in short, all fundamental topics of Western metaphysics, while at the same time claiming that communism, fascism, and lately Muslim fundamentalism (without distinction) were to blame for having subjected the XX century to the most inhumane Terror, precisely because these Great Narratives were deeply rooted in such totalizing concepts.

The deconstructive and postmodern discourses secretly enjoy the fact that there is no longer a fulcrum or a stopping point at which a before-and-after can be built, nor truths, nor anything that aims to stay. Thus, they say, everything is revolving endlessly. But this movement is just the ceaseless circulation of commodities in a capsule called capitalism.

Not even the leftist positions, from the undecided and reformist to the dogmatic and sterile (including some new experiences that arise with no direction) are friendly towards these concepts that they *also* consider part of the right-wing arsenal. It is hard to imagine these forces flirting with a philosophy that affirms the absolute, truths, eternity and universality, among other big words.

Any philosophy that intends to rethink these notions seems to be doomed and hopelessly divorced from any hope of radically changing the world. As soon as a thought dares navigating these seas, the unanimous chorus of left and right politics will raise their voices to condemn it. It is very curious to see how this suspicious coincidence comes together: by decreeing the end of Philosophy, the end of History and the end of ideologies, postmodernity prepares the field for the globalization of capitalism, the empire of the economic needs and the defenestration of any

idea of political emancipation, turning politics into a simple artifact of state-governmental management. And, at the same time, any attempts to restore the old emancipatory thoughts and practices are, more or less, explicitly claiming to have nothing to do with these great categories of philosophical thought. It is indeed very suspicious that the deconstruction of the universe of the big ideas of philosophy has been, since the end of the seventies, the royal road to the globalization of capital, and at the same time, a powerful blockade to emancipatory thought.

The desire to radically change our lifestyles collectively seems to find an insurmountable obstacle in the desert of debris left by the Hurricane announcing the end of the totalitarian nightmare, raising the flag of the fall of big narratives, the empire of opinions, representative democracy and tolerance for alternative lifestyles. The intellectual horizon of our times is thoroughly infested with this discourse -still effective after 40 years of existence.

Philosophy wonders whether or not it is possible to change the world, not in the sense of a simple modification, but in terms of a real rupture. As we saw, the dominant thought claims this is not possible, and the main argument is the one we've already exposed: Once all the great visions of the world have fallen along with their majestic concepts, all utopian politics that had based on such grounds are now spinning around in the air, remaining only as the illusion of the usual fanatics.

For its part, politics that does not refrain from emancipation secretly admits (sometimes not even consciously) that it is very difficult to wager on a new libertarian stance without the solid supporting point that philosophy used to offer (specially German idealism). We can evoke here that old Archimedes wisdom: "Give me a place to stand on, and I will move the Earth." They miss that precious place to stand on - the foundation of a real, necessary and true process.

However, there is a chance. There is a possibility that I want to locate in the field of thought, in the realm of ideas. And it implies to produce a twist that will affect the very meaning of the words "thought" and "ideas." After all, the falling apart of the emancipatory project that started with Marx under the name of communism and crystalized on those states that were part of the socialist regimes, was not due to an internal overthrown or an external military invasion. This political sequence simply imploded without being able to say a single word about what was really going on. And there were no words to describe the fall, simply because the only discourse that was circulating victoriously was that of the conservative thought. A thought that, as we said, demolishes

the very coordinates of what, according to its vision, has sustained such nonsense. Therefore - and this is the hypothesis of this work - the revolutionary wave of the twentieth century was fundamentally defeated in the field of ideology, that is, in the realm of ideas.

We can say that emancipatory politics were defeated in the battlefield of thought only if we admit that politics is *also* a process of thinking. Here, precisely is where I try to open a dialogue between emancipatory politics and the philosophy of Alain Badiou. Of course, this initial exposure of Badiou's work will be biased and minimalist, without being able to substantiate its developments.

Sketch for a new chance

The Marxist political experience was deeply stalled way before the fall of the Berlin World sanctioned its symbolic burial. However, as we have seen, this breakdown was accelerated from an integral ideological project that claimed that politics did not have its own history, its own specific autonomy or its own thought but, instead, received from the great philosophical contributions the grounds of its ambitious ideals. This is why postmodern philosophers were able to associate the deconstruction of metaphysics with the destruction of communism and, with it, any other egalitarian project to come.

Badiou produces a twist of unexpected consequences on this precise point. It basically involves cancelling the old dominant position of philosophy over the rest of the valuated spheres such as science, art and morals, including, of course, history and politics. This gesture consists of inverting the direction of the arrow that descended from philosophy to make it ascend from those spheres subjected to their old master. However, this is not just simply an inversion of the relation (that does not really change things) but a redefinition of the content of the relation. Those that were dominated by philosophy in the past are not going to take the dominant position now, but instead they will become *conditions* of possibility for philosophy. From now on, philosophy will work on the real production of its conditions. There are four conditions, also called truth procedures: art, politics, love and science; the list cannot ever be closed.

And this is the first step to dissolve the hegemonic project of postmodernity, since it restores truth to the very heart of philosophy as a condition for it. In other words, without a thought of truth, philosophy vanishes in the subtle game of opinions. The century dawns by claiming there are truths. In its *Logic of Worlds*, Badiou precisely claims that because truths are exceptions to the ordinary world of monotonous repeti-

tion, they are the “initial empirical evidence.” If philosophy now begins to work and produce concepts such as universality, infinity, eternity and subject, it should start from real experiences bursting out of these truth procedures. But there is more.

This philosophical revival of truth comes together with a new shift, which is moving philosophy from its traditional position of being the exact suitability of a judgment with a reality (or any other kind of suitability, such as the correspondence of a statement with the consistency of the system it depends on). Truth is no longer linked with knowledge, which does not mean that a knowledge of truth cannot be edified once truth is produced. Truth is now a creation. It is a special type of creation of novelty, which is always a real and immanent rupture where the *after* cannot be deduced by the *before*.

Putting philosophy under the condition of truths and thinking them as special procedures of creation of the New in immanent rupture with the places they come from is just the beginning. There is much more we can delve into. But now we need to open a parenthesis since the torsion Badiou exerts over philosophy is not just limited to this conditioning. It was also necessary to tear down the wall in which postmodern skepticism felt safe behind forever. Tearing down this wall means to restore ontology as the founding and absolute reference for philosophy. On this precise point, deconstruction theory seemed to have an ace up its sleeve. Its basic claim was that any ontology, that is, any thinking of being *qua* being, inevitably ends in a totalization, a great One that held humanity under the claws of totalitarianism. Is it just coincidence that all liberal democracies judge any emancipatory project as fundamentalist and totalitarian? Not at all. And it is time to reveal this intimate connection. The reasoning of postmodern libertines is that if we have a fundamental thought of being, we are inevitably heading towards totalization since nothing can escape from the absolute reference, and it has been proven that totalization is impossible; therefore, we must resign ourselves to a philosophy of scattered fragments and strips - a philosophy of small unpretentious paths - accepting the infinite dissemination of everything that *is* without any hope of finding a place to stand on.

The materialist dialectic (that is the name of Badiou’s philosophical enterprise) is meant to force this wall down. I would like to present this *forcing* with an epic tale. To begin with, it was necessary to provide ontology with a new argument. This new argument is new up to some point, since it is very possible that it has already been operating on the thinking of being from the very beginning, even not consciously. This new weap-

on entails a philosophical gesture, which is recognizing the impasse reached regarding the ontological meditation, and consequently, getting rid of this topic and yielding it to mathematics. Indeed, mathematics is now equal to ontology and philosophy is hereby exempted from building - with nothing more than the multivocal and intricate tools of ordinary language - the ontological edifice. With this new armament, Badiou raises the ante for postmodern discourses, not only leaving aside the illusion of totality, but also expelling from ontology the secret architect of a closed, unified, order: the *One*. His claim, “the One is not,” fully releases for the very first time the pure multiplicity: a multiplicity without One, that is, inconsistent. It is not up to mathematics, through set theory, to give shape to a consistent theory of the inconsistent multiplicity and provide the fundamentals for contemporary mathematics. *Being and Event* is the work that initiates this intellectual adventure. In it, we can see how a secular theory of infinitude is developed for the first time: what Cantor called *actual infinity*. This fundamental category of thought is thus withdrawn from its religious lair from where humanity was condemned to resignedly think itself in the ineluctable horizon of finitude.

If the being of everything-that-is presents itself as pure multiplicity (multiple of multiples), we must expose its difference with the postmodern notion of a pseudo multiplicity in endless drift. First of all, the mathematical ontology thinks multiplicity with regards to a detention point, which is the empty set. Secondly, there is no being of the One, so ontology cannot define what the matter of its thinking is: it cannot define what a set is, since doing so would again subordinate multiplicity to the supreme One. Thirdly, and because of that, ontology must be presented axiomatically, which entails an immanent deployment based on its axioms. Fourthly, there is no way to conceive a closure that envelops ontology by means of a purely exterior (nor interior) operation. Finally, as we have already said, this opens the sequence of a new thinking of being, deeply rooted in the concept of actual infinity. This leaves aside the image of a transcendental infinity that cannot ever be reached or realized.

This ontology proclaims a new type of *consistency* that keeps its theoretical dispositive open since it would collapse if it were closed. It emphatically declares the inconsistency of being (i.e. the inconsistency of thought since being and thought are the same) keeping open the possibility of *chance*. This means that the structural consistency reached in any field can be interrupted by the emergence of an unexpected *event*, which is another name for that immanent chance.

Those on the forefront of postmodern diaspora seem to have cho-

sen to remain silent apropos this unexpected attack. They were certainly not expecting this lunge of thought hitting them right exactly when they expected to have mortally wounded any philosophical thought compatible with emancipatory politics. How come nobody says a word about such offense! Badiou's mathematical ontology says to postmodern sophistications that the debris left behind by deconstruction, far from leaving thought adrift (so capitalism and Democracy Incorporated quietly consolidate their global enterprise), were a great opportunity to produce a Copernican Revolution in ontology. A revolution that consists in deploying, probably for the first time, a theory of pure multiplicity preventing this effort to be absorbed, as it was in past centuries, by the tenacious hegemony of the One over the Multiple.

In order to close this "ontological" parenthesis, we can return to the question of truths. Now philosophy has an ontological *foundation*, along with real *conditions* of possibility of truths. The philosophical work will have to mediate between its fundamentals and its conditions. Little by little, *materialist dialectics* will invent and recreate its concepts and categories according to the new position it decided to take. A crucial task here is to compose the fidelity to the ontology of the multiple with the modes in which multiples appear in the worlds, essentially in the creation of truths. A new theory of Subject becomes necessary here. A theory of the subject as a subjectivable body, as a limited journey and holder of the invention of the new in the truth procedures. A theory of subject which does not have anything to do with the idea of a substantial subject.

Let us just briefly review some essential features of any truth procedure:

The process of creation of truths begins with an *event*, that is, a random irruption that exceeds the situation, interrupting its normal functioning and presenting unheard of possibilities normally judged as impossible.

Truths are universal; although they are born in a given time and place, they are aimed to the whole humanity. It does not matter in what time or specific culture we are located, the fact is that a Sophocles tragedy traverses all identities, endures over time and is offered to be constantly reinvented. This is an open confrontation with the multi-cultural thesis that claims that all novelty depends on its time and culture.

Truths also allow us to think in a secular and immanent idea of *eternity*, because in the creation of the new there are ideas that persist without being able to close them. It is almost self-evident that the condition of mortality to which the biological nature of the human animal is sub-

jected is not extended to the procedures of truth. There is an invariant. For example, in politics, the *egalitarian principle* is over an excessive recreation every time a particular political process reinvents it in an unheard-of mode, like in the case of the rebellion of slaves in the Spartacus army, the French Revolution, or the revolutionary communism of Marx, as long as each one of these reinventions is not believed to be already present in the invariant. Every new political production of the egalitarian principle will entail a torsion, that is, a modification of the very same principle. It will be yet an-Other.

The production of truths is also the construction of a *subject* of each truth. This subject is a structure faithful to the event that sets this new truth in motion, and it is destined to create a new present. This is not to be confused to the psychological notion of "individual," which it covers and exceeds.

The Return of Philosophy

Badiou reminds us that it was also Deleuze who dedicated himself to creating the conditions of a contemporary metaphysics, although with a different perspective. Deleuze used to say that when a philosopher listens to someone talk about "democratic debate" he or she runs away immediately. What I am trying to present here is Badiou's creative effort to recover philosophy from the sophistications of the "linguistic turn" and prevent us from the free circulation of opinions and entertainment in the form of commodities. We can say that in the realm of thought, the XXI century dawns with a chance. This is an important step to affirm the validity of philosophy renewing its great ideas and creating new ones.

The concepts and categories of philosophy can now be put in motion without fear of the postmodern whining that complaint "You totalitarian, fundamentalist, terrorist intellectuals!". It will be hard, but now we have something to fight with.

If I had to put materialist dialectics in a nutshell, in order to stop all postmodern attacks at once, I would say that *the systematical soundness of this theoretical edifice stands on ontological inconsistency*. This inconsistency, far from being a weak point, is what supports the philosophical system within a new coherence. The place to stand on - necessary to move the Earth - can be inconsistent. Moreover, it *has* to be inconsistent in order to be effective. This simple circumstance will prevent an all-encompassing closure. By affirming the contingency of the Event, materialism is refrained from the blind necessity of the One. Only the multiple inconsistency (without One) *is*. And materialism is also refrained from

transcendence since the idea of actual infinity debunks the myth of a great beyond. The German poet Paul Celan gave us an anticipation in his dictum: “build on inconsistencies.”

We can claim again that ontology can be thought as the theory of the *pure multiple*, and it can be presented as an *absolute fundamental*; absolute because it only refers to its own immanent deployment. To deploy its indeterminate consequences means to have broken with the empire of *finitude* - an empire that has been effective over the last 2000 years and has been the source of all transcendence - and make possible a rigorous thought of *actual infinity*. We can claim that *truth* comes back as a procedure of creation of radical novelties; a process by which humans can become *subjects*. These truths claim the *universality* of their productions since they are destined to everyone, to anyone. These truths inaugurate a type of immanent eternity in terms of persistence in time and even in the annihilation of the particular conditions they came from. And, since every truth implies a subtraction from established knowledge, their creations are never a consequence of the domain or the deepening of knowledge. In order to be set in motion, the truth procedure needs an event, that is, an unpredictable irruption that disorganizes the situation where it takes place, revealing its limits and opening the paths to make new wagers.

What about Politics?

So far we have been exclusively talking about philosophy, and this can lead to a misunderstanding. We are trying to establish a dialogue between politics and Badiou’s philosophy by starting from a very clear principle: his philosophy declares that it is *conditioned* to a truth procedure called politics, which is autonomous. Effectively, politics is a *condition* (as well as art, science and love) for philosophy. This gives politics a new air. There is no need to know anything about *materialist dialectics* for politics to exist. And this is a new chance for thought.

Our question is whether or not philosophy can contribute to politics, whether or not the conditioned procedure can influence on its condition. Philosophy elaborates new categories based on the novelties (that is, truths) made effective by politics, *after* these novelties come to light, in the way Hegel analyzes the impact of the French Revolution. The question is whether or not philosophy can produce something that can collaborate with a politics to come. In order to try to find an answer, *it is required that this politics exists in the first place*. We need to affirm that this is effectively our current situation.

Grupo Acontecimiento has been proclaiming their ideas for more than two decades and taking part, precariously, where it judges it relevant. A certain restlessness can be perceived in the whole world; a combination of action (taking squares and streets), and thought (discussions that bear infinite possibilities). All these experiences try to escape from the hegemonic political universe, which is devoted to reduce politics to management, getting rid of the protagonism of the people by means of institutionalized democratic forms, not only to empower the global domain of capital but also to try to accelerate its development anywhere there is a small chance of national or regional rebirth.

It is in this sense that we are not the first ones, nor are we alone. There is a certain common sensitivity in all these diverse experiences, and this challenges us to think it is required to produce a profound renovation in the field where the idea of emancipation is alive, without which we would be condemned to a nearly savage collective life. From *Zapatistas* to the recent uprisings in Brazil, including the December 2001 uprising in Argentina, the Egyptian Revolution of 2011, etc. We can state we are in a sequence not only full of questions but also full of ideas and political principles totally different from the revolutionary experiences of the 1970s.

Affirmations of Politics

I would like to isolate some real political questions to verify the possibility of the intervention of *materialist dialectics*. These are basically the same principles sustained by *Grupo Acontecimiento*. But you will notice that the same motifs are circulating in other latitudes, probably in a different form, or as *impasses*.

It is necessary to establish a new way of thinking/doing emancipation politics which implies a break with the sequence from the last century.

Politics is an experience of thought and autonomous action, and it depends on nothing else but its very own principles. Politics is not an expression of a reality exterior to it; it does not represent anyone, and it is located at a distance from the State.

The politics we are committed to is not the management of the existing order of things, but its rupture.

Let us analyze these ideas immanently. We can say that these are principles, or starting points, that will guide our actions. This politics is heritage. Every great politics, especially revolutionary ones, have been founded in ideas and thought. The fact that politics is subjected to prin-

ciples does not have anything to do with philosophy.

The first principle demands from us the recognition of the end of a period and not the continuity of it. However, it is impossible to conclude an experience without taking stock of its history. We are again in the realm of politics and not philosophy.

The second principle is more adventurous and complicated since it radically affirms the autonomy of politics, claiming at the same time its independence from any other discourse, including philosophy. This formal argument is complemented by the most intense political stances of our era. The *Zapatistas* already declared in 1994 that politics is located at a distance from the State, and they do not represent anyone. The political vice, inherited from the Marxist tradition, of deriving the essence and the strength of a politics from social classes is crumbling. These direct interpretations are clearly disoriented when they try to analyze political presences where, like in the case of the recent Brazilian uprisings, its socio-economic origins do not correspond with the expected behavior. The political literature that tries to redefine the relation between politics and State, along with the real and theoretical questioning of this old thesis that considered politics as an effect of the economic determinant, is not only the consequence of a genuine and current discussion, but it has also been derived from the May '68 events in France and the Cultural Revolution in China (especially Shanghai People's Commune). Again, this has nothing to do with philosophy.

The third principle resumes an essentially political theme that divided the anti-capitalist forces in the 20th century: the opposition between revolutionaries and reformists. We can see traces of this tradition today in a new form. Those who were once called reformist are now called supporters of the *lesser evil*. Those who try to engage in emancipatory struggle are now called "abstract theorists" who live outside reality. This affirmation of rupture is genuinely political and, once again, does not owe anything to philosophy.

Philosophical Intervention Methods

Let us now review the methods by which philosophy can be actively present in politics, without subordinating it, referring to the three principles described above.

The first principle calls for a reevaluation of the past. The key political question is: what philosophical thought today is *compatible* with emancipation? I believe it is *materialist dialectics* because this philosophy fights a battle against postmodernity and deconstruction. Postmoderni-

ty and deconstruction have been condemning the big narratives of metaphysics making philosophy responsible for the great political horrors of 20th century. This is a reactionary evaluation of the century. We need to make all the necessary criticism and move forward. However, it is evident that the postmodern critique has been effective in discrediting past struggles and preventing them from rebirth. Hence, it is possible that they hold certain degree of objectivity. That is why it is necessary to think up to what point the sequence of Marx-Lenin-Mao, with all their internal differences, was trapped in a philosophical tradition that held the One as its fundamental category. Here is where *materialist dialectics* creates a new path to combine with politics and be forewarned for the future. This compatibility is essentially analytical with regards to the past, while at the same time it has consequences in the future.

The second principle affirms the autonomy of politics. The question again is whether or not Badiou's work is pertinent regarding this idea. For obvious reasons the answer is yes. His philosophy claims that politics is an autonomous truth procedure. There is compatibility by definition. On the other hand, to name, for example, Deleuze again, the autonomy of politics is not compatible with the Deleuzian philosophical perspective since his premise of an absolute immanency does not allow it. So, back to our case: we need to identify the proper political operators that are at stake when the autonomy of politics is affirmed. We can name basically two: *representation* and *expression*. These are categories that have been circulating in the very heart of philosophical thought ever since Descartes. We can even say that they were lately incorporated to the political discourse. Having in mind the efforts of *materialist dialectics* to elaborate the autonomy of its conditions and, *at the same time*, propose a radical immanency to avoid any dualism or a new transcendence, we can find more examples from other truth procedures such as art and science. This is a *creative* mode of compatibility.

The third principle is the political affirmation on the question of rupture, the breakdown of order. If we conclude that rupture is not the outcome of a necessary evolution of History, and politics is autonomous from (and not an expression of) the social determinants, the question is: how is it possible to break a structure if the old political subject (the historical movement led by the Proletariat and represented by the Party) has ceased? If political practices and thoughts have abandoned determinism as the ultimate explanation of the capacity of real transformation of social relations, we need to clarify under what theoretical basis the possibility of rupture is justified. All new political experiences cannot

but produce their own meditation on this question. It is not enough to comply with a simple vision based on the power of strength, will or the unifying impetus of ideals. We can summarize how the Marxist tradition has addressed this issue: the starting point (materialism) was the structure (analysis of capitalism). The implicated subjects (workers, capitalists) were merely effects of the structure, subjected-subjects; they merely played roles assigned by the structure. So the question here was: how come an effect, an outcome of the structure (the working class), was able to destroy that of which it depends on (the capitalist structure)? It is the crucial question of Marxist politics, since it reveals a tension between *politics* and *economics*, a tension that has been present all over the past century. Marx proposes a solution for this impasse: claiming the revolutionary political power of the proletariat, as the most active force of a movement called Communism, inscribed in a history subjected to certain laws. To put it in more contemporary terms: if Marx had not have gone through politics in the very heart of the objective structure of economics, he would have become another reformist like the many who swarmed in the nineteenth century.

We think that politics is autonomous from economy, but we don't believe that the subject of this politics should be a representative (the Party) of a class embedded in a process of determined historical laws. We claim - and this is a political affirmation - that any chances of emancipation start with a new rupture. We claim that the changes cannot be guided from the State based on the continuity of established order and its structural laws. All profound political changes start with an unpredictable breakdown that paralyzes the constant repetition of order. The possibilities unleashed by the impotency of constituted power exposed in front of what it cannot represent is our starting point in the same way the rebellions and workers strikes in the early nineteenth century were Marx's starting points. In order to give shape to such possibilities, we need to elaborate ideas, organize and fight. We need to invent a new subject who is up to the job.

Again, *materialist dialectics* is compatible with this political principle by means of two key concepts: the *event* and the *theory of subject*. This compatibility is just an orientation. It cannot be any other way since this philosophy claims there is no determinism; the event is what de-totalizes the always illusory unity of a situation. The novelty that can be set in motion by an event requires the invention of a body of ideas that can be subjectivized by anyone.

Conclusions

What is at stake is the always tortuous relation between revolutionary politics and philosophy. Today, both terms are weakened. Due to the constant attacks of postmodern deconstruction, philosophy has been reduced to a rather "clever" comment about anything that happens in the world, a scholarly opinion. Therefore, philosophy renounces the systemic treatment of its great topics (Being, Truth, Subject), now accused of fundamentalism. On the other hand, emancipatory politics have been erased from the life of the people after the fall of the socialist states. The postmodern skepticism has been a key ideological factor in de-activating revolutionary politics by claiming that emancipatory ideas were deeply rooted in the great narratives of metaphysics and, therefore, destined to fall into the same historical sewers of Nazi horror and contemporary integristism. Only democracy will save the man and its rights, they say.

But the century dawns with a chance; the irruption of an "old school" philosophical thought, rigorously assembled, recasting the most sensitive themes of philosophy into the battlefield of thought, by means of creative innovation and decisions that can be destined to be a turning point in the history of thought. And this is what *materialist dialectics* is. So the question is: can this philosophy help with the task of consolidating the new emancipatory politics?

In order to start a productive dialogue between both parts some conditions need to be met. First, the actual existence of the parts must be in the dialogue. We do have Badiou's work in place, and no matter how incipient and precarious they are, we do have new political affirmations and organizations as well, fighting real struggles in the name of a radical change of revolutionary ideas. The second condition is the autonomy of the parts in the dialogue. Both Badiou's work and the new political experiences affirm the reciprocal independency of politics and philosophy. The third condition is to identify the common ground for both parts in the dialogue. We believe that thought is the common ground. Both philosophy and politics must intend to be thoughts, and each one of them will define what this quality means. The fourth and last condition is to define the nature of the relation that articulates the dialogue between emancipatory politics and philosophy since different trends might be involved in the conversation. We claim that this relation should be *compatibility*.

We have provided three examples of this relation: the *analytical* compatibility with regards to the reevaluation of the past, the *creative* compatibility that contributes to politics in enhancing its own concepts

and proposing new problems, and an the *orientative* compatibility that provides a broad view within which the political paths will be developed.

Finally, in addition to what has been said here, I'm firmly convinced that:

Under no circumstances the philosophical knowledge is a condition for politics (it is the other way round). Philosophy can only contribute to politics provided its compatibility with it.

In terms of internal requirements of its theoretical development, mathematics is the most important condition in Badiou's work. However, in terms of drives and creative will, it is clear that the leading condition is revolutionary politics.

In such special conjunctures like our current predicament, politics can use the help of a compatible philosophy to decompress a closed horizon, full of skepticism and lacking any real will of transformation, to give us a heads up and tell us if we keep this way we will end up being a civilization of online illustrated *rats*.

Entlassen. Remarks on Hegel, Sacrifice and Liberation

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1. Preliminaries: From Fatalism to Sacrifice

The following remarks stand in a close connection to something I developed elsewhere, namely the contemporary need for a defense of fatalism.¹ This defense was motivated by an analysis of a problematic conception of freedom, which was formulated inter alia by Descartes, Kant and Hegel. The crucial characteristic of the problematic conception of freedom criticized by these authors becomes embodied in the belief that freedom as capacity. The phenomenal effect of such an understanding was conceptualized by Descartes and the others as state of indifference. In short the diagnosis runs as follows: as soon as I understand freedom to be my capacity I become indifferent toward my own constitution, namely – although this may sound tautological – I become indifferent to freedom. Against this conception I sought to defend an argument that one can find in Descartes' last published work, in his "Passions of the Soul", in which he states that to counter a state of indifference – say if one is stuck in a moment of indecision – one has to become a fatalist. In short, this is to say that the precondition for being free is to accept that freedom is not simply something in one's power. If there ever were or will be freedom it need to be understood as a result, as something that is generated and produced, not given. One is able to attain such an understanding if one assumes that everything is already fully predetermined, although one can never and will never know how. This disposition of mind is referred to as being fatalist by Descartes and it aims at avoiding me falling into the idealist position of assuming that freedom is my capacity. Fatalism suspends me conceiving of freedom as something that I am able to do. Thereby Descartes proposes to assume the full determinate impact of contingency turning into necessity, that is to say something happening to me as the precondition of my freedom. In the first instance, this might look as if it were the abolishment of freedom. And for Descartes it is the abolishment of freedom: of freedom as a capacity. I articulated this precondition of being free in a slogan: *one needs to act as if one were not free*. Acting as if I were not free – being a fatalist – I affirm the very determination that I cannot deduce from my capacities, namely that I am forced to make a choice when I seek to be free. Yet, if this can be consistently defended and it delineates a consistent notion of freedom, freedom necessarily implies an act of sacrifice. Therefore the question that the present investigations will address is the following: how to conceive of this sacrifice? In the following I will there-

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¹ Cf. Ruda 2014.

fore be dealing with a question that logically follows from abolishing the identification of freedom and capacity, the name for this very abolishment is – as I want to contend – sacrifice.

“To sacrifice means to sublate naturalness, the being-other.” (Hegel)
“If you think that the world can and should absolutely change, that there is neither a nature of things to respect nor pre-formed subjects to uphold, you admit that the individual can be sacrificed.” (Badiou)

2. Sacrificing Sacrifice?

Let us first take a step back: Can there be any use of the idea, the concept, and the practice of sacrifice for and within emancipatory thought today? Or even more fundamentally: Can sacrifice be said to be a crucial element of a consistent concept of freedom? The answer to these questions might seem simply to be “no”. There is no possible use or function for this concept. It may even be enough to raise this question to come dangerously close to a nostalgic or even a melancholic position. Nostalgic of times in which one still, at least could have thought that there can be heroic emancipatory deeds and these always implied some sacrificial gesture. And this was supposedly back then not only true for the revolutionary, but also for any emancipatory theorist. Along these lines Althusser once claimed about Marx’s *Capital*: “What is *Capital*? It is Marx’s greatest work, the one to which he devoted his whole life after 1850, and to which he sacrificed the better part of his personal and family existence in bitter tribulations.”² But as any nostalgic idealizes a long gone past it would not have much value for *contemporary* emancipatory thought. The nostalgic in some sense lives in the past and hence does not properly relate to the present.

But just to raise the question of the value of sacrifice for emancipatory thought might, and this is even worse, imply a melancholic stance. This would then mean that the very nostalgic idea of such long gone, lost, yet nonetheless heroic times is in itself nothing but a retroactive fantasy that is constructed as means to cover up one’s own impotence from the point of view of today. Read in this way, one would try to restore and resurrect something which never properly existed. If

2 Althusser 1971, 71.

this were to be the case, one would maybe be dealing with what Wendy Brown³ and more recently Jodi Dean called left wing melancholy.⁴ To approach this issue, one should recall here Freud’s depiction of the distinction between melancholia and mourning also referred to by Jodi Dean: “The melancholic displays something else besides which is lacking in mourning – an extraordinary diminution in his self-regard, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the Ego itself.”⁵ In mourning the world becomes empty due to the loss of the bemoaned object; in melancholia the subject itself has become empty due to a loss. But the loss the melancholic relates to functions differently, as he does know what he has lost. One may even claim that the melancholic “libido behaves as if a loss had occurred although nothing has in fact been lost... because it had never perhaps existed....”⁶ The melancholic lost something, namely, as Freud has it “his self-respect”⁷ and as always within psychoanalysis, this is not accidental, rather there are very good reasons for it. But these very reasons remain unintelligible, i.e. unconscious to the melancholic. The melancholic thereby enters in a state of constant self-surveillance, since he believes himself to have committed a fallacy, an error, a betrayal. Against this background Jodi Dean describes left wing melancholy as follows: The left self-proclaimed emancipatory theory and practice “has replaced commitments to the emancipatory, egalitarian struggle of working people against capitalism... with incessant activity (not unlike the mania often involved in melancholia) and so now satisfies itself with criticism and interpretation, small projects and local actions, particular issues and legislative victories....”⁸

Thereby it assumes capitalism and its contemporary form of organization, namely parliamentary democracy as unavoidable. As Dean, following Brown, continues to argue, the loss of self-respect is therefore a result, because some commitments (like the commitment to emancipation) function very much like Kant’s categorical imperative, that is to say

3 Brown 1999.

4 Dean 2013.

5 Freud 1957, 245

6 Agamben 1993, 20.

7 Freud 1957, 246.

8 Dean 2013, 87.

they do not allow justifying their violation by empirical excuses. If one is committed to equality tout court, stating that the world one is living in does simply not allow for practically sticking to such a commitment does not count as a legitimate excuse, since it is merely empirical. All the watchwords of left criticism point to this, watchwords like totalitarianism, authoritarianism, dogmatism, utopianism, moralism, even violence, etc. All of them only negatively delineate what one should not do; they negatively construct a field of (non-)action and thereby embody in a certain sense negative commitments. All of them indicate that there is a risk implied in committing to emancipation, namely that it might lead precisely to end up doing what one should avoid to be doing (say defending the emancipatory use of violence because the current system is itself violent). To protect itself from these dangers, the melancholic left chooses the safest path, namely – and often without even acknowledging it – to just renounce emancipation. The concept I seek to investigate, namely sacrifice has quite a bad reputation, since it is in many senses linked to nearly all the watchwords of the melancholic left. It plays a certain role in authoritarianism, dogmatism, rigorist moralism, etc. All of them seem to imply that there should be a moment of sacrifice for a higher cause. What the reader should expect in the following is neither a nostalgic nor a melancholic investigation. I rather follow the idea that one needs to directly confront the very categories, which for the left seem irredeemably lost and tainted, when one seeks to overcome the melancholic – or nostalgic – stance of emancipatory thought today. The following will seek to provide elements for a renewal of the value of sacrifice for emancipatory thought. What the reader therefore should expect is an attempt to offer some antidote to the very melancholia that I take to be an adequate characterization of the majority of contemporary self-proclaimed emancipatory positions. This of course comes with the risk of dogmatism, authoritarianism and so forth. This is a risk one should be willing to take.

3. How to Invent a New Ink

Why return to the idea, category, act of sacrifice? One can start answering this question by recourse to a joke, which has been used several times by Slavoj Žižek.⁹ A German Worker gets a job in Siberia in the times of Stalinism. Before he leaves he tells his friends that he obviously expects all of his letters to be read by the censors. But he came up with a plan how to get messages through to them despite the censorship. His

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⁹ Žižek 2006, 141.

plan is that he will write everything that is meant as stated in blue ink, everything else will be written in red ink. After a month his friends receive a first letter, which explains how beautiful Siberia is, how nice all people are, especially the officers, how charming the company of all the other prisoners is, how he feels much more healthy and alive after long days of hard physical work and exercise in the fresh air. He enjoys the lifestyle and newly acquired discipline very much and everything would be perfect, but there is only one thing missing. There is no red ink.

This joke expresses that the very terms, the very language in which to articulate a critique of a situation might not be available from time to time. Therefore the problem is not that one does not see the contradictions and problems in the situation. It is rather that the language to express them can from time to time be missing. Therefore the question arises how to deal with such a situation. To my mind, the contemporary situation can be quite adequately framed in this manner. Therefore the question that needs to be answered is: How to invent a language to express that which in the present situation otherwise remains unarticulated and inexistent? Today one is not completely lost, when it comes to answering this question, since there has been at least one type of proposal how to deal with this. Namely, by referring to precisely those categories and those ideas, which seem absolutely lost to the politically wrong, i.e. reactionary side. This has been done for example by Alain Badiou with his reuptake of the category of discipline. Discipline immediately sounds as if it were to come with authoritarianism, it seems to have been lost to precisely those political strands, conservative and reactionary ones, which emancipatory thought needs to avoid as much as possible. Yet, as Badiou convincingly argues there is nothing reactionary as such to the concept in itself. It was rather re-appropriated by the reactionary side and one should fully embrace the idea that “those who have nothing, have only their discipline.”¹⁰ That is to say, if one does not have any material means to organize oneself, one is precisely not lost and impotent. It is discipline that can help and overcome this alleged obstacle. Badiou's maneuver in this case consists in taking up precisely one of those categories for rethinking emancipation that seemed to be invalidated, as it came with a sort of wrong coloring. Badiou following the same logic recently even took up again the category of a new master,

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¹⁰ Badiou 2008.

a leader in politics.¹¹ The other proponent that obviously comes to mind with regard to this strategy is Slavoj Žižek. He has performed this move many times, for example after Angela Merkel asserted the necessity of a German *Leitkultur* (dominant culture) to resolve problems of immigrant integration. Žižek proposed to not too swiftly renounce the term *Leitkultur* – although it obviously sounds reactionary to the core but to use it to rearticulate what could be a left Leitkultur.¹²

This very maneuver is a revamping of the gesture that stands at the foundation of psychoanalysis by Freud. Since in some way one can read its foundational act not only as being linked to the discovery of the unconscious but also as an invention of a new red ink. Freud does provide the paradigm of this gesture, when for example he in his *Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis* turns against what he refers to as “the illusion of there being such a thing as psychical freedom”¹³ – a point which obviously mirrors Descartes’s argument of fatalism I alluded to in the beginning. Freud’s argument is that if there is a choice between freedom and determinism, any proper rationalist – that he is – needs to choose determinism, although this obviously sounds as if one gets rid of the idea of freedom tout court. Why is this according to Freud the right strategy? Because, the claim of psychic freedom functions in Freud’s situation as a direct attack on rationalism per se. It basically amounts to the thesis that some things just happen without any reason and that hence no rational account of them can be given. Freud claims that this would imply to directly give up any rationalist position tout court. So, to avoid anti-rationalism Freud proposes to first opt for determinism when there is a choice between freedom and determinism. Choosing determinism implies that there is nothing in the human psyche which is not determined or per se unexplainable, irrational, or irrelevant. The immediate consequence of this is that there is nothing ephemeral in human psyche – everything is equally valid and deserves the same attention: one has to account for parapraxes as much as for seemingly more relevant things. It is even more precisely these very ephemeral phenomena that directly lead into the core of human subjectivity. Thereby Freud does not only invert the hierarchy between what is marginal and what is central, he also inverts the relation between what is (justifiably) said to exist and

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¹¹ Badiou / Roudinesco 2014.

¹² Žižek 2011.

¹³ Freud 1961, 49.

that which does not exist – in an account of the human psyche. This is the invention of a new red ink. All this is derived from the primordial choice between freedom and determinism. This means that inventing a new ink, a new language of criticism and also of emancipation, might emerge when one opts for something that seems – more or less intuitively – wrong. Yet, it is only from opting for something seemingly false that something true can emerge.¹⁴

Back to the contemporary situation. Badiou suggested that the contemporary situation is marked by one fundamental choice: Either subjects are completely identical to their bodies and hence the only goal of all their actions is enjoyment –embodied enjoyment and expressible in particular languages, say of human rights – or there is a separation of the subject from its body, and hence the body can and should be sacrificed.¹⁵ He stated that today one needs to invent a new paradigm – for him this is the task of art and of philosophy today –, which neither falls on the side of a complete identification of the subject with its body, nor on the side of a complete separation, of an external and transcendent difference between them. He refers to this as a paradigm of *immanent difference*. His attempt to generate a third paradigm therefore can also be said to be aiming at the invention a new red ink. I think that if there is a choice between enjoyment and sacrifice today to properly unfold this paradigm, following Freud’s method and in the spirit of Badiou, one should dialecticize this very choice. One first needs to opt for sacrifice. But how?

Of Heroes and Workers

One can develop this by pointing to a peculiar paradox inscribed into the very notion of sacrifice. One may start by quoting Che Guevara who once claimed heroically:

“Our vanguard revolutionaries.... Cannot descend, with small doses of daily affection, to the level where ordinary people put their love. The leaders of the revolution have children just beginning to talk who are not learning to say “daddy”; their wives, too, must be part of the general sacrifice of their lives in order to take the revolution to its destiny. The circle of their friends is strictly limited to the circle of comrades in the

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¹⁴ This argument is obviously ultimately Hegelian and has been made many times by Slavoj Žižek.

¹⁵ Cf. Badiou 2006.

revolution. There is no life outside of it.”¹⁶

For Guevara sacrifice – namely of an ordinary life and its pleasures – was a constitutive part of the life of any emancipator. However, today it seems that any such sacrificial stance, sacrificing a normal life for the greater good seems to have no place in thinking emancipation. It seems through history, what has been learnt is that as soon as one sacrifices oneself for a higher cause, even if one gets rid of the last ingredients of egotism one will certainly end up sacrificing the cause itself at one point. This seems to be the unavoidable result of any sacrificial act, i.e. of an act that makes the very agent that sacrifices into a sacred entity. As today the times of classical revolutionary heroism seem to be long over, one might be tempted to turn to a different conception of emancipation, maybe to the one recently proposed by John Holloway. He claimed in his *Change the World Without Taking Power*:

“The movement of communism is anti-heroic. Heroes stand out from the community... The revolutionary tradition is full of heroes, people who have sacrificed themselves for the revolution.... Nobody would deny the importance of such figures, and yet ... The aim of revolution is the transformation of ordinary, everyday life and it is surely from ordinary, everyday life that revolution must arise.... Revolution is conceivable only if we start from the assumption that being a revolutionary is a very ordinary, very usual matter, that we are all revolutionaries, albeit in very contradictory, fetishized, repressed way....”¹⁷

Sounds like good news. We are already all revolutionaries, ordinary life is revolutionary and hence no sacrifice is needed. The ordinariness of our actions provides a sufficient background for true emancipation to come. Is there anything that one might object to such a non-heroic option for emancipation, for emancipation without sacrifice? There is. Even apart from the obvious danger that one might simply get sucked into everyday life activities and even more so because one perceives them as ultimately revolutionary. If emancipation aims at changing the very structure of everyday life and hence we simply need to be who we are – because we are already revolutionaries – one would need to argue that anyone’s everyday life in contemporary societies does not involve what makes the hero into a hero (as in Guevara’s conception), namely sacrifice. But the very converse is true. And Holloway even

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16 Guevara /Castro 1989, 25.

17 Holloway 2002, 129.

seems to agree, since we are revolutionaries in a “fetishized, repressed way”, hence being this revolutionary is ultimately accompanied by repression. One can say: with sacrificing the very idea of revolution (left wing melancholy). To put this in pointed terms: avoiding heroism and directly embracing everyday life, will lead precisely to everyday life and not to emancipation. When Guevara with regard to the choice between enjoyment and sacrifice opted for sacrifice, he implied that the revolutionary is he who can sacrifice his bodily desires and immediate longings. He de-functionalizes, dis-identifies himself from his usual human functions and emphasizes the difference between the subject and body. But if today it is either sacrifice or enjoyment, what is implied in directly opting for enjoyment? One should here recall what the young Karl Marx stated when he depicted the social conditions of any type of enjoyment in capitalism. He remarked that the more money (i.e. means of enjoyment) people “want to earn the more they must sacrifice their time and freedom....”¹⁸ Contemporary capitalist societies are based upon taming the heroism of sacrificial acts precisely by hypostatizing everyday life action. If one takes Marx seriously, this does not imply that non-heroic individuals are simply liberated from the pressures of sacrificial actions, on the contrary: most people today sacrifice a lot, even to be and continue to be what they already are: simple everyday people. The problem with non-heroic sacrifices is simply that they work very well in a world – if it is one – in which heroism is deemed outdated and sacrificial acts are considered to be a relic of a long gone past.

Giorgio Agamben made a similar point when he stated: “Nothing is more nauseating than the impudence with which those who have turned money into their only raison d’être periodically wave around the scarecrow of economic crisis: the rich nowadays wear plain rags so as to warn the poor that sacrifices will be necessary for *everybody*.”¹⁹ And something akin was already indicated by Adorno and Horkheimer in their depiction of the dialectic of enlightenment.²⁰ They analyzed how in the struggle of reason against the – mythic – powers of nature what is demanded are endless heroic sacrifices (think of Odysseus on the boat). Yet, what is really sacrificed when mythic sacrifice is sacrificed is the very idea of the self – the self itself becomes an empty shell of rea-

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18 Marx 1975, 284.

19 Agamben 2000, 132.

20 Adorno / Horkheimer 2002, 35-62.

son, without entailing any act that might exceed what Horkheimer called instrumental reason²¹ (this is why one may say there is a universalized melancholy). To put this in more dialectical terms: by striving to overcome models of mythic sacrifice, enlightenment reiterates the very logic of sacrifice it sought to get rid of by attempting to sacrifice mythic sacrifice. *Sacrificing sacrifice is still sacrifice*. Wanting the revolutionary cake and eating it, too, (as Holloway does) does not seem to be an option. One therefore seems to be left with the following alternative: either there is sacrificial heroism – a stance that comes with a sacralization of the sacrificing agent and there is thus a separation of the body from the subject, i.e. transcendent difference – or there is sacrifice which does not even make a hero but turns out to be embedded into the very structures of everyday life – a complete identification of the subject with its body. Either Guevara's option – political emancipation implies being called upon to make sacrifices – or Marx' and Adorno's critique applies – everyone, except the very few of the one percent constantly need to sacrifice. Either one voluntarily sacrifices or one turns out to be a victim of involuntary sacrifice. Either the heroic type of sacrificial gesture in politics or the economic law of survival of societies demands its sacrifices. There does not seem to be a third way. Either there is an affirmation of political emancipation with subjective sacrifice or there is no emancipation and constant subjective sacrifice anyhow.

5. Sacrificial Modes. Marion, Žižek

From time to time it is helpful to take a brief step back from this dilemma. One should here add an outline of different modes of sacrifice. Just to know what one is dealing with when one is referring to this concept. Jean-Luc Marion developed a sketch of a phenomenological concept of sacrifice that proves to be instructive, at least if one supplements it with some additional types.²² His sketch is instructive since he seeks to depict the role of sacrifice in and for contemporary godless societies (a point I will leave aside here). Marion distinguishes three main modes of sacrifice. Firstly there is a purely negative and destructive mode, which today appears in the form of pointless acts of destruction that try to break the functionalisms of everyday life²³. Yet, it can also take the

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21 Cf. Horkheimer 2013.

22 I here refer to Marion's yet unpublished manuscript quoted by Žižek in: Žižek 2012, 50f.

23 An act, which for example makes the ruins of 9/11 into a sacred object.

form of asceticism through which one sacrifices all material aspects of the self – such that the true self can be asserted outside and beyond the functions of externalities²⁴. This first mode of sacrifice aims at increasing the autonomy of the subject through sacrifice – I simply get rid of non-functional stuff I do not need anyway.

In the second mode that Marion outlines sacrifice functions as a gift, but as gift under conditions. One sacrifices something to get something back – one sacrifices time, energy, labor, meeting with friends, etc. – to get in return, say monetary reimbursement for the sacrifice, or some sort of promised symbolic capital²⁵. Sacrifice here becomes an enabling principle of exchange – somehow similar to Marx. Sacrifice thus does not destruct, but rather “establishes the economy of reciprocity” (Marion).²⁶ The implicit and unspoken rule of this type of sacrifice is exchange. The problem with this second mode for Marion consists in the fact that it abolishes the dimension of sacrifice proper. This is the case, because it introduces an instrumentalist reasoning into the very act of sacrifice and elides its function (which is depicted in the first mode of sacrifice). Sacrifice in general aims at extracting something from the functionalist universe of everyday life by de-functionalizing it. If sacrifice turns into a functioning exchange model, sacrifice is lost. But if in this model one does not really sacrifice, because one expects to be reimbursed and thus one can count on the logic of exchange, this also comes with the insight that the first version, of asceticism also annihilates sacrifice proper. Why? Because one does not really sacrifice anything essential if one sacrifices one's properties. One simply gets rid of things that were irrelevant in the first place, even if this is one's own life.

What this typology ends up with is a question: How is it possible to sacrifice at all without falling back into the model of becoming-more-autonomous through sacrificing irrelevant stuff (which is not sacrifice)

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24 One might see this today in the idea of finding one's true self in unity with nature.

25 One may here think of internships that right now even pervade the structure of the German university. The Humboldt University in Berlin introduced a form that some people teaching there – due to the high level of competition and the bad financial situation – have to sign. It states that they voluntarily refrain from receiving any payment for their labor (holding a seminar). This does only work because teaching at the university comes with the promise that this will at some point in the future be useful symbolic capital (on the CV) for getting a job. So, this sacrifice works via the promise that maybe someday there will be a job resulting from what cannot even be called exploitation any longer, since people willingly (and unfortunately gladly) accept this as a condition.

26 This follows the model of: I invite you now such that you invite me next time, and maybe you even feel a bit guilty in between and hence invite me to an even nicer place than I did.

or into sacrificing for the sake of re-appropriation (which is not sacrifice either)? The true question thus is: Is it possible to sacrifice at all? If this were to be possible, sacrifice needs to involve a true loss for which one does not expect anything back. As Žižek pointed out, Marion here “focuses on the paradox of sacrifice as gift, a pure act if given with no return.”²⁷ Why is it a paradox? Because, if this is to be thought consistently one need to conceive of sacrifice outside any economy of exchange. Or, to put it more pointedly, one need to think a sacrifice that is no sacrifice anymore. In such a way the very act of sacrifice, of gift, of loss again disappears – since a loss without any exchange is terminologically not a loss any longer. Marion states: “The owner, the giver must disappear, so that the gift to appear as given definitively, that is to say given up.” Only a gift that is itself given up by the giver is a gift beyond destruction or asceticism and exchange. Marion: “Sacrifice gives the gift back to givenness, from which it comes, by returning it to the very return that originally constitutes it. Sacrifice does not leave the gift, but dwells in it totally...”²⁸ This is why for him I do not lose anything in sacrifice proper, but I simply re-assert the very givenness of givenness. This is why Marion likes Abraham. Abraham is someone who only needs to display his readiness to sacrifice his son, Isaac. By displaying his readiness to sacrifice, he does not lose anything but simply confirms that his son was never his. He was given to him by God in the first place. God in this scenario does “not refuse the sacrifice of Abraham, but annuls only his being put to death, because this does not belong to the essence of sacrifice.” (Marion) If God would have accepted Abraham’s sacrifice this would either have fitted in the sacrificial mode of destruction or exchange, but by refusing the actual sacrifice, “God re-gives him [Isaac] to him [Abraham], gives him a second time.” (Marion) Therefore “the sacrifice redoubles the gift and confirms it as such for the first time.” (Marion) This very conception is different from the idea that I sacrifice truly only under the premise that my sacrifice is not taken to be a sacrifice, as God in his infinitely kind ways refuses to accept the sacrifice. The giver, Abraham, was really ready to lose something and hence not accepting his sacrifice makes him understand that the son was never simply his.

One should here add two additional modes of sacrifice not mentioned by Marion but brought up by Žižek in his critical discussion of

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²⁷ Žižek 2012, 52.

²⁸ Ibid.

this model. The first (or fourth in the series) of these models is the one where one acts in sacrificial terms to protect an impotence of an agency, of something, which one considers to be constitutive of the world as it is. In this mode sacrifice does not operate to generate a profit, but rather to intervene to protect the appearance of the world as it is. An example of this Žižek refers to is if someone steals just to conceal the fact that there is nothing to steal (as in the 1938 movie *Beau Geste* in which one of three brothers living with their benevolent aunt steals her expensive diamond necklace, which is the pride of the family, just to cover up the fact that the family is broke and the necklace is fake anyhow – the brother thereby protects the aunt’s and the family’s honor by stealing something that has no value whatsoever). In this mode dealing with an act of sacrifice that sacrifices – one sacrifices oneself – to maintain the appearances, say to save the beloved other from dishonor. This is also one way of affirming the very givenness – reconstituting it – by generating an illusion through a sacrificial act. One sacrifices such that appearances can be uphold, yet thereby one sacrifices only in order not to sacrifice these appearances.

Another mode of sacrifice that also asserts the givenness of givenness can be depicted as covering up a fact, a lack – this time not something that the other lacks – by feigning a lack of my own. This mode is basically relying on the idea that as long as I can make you believe that I want something you will not consider me already having what I demonstrate to be wanting. One may say: one feigns a want or loss to cover up the fact that one already has what the other thinks one wants to attain. This mode indicates that sacrifice can exceed the logic of exchange, since one does not want anything from the other but to dupe him and hence what one wants from the other is not something but a certain type of attitude or him believing that one is still and actually lacking something.

6. Sacrifice: Knowledge and Truth

To resume the peculiar result thus far: when there is a choice between enjoyment and sacrifice, one cannot but choose sacrifice as also enjoyment is based on sacrifice. Yet, the attempt to properly sacrifice does lead to the peculiar fact that one cannot sacrifice. Put in one formula: one cannot sacrifice and at the same time one cannot not sacrifice. It is necessary to sacrifice, even if one does not want to, yet it is impossible to sacrifice at the same time. There seems to be a limit, a real limit, a real impasse, an impasse maybe of the Real linked to sacrifice,

embodied in its idea: A limit maybe of thought, maybe of the concept itself, which appears through this peculiar concatenation of the impossibility to sacrifice and the necessity to do so. Sacrifice seems to be resisting. Now, what do with this? As always it helps to turn to Hegel. He stated: "To know one's limit, is to know how to sacrifice oneself"²⁹ – very close to the end of his *Phenomenology of Spirit*. What is this knowledge of one's own limit? Hegel calls it absolute knowing. Absolute knowing is the knowledge of one's own limit, which entails that one knows how to sacrifice oneself. How to make this claim intelligible? Maybe one can start to do so by stating that one cannot find any other book in the history of philosophy, which is so obsessed with the malfunctioning and with failed sacrifices as the *Phenomenology of Spirit*: the whole book's endeavor might be resumed in saying that it is an attempt to conceptualize sacrifice – from the sacrifice of certitude in its very beginning, to the sacrifice of others as outcome of the French Revolution, to an internalization of this sacrifices in what Hegel claims to be Kant's idea of morality. What all the stages of the *Phenomenology* strangely have in common is that they in one way or the other try to generate a stable knowledge of something, of the subject, even in the last instance of knowledge itself. Yet, and this is precisely what the *Phenomenology* depicts, it demonstrates how the very idea of any stability is irrefutably unsustainable. One may know that there is a fundamental instability of any knowledge – rendered in different term, one may say that contingency is the very foundational ground of any knowledge whatsoever, and as one may also need to recall that for Hegel contingency is just another name for nature – but this is not enough for absolute knowing to be absolute. Since this insight into the instability of knowledge, into the limit, the inconsistency of knowledge is fundamentally not assumable because accepting that knowledge cannot know certain things implies constitutively that knowledge knows that in it there is something which it cannot know – hence something which makes knowledge itself impossible. Absolute knowing knows this and it knows that thereby it knows something, which simply cannot be known – as one cannot simply assume the very contingency of knowledge and act as if this contingency were to be necessary.

So, absolute knowing in Hegel knows something, which cannot simply be included, integrated or asserted in knowledge, because it implies the abolishment of knowledge. Absolute knowing is an impossible knowledge, because it knows the limits of knowledge – and strangely

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²⁹ Hegel 1977, 492.

thereby sacrifices knowledge itself. Yet, without this impossible knowledge, one does not know anything of knowledge, one does not even know what one knows – namely that knowledge is constitutively limited. Therefore it is also absolutely necessary knowledge. One needs to know what one cannot know, but as one cannot know it, this knowledge is impossible and necessary. Absolute knowing is thereby not an objective knowledge of something or of the absolute, it is also not the knowledge of an object that may be called the absolute (this is the classical misreading of Hegel), but it is a knowledge, which knows what is constitutive of any knowledge, namely that it is based on a something that it cannot integrate into itself. I cannot assert that which if I would assert it would make it impossible for me to assert it. Absolute knowing in being necessary – for any knowledge to exist – is also impossible knowledge, since it marks the very limit of any knowledge. One therefore has a knowledge that is a necessary and impossible as sacrifice is. *Thereby it is sacrifice*. What does this mean? Hegel goes on to state in the *Science of Logic* that this knowledge is so pure that "ceases itself to be knowledge."³⁰ Why is that? Because, this knowledge is indistinguishable from the lack of knowledge, from non-knowledge, from something which makes knowledge itself impossible and incomplete. So, absolute knowing knows what makes knowledge impossible and although this knowledge is necessary to know anything at all absolute knowing immediately ceases to be knowledge.

That is to say that there is a truth in the instability of knowledge or more precisely: the instability is the truth of knowledge, which cannot be known (otherwise it would be 1. knowledge and 2. Knowledge of an object). So absolute knowing is a knowledge that knows that it does not know what it knows. *It knows that it does not know that it knows* that its instability is its truth, which conceptually implies that truth cannot be known. It does know that it has a knowledge that it does not know it has. The truth of knowledge, which is known by absolute knowing, is necessary yet impossible to know. Absolute knowing is hence the full assumption of the instability and contingency of the emergence of knowledge itself. It is real knowledge because it entails an assertion of the Real of knowledge. Hegel continues after the sentence – after this fundamental definition of absolute knowing as knowledge of limit which entails knowledge of sacrifice, which is itself the sacrifice of knowledge – by stating:

.....
³⁰ Hegel 1969, 69.

“This sacrifice is the externalization in which Spirit displays the process of its becoming Spirit in the form of *free contingent happening*, intuiting its pure Self as Time outside of it, and equally its Being as Space. This last becoming of Spirit, *Nature*, is its living immediate Becoming; Nature, the externalized Spirit, is in its existence nothing but this eternal externalization of its *continuing existence* and the movement which reinstates the *Subject*.³¹”

If sacrifice is the externalization in which spirit becomes what it is through contingent happenings, this means that sacrifice is linked to externalization. Spirit becomes what it is, when there is what one might call with Badiou subjectivization. Subjectivization can only take place, when there is externalization. Hegel calls this mode of externalization in German *entlassen*, release. This term has passed nearly completely unnoticed in most of the literature on Hegel.³² *Entlassen* depicts precisely what it means to understand what Hegel refers to as externalization involved in the concept of absolute knowing. Literarily *Entlassen* has several connotations: 1. It means to let something go. One can for example say that one “entlässt” one’s child into the world. 2. It means to relieve something of its function which is why *Entlassen* can also be translated as discharging, dismissing, or even to fire someone from a job. 3. It means that there is an act involved – this is what the “Ent” of *Entlassen* suggests, but at the same time the “lassen” implies that this act is an act of letting things be (as in Heidegger’s term *Gelassenheit*). What does this peculiar term suggest for the definition of externalization?

It means – although this is tautologically – what one needs to affirm is the idea that *one does only become a subject proper, if it happens that one becomes a subject proper*. That is to say: if something contingently happens (Badiou’s name for it is of course “event”). Therefore what one needs to sacrifice is the very idea that one either is already a subject – and has something which one could give up – or that one can become a subject by sacrificing something that may be in one’s possession. *One can only become a subject when one sacrifices the very idea that one can become a subject* – this is what it means to know one’s limit as one’s limit. This is not a simple affirmation of finitude, of human limitations, etc. It is rather the very precondition for something non-finite to appear. Hence one sacrifices the very idea that one can become a subject, and with it

31 Hegel 1977, 492.

32 As always a nice exception is Catherine Malabou. Cf. Malabou 2005, 155f.

the very idea of freedom (and the idea that one is able to sacrifice anything at all). This means to assume: I am not a free being, I am a being that can be free if something contingently happens to me, which forces me to be free. *Entlassen* which is the proper mode of a consistent idea of sacrifice implies that I renounce the idea that I am already a subject or a potential subject. I renounce that there is anything in my power or that I have any capacity whatsoever that could help. The only way I can *prepare* to become a subject is when I act as if I were not free; when I act as if I were dead, as if the apocalypse already happened, as if there is no possibility whatsoever to be truly alive. The only proper way of being able to become a subject is first to externalize, *entlassen* all possibilities to become a subject: one can only – and only maybe – become a subject, when there is no option for one becoming a subject. This assumption is necessary and at the same time impossible. And this is one aspect of what Hegel means with absolute knowing.

This is why the assumption of this idea is when knowledge ceases to be knowledge: I only know that I know that I have nothing in my power which could me make into a subject. And hence to affirm this is to externalize, *entlassen* my being completely. I am free when I am contingently forced to be free. It’s up to nature – nature properly understood (i.e. as sheer contingency) – and this contingency is by no means necessary, it is rather at the same time impossible. Hence the proper way of including sacrifice into emancipatory thought from such a perspective, is first to avoid destruction, exchange and the re-assertion of givenness as gift, second to sacrifice the idea of keeping up the appearances either by protecting the other or feigning a lack that makes the other believe, one wants something. Only by willingly assuming that one is not free there is a chance of freedom. Only by assuming that one is already dead, there is a chance of maybe one day having a proper live. Hence, this idea of sacrifice entails neither melancholy, nor nostalgia. It entails for sure a certain kind of heroism, but one that does not separate the subject from its body in a way that makes the former transcend the latter. One is hence dealing with an immanent difference. Only by assuming that my body is not a subject and at the same time affirming that nonetheless I am my body (and hence not a subject – yet), that is: by affirming a difference it may become possible – under the condition that something happens to me which allows for such a consequence – to exceed the idea of a pleasure beyond pleasure (enjoyment) and pleasure in suffering (sacrifice the stupid way): only by fully sacrificing, i.e. *entlassen* what I am, by fully subscribing to the idea that I have nothing in my power, one can gener-

ate the condition for emancipation. This *is* not yet emancipation, nor politics – I do not become a subject by assuming that I am not a subject. It is one – maybe the most crucial – principle of a provisory moral of how to generate *subjective preparedness* for emancipation, of what it means to be ready to receive an event. This does not at all mean to wait, since there is nothing to wait for, it is impossible that I will become a subject anyhow. In other words: only by sacrificing everything, even the idea of the sacrificial acts, by assuming that I cannot sacrifice, only in this act emancipation – maybe – will have been possible. In other terms: as long as one thinks that there is something internal that should be treated as if it is unscacri fiable, there never will be emancipation. One needs to assume that one cannot sacrifice and this is the greatest sacrifice. This is a sacrifice emancipation demands. Its mode is what Hegel calls *Entlassen* and its slogans may be: act as if you are not free; act as if you are dead. Maybe these will have been the first lines written in a new red ink.

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Real Abstraction and the Autonomization of Value

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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1. An impossible form

I would like to employ the following excerpt from Leda Paulani's *The autonomization of the truly social forms in Marx's theory*¹, as an epigraph of our investigation:

“the historical developments experienced by the international monetary system can be seen as a kind of “realization” of a process of autonomization of social forms that is inscribed in the commodity itself and which propels it logically and ontologically towards the most abstract forms of wealth like financial and fictitious capital” (Paulani, 2011: 51)

I have chosen this brief excerpt because it poses a fundamental question that will be, in a sense, the main concern of the present work. Paulani proposes here the following enchainment: i) historical developments – as, in the case of the referred text, the emergence of inconvertible money since 1971 – “realize” a process already inscribed in the commodity; ii) this feature, already present in the commodity, impels it towards more abstract social forms and, therefore, is the motor of its autonomization; iii) this thrust is logical and ontological – that is, it concerns the structure of the commodity as such. However, would the idea of a historical development previously inscribed in the commodity-form not take us a step too close towards the dangerous land of teleologies and final causes – a perspective which is incompatible with the most general methodological premises of the value theory of Marx? This is *not* the case: note that the text *does not* suggest that history realizes a process of autonomization because it “reaches” what was inscribed in the commodity-form, but that it *propels* the process – and thrusts it “logically and ontologically”, which means that each step is formed as “having been” necessary, each step constructs its own pre-history.

At first glance, this is a subtle difference, but it sufficiently demarcates an important field of investigation. If we were dealing with a teleological structure, we would assume that the commodity-form has a structure ‘x’ that aims to historically realize itself as ‘x’ – in modal terms, we would depart from a necessary form, cross the possibilities of history and return to the necessity of this form’s realization – the contingent would therefore be an illusory shell to be removed by the correct

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¹ Published in portuguese as *A autonomização das formas verdadeiramente sociais na teoria de Marx* - available at: http://www.anpec.org.br/revista/vol12/vol12n1p49_70.pdf

analysis. Nevertheless, once we have removed the teleological vector, how are we to organize these categories? We have, roughly speaking, the contingent development of history, which manifests itself as “having been” necessary steps, at each moment prescribing a certain horizon of possibilities – that is, a theoretical outlook compatible with historical materialism. But what about the “logical and ontological” force of the commodity? If we still maintain that there is a positively determined feature of the commodity-form, responsible for the process of autonomization which leads it away from its concrete support, would we not remain spoused to a certain teleological view? This is, in fact, a fundamental question. We know that abstract labor, the social substance of value, is “the reason [why] truly social forms tend, by their own logic, (...) to get rid of the concrete barriers that hinder their fullness” (Paulani, 2011: 54) – what is at stake, however, is the way in which the contradiction between quality and quantity, between concrete labor and abstract labor, is inscribed in the commodity-form: would abstract labor be the *telos* of autonomization, a logically necessary feature of the commodity-form?

What we intend to develop here is precisely an alternative to the modal status of this inscription. Our hypothesis – which could be formally called ‘the Sohn-Rethel hypothesis’, in homage to the Marxist philosopher and economist who first developed it, albeit in other terms (Sohn-Rethel, 1978) – is that the autonomization of the commodity-form, increasingly abstracted from its concrete support, is “pushed” not by a necessary form, but by an *impossible* one.

In reference to the Aristotelian categories, by “impossible” we mean that which is neither an actualized potency, nor a potential actuality (Aristotle, 2002: 395-431), but rather what is *actual only as a negative potential* - something which is only insofar as it is not². Let us recall that, for Aristotle, “potentiality preexists the act as a condition of its actuality, and the act preexists the potentiality as what reveals it” (Aubenque, 2012: 410) - this allows us to construct a schema of the four modalities using the pair actuality/potentiality, and their different negations, as our guideline (Aristotle, 2005: 100-107):

.....
2 We base our conception of the impossible in view of Giorgio Agamben's reading of Aristotle (Agamben, 2011; 2000) and in the wake of the “return to Hegel” found in the works of Slavoj Žižek (1999; 2006). We cite also the more general influence of the work of Jacques Lacan, responsible for the elaboration of the category of the impossible in psychoanalysis – we especially refer to the seminars *From an Other to the Other* (Lacan, 2006) and *Encore* (Lacan, 1975).

Modality	Actuality/Potency
contingency	the passing into actuality of a potency of not being actual
possibility	the actuality of a potency of being and of not being actual
necessity	negation of potency not to be actual
impossibility	the negation of potency to be actual

Table of four Aristotelian modalities

Let us briefly analyze each case. The modality of the contingent is that of *an actuality which reveals its own potency*. A catastrophe, for example, is contingent because we only come to realize that it could happen after it takes place: it is only after the catastrophic happens that we discover that its looming potential for happening was already there. The contingent is the case of an actuality which also renders legible something about the conditions of its potential taking place.

The possible distinguishes itself from the contingent precisely because it does not depend on its own actualization to reveal its potency. This means that the possible is an ambivalent category, it is that which has both the potency of actualizing itself and of not actualizing itself. For example: a doctor is someone who can both exercise medicine as well as not do it, who can perform a surgery and not perform it, if he wishes. Other people can, if confronted with an emergency, act as a doctor, but only a doctor remains one even when he is not practicing. The possible is therefore *that which has both the potency to pass into actuality and the potency not to*.

Having understood the ambivalent potency that is inherent to the possible, we can now better comprehend the category of necessity. The necessary is the modality which *negates, in the possible, the potency of not passing into actuality*. What is necessary does not have the potency of not being actual. The paradigmatic example here would be the laws of physics. It would be contradictory to assume that physical laws could suddenly cease being actual - they do not possess the potency of not being actual. And just as it is easy to confuse the possible with the potential as such, it would also be easy to make the necessary into the equivalent of pure actuality - but our previous example helps us to see that this is not the case: the laws of physics do not have the potency not to be actual, but they still retain the potency to be actual. A physical law must not

only be always taking place, but it must also carry the potency of being valid for currently unknown phenomena as well.

This leads us, finally, to the impossible - which, we now realize, is not so much the opposite of the possible, but of the necessary. If necessity is that which negates the potency of not being actual, for its potency is that of always passing into actuality, the impossible is that which negates the potency of passing into actuality. This is a very complex idea and it would be easy to simply identify the impossible to impotence, the negation of potency as such - Aristotle himself seems to do so, in his presentation of the modal categories in the *Organon*. But, just like in the case of the necessary, in order to understand this category we must investigate both the dimensions of potency and of actuality. Now, the actuality of the impossible can only be its own paradoxical suspension, *impossibility is that which is actual only in the measure that it has no actual manifestation, its only potency the potency to not reveal its potency* - such is the contradiction: the impossible is actual, but only in the measure that it is not actual, only potent in the measure it does not actualize this potency. In short, the impossible is the way of what *does not cease not passing into being*. It is this modality that we intend to investigate here.

We will not directly study the effects of the Sohn-Rethelian hypothesis for the understanding of the ontology of labor, leaving it as a question for future development. How should we conceive the notion of abstract labor so that it would be possible to state that it “does not cease not to write itself” in the commodity-form? Perhaps the attempt to answer this strange question, which confronts labor with this paradoxical modality of sociality, may eventually help us grasp the growing importance of the so-called “immaterial” labor without requiring us to give ground on the fundamentals of the Marxist law of labor-value. That being said, let us move on to investigate our hypothesis there where it is thought “in the language of commodities”, that is, in the value-form itself.

2. Real Abstraction, the sublime matter of money

Alfred Sohn-Rethel's investigation of the value-form started from a paradoxical premise, which guided his work for over 50 years: the idea that, in the very kernel of the commodity-form, we find the fundamental traits of the synthetic a priori structure of the Kantian transcendental subject - the opaque, evanescent and purely formal point of subjectivity (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: xiii). This, however, is not the basis for yet another attempt to reintroduce some subjectivism at the origin of the question

of value, but rather the departing point for the surprising affirmation that, in the commodity, the *form of thought finds itself outside of thought* (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 6).

Let us promptly turn to an example, in hope that it might help us with the immediate difficulty of this thesis. Consider the famous excerpt from *Capital* in which Marx describes what allows for certain precious metals to function as money-commodities:

“The truth of the proposition that, “although gold and silver are not by nature money, money is by nature gold and silver,” is shown by the fitness of the physical properties of these metals for the functions of money. Up to this point, however, we are acquainted only with one function of money, namely, to serve as the form of manifestation of the value of commodities, or as the material in which the magnitudes of their values are socially expressed. An adequate form of manifestation of value, a fit embodiment of abstract, undifferentiated, and therefore equal human labor, that material alone can be whose every sample exhibits the same uniform qualities. On the other hand, since the difference between the magnitudes of value is purely quantitative, the money commodity must be susceptible of merely quantitative differences, must therefore be divisible at will, and equally capable of being reunited. Gold and silver possess these properties by Nature.

The use-value of the money-commodity becomes two-fold. In addition to its special use-value as a commodity (gold, for instance, serving to stop teeth, to form the raw material of articles of luxury, &c.), it acquires a formal use-value, originating in its specific social function.” (Marx, [1867] 2008: 114)

In short, the natural properties of gold and silver, not only their use-value, qualify these materials to serve as support of the money-commodity: precious metals are divisible in an extremely homogeneous fashion, they are durable and may be joined back to the previous unity with minimal loss of material. It is important to note that what is at stake is a “*formal* use value”, that is, the capacity of a certain material to embody the commodity-form, which is nothing more than the *relation* between commodities, and therefore serve as means of circulation. However, the capacity to “embody” the commodity-form is the capacity of a particular material to take the place of another – another material that actually *does not have the same existence than the one which replaces it*, be-

cause it is a pure form, with no concrete existence. In other words, *that which gold replaces is impossible to be replaced* - it is impossible because this form does not exist in the way that gold exists: it is a form that is only actual as a negative potency, and whose potency is legible only as a negative actuality, a form that *does not cease not passing into being*.

We are therefore confronted here with something which cannot be positively inscribed and which, precisely because of this impossibility, participates in the movement of extrusion of the commodity-form. The fundamental tension between quality and quantity – a determining contradiction in this process – invites us to employ this rather clumsy modal category when, instead of only focusing on the movement from commodity to coined money, we try to include within this investigation the problem of the “sublime materiality” (Žižek, 1999: 18) of this formal use-value.

Sohn-Rethel's thesis is that this materiality, suspended between the natural property of gold and its social function, is nothing other than the form of pure thought – whose ideality became discernible as such with the concept of the One in the work of Parmenides, where Being presents, for the first time, the unity, permanence and homogeneity characteristic of the social matter of value (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 65; Thomson, 1977). Once the relation between exchange abstraction and the constitution of the transcendental point, subtracted of qualities, out of time and space, is established, the analysis of the commodity-form assumes a central role in the critic of epistemology and of its classical questions: for example, the problem of the conditions of knowledge obtained by means other than empirical experience can be reformulated and elucidated by the reference to the genesis of intellectual labor out of the division of labor.

Let us then proceed to a step-by-step construction of the formal analysis proposed by the philosopher, which we will then relate to the problem of the autonomization of social forms.

The starting point of Sohn-Rethel's presentation in *Intellectual and Manual Labor*, the book that condenses the work of his life, is the concern with a fundamental consequence which follows from the basic premises of historical materialism. Sohn-Rethel writes:

“One must not ignore the process of abstraction at work in the emergence of historical forms of consciousness. Abstraction can be likened to the workshop of conceptual thought and its process must be a materialistic one in the assertion that consciousness is determined by social

being is to hold true. A derivation of consciousness from social being presupposes a process of abstraction which is part of this being. Only so can we validate the statement that ‘the social being of man determines his consciousness’”. (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 18)

That is, if “social being determines consciousness”, the passage from being to the abstract cannot be a *pure interruption* between two completely heterogeneous registries – which would imply that we cannot state any form of determination of one to the other – and neither could it be reduced to a *pure continuity*, as if we were dealing with a completely homogenous domain – because this would imply a certain reductionist perspective at the heart of historical materialism, rendering it incapable of dealing with specific determinations of thought and ideality. It is exactly the enigmatic status of this interruption/continuity, an endless philosophical problem, that acquires a determining role in the Sohn-Rethelian analysis of the commodity-form and of the separation between manual labor and spiritual labor (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 67-79).

Sohn-Rethel's hypothesis allows us to approach the question of the value-form from a perspective that breaks away from the essentially ideological models which relate “symbolic names” and “real things” (Badiou, 2007), by focusing not on the manifest opposition between use value and exchange value – an opposition which is *superposed* in thought as two heterogeneous registries – but on the concrete opposition between the *act of use* and the *act of exchange*. While the field of exchange is ideal, existing “outside of time”, in our minds, as a totality that never interposes itself to the field of consumption and use of commodities, the act of exchange is external to thought, taking place within time and space, and cannot happen at the same time as the act of using or consuming what would otherwise be exchanged.

This brings us back to the question of the impossible form, because, in the act of exchanging a commodity, everything happens *as if* the commodity was timeless, non-dimensional, a pure quantity moving in a uniform space (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 35-59) – and yet it is an act that happens within time, within space, among concrete individuals (necessarily) unconscious of the reality of the abstraction implied in and by their actions. Sohn-Rethel concludes, therefore, that the act of exchange *concretely* implies the form of the fundamental categories of abstract thought:

“While the concepts of natural science are thought-abstractions, the

economic concept of value is a real one. It exists nowhere other than in the human mind but it does not spring from it. Rather, it is purely social in character, arising in the spatio-temporal sphere of human interrelations. *It is not people who originate these abstractions but their actions.* ‘They do this without being aware of it’’. (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 20)

It is crucial to note here that the commodity-abstraction is *public* and *social*, while the thought of the exchange agents is concrete – that is, it is determined by the qualities of objects and actions involved in the exchange –, but *private* and *individual*, so that “in commodity exchange, the action and the consciousness of people go separate ways. Only the action is abstract; the consciousness of the actors is not. The abstractness of their action is hidden from the people performing it” (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 30).

Having developed the concept of *real abstraction*, the philosopher is then capable of demonstrating that, in the passage from gold as a ‘direct’ general equivalent to coined money (the moment of actual expression of the general equivalent form) an operation of inversion takes place. The autonomous dimension of the social form, contained by the very structure of the value-form, becomes independent from our consciousness in the same measure that it is ideally apprehended by it. Let us trace this development carefully.

3. The conversion of real abstraction and the autonomization of the sphere of value

The way in which Alfred Sohn-Rethel introduces the concept of real abstraction already flirts with the modality of impossible, since the author warns that “in a mere isolated, accidental case of exchange between any two parties the exchange abstraction evidently shows no trace at all” (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 58) – which implies, precisely, that the real abstraction does not have a direct actuality, its inscription cannot be located. Nonetheless, in the moment when exchange becomes multilateral, involving a variety of commodities in different places and moments, and a specific commodity starts serving as a means of exchange between the others, the form which is implied in the act of exchange – this potentiality without any potency of direct realization – reveals its indirect actuality. In this sense, the emergence of coined money is exemplary because it enacts the confrontation of concrete materiality with this strange dimension that is always present, but does not have a presence of its own.

We have briefly discussed Marx’s analysis of the reasons why it fell upon gold and other precious metals to perform the function of embodying the value-form: their natural properties endow their concrete existence with a metaphoric capacity to stand in for their “monetary functions”. We now know that pure quantification, pure unity, non-dimensionality, timelessness, etc, *before* being abstract categories of thought, are *already* postulates implicated in the concrete act of exchange as such, in its very structure: it is the real abstraction of exchange that is “mirrored” by the natural properties of gold (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 58). And it is precisely because the real abstraction *cannot* be reduced to any material found in nature that, eventually, it becomes clear that gold is not adequate to function as general equivalent: the contradiction between gold’s *use value* – its properties taken as “aspects of use” (Marx, [1867] 2008: 77), and therefore subject to change, wear and tear, etc. – and its *formal use-value* – its properties taken as asymptotic approximations of the postulates of the exchange – becomes too tensioned when the reach of the market challenges the possibility of effecting, at every act of exchange, the weighting of the gold, which is the pivot of the coincidence between its function as a measure of value and of means of circulation. We can thus realize that the insistence of an impossible dimension “pushes” the movement of autonomization of this social form – and what happens then is the invention of coinage (ibid: 126-127), the inversion and separation of these two dimensions of the value-form.

The inversion at play with the advent of coinage is of the utmost importance. Until then, the gold coin was structured as follows: its “first nature”, concrete and material, endowed it with its “second nature”, abstract and purely social (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 56-57) – the gold coin was, first of all, a certain kind of precious metal, and the concrete determinations of this material supported its abstract function of the means of circulation. When an individual carried such coin in his pocket, he knew – because he could verify that through weighting – that he carried a certain precise quantity of value. However, the case is radically different after coinage: once the State guarantees that a coin is worth a given amount, the first nature no longer has precedence over the second, because the weighting of the gold may vary and its exchange-value would still remain the same.

All the material support necessary from then on is a trace, an “imprint”, what stands in for the guarantee that, somewhere and at some moment, that social value may be translated into use-value, that is, reverted to a “first nature”. The relation between these two physicali-

ties is still at stake, *but it is the first nature that is abstract*, made into the substance of a “commerce of promises” (Giraud, 2009: 75-82), while the second nature is effectively concrete, present at each act of exchange. We can already observe that, even with the rise of irredeemable money after the Breton Woods agreement of 1971, the basic structure relating the first and the second nature, as analyzed by Sohn-Rethel, remains untouched – what differs is the composition of the “use abstraction”, so to speak: before, the State guaranteed that there was ballast for the coin in circulation, after it, the warranty of valorization relies on other factors (Rotta; 2008), but since the invention of coinage the real and concrete dimension of abstraction already “did not cease not to write itself” in the form of the commodity.

We can therefore return to the epigraph with which we began our investigation – the thesis that the “the historical unfoldings experienced by the international monetary system can be seen as a kind of “realization” of a process of autonomization of social forms that is inscribed in the commodity itself” (Paulani, 2011: 51) – now “armed” with the concept of real abstraction, which allows us to think this “inscription” in a way that is consistent with the premises of historical materialism. After all, it is precisely “through the unremitting abstractness of the acts of exchange from all things empirical” – that is, through the autonomization of the commodity-form – “[that] the nexus of this unconscious society impose itself as one of second nature” (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 61).

Nevertheless, if the function of “social interdependence” inherent to abstract labor – and, therefore, to the capitalist mode of social domination (Postone, 2003: 148) – is realized by the second nature of the commodity-form, we have still to face a complex problem: we have seen that the act of exchange takes place within time and space (and, therefore, is directly opposed to the act of use) and we have also seen that the exchange abstraction, structurally present in this same act is, in a paradoxical way, the timeless, non-dimensional, and real abstraction. But how can an abstraction of such patently contradictory aspects serve as the pivot of social nexus?

It is here that Sohn-Rethel introduces the concept of *conversion* – an essential notion of his conception of the commodity-form. After all, it is necessary to understand how it is possible to pass from the real abstraction inherent to the act of exchange to the ideal abstraction that offers itself to thought as the pure quantifiable unity, or as the geometrical point (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 65). Consequently, the contradictory ground of real abstraction confronts us with the following question: is it really

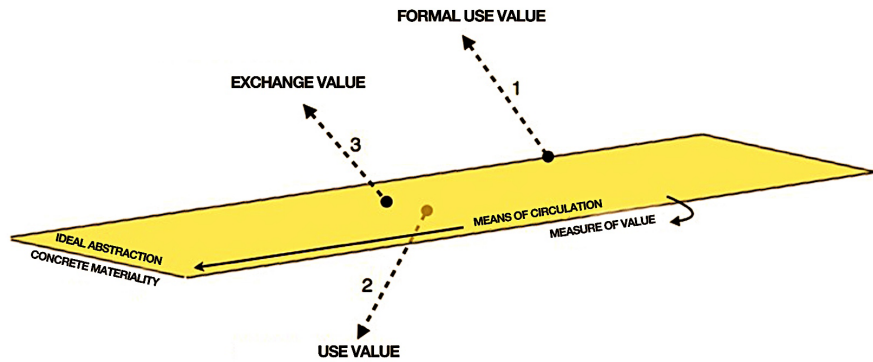
necessary to think this passage as a part of the commodity structure? Is it necessary to think these two heterogenous abstractions as features of a same form? For Sohn-Rethel, this paradoxical conception is unavoidable, because the ideal abstraction is indispensable to the functioning of the real abstraction as a pivot of social synthesis: we cannot consider the two separately, because a condition for the consistency and autonomy of ideality is that the passage from real abstraction to ideal abstraction also operates the disappearance of the vector of determination of the latter by the former. In his analysis of the work of Sohn-Rethel, Slavoj Žižek clarifies this point brilliantly:

“The crucial paradox of this relationship between the social effectivity of the commodity exchange and the ‘consciousness’ of it is that – to use again a concise formulation by Sohn-Rethel – ‘this non knowledge of the reality is part of its very essence’: the social effectivity of the exchange process is a kind of reality which is possible only on condition that the individuals partaking in it are not aware of its proper logic; that is, a *kind of reality whose very ontological consistency implies a certain non-knowledge of its participants*” (Žižek, 1999: 21)

Hence, the transformation of the exchange-abstraction into a private and purely intellectual abstraction is not simply an accidental consequence of the commodity-form, but an irreducible condition of its consistence. It is precisely this procedure of repetition (of the same abstraction) and substitution (of registry, from real to ideal) that Sohn-Rethel calls *conversion*, and which explicitly refers us to the modality of impossible – given that it evokes the problem of how to deal with the actuality and the intelligibility of that which is-only-insofar-as-it-is-not:

“[Demonstrating conversion is] no easy task. How can we set out to reason the case for or against the conversion? Thinking of the conversion as a performance in people’s minds, it can, of course, never be either demonstrated or denied because it cannot be witnessed. The concepts in question being non-empirical, their mental presence cannot be testified by observable objects or facts. To try to ask the people themselves is equally non-availing since we have ourselves made out that the conversion must be blotted out from the minds engaged in it. All we can argue is the problem at issue in the conversion and how to make it recognizable. In real life, the ideal abstraction blots out the real abstraction so as to make it unrecognizable. In order to avoid this happening the

conversion must be presented as occurring from an act of commodity exchange as a starting-point or in direct context with the handling of coined money for its commercial use. In other words the conversion must be presented as occurring in a way in which it is *absolutely impossible* for it to occur”³ (Sohn-Rethel, 1978: 62)



4. A topological model of the autonomization of value

Considering both the logical need of the concept of conversion and the “absolute impossibility” of its representation, we may now attempt to create an alternative model of the commodity-form, one that includes the place and function of real abstraction, that is, a point which is modally impossible. To do so, let us schematically reconstruct a well-known model – of a structuralist orientation – which organizes the analysis of the value-form according to the modern logic of signification (Arnaud, 2003; Fausto, 1997; Goux, 1990; Paulani, 2011):

The distinction made here between use value (2) and the exchange process (3) is thought in light of the Saussurrean distinction between the signifier and the signified (Saussure, 1997: 130-138), in the same measure that it obscures the problematic *localization* of the formal use value (1), that is, the empty aspect of the form, responsible for the introduction of the commodity in the field of exchanges (or of the phoneme

3 Notice that Sohn-Rethel expresses himself analogously to Marx, who writes, in the first paragraphs of his analysis of the value form, in the first chapter of the *Capital*: “The reality of the value of commodities differs in this respect from Dame Quickly, that we don’t know where to have it. The value of commodities is the very opposite of the coarse materiality of their substance, not an atom of matter enters into its composition. Turn and examine a single commodity, by itself, as we will, yet in so far as it remains an object of value, it seems impossible to grasp it [sie bleibt unfassbar as Wertding]” (Marx, [1867] 2008: 69)

in the field of meaning). However, the difficulty in locating the formal aspect of this operation is equivalent to the difficulty in locating labor in the structuration of value – just as the implicative nature of the act of speech is lost when we consider the sound and sense as being two sides of a sheet of paper⁴.

Still, this model allows us to envisage some of the most fundamental operational distinctions at stake in the commodity-abstraction: the formal use value of the money-commodity serves as an ideal support (1) to its function as a means of circulation, in which values are compared in terms of their pure quantity (3), while use value (2) is the direct reference (or indirect, in the case of the paper-money) of its measure of value. In broader terms, we find two sides that never cross each other – one, abstract and ideal, and the other, material – and two operations: the money-form as a means of circulation remains in the abstract registry, comparing and exchanging values, and the money-form as a measure of value represents a value of use, referring to sensible and consumable properties of the commodity, and having these as its support.

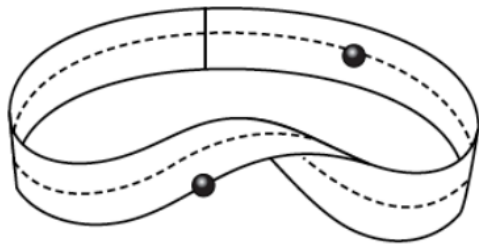
The problem that served us as starting point – the autonomization of the money-form associated to its inconvertibility – poses the following question: how is it possible to maintain the structural relation between exchange value and use value without a constant reference to a gold standard or any equivalent form of guarantee of a corresponding amount of use-value? According to the above-mentioned model, this question could be reformulated as follows: how could there be *two separate surfaces* – that of use and that of exchange – *and yet only one side*? Or yet: how is it possible to radically autonomize the circulation of value without losing the *structural reference* to use value?

We shall now attempt to build a model that is able to tackle precisely this problem. We have already seen that the Sohn-Rethelian hypothesis does not only decompose the “formal use value” into its contradictory features – the real abstraction and the ideal abstraction – but also offers us, with the concept of conversion, a *point in the surface of value-operations that is simultaneously an interruption and a continuity between both sides*. Real abstraction is an external and material abstraction, the “sublime matter of money” (Žižek, 1999: 18), and the ideal abstraction is

4 In fact, it is precisely the supposition that Sohn-Rethel would raise real abstraction to the dignity of a necessary and trans-historical support of this division – such as the “immutable” sheet of paper in the symbolical model – that sustains the most pungent critics to his work, some claiming that the concept of real abstraction would imply a return to teleology and others that it contradicts the law of labor-value in Marx (Jappe, 2006; Postone, 2003).

the form of the concrete raised to pure thought (Althusser, 2005: 151) - and, moreover, the concept of conversion demarcates the inextricable nature of these two abstractions, articulating the disappearance of the former to the consistency of the latter.

We are therefore confronted with a problem – the question of how to think the autonomization of the “surface of value” without letting go of the reference to concrete use, and therefore, concrete labour – and with the paradoxical concept of real abstraction, as what exists only insofar as it disappears and is not inscribed anywhere. Well, there is a structure that is capable of transforming this absent or impossible point into the pivot of a possible answer to the question of autonomization, transforming the real abstraction into the very condition of consistency of the autonomized surface – the structure of the “Möbius strip”.

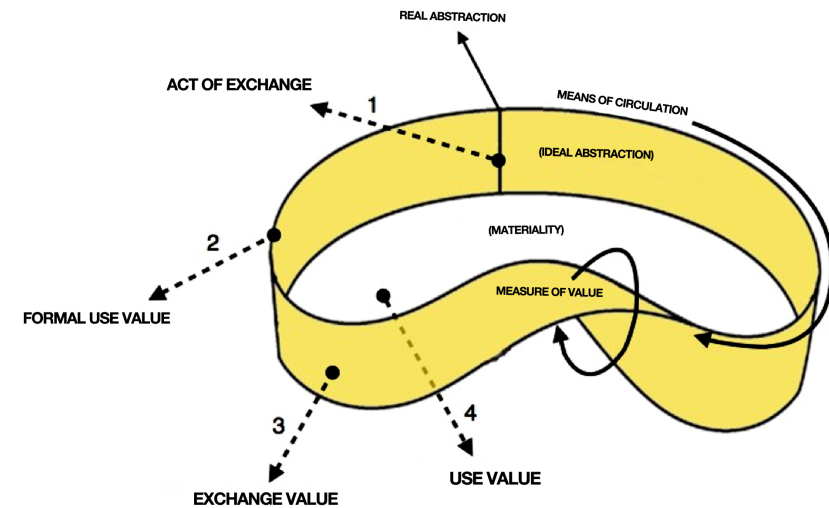


A tridimensional model of the Möbius strip can be easily assembled by adding the two ends of a strip of paper in an inverted way. The surface that we can more or less intuitively visualize in this three-dimensional embedding is sufficient for the purpose of recognizing in the Möbius strip the exact features that we are trying to articulate here: for any given point in the surface, there is a corresponding point in the opposed side - and, still, it is possible to move continuously from the first to the second point, without ruptures, because the two are actually on the same side. But what is truly crucial is to realize that in order for this surface to have only one side (and only one border), *something must disappear* from it, a singular element of the surface that is functional therein only insofar as it is excluded from the space:

“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 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 make it possible for them to fit into each other, so to speak” (Zupancic, 2008: 56)

We can finally present the suggestion of a model for the Sohn-Rethelian conception of the commodity-form:



Notice that the passage from the first model, of Saussurean inspiration, to our present proposal is simply the movement of *adding an absent point* – that is, everything that has been added in this new presentation is the hypothesis of an impossible dimension of the commodity-form, the idea of something that *does not cease not inscribing itself*. By supplementing the previous model with this “missing link”, we reveal a new degree of complexity within the form of value. We see here that the disappearance of the real abstraction, postulated by the exchange act (1), allows the reference to use value (4) to be “built into the structure itself” of the exchange value (3), without thereby being identified with another verso of the surface – like the external existence of concrete goods. We also see that the formal use value (2), the dimension of the substance of value that functions as the support of the operations of the commodity-form, does not have to be thought in terms of an asymptotic approach of con-

crete determinations of the material support to the qualities of the social substance (like natural materials “imitating”, better or worse, the abstract quality of value): we now know that the formal use value does not stop from not inscribing itself in the commodity and that, therefore, any concrete support that aims to embody it – be it gold, be it a coin or credit – will always be distinguishable from that which it tries to metaphorize.

We are certainly far from being able to consider this first proposal of a “Sohn-Rethelian model” a consistent or even an acceptable construction. To begin with, it would be necessary to question it exhaustively and to test its consequences - first of all, its consequences to the category of concrete and abstract labor. We note, however, that the utility of such analysis seems unquestionable, given that its success would allow us to raise the very disjunction between the theory of the value-labor and the theory of the monetary value to the dignity of a proof of their compatibility and intersection.

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CONDITIONS

Serialism as Simulacrum

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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The purpose of this paper is to explore the possibility that dodecaphony, the defining school of 20th century Western art music, was not an event in the history of music, but rather a simulacrum of same, corresponding to Alain Badiou's definition of the simulacrum of an event as a category of Evil.

The distinctions involved in making the case for dodecaphony as simulacrum must be particularly exact, seeing as the establishment of dodecaphony is among the very things Badiou cites as an example of an authentic event; that is, one that opens a path to a truth. From chapter four of Badiou's *Ethics*:

"Let us say that a *subject*, which goes beyond the animal (though the animal remains its sole foundation [support]) needs something to have happened, something that cannot be reduced to its ordinary inscription in 'what there is'. Let us call this supplement an event, and let us distinguish multiple-being, where it is not a matter of truth (but only of opinions), from the event, which compels us to decide a new way of being. Such events are well and truly attested: the French Revolution of 1792, the meeting of Heloise and Abelard, Galileo's creation of physics, Haydn's invention of the classical musical style. . . . But also: the Cultural Revolution in China (1965-67), a personal amorous passion, the creation of Topos theory by the mathematician Grothendieck, the invention of the twelve-tone scale by Schoenberg. ..." ¹

SCHOENBERG'S PROJECT: SOME BACKGROUND

To clarify with exactness the nature of Schoenberg's invention, it was the twelve-tone row or series, and not the scale itself. The twelve-tone scale was already centuries old when Schoenberg was born in 1874. Also known as the chromatic scale, it comprises the twelve tones that run from one name note to another; i.e., C/C-SHARP/D/D-SHARP/E/F/F-SHARP/G/G-SHARP/A/A-SHARP/B. These are the twelve tones of the chromatic scale starting on C, going up. If we were to continue going up, the next note would be another C, this one an octave higher than the first. (It is also possible to spell the scale using flats, e.g., C/D-FLAT/D/E-FLAT, etc., as sharps and flats constitute different ways of naming the same pitch.)

.....
¹ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York/London: Verso, 2001), p. 41.

Like all scales, the twelve-tone scale is an alphabet from which composers and improvising musicians may shape musical phrases. It is the largest alphabet generally available. (To construct a larger one would require bursting the constraints of conventional tuning in order to retune the octave to some division smaller than the half-step, creating more than twelve tones within the octave span.) The twelve-tone row or series is a method of employing this alphabet in a certain way, to a certain end. Specifically, Schoenberg's system calls for the composer to use an entire set of the twelve tones before repeating any of its individual members. According to Schoenberg's instructions for composing what would come to be called "twelve-tone music," the

dodecaphonic composer is to construct a tone row, or series, in which all twelve notes of the chromatic scale are ordered, one after another (but not merely sequentially, as in the scale itself).

For instance, a composer might scramble the chromatic scale to come up with this order (here we begin the use of the notational sign "#" for the word "sharp"): C#/E/F#/F/G#/A#/D/C/D#/A/B/G. The ordering of the notes in this row affects its future manipulation because (remember) the composer is not allowed to repeat any member of the row before completing the row. Once the composer employs an F#, for example, he/she is forbidden to employ it again until the other eleven tones are used. This rule, set forth by Schoenberg with strictness to match that of any rule in traditional Western harmony (such as that against parallel fifths, or the forbidding of hidden octaves), is the constant companion of the dodecaphonic composer.

The composer is not limited to the original series, however. The row can be manipulated in four ways. First, it can be transposed; that is, it may start on any pitch, provided it preserves the same note-to-note relationship of intervals, or distances between tones. For example, the row given above begins on C#, then goes to E and, after that, F#. The distance between C# and E is three half-steps, and the distance between E and F# is two half-steps. If we were to begin instead on D, the next note in the row would be F, three half-steps away, and the one after that G, two half-steps from F, etc. In this way, the composer may start the row on any of the twelve pitches, giving him/her twelve possible situations of the row. The composer may also employ the row in retrograde, which is simply the row backward; or in inversion, wherein the distance between

intervals is reversed to equal twelve (e.g., three half-steps would become nine); and finally in retrograde-inversion, the row now being both backward and reversed. This elaboration gives a total of 48 differ-

ent deployments of the row, and it is from this that the composer is directed to construct a composition.

This technical information is given in order to make clear the complex nature of Schoenberg's invention, as well as to give some impression of its rigidity. The establishment of dodecaphony, or "serial composition," as it came to be known, imposed a massive rulebook on the composer. It did not free the composer in any general sense. Schoenberg's goal, rather, was forcibly to push the composer past what he saw as the exhaustion of the previous framework of Western art music, the tonal system of 24 major and minor keys. His perceived exhaustion of the tonal system in the wake of the stretching (almost to the point of breaking) of that system by Wagner and his successors, was the backdrop for the establishment of serialism.

A history of tonality being beyond the scope of this short essay, it will have to be sufficient to point out that tonality employs a hierarchy of pitches. A tonal piece is in a certain key, and the root tone of that key governs the construction of the piece. Some pitches in the seven-tone tonal alphabet are more strongly related to the root one than others. In the key of C, for example, the tone G, the fifth tone (V) in the C-major scale, is strongly related to the root (I), while others are less so. This is the reason why almost countless pieces of music in the Western tradition, both classical and otherwise, employ a succession of the I and V chords. The intricate relationship of the other, hierarchically weaker pitches to the I and the V is the ground of harmonic theory. Arnold Schoenberg

was perhaps the greatest theorist of tonal music who ever lived. His treatises on harmony display an unequalled understanding of how tonal music functions. They parse the relationship of tones one to another in ceaseless detail and subtlety. It is ironic, in fact, that this man, whose very name has come to be associated with so-called "atonality" (a common but inaccurate name for dodecaphony), was the greatest master of tonal theory in the early 20th century. A further irony is that it was precisely in this role that Schoenberg conceived the simulacrum of dodecaphony.

Schoenberg noticed in the first decade of the 20th century that tonality had entered a tired phase. The relationships between tones that had served composers so well in the early centuries of the system were now undergoing manipulations that threatened to break it down completely. The generator of this trend was Richard Wagner. In his massive music dramas, Wagner had exploited the fact that a single chord can

belong to myriad keys. As a simple example, a C-major triad can be the I chord in C, the V chord in F, and the IV chord in G. Not only any chord, but *any single tone is, by itself, an inherent multiplicity of pitch*. This multiplicity is rooted in pitch's foundation in frequency, where frequency is a measurable, periodic oscillation of air, and pitch is the perceived function of that frequency as maintaining a relationship with other, similar entities. This relationship is not only inherently multiple, but it is necessarily hierarchical, based on an inescapable acoustic phenomenon known as the harmonic series.

THE HARMONIC SERIES AS ONTIC CONDITION

A column of air or a string oscillates at numerous frequencies, simultaneously. The root frequency produced is the pitch-name we give to this multiplicity of frequency. When a

string vibrates at 440 cycles per second, it is called A above middle C, or A4. But the string also vibrates at other frequencies in an ascending series of secondary frequencies called the harmonic or overtone series. Again, these are frequencies to which we give pitch names. The relationship of the overtones to the root tone is always the same, whatever the root tone. That is, the intervallic or distance relationship between the root and its overtones remains the same from string to string. For A4, the strongest overtones will include E, C-sharp and G. Others will follow, higher up the series, until the series at last generates all the pitches in what we call a major scale – all but one, that is: the fourth step, or “D” over the root note A. (I have endeavored elsewhere to show how this pitch is derived as a phantom root from the previous pitch in what is called the “circle of fifths.”)²

But however forced the fourth step of the scale is, and however many adjustments of frequencies are made to the pitches that parallel those frequencies, the fact persists nonetheless that the Western tonal system, a system of interlocking hierarchies of pitch multiplicity, is derived from the fact of the ontic harmonic series. The existence of the harmonic series necessarily conditions the experience of periodic sound. The basis of the tonal system is in the manner in which pitch is necessarily perceived: it is perceived as corresponding with frequency, thereby exhibiting the same hierarchy of related tones. The tonal system, which grew up over centuries, was not arbitrary. But Schoenberg's

2 < <http://www.newmusicbox.org/articles/IV-The-Phantom-Tonic/>>

denial of it, despite both Schoenberg's and Badiou's claims to the contrary, was.

SCHOENBERG'S RADICAL BREAK

Here is Badiou's description of Schoenberg's invention: “Where the system of scales and fundamental harmonies of a tonality was, we have the free choice of a succession of distinct notes, fixing the order in which these notes should appear or be combined, a succession that is called a series. The serial organization of twelve sounds is also named “dodecaphonism” to indicate that these twelve sounds of the old chromatic scale (thus: do, do#, re, re#, etc.) are no longer hierarchised by the tonal construction and the laws of classical harmony, but treated equally, according to a principle of succession chosen as the subjacent structure for such or such a work. This serial organization refers the notes only to their internal organisation, to their reciprocal relations in a determined acoustic space. As Schönberg said, the musician works with ‘twelve notes that have a relation only among themselves.’”³

The description of dodecaphony, from the standpoint of Schoenberg's assertion, is largely accurate. But two statements stand out as misleading, if not clearly false. The first is that “we” (meaning the composers of dodecaphonic music) “have the free choice of a succession of distinct notes...called a series.” In fact, according to Schoenberg, we are not free to choose any succession of notes. The row is restricted to necessarily comprising all the notes of the chromatic scale and to containing no repeated notes. If I were to choose the following succession of notes, it would be rejected by the laws of

serial composition, as it violates both the restrictions just cited: C-F#-G-G#-B-F#-E-D-C. Serial composition operates from the standpoint of restriction, not freedom.

The second misleading statement is the more pertinent to my case for serialism as simulacrum: “these twelve sounds of the old chromatic scale...are no longer hierarchized by the tonal construction and the laws of classical harmony...” While it is true that the essence of Schoenberg's system is the eradication of hierarchy, it was not “tonal construction and the laws of classical harmony” that erected the hierarchy in the first place. Rather, tonal construction and the laws of classical harmony

3 Alain Badiou, “A Musical Variant of the Metaphysics of the Subject,” *Parrhesia*, No. 2 (2007), pp. 29-36

are themselves based on the hierarchy inherent in the human perception of frequency; i.e., that of the harmonic series that is an unavoidable element of experiencing periodic sound. Schoenberg either failed to notice the ontic fact of frequency underlying pitch, or his project is directly an effort to deny the relevance of “animal support” (that is, the perception of frequency as inherently hierarchic) that Badiou, in the quote from his *Ethics*, cited in the third paragraph above, soundly reaffirms as a subject’s “sole foundation.” Either way, dodecaphony perfectly fits the bill of Badiou’s definition for “simulacrum”:

“When a radical break in a situation, under names borrowed from real truth-processes, convokes not the void but the ‘full’ particularity or presumed substance of that situation, we are dealing with a *simulacrum of truth*.

“‘Simulacrum’ must be understood here in its strong sense: all the formal traits of a truth are at work in the simulacrum. Not only a universal nomination of the event, inducing the power of a radical break, but also the ‘obligation’ of a fidelity, and the promotion of a *simulacrum of the subject*, erected - without the advent of any Immortal - above the human animality of the others, of those who are arbitrarily declared not to belong to the communitarian substance whose promotion and domination the simulacrum- event is designed to assure.”⁴

Badiou’s every point conforms to the nature of serialism. Schoenberg’s system exemplified all the formal traits of a truth, producing a powerful break with the past, erected above the human animality of hierarchical pitch-perception. Schoenberg made a radical break, using names handed down from the real truth-process of the tonal system, but a break that failed to invoke the void, presenting instead a new, purportedly substantial absolute for all future composition. (At the height of serialism’s chic in the United State in the 1950s, it was virtually impossible for a non-serial composer to obtain a university position.) Everything in dodecaphony is nameable, with no allowance for the unnameable.

CONCLUSION

It seems that Schoenberg’s innovation was invalid; the event of dodecaphony was no event at all, but a mere simulacrum. As is the case with all Evils in Badiou’s way of looking at things, this particular one

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⁴ Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (New York/London: Verso, 2001), pp. 73-74.

sprang from the desire for the Good. It was not a deliberate effort to subvert Western art music; to the contrary, Schoenberg was of the opinion that Western art music needed rescuing from the ennui he felt dominated it in the early years of the 20th century. Yet in attempting rescue, he cut the house of music from his foundations. This is the inevitable conclusion reached if we fully understand Schoenberg’s system and accept Badiou’s definition of simulacrum.

So, why, then, does Badiou consistently champion Schoenberg, dodecaphony and the so-called Second Viennese School? Why the praise heaped upon serial composition in various sources? One can only suppose that there is some kind of confusion over the terms “tonality” and “tonal system.” “Tonality” by itself, describes the facts of hierarchic pitch relationships; it does not, necessarily, refer to the particular system – unfortunately called the “tonal system” -- of major and minor scales and chords that Schoenberg sought to replace. All music before dodecaphony was tonal – Native American flute music, Indian classical ragas, ancient Greek kithara accompaniments to poetry, ethnic folk musics of all kinds, everything. It was tonal in the general sense of operating according to the inherent hierarchy of pitch that inhabits how we hear periodic sound (the harmonic series). Music in the Roman Catholic Church prior to the development of the tonal system was of a sort we call “modal.” But it was still tonal (in the experiential sense), because notes were frequently repeated and the relationships of the root tone of a given piece with the other tones in that piece fell effortlessly into the hierarchic arrangement that follows from the experience of periodic sound.

The “tonal system,” on the other hand, refers to a specific mode of deploying tonality that flourished in Europe between ca. 1500 and 1920 A.D., and which continues to function globally, albeit in a changed state that owes something to the challenge of serialism, but to various other influences as well: Stravinsky’s infusion of Russian/Eastern musical elements; the extraordinary development of American jazz, which completely rethought the tonal landscape; Messiaen’s transformation of French music with its rejection of German structural absolutes, etc. Most music today is no longer systematically tonal, but it remains, as it always has been, tonal, for the clear reason that “tonal” refers not to the way musician chooses notes but to the inescapably hierarchic way in which all of us experience notes. In this very serious sense, all music is tonal – that is, no music can exist outside the realm of periodic sound, which is its medium. As this medium contains the harmonic series with its “gravity” effect of notes in hierarchic array, all music – without excep-

tion – is tonal.

This last statement will come as a shock only if the reader has assumed this essay to be making a case against “atonal” music. My position is not that tonal music is to be preferred over so-called “atonal” music, which is the label usually hoisted on the products of serial composition. My position is that all music is inherently tonal because we are incapable of experiencing it otherwise. This was the position of Leonard Bernstein in Charles Eliot Norton lectures at Harvard University in 1973, titled *The Unanswered Question*.⁵ Paralleling Chomsky’s theory, then relatively new, that the structure of verbal language is biologically determined, Bernstein made a case for tonality (in the general sense, not that of a “tonal system”) being similarly determined. He was widely misunderstood, and a number of influential critics began to champion Minimalism as an answer to dodecaphony. Bernstein’s point had not been to oppose dodecaphony with yet another school of composition, but to recognize the enormous potential for creating music without rules of any sort, a true eclecticism that would free the composer from any allegiances whatsoever.

Tonality in its broadest sense does not describe an absolute, it simply defines the parameters within which music exists. It empowers the composer to choose freely, using only ear and artistry to make decisions. The composing artist may do anything at all. We recently lost one of the freest and most expressive of our composers, the German Hans Werner Henze, who never embraced dodecaphony, opting instead for an ever-expanding tonality. The Estonian master, Arvo Part, chooses to re-center on the idea of the root note, while the American Paul Schoenfield throws jazz and klezmer together in a symphonic amalgam. Still other composers may, if they wish, employ a system that orders all the tones of the chromatic scale so as to undermine the sense of hierarchy – that is, dodecaphony. But that will not stop listeners from attempting to hear the implied hierarchies and subsequently feeling frustrated and angry when these are subverted. There is good reason why pure dodecaphony is unpopular in concert halls around the world.

IMPLICATIONS

The truth-event in Badiou is a powerful experiential engine that

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5 Leonard Bernstein: *The Unanswered Question: Six Talks at Harvard* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1976.)

creates a subject via an epiphany that breaks from the past to provide authentic innovation in art, love, science or politics. But not just anything is an event, even when the would-be subject thinks it is. And breaking from the past is not, in and of itself, an innovation. Badiou borrows most of his examples of truth-events from history, which might make it seem as if these confirmed occurrences must, therefore, fulfill the role of “event.” We have demonstrated that that is not the case. Badiou posits three modes of Evil, of which one, simulacrum, provides the possibility that the would-be subject is mistaken and that the innovation at hand is illegitimate. Badiou does not, however, provide exact methods with which to distinguish event from simulacrum. His definition of the latter, quoted above, is general, and applicable in cases of major historical development such as the advent of dodecaphony. But as an ethic, Badiou’s theory needs to be able to apply to ahistorical lives, the loves and arts and sciences and politics of people who never enter the history books. To that end, more precise ways of recognizing the simulacrum must be discovered. It would seem that one of them is evidence of a break with the ontic.

What is missing / What is coming

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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1.

We want to test the following hypothesis: The current cycle of popular mobilizations that goes from the Tunisian revolution and its resonances in Egypt to the recent protests in Turkey and Brazil inaugurates a new global political sequence based on egalitarian principles. We are contemporary to a series of preliminary and localized essays of what will be a whole new historical period.

The first meritorious objection warns us that these movements respond to specific situations and cannot be generalized or considered part of the same process other than the mere confirmation of uneasiness in global capitalism and its only two possible outcomes, which are – they keep reminding us day after day- democracy or totalitarianism. Note that this objection - that seems to challenge the very possibility of a universal political process- is completely dependent on the alleged universality of the Empire of Necessity and its legal framework. In other words: the supremacy of the world market and its forms of State.

However inarticulate, preliminary, or non-localized they may be, these rebellions do not account for a future political order whose structure can be inferred. They are not signs of what is coming, but rather the opposite: whatever is to come, it is these events that will determine the shape of it. This is not the place, nor the time to dream of a utopian society and ascribe future global significance to it. Again, it is the ideas that emerge in these riots what authorizes us to think in universal terms. The proletarians of the world are not an integral part of societies, classes and cultures, but the affirmative power of the common. The first person plural is in itself a constitutive part of the hypothesis being tested. We begin by affirming the existence of the we.

2.

Liberals, spokesmen of the world of business, propagandists of democratic values, and even leftist intellectuals join on the same choir to claim, with different variations, that there are only two terms involved in these uprisings: Economy and State.

The establishment media pretends to be surprised of the fact that there are massive demonstrations in countries with enviable growth rates, countries that have so far been the icon of social austerity and the Ease of Doing Business. They all claim that the recent protests are due to the emergence of a new educated citizenship, with greater expectations for the future, and accordingly, greater demands for their governments. Why do people protest if democratic institutions work?

Why rebel if the government is effectively fighting corruption, building the basis for sustained growth? That is all they have ears for: stupid protests against corruption, empirically verifiable acts of corruption. Therefore, the only possible answer is to offer an extended citizenship: expectations grew and people want more of the same... more civic education, more democracy. Therefore the question is how to capitalize the discomfort in parliamentary constraints.

Along these lines, liberals claim that all these demonstrations are caused by the emergence of an educated middle class. Francis Fukuyama, who had predicted the end of history in 1992, recently published an article in *The Wall Street Journal*, entitled “The middle class revolution” in which he attributes today’s political turmoil to the emergence of a new prosperous and educated middle class. According to Fukuyama, the best definition of “middle class” is related to education status and ownership of durable assets, since this is what makes people most consistent in terms of political influence. Educated owners have a higher value for democracy, individual freedoms and tolerance for alternative lifestyles. Since they are not fighting for survival, smallholders and educated citizens have higher expectations and therefore more demands for their governments. Fukuyama says this can end in two ways: the reformism path as the good choice; or the dissipation of energies by engaging in identity politics or, more bluntly, playing the (system’s) game.

Finally, the sleeping beauty left, either hibernating in the parliamentary shield or trapped in the nostalgia of the great revolutions of the twentieth century, provides a similar characterization. The leftist argument is that the uprisings are the result of a relative stagnation in developing countries. In this vulgar mechanistic conception, popular revolts are just a consequence of the development of productive forces along with the awareness of the social polarization and the relative impoverishment to which the masses are subjected. According to this view, periods of relative growth are breeding grounds for popular insurrection: When people notices that their expectations are not met, that the (implicit or explicit) promises were not met, they act accordingly. Thus, the consciousness of class antagonism, by itself, is the greatest threat to the global order of power.

It may seem odd that the liberal right and the revolutionary left basically share the same diagnostic. All these analyses have something in common: the reference to some sort of a structure that explains, or even determines, great popular movements. But the spark that sets the plain on fire is never a simple awareness or self-consciousness –due to high-

er education or relatively improvement of living conditions. The spirit of citizenship and/or the class consciousness do not lend by themselves to a reaction to the crisis which threatens the continuity of those improvements.

The inconsistency of this structure is self-evident. From an empirical point of view, there are times when the constant growth stagnates and this does not automatically translate into a strong opposition to the existing political and social order, as in the current Argentine case (without going any further). There are also times when these conditions (economic depression / frustrations of a new middle class / citizen expectations unfulfilled / awareness of class antagonism) are absent, and yet the society explodes. The Zapatistas and the Bolivian struggles (just to mention a couple of examples) arose after long periods of impoverishment in underdeveloped regions.

But it is useless to look for counterexamples. Sometimes being empirically right does not mean that your arguments and your reasoning process are valid. You can provide an accurate diagnosis totally based on false premises.

There has to be something else; we need a third term to supplement the other two (Economy and State). And this is our blind spot. Something is missing from the equation, and not only we do not have eyes to see it, but there is hardly a language to articulate it. There is no deductive proof of the existence of this third term. But we can decide its existence; we can wager on it. Because if we do not assume the (possibility of) existence of a third term, we should resign ourselves to accept that everything will work out, as Fukuyama says, with more and better democratic institutions; or, as the nostalgic left puts it, with a big and depoliticized Socialist State, dedicated to the service of the goods, harboring inside the project of its own extinction; or, like the right-wing liberals claim, with a weak and dwarfed National State (with a firm hand though) totally subordinated to the invisible hand of the market and the existing social order. In short, more of the same, more of what there is.

From the point of view of political emancipation, these diagnostics lose sight of the collective decision-making ability, the power to create new ideas from mobilization; new principles tested in specific situations. Nothing authorizes us to affirm the universal reach of popular mobilization, except the very authority of the ideas that can be drawn from these uprisings. The authority of political principles compels us to move forward.

We are willing to sacrifice the concept unless it supports the truth

of the situation. Ideas are authorized from what we can symbolize from the popular will, from the breakdown of established order, which is always the answer to a question not fully asked. We want to ask that question, we want to find the words that this question requires.

3.

The period of neoliberal expansion that begins with the end of the cold war and the violent repression of the wars for national liberation (or the hot wars as we might call them), is coming to an end. The closure of this political sequence cannot be the direct consequence of a crisis of global capitalism. Recall that crises in capitalism are always “capitalist crises” and never the “crisis of capitalism”, since the dynamics of capitalism implies in itself the constant reconfiguration from recurrent crises. Capitalism entails crisis; we need to remain strictly Marxists here. Expecting a terminal crisis of capitalism would mean to expect a crisis of systemic crisis. It would be something like a final moment in which the very possibility of the crisis is in crisis: Either perpetual peace or the extinction of humanity. That will not be the case. The end of this cycle can only be a result of the emergence of new political emancipatory movements; the creation of hitherto unexplored organizational experiences, from which we can only guess their signs or footprints in the present.

This political sequence is coming to an end, but not automatically. There are a few ideological obstacles that persist: One is the inevitability of economic management as the final destination of every single political initiative; it’s all about markets, whose elusive love is disputed by Western democracy with parliamentary institutions and other forms of authoritarian states as in the case of Asian countries.

In these times the political subjectivity with most chances of survival in countries moving from center to periphery (or the other way round) seems to be that of progressivism, which we might also call ultra-centrism: it is an ideological spiral that violently alternates from left to right, approaching a deep vortex that absorbs any distinction.

Progressivism in all its forms warns us, when it moves towards left, that we must learn to distinguish bad from worst. And this is ultimately true; we need to tell wrong from wrongest. But this is also a demobilising operation. In every political process there are two subjective orientations that are invariantly defined, as it were, by the book. Both subjectivization processes stand differently towards the new. But what is the new? A political novelty is the possibility of emancipation;

it is the invention, the infinite openness of this possibility, which can be the reinvention of collective life, -from each according to his ability, to each according to his need-; it is the inquiry on what the human animal is capable of. And it is not a purely structural, nor necessary possibility. It is not a possibility among others provided by material conditions of existence. There is something else. Here is where we need to reinstall, at least temporarily, the idea of a third term (supplementing Economy and State): Something that cannot be but a collective decision (if that’s even possible), based on common principles. Principles as such are not subjected to elections by majority. Ideas are not meant to represent all identities, all the parts a society can be divided into. We need authoritarian ideas, in the sense that it is their own weight as ideas what makes them mobilize ourselves out of our ordinary existence. Again, this kind of principles is not a subject to poll. What was the concept of *dictatorship of the proletariat*, adopted by Marx and Engels, if not an authoritarian idea (in the good sense)? Truly emancipatory principles are always authoritarian in this sense. They are axioms that stand by their own. They are no more or less true if they are supported by the vast majority or by a minority. When authority falls into a person (a leader or group), or a self-proclaimed avant-garde, or when the political idea is the mimic of a truly emancipatory principle, we get authoritarian regimes, totalitarianism, and the like. But there’s no thin red line here. We need to clearly identify good from bad authority, or good from bad Masters.

As we were saying, we have two positions towards the politically new. On the one hand, we have pure reaction, which goes from the reassertion of the present order of things to fascism; always with a vocation to conceal or destroy any possible emancipatory path. On the other hand we have, let’s say, reagent progressivism: the will for restoration of the rule of law, under the promise of a substantial improvement of the state: the promise of a good state. Reactionaries and restaurateurs are archetypal figures in the history of politics. They are not eternal mythical characters in political antagonism, but subjective orientations. They are the ideological foundation of concrete political practices. Even though both orientations find its natural course in the state, they are very different from each other. One is willing to annihilate any disturbance to the established order in the name of a full totality (God, Race, People, Nation), while the other provides mechanisms addressed to those who disturb the social cohesion, in order to undertake an orderly transition towards establishing a new normality: a new power, perhaps more just, more equal, but certainly more stable, subjected to the same law that

was initially threatened by emancipatory processes.

Progressive restaurateurs remind us that reactive novelty is always preferable. Indeed, here is where the famous *lesser evil* comes into play. Let's be clear, there should not be any confusion here: It is the supporters of lesser evil who have to prove that there is a possible way out from the restoration of order to emancipation. That horizon is purely imaginary, full of rhetoric, partisanship, calls for unity (nationality, identity, class collaboration, etc...). Therefore, without blurring into fascism, the restaurateurs prepare the ground for it to emerge. The restorative will, which compels us to get out of hell (just like the supporters of the current argentine government, who refer to the truly emancipatory event of December of 2001 as the "hell"), also invites us to look at history from the position of a passive spectator. We are told to wait until contradictions are overcome: we first need to recover a strong state so it distributes national wealth fairly and makes the middle class flourish. Once we reach the promised horizon (no matter how long that takes, maybe one hundred years), maybe, and just maybe, we will be ready to take the next step. And this step forward, in this orientation, merely refers to an orderly transition to what has been vaguely called Socialism of the XXI Century.

Here is what the Latin American experience shows so far: In a scenario of relative regional economic growth (largely due to the global displacement of the center / periphery axis as a result of the economic crisis), the "progressive" governments promoted a vague redistribution of national wealth, some protectionist measures accompanied by some anti-imperialist rhetoric, a strong (mostly discursive) emphasis in the national and regional unity, occasionally causing friction and conflicts with the local oligarchies, and an insistent preaching of the primacy of economic management and respect for human rights. In short, the so-called Socialism of XXI Century presents itself as a way to sustain economic stability in the sake of a more or less "democratic" order, and lay the foundations of a new period of capitalist accumulation in those countries where neoliberal hegemony is seriously questioned and the dictatorial way does not guarantee the political passivity of the people.

The guiding principles of restorative progressivism are very different. You'll have to excuse the contradiction in terms, but they are something like *pragmatic principles*: pragmatism comes first. They indicate that the politically New has to be managed; politics means management. The new has to be managed in order to be adapted to what already exists. They claim we need to translate abstract ideas into concrete everyday

tasks. They are principles that promise, at some point, to realize new; to inscribe it in a particular world, depending on social and cultural conditions... But the New here is just a continuation of the Old. It is an oriented continuation, under the promise of (often material) improvement. There are several variations of this promise.

4.

The progressive horizon can be naturalistic, as if human populations were comparable to animal species in captivity, which have to be taken care of and preserved... If the word *ethics* has any meaning here, it is that of the mercy of the righteous. The ultimate ethical horizon is survival and self-interest. The naturalist promise is based, in the best case, on a vague principle of equity in terms of a just distribution of social wealth. Sometimes it is even implied that inequity is the true state of nature, so what we need to do is to establish the protocols to prevent or minimize the unnecessary suffering of those lives that are inevitably relegated to a lowest form of existence. Ecology and anti-speciesism are two examples of this submission to an imaginary order called Nature.

There's also the postmodern version, which is based on the dismissiveness of emancipatory struggle as such, unless it disturbs the individualistic over-identification, or unless it generates some kind of enthusiasm that kicks us out of the stupor of hedonism and permissiveness, or unless it liberates us from the false openness imposed as a dogma. For the postmodern horizon, politics is always a bad word, carrying a dangerous language that is not subjected to the mandatory neutrality of all languages. The claim of universality is prohibited, and even more explicitly in politics. Politics is not capable of truth, although it mimics an imaginary projection of a truth process. Truth is always an imaginary totality according to the postmodern discourse. So any kind of engagement is discouraged, and there's nothing political per se; politics is just an expression of something else (culture, identity, society, economics, etc.).

There's also a modern version of this pledge of avoiding the worst: it is based on the figure of a **New Man**; a structural redefinition of humanity and its possibilities, according to which, once we reach the promised horizon in a great sublime act, everything would have been said, and we will be condemned to live in eternal harmony. The socialist promise is the bearer of the idea of equality as a promised horizon. This equality is so unattainable that always ends up in state controlled revolutions. That is the legacy of the past century, yet unfinished.

The architect of the idea that the ultimate goal is economical equity, or diversity and respect for differences, or the state-driven projection of an egalitarian horizon is necessarily state power. But equality cannot be a promise. With so much effort invested in achieve fairness, respect for differences and equality as a heaven brought down to earth, we forgot about true egalitarian principles.

Engels said that the government of persons should be replaced by the administration of things: Since the government of the people is the State, it will be necessary to terminate the State in order to administer things collectively, without hierarchies or social divisions. The current thesis -shared by the hegemonic parliamentarism and its “authoritarian” competitors- is that you just have to manage things; the government of persons is a secondary problem. This thesis is based on an apolitical conception of the state. It underestimates the state’s ability to organize people under the principle that nothing can change if not through -precisely- the state itself. But the government of persons cannot be apolitical. The state is not a machine that can be broken, disarmed and rebuilt.

5.

What do the protests in Egypt, Europe, Brazil... have in common? It is certainly not the preponderance of educated middle classes, or the completion of a cycle of relative growth, or development of the productive forces and, with it, the achievement of class consciousness, or other mass psychologisms like “unmet expectations”. The singularity of these demands is that they show what collective action and decision is capable of: the thinking of the common at a distance from the state. It is not about choosing between options made possible by democratic institutions, but rather a matter of creating new possibilities. What these recent protests fail to grasp is the obstacle that lies in the formulation of specific demands. Even if these claims are partly met (presidential dismissal, revocation of the increase of public transportation costs) , the intensity of the revolt does not decrease immediately. Something remains unnamed, not fully grasped.

Maybe it’s time to think without state. Taking distance from the state entails interrupting the normal course of things, acting outside the framework it provides for representing all agents, which are presumably equal. This equality is doubly false. First, it is not true that we are all under the same conditions: classes and social antagonism are there, although they are denied for those who declared the end of history. Second, because the conditions we live in are not what determines us.

We cannot deny the precarious conditions in which we live; much less can we deny the power devices that keep them in place. This does not mean that we should operate in the interstices of power. Nor is it a call to pastoralism, nor any return to a paradise lost. Nobody says you have to pretend that the power does not exist, that’s absurd. What we should ignore is the ideological machinery that says conditions determine us. The only thing that determines us is the ideas and principles that we affirm and uphold. The global dynamics of capitalism, the way it is, feeds and provides vital sustenance to millions of people. Of course, it does it in an uneven and chaotic way. Going to the forest to eat berries in love with ourselves would be a collective immolation. The state is something to deal with; which does not mean it is the means par excellence of social transformation.

What is at stake is that real elections are political elections, rather than democratic or parliamentary or national, etc.. If elections are political, it is because they commit us to the identification with its founding principles. Voting is not a political choice. Parliamentary elections are reactive to political elections.

But what is really the importance of parliamentary elections? If it was because of the “majority consensus”, we would be governed by the most elected choice, and those other “not so popular” would have gained their deserved role of objectors. And that is how they succeed to each other, according to the winds that blow. Meanwhile, the state, provided neutral and ubiquitous, is just there to be “managed” by governments. The State is thus an instrument whose sign or polarity is interchangeable depending on who dwells in it. This idea of the state is amazingly shared by Liberals and Marxists.

The results of elections are abstract statistics, foreign to the formation of a political subjectivity. There is no real hope of emancipation in the democratic consensus, not even when political campaigns are used, in the least worst case, as forums to agitate revolutionary ideas. Elections are nothing but opinion polls; they are not a means to accommodate the discontent, or to express political ideas or thoughts.

We are lately witnessing a spontaneous and disorganized series of popular uprisings, from a place that is not supported by this logic. Entire peoples take the streets and raise slogans, and they don’t give up even having achieved its objectives. They say “Enough” to the symbiosis between the democratic system and economic power.

Of course, the “international community “ offers his arrogant and hypocritical interpretation of the popular insurgency; as if suddenly ev-

everything could be resolved with parliamentary elections, institutional strengthening, two or three political parties of different colors, and an adequate state administration. The fact that it is liberals who now sing odes to the state does not surprise anyone; they cry for state regulation and an institutional framework, and they give advice on how to properly manage public affairs in those states today threatened from what they cannot easily categorize as totalitarianism. But totalitarianism is nothing but a borderline case of parliamentarism. However good their intentions are, greeting the popular insurgencies in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Chile, Greece, etc. in the name of democracy -as we know it- is to miss twice: The first time, by prescribing the solution to a problem seen from the outside (from the point of view of the spectator). The second time, by ignoring the true dimension of events, reducing them to a scheme of causes and consequences derived from economic shocks.

6.

If “politics” means to recover the state, that is, if the state is the guarantor of what is political, we are dusting off the old Durkheim’s theory of state: the essential function of the state is to think... for us. The state, according to Durkheim, exerts moral duties, ensures that rules are followed, and prevents anomie. The state represents the society: it thinks and decides for society. The state knows better than society. It manages collective behavior through the development of a social thought. It protects and organizes social institutions (religious, family, association). It is not a mere spectator of the social life who intervenes to regulate, as liberals claim. But neither it is just a cog in the economic structure, as posed by socialist theorists. The state thinks for us the link between life and organization of public affairs: when complexity separates one from the other, the state appears to think for us how to join them back. We need a link between the limitations of communal order and the management of national economy: and this link is guaranteed by the state. And that is what the choice is about: who will succeed in the conduct of this neutral State which itself is neutral (it is there to be managed), and thinks for us (providing a closed ideological framework). The state thinks and compels us to think that only through the state that is possible to change things.

Let’s review the formula attributed to Emma Goldman: “If voting changed anything, they’d make it illegal.”

The premise of this conditional is that the foundations of parliamentary democracy prohibit substantial changes in it. In other words,

the state function is to prohibit the New, preventing from ruptures that cannot be digested by its legality. The democratic system only allows transcendent breaks, ergo, inconsistent, impossible as such. According to the democratic point of view, the Other of the state is transcendence: either the dream of the tyrant or the utopia of the revolutionary: something that goes beyond thinkable. What remains purely imaginary.

But the immanent rupture is real. Emancipatory politics open new paths that are not even formally prohibited by symbolic state apparatuses. The opening to the real politics is what the state defines as impossible. It is not a matter of implementing emancipation, because it is inconceivable as a program. But neither is it a matter of waiting passively. In the first place, we have to be clear about its absence; we have to be prepared to what announces the possibility of the reinvention of politics. We have to tune our ears to listen to those small cracks that begin to tear the structure... Then we also need to be faithful; we need to keep those great historical ruptures that precede us updated. We have to see what they can say about our current situation.

7.

It may be objected that this applies to every State, every society. This objection is ultimately valid: emancipation should be more universal than the logic of capital. It is the same for a worker in Indonesia, a worker in Argentina and a unemployed in Spain. The revolutionary political principles are universal or they are nothing. There is no such thing as non-universal principles. By definition, they would be just opinions (however strong and assertive). Non-universal “principles” are localized particularities subjected to a culture, a language or a tradition. They are temporary attempts to structure contingency and dispersion, as if the always irreducible particularity of situations wouldn’t allow the clarification of their ideological coordinates, or the conjugation of subjective orientations... Particularization is overrated. National leftists and Latin American Marxisms lost the last train long ago, and yet many of them are still waiting.

It is useless to contemplate these recent demonstrations from a sociological and anthropological point of view, reducing them to cultural phenomena. We cannot but feel some sort of enthusiasm: we are closely reflected in those struggles. Because maybe, just maybe, the universal principles underlying those struggles make them a common cause. This was once called internationalism. But there’s more than that. There is something bigger than the history of nations: temporary and hypotheti-

cal ongoing processes for which there are nothing more than attempts, essays and current transformations. Something provisional and hypothetical yet insists, and insists, with all the weight of an idea flirting with eternity.

We can no longer confuse eternity with transcendence. New earthly questions arise: Is there any way out of the twentieth century, that is, out of the logic that says there are only social movements, parties and their relationship with the State? Can we find a way out of this maze that only leads to the state? Is it conceivable to create thought and political action from a subject (a hypothetical us) and not from the direct mediation with the State? Will there be a way to sustain this over time? How to sustain over time the dynamic of the revolts and the state responses to them? We know that under the direct command of collective action the government obeys the demands almost literally: You don't want to pay more for public transport? Let's revoke the increase. Do you want less corruption? Let's overthrow this or that state representative, let's call elections again, etc. What modes of collective organization could "normalise" our mechanisms of managing the commons? Will decisions be taken within a disciplined body, while the state will only be at the "service of the goods", ie , a mere set of institutions guaranteeing health, education, and other social services? How to make popular sovereignty reside at a distance of parliamentary representation, at a distance from the legality prescribed from the state?

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The Analysis and the Presentation of Marc Lachièze-Rey's 'Travelling in the Time: The Modern Physics and the Temporality'¹

Since Acheronta Movebo is an anonymous collective, the journal was structured such that the name of the author is excluded in each text. Instead, the list of all contributors is as follows:

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Introduction

In this text I will try to present the main points of the book of Marc Lachièze-Rey which is called 'Travelling in the time: the modern physics and the temporality'. I would try to provide an image which I hope will be exact enough especially with regard to the principal thesis that it tries to give us. We can find this thesis towards the very end of the book, and it is the following one:

The notion of time cannot be made part of an ontology that would be compatible with our knowledge of the nature.¹

In other words, the author wants to defend the thesis according to which the theories of the Einsteinian Relativity have led to the disappearance of the notion of time. Moreover, the idea that if there is a possibility of something such as travelling in time that would not be a pure fiction or penetrated with plenty of contradictions, it is only in the framework of the General Relativity and with the disappearance of time that it can be seriously appraised theoretically and even actualized. The thesis that the author postulates towards the end of the book is in fact the response that he gives to a question that he poses in the beginning of the book:

The primordial question, to which the others very well relate themselves, is to know whether the time is nothing but a structure of our thought, without objective existence or else it very well partakes in an objective reality of the nature.²

The book offers plenty of examples from the authors of the past and the present that have posed themselves the same question, from Aristotle to Merleau-Ponty, from Empedocles to Proust. However, what furnishes us a better position to examine this question is in the last analysis the developments of the modern physics, even if as we will see, the latter is far from being a fait accompli. Still, the author assures us of one thing, that future physical development, Quantum Gravity for example, "will go still farther in putting into question our familiar notions."³

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¹ Marc Lachièze-Rey, *Voyager dans le temps : La physique moderne et la temporalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2013, p. 250.

² Ibid., p. 13.

³ Ibid., p. 252.

Preliminary Remarks

The book starts by stipulating certain points that we should take into consideration in order to be capable to appreciate sufficiently its messages. As we will see these points more clearly in the course of my text, let's content ourselves with a simple listing of them for now:

The author adopts a chronogeometric vision where every object, every system and every observer is assimilated to a *world line* that represents the integrality of its existence.⁴

Where as dating, the assigning of a unique date to every point of space-time, is an important trait of the Newtonian physics, this temporal function stops to offer any relevance with relation to the Einsteinian physics.

For the author, to exist “is not existing in the present; it is being all by becoming.”⁵ This last point juxtaposes two contrary visions of the existence, Presentism and Eternalism. According to the first one, only the present moment exists whereas the past no longer exists and the future does not yet exist. What renders very problematic this vision from a physical point of view is the speed of light. The limited speed of light shows that it takes certain amount of time for us to perceive the existence of an object by receiving the light that it has emanated. Thus, what we can know belongs always to the past and never to the present. Hence, “the presentism would imply that nothing of what I see, of what I know exists. And that on the contrary, of that which exists, I cannot know anything. We live in a phantomatic world where knowledge is impossible, no matter what exists.”⁶ The eternalist vision does not however pose any problem for physics for it postulates that it is the totality of the existence of an object that exists and this cannot be divided in a rigid manner into past, present and future. For an object, its existence would be the totality of its history, from its birth until its death.

For understanding better the notion of time, we should distinguish three different physical frameworks in which this notion can be conceived: the Newtonian, the special relativity and the general relativity.

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4 Ibid., p. 16-17.

5 Ibid., p. 20.

6 Ibid., p. 22.

The Newtonian Physics

The first one founds itself based on the existence of a universal and singular time. This is a conception of time that is very close to our ordinary understanding of it. However, even if this introduction of the universal time in the Newtonian physics has led to the foundation of the modern physics, the general relativity will show later on that it is untenable.

In order to understand better this distinction, let us first analyse a little bit the Newtonian physics. In addition, in order to do an analysis that would make it possible to compare this physics with the Eisteinian framework, the author proposes to speak of the Newtonian Space-Time. The differences of the two frameworks are thus their different properties.

The Space-Time in the Newtonian physics gives us the possibility of localizing each event by its date and its place. We should take note of the fact that time is not the same thing as dating. The latter is a temporal function, a process that “assigns a number to each event, without any other necessity”⁷. This means that “a time is a dating accompanied with certain properties”⁸. Among these, we can mention the chronology and simultaneity. Related to these two is a comprehension of space as being absolute, that is to say an absolute space.

The causal structure of the Newtonian physics confounds itself with its chronological structure. This signifies that in the Newtonian physics, the causality is a relation of *total order* where we can always relate an event to another event as its cause. Finally, concerning the notion of duration, the Newtonian physics deduces it just by taking into consideration the beginning and the end of a process, the duration being the difference of the two.

Nevertheless, it is especially by studying the Newtonian kinematics that we can understand its specificities. Kinematics is the “study of the free movements: those of a material body that is not submitted to any force (or interaction). We qualify them as inertial.”⁹

Studying the kinematics is effectively the same thing as studying the geometrical properties of the space-time, and this is equally true in the Newtonian and the Einsteinian physics. Nevertheless, it was especially with regard to the composition law for velocities that the Newtonian kinematics was put into question, because the speed of light pres-

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7 Ibid., p. 41.

8 Ibid., p. 42.

9 Ibid., p. 52.

ents itself as the maximum attainable speed.

The Einsteinian Physics

It was first through the works of Hendrick Lorentz that we managed to find a formula concerning the composition law for velocities that would be equally valid for the matter and the light. It was a completely heuristic solution but the genius of Einstein was to have found out that this new formula was not only incompatible with the Newtonian kinematics, but also the very notions of space and time. As Minkowski declared it on 1908:

The space and the time are condemned to disappear as autonomous entities, to reduce themselves to shadows, and to give up their place to a sort of union of the two that will alone keep an independent reality.¹⁰

It is thus that we move towards a space-time that would be from now on four-dimensional and instead of talking of the evolution of a system in the time and in the geometry of the space, we will speak of its evolution in the chronogeometry of the space-time. However, before passing a judgment, it ought to be known that this revolution is not so different from the one that the Newtonian physics had produced a propos de its proper past. Before its advent, the two horizontal directions were conceived differently from the vertical one i.e. the pre-Newtonian space was anisotropic, with a two-dimensional surface that was representing the horizontal directions and then the vertical direction external to the latter. This way of conceiving the space was due to the difficulty that the man had for moving himself through the vertical direction. But then Newton very well understood that this difficulty was not due to an intrinsic particularity of the space, but was due to the gravity, itself external to the properties of the space:

The Newtonian innovation formulates itself like the passage from two horizontal dimensions + a vertical dimension to three special dimensions constituting the space.¹¹

10 Ibid., p. 63.

11 Ibid., p. 68.

And what has happened with the Einsteinian physics is very much in analogy to this, because instead of speaking of three spatial dimensions + one temporal dimension, we will speak of a four-dimensional space-time.

If in the pre-Newtonian physics, the gravity was preventing us from appreciating this equivalence between all the three dimensions, now it is our incapacity to reach speeds comparable to that of light that is stopping us from acknowledging this equivalence between the four dimensions.

The World Line

In the framework of the Ensteinian physics, every object can be said to follow a world line that is composed of various but continuous points that this object occupies during its life. But in fact in an even stronger sense, we can say that each object is this world line. Where as in the Newtonian physics we were talking of a time that could be applied to the world line of different objects, in the Einsteinian physics we should speak of a unique particular time that runs for every unique object. From where the conclusion of Einstein himself:

Every reference-body (coordinate system) has its own proper time; unless we are told the reference-body to which the statement of time refers, there is no meaning in a statement of the time of an event.¹²

These world lines could be of three different kinds: temporal (if the speed of the object is inferior to the speed of light), light (if it is equal to the speed of light) and space (if it is superior to the speed of light). The lines of the first two kinds are qualified causal but the lines of the third kind are thought to represent nothing real in the universe. It is important to bear in mind that a speed superior to the speed of light is not really a limit of the Einsteinian physics and that what is rather prohibited is to have changes of speed of a sort that one world line would change its kind.

The Einsteinian Space-Time

We all know that there are two different theories of the Einsteinian relativity, Special and General. Each of the two is associated with a different chronogeometry, Minkowskian in the case of the Special, Lorentzian in the case of the General. Despite their many similarities, what distinguishes them most strongly is the fact that in the case of the general relativity, the gravitation becomes an intrinsic part of the Space-Time. Given

12 Albert Einstein, La théorie de la relativité restreinetee et générale, Dunod, 2004, p. 12.

that the gravitation in each part of the universe is due to the contents of that part, in the case of the general relativity we can no longer define the space-time without taking into account the contents of the universe. Consequently, we cannot fix the geometric framework once for all. What distinguishes the frameworks mathematically is that the Minkonskian space-time, contrary to the other, does not permit the existence of non-null curvatures.

The importance of the equation of Einstein is that it teaches us a manner of knowing how the contents of the universe give it its form in each and every of its different parts.

Before moving ahead, we should insist on the fact that the disappearance of the notion of time in the Einsteinian physics does not signify that it has no well defined causal structure. In fact, Lachièze-Rey insists a lot on the idea that the causal structure is something that is more general and important than time. However, contrary to the Newtonian physics, the causal structure of the Einsteinian physics gives the possibility that two events do not be causally related. Thus, one defines for each event the cone of past causality and the cone of future causality. Nevertheless, whereas in the special relativity these two cones are well distinguished, in the framework of the general relativity, because of the possibility of non-null curves of the space-time, it can happen that the two regions interact. Hence, if a time travel could be possible, it would be so precisely because of the existence of such situations where the past and the future mix up.

Newtonian Physics	Special Relativity	General Relativity
Space and Time separated	No Space and no Time	No Space and no Time
Space-Time given once for all, indifferent to the material content of the universe	Space-time given once for all, indifferent to the material content of the universe	Space-Time deformed by the material content of the universe

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Proper Times instead of the Time

If it is not possible to speak of a time in the framework of the Einsteinian space-time, we can evoke nevertheless for each observer a proper time that would be proper to him and valid in the very limited region of the

13 Marc Lachièze-Rey, *Voyager dans le temps : La physique moderne et la temporalité*, Paris, Seuil, 2013, p. 154.

universe where he finds himself. There are nowadays other theories that postulate that we should only study the causal structure and abandon even the notions of proper time and duration. This is not the case, nonetheless, with the Einsteinian physics. This is because the Lorentzian metric, beyond its conformal structure, possesses a measuring function and it is this function that renders possible the proper times and durations. We should not however forget that this proper time has nothing to do with the time of Newton, as it does not permit a dating or synchronization. For a particular observer, like myself for example, I can very well evoke a proper duration, for example the one that unfolds between two particular events of my life. This duration would not be applicable, nevertheless, to any object other than myself. To say it differently:

Proper times and durations associated with two different systems are two distinct quantities rather than two different values of a same quantity.¹⁴

In spite of what we just said, in cases where a high degree of precision is not very important for us, we would be able to define what is called a temporal function which will be compatible for two or more different objects. Yet, we would have to have in mind the fact that the duration that separates two events for one object is not the same one that I would measure when I observe these two events:

what is the (proper) time for him is not the (proper) time for me. What is the space for him is not the space for me. More precisely, what is the time for him is a mélange of my time and my space.¹⁵

The notion of time shifting is used for signifying the difference that exists between two durations. Defining this concept is easy enough in the framework of the Newtonian physics where it reduces itself to a relative movement between the objects. But it is a lot more difficult to define it in the special relativity and even more difficult in the general relativity. With regard to this latter, it would be almost impossible to know if the time shifting is due to the relative movement or the gravity. The implication of the latter signifies that for example, in a region surrounding a black hole, the time shifting tends towards infinity. This means that a signal emanated from such a region would never reach us.

Going back to the temporal function, we can say that this is a rather

14 Ibid., p. 126.

15 Ibid., p. 126.

arbitrary choice among an infinite number of possibilities. Still, doing this can help us to establish a sort of dating in the framework of the Einsteinian physics. Nevertheless, for making sure that we would understand that such a choice is only possible in cases where a very precise measure is not necessary, Lachièze-Rey presents a number of examples, like the Langevin's twins. These examples show that it is only by adhering to the notion of time that different kinds of paradoxes engender themselves, this being another proof of the disappearance or non-pertinence of time in the Einsteinian physics.

As we have already said it, we use a temporal function in order to assign a date to each point that situates itself on a world line. There are however certain forms of space-time that do not offer any possibility for doing so. Interestingly enough, these are the space-times based on which we would be able to interrogate the possibility of time travel. We have the physicians who consider these kinds of solutions to be very problematic and who believe that either they ought to be forbidden a priori, or the future developments of physics will automatically manifest their lack of pertinence with regard to concrete situations. The existence of these solutions does not hide the fact that the majority of solutions that are already studied admit temporal functions. In spite of this admission, they give the possibility of defining an infinite number of them, and different temporal functions tend to give contradictory results. The question thus would be to know how we could select a finite number of them. Nowadays we have three methods that give us the possibility of choosing one whose properties would be very close to those of time:

The space-times obeying the cosmological principle

The cosmic time

The matter as clock

It is especially the second method whose use is quite widespread in physics and whose value defines what is known as the *age of the universe* that we estimate to be around 13.7 billion years. Despite its advantages, there are plenty of incompatibilities between this function and time in the sense of the Newtonian physics and besides, its use is in reality a lot more limited than is otherwise believed. This function presents itself through a model of the universe, the Friedmann-Lemaître cosmological model, which is only an approximation of the real universe and whose degree of exactitude we cannot adequately measure! This shows that even in the best case, a temporal function is far from being similar to time and this is yet another manner of saying that time doesn't exist. We should add to it that by losing this notion, physics wouldn't lose any

of its capacities for explicating the concrete situations.

Traveling in the Time?

The analysis of Lachièze-Rey concerning time travel shows that first of all, travelling to the future is a phenomenon that can be very well envisaged. It is related to the speed of light and the fact that by having a speed that would approach the latter, we can very well go more rapidly towards the future. Thus it is the state of technological advances rather than a principle of physics that poses a problem. But what is really enigmatic even from the point of view of physical principles is the idea of time travel towards the past. In the situations where future and past cones of an object are well separated, an object would not be able to observe itself in its past. But it is possible to conceive solutions of space-time where the curve would be so twisted as to engender world lines which are closed or almost closed, what one calls closed timelike curve (*CTC*). It is thus evident that such a situation cannot be produced but in general, where the space-time is influenced by the gravitation existing in each part of the universe. However, it is necessary that the gravity be so intense that the change in the curvature of the space-time be of such a kind that the creation of a closed timelike curve be possible.

Two types of closed timelike curves are often alluded to, strictly closed and almost closed. The former implies a system that after living for a particular period would return to where it has been earlier. This means that it would be exactly identical to what it has been before. It is hence clear that such a case cannot be pertained to humans. But we can then evoke elementary particles, which always remain in the same situation, and which do not grow old. Yet, apropos of the humans, the fact that they have memory renders untenable such a curve. But this problem does not emerge when we consider those CTCs that are almost closed:

a curve that is almost closed, and not strictly closed, leads not exactly to a point of the space-time already occupied, but to its proximity; close enough for an observer to be able to see himself the way that he has been in the past; or even interacting with the younger version of himself.¹⁶

Then, by analysing a number of examples that can lead to paradoxes, like the one of grand-patricide or the paradox of the balls, Lachièze-Rey explains how certain physicians think that only those solutions of the space time that are compatible with the logic ought to be accepted. This postulate is called the 'Novikof self-consistency principle'. The purport

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¹⁶ Ibid., p. 186.

of this principle is to show that even if an observer was capable of going back towards his past, he would not be able to modify the latter, because otherwise he would produce insurmountable paradoxes. This requirement seems to be against the free will and implies a situation of total determinism. Still, Lachièze-Rey indicates to us that this is nothing new, and that physics is very well determinist with regard to many other situations that are even more so called ordinary.

Nonetheless, the real problem with the time travel of a system that is more complex than an elementary particle situates itself elsewhere. When we speak of a complex system, we speak of one that is composed of several components. The identity of such a system consists of the preservation of the cohesion of the world lines of its components, what will lead to the formation of a beam. Consequently, for the time travel of such a system to be feasible, it would not suffice that each world line of its components describe a closed timelike curve, but that moreover, they should conserve their cohesion and identity through this journey. Nevertheless, most of the situations that could permit a time travel are very intense gravitational fields. It is almost certain that such a situation will force the world lines of a complex system to distance themselves from each other, to diverge from each other and thus to lose their common identity. An example of such a field that can be invoked is a black hole. Still, the fact that what we said is 'almost' certain to take place but also the fact that we may be able to find other situations which might render possible a time travel signifies that we could continue to reflect upon its idea.

It was to this end that the logician and the mathematician Kurt Gödel tried to offer a solution of the space-time of the general relativity that could render possible the time travel. One of the interests of his model is that it does not admit any temporal function. For Gödel, the fact that such a model could exist demonstrates that time has no objective reality and that "the ontology of the general relativity does not permit the becoming, the world is fully unfolded. And the experience of time is not the reality of time.¹⁷"

Einstein, who was a very close friend of Gödel, himself recognised the mathematical validity of the solution proposed by Gödel but believed that it could be excluded "by utilizing the physical arguments." This statement, especially if we add to it for example the 'chronology protection conjecture', the latter put forward in 1992 by Stephan Hawkins, and which

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17 Ibid., p. 210-211.

stipulates that the physical laws would protect all the normal and admissible space-times against the chronological violations, seems to me to be a profound enigma concerning the status of the mathematical physics. Would we be able to say that here Einstein and Hawkins evoke certain ideas that postulate a physical limit of the mathematisation of physics? And if this is so, what would exactly the role of mathematics become in physics?

Conclusion

What we ought to comprehend from the points that Marc Lachièze-Rey has propounded in his book is first of all the disappearance of the notion of time, and the fact that it is a subjective concept without a reality corresponding to it in the universe. This idea is the principal message of the Einsteinian physics. However, it is possible to define certain temporal functions that could play a role somehow similar to the one of time in the Newtonian physics. Nevertheless, as the author sufficiently shows us in the course of his book, it is neither desirable nor necessary to preserve something that would resemble to the time in the Einsteinian physics. Moreover, there are certain solutions of the latter that don't even admit temporal functions. And with regard to the idea of time travel, it is precisely such situations that could offer its possibility, at least at a purely theoretical level. Yet, for really interrogating the idea of time travel beyond a discourse that would be filled with plenty of futile speculations, it is necessary to develop a new physics, like a Quantum Gravity, that would give us the possibility of properly analysing the behaviour of quantum fields in the presence of the gravitation. Though we can already say with a high degree of certitude that time travel will not be possible for a complex system because the gravitational intensity of the fields that can deform the space-time in such a way that it be possible to have a time travel, will almost certainly disintegrate such a complex object, like we humans are, by forcing its components to go astray.

The final point is that the analysis that the author proposes in his book deals for the most part with the Relativist physics. It thus needs to be emphasised that the question of time, appraised from the perceptive of the Quantum Mechanics, will give rise to a completely different kind of analysis. This is mostly because the notion of time continues to play a substantial and indispensable role in the framework of the Quantum Mechanics. And this is true even in those forms of the Quantum Theory where it is possible to adhere to a realist philosophical perceptive and where the question of causality continues to play an important role. The

Bohmian Quantum Mechanics being an example of that. And this is in fact one of most amazing aspects of the modern physics, that two completely incompatible theories, the general relativity and the Quantum Mechanics continue to be used and applied, indeed to very different domains, the former to phenomena at the macroscopic and the latter to phenomena at the microscopic scales.

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