

Lacanizing Marxism: the Effects of Lacan in Readings of Marx and Marxist Thinkers

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Abstract

In this essay I discuss the ways that Marxism is read through the lens of Lacanian theory by Lacan's followers and not by Lacan himself. I distinguish between different Lacanian approaches to Marxism and between Lacan's diverse effects on the subjects that are approached. I scrutinize five affirmative effects, namely those of problematising, historicising, generalising, confirming and completing what is read. I first explicate these effects briefly in discussing classic works of the 1980s and then at length in presenting my own Lacanian approach to Marxism. I show how the realisation of such effects implies a *Lacanization of Marxism* and the resulting constitution of a *Lacanian Marxism* that I openly assume.

Keywords: Marxism, psychoanalysis, politics, Marx, Lacan.

Introduction

Jacques Lacan's reading of Karl Marx has already been thoroughly analysed in the literature.¹ The analyses are usually accompanied by extensive reflections inspired by Lacan. Of course, these reflections can also be found without analyses of Lacan's reading of Marx, which is replaced by another reading conducted in Lacanian style. This manner of proceeding has been extraordinarily fruitful in the last thirty years, giving rise to a myriad of Lacanian readings of Marx and Marxist thinkers.²

This essay precisely addresses the way that Marxism is read not by Lacan but by authors inspired by him. The subject is not embraced in all its breadth and depth, but approached in terms of one of its most insignificant expressions, the one I know best: my own Lacanian reading of Marx and Marxist thinkers. However, before grappling with this specific reading, I will briefly examine different Lacanian approaches to Marxism and Lacan's diverse effects on the subjects that are approached.

Most of the essay will focus on five rather affirmative effects of Lacan in the reading of Marx and Marxist thinkers, namely those of problematising, historicising, generalising, confirming and completing what is read. These effects will first be explicated briefly in a discussion of classic works of the 1980s and then at length in a presentation of my own Lacanian approach to Marxism. I will try to show how the realisation of such effects implies a *Lacanization of Marxism* and the resulting constitution of something as problematic and scandalous as the *Lacanian Marxism* that I have openly assumed. For now, before reaching the Lacanian left, let's review a little of what happened with Marx and the Marxists in conventional Lacanism, which is usually right-wing or supposedly apolitical.

1 E. g. Regnault 2005, Bruno 2010, Pavón Cuéllar 2013, Tomšič 2015, Vighi 2016.

2 E. g. Laclau & Mouffe 1985, Žižek 1989, Močnik 1991, Dolar 1993, Silveira 2002, Özselçuk & Madra 2010, Lippi & Landman 2013, Žižek, Ruda & Hamza, 2018.

Normal effects

The average Lacanian is familiar with at least some of the ‘mistakes’ of Marxism. He or she is even able to recite them from memory. Marx and the Marxists were wrong to postpone desire and turn it into a post-revolutionary issue, to imagine that the problem was capitalism and not language and its discontent, to calculate the incalculable surplus enjoyment and thus transform it into surplus value, to interpret the symptom as a sign and not as a signifier, to fail to see that revolutions return to the point of departure, to believe that they aspired to freedom when they wanted a master, and to remain trapped in the master discourse.

How is it that ordinary Lacanians know the errors of Marxism so well? Obviously, they have not detected them by themselves, but have learned them from Lacan or perhaps from other ordinary Lacanians who repeat again and again what they have learned from Lacan. Among what they have learned are the errors of Marx and the Marxists, almost always the misses and almost never the hits, according to a selective criterion that might be revealing the single thought, *pensée unique*, in which Marxism is necessarily related to error.

In dissolving Lacan into something as anti-Lacanian as mainstream ideological conformism, an average Lacanian may well confine Marx and the Marxists to error. It does not matter, of course, that he or she has not read Marx and the Marxists. Why read them when you can read Lacan to know that they were wrong? Lacan is used here not to read Marx and the Marxists, but to avoid them, to discard and ignore them, to put them aside or, more precisely, to leave them behind, because average Lacanians are convinced that they have surpassed Marx thanks to Lacan, having forgotten what Lacan himself taught them: that Marx is ‘always new’, that he ‘cannot be overcome’.³

In order to overcome Marx, average Lacanians imagine that they have exhausted him, and in imagining this outcome, they do not see that he is inexhaustible. They simplify and trivialise him. He is represented as a naive thinker. They replace him with a caricature of who he was. They make him contemptible to hold him in contempt. They end up being certain that he did not know what he knew very well, such as the circularity of revolutions⁴ or the difference between surplus value and surplus enjoyment.⁵

Many Lacanians mutilate Marx. They steal his ideas and attribute them to Lacan. Then they use these same ideas to argue against a defenceless, weakened, impoverished, unrecognizable Marx. Marx is

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3 Lacan 1946, p. 192; 1959-1960, p. 245.

4 Marx 1852.

5 Marx 1866.

disfigured to be later corrected, revised, rectified and refuted with his own ideas: with the surplus enjoyment, with the revolutionary circularity, with the symptom, with the lack of metalanguage. Those who do so, usually in schools and associations of Lacanian psychoanalysis, betray not only that they have not read Marx, but also that they have misread Lacan, who always ends up giving credit to Marx for his discoveries.⁶

Other effects

We see that Lacan can inhibit reading Marxism, deviate from it and make us believe that it is unnecessary. It can also happen, however, that Lacan pushes us to read Marx and the Marxists to try to resolve his enigmatic assertions about them. It is possible, in addition, that he transforms our reading, making us read them or reread them in another way: in a Lacanian way. This last possibility is the one that interests us here.

When read through a Lacanian lens, Marx and the Marxists are transfigured and shown in a totally different light. It’s almost as if they become others or mad. Suddenly, their speeches are full of nonsense, paradoxes, tensions, uncertainties and enigmas. Their theories are reconfigured. Certain parts are revalued and others are devalued and reduced to absurdity. Some of their lateral ideas become decisive, while their central ideas lose importance. Their seemingly simple and obvious notions cease to seem that way; they become complicated, they move away from common sense, they are carried to their ultimate consequences and reappear with new nuances and an unfathomable depth. It happens that their perspective becomes more solid, radicalises and reinvigorates, acquires greater scope and reveals unexpected aspects. We are surprised again by what no longer surprised us. We stop understanding what we understood perfectly.

Lacan had many more possible effects on readings of Marx and Marxist thinkers, among them the typically postmodern solvent or deconstructive effects, such as disorganising, disarticulating, fragmenting and volatilising. And, in the antipodes of these negative effects, there are five rather affirmative effects, namely to *problematise*, *historicise*, *generalise*, *confirm* and *complete*, upon which I would like to concentrate, and which are perhaps not very consonant with the typical vision of the Lacanian spirit as being essentially characterised by negativity. Let us review an example of each of these effects in the already classic works of well-known authors whose readings of Marx and Marxism had a marked Lacanian tonality:

- Instead of simply avoiding Marxism by considering it Lacanianly irrelevant, it is possible to *problematise* its ideas as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe did by using Lacan to

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6 Lacan 1968-1969, 1969-1970, 1971.

discuss the Marxist conception of the subject, of society or of the working class, as a given empirical being. The Lacanian perspective makes this subject problematic, showing its 'precariousness and absence of suture' and its 'ambiguous, incomplete, polysemical' character as 'discursive identity', which is what makes a 'hegemonic articulation' possible and necessary to 'construct nodal points' that 'fix the meaning of the subject'.⁷ Thanks to Lacan, we can see a theoretical and practical problem, a matter of controversy and a challenge for the socialist strategy, whereas before, for some though not all Marxists, there was evidence of the revolutionary nature of the subject. The indisputable became questionable. This did not inhibit reading Marxism, but quite the opposite. Laclau and Mouffe approached the Marxists and read them carefully to discuss the subject with them, disagreeing with some, like Kautsky or Plekhanov, but also coinciding with others, such as Sorel and particularly Gramsci.

• Instead of merely dismissing Marxism by considering it to have been surpassed by the Lacanian perspective, we can *historicise* it by resituating it in a certain historical context with the help of Lacan. This is what Sidi Askofaré did by showing how the 'emergence' of the proletariat as a 'historical figure' of truth and dispossession of knowledge, at the moment of the transition from feudalism to capitalism, allowed Marx to discover a 'social symptom' that 'connotes the universality of the function of the symptom' in which the subject suffers from a particular truth irreducible to what can be universally known about it.⁸ This truth is obviously different for each subject and that is why it resists universal knowledge. It is for the same reason that the symptom is invariably particular, that is, *universally particular*. But this universality of particularity is precisely the insurmountable sense of the social symptom discovered by Marx thanks to a unique conjuncture of history. To historicise is here to recognise the role of history in Marxist discoveries, which were, in fact, discoveries *by* history and not only *of* history. The historical world, in short, discovered itself through Marx's findings. However, as we have just seen, this does not compromise the universality of what was discovered and should not make us relegate it to the past. History is never behind us. We are simply in another moment of the same history.

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7 Laclau & Mouffe 1985, 112-122.

8 Askofaré 1989, 121-138.

• If Lacan prevents us from relegating Marxist discoveries to the past, it is because he makes us *generalise* them by allowing us to recognise the universal scope they possess. Some of the best examples of this kind of generalisation can be found in the Lacanian reading of Marx provided by Slavoj Žižek. For example, when Žižek Lacanianly read Marx's famous reflections on fetishism and the relations between things that replace relations between people, he moved beyond the specific framework of the functioning of commodities in capitalism and scrutinised the general fact of the objectivity and radical exteriority of 'beliefs, superstitions and metaphysical mystifications', as well as the 'most intimate emotions'.⁹ The exterior of the interior, the objective of the subjective and the impersonal of the personal appeared as a universal truth that Marx discovered through the fetishism of commodities in capitalism. The fetishistic configuration, by which things believe and feel instead of us, was no longer a specific situation of the industrial capitalist system studied by Marx, but a general condition of humanity ranging from Greek theatre to television and the social networks. This general condition is what we can read in Marx when reading him through Lacan. Lacanian theory confirms the Marxist concept on a general level.

• Generalisation is not the only possible Lacanian way of *confirming* what we read in Marx. There are other possibilities, among them the opposite of generalisation, specification, by which Lacanian ideas or postulates constitute specific cases with which general Marxist ideas or postulates are confirmed. Fredric Jameson offered us a good example of this process when he realised that Lacan's 'critique of the subject', with his idea of subjective 'decentring' and with his conception of consciousness as an 'effect of structure', theoretically confirmed the Marxist non-individualist notion of the subject in the specific historical context of the 'dissolution of an essentially bourgeois ideology of the subject and of psychic unity or identity'.¹⁰ The crisis of individualism that manifests itself in Lacan allows us to confirm the critique of individualism that we can read in Marx and Marxist thinkers. Marxism demonstrates its truth in the very categories through which it is Lacanianly read. The Lacanian concepts are a specific expression of what the Marxist concepts refer to.

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9 Žižek 1989, 31-33.

10 Jameson 1981, 111-112.

• Sometimes Lacanian concepts do not express what Marxist concepts refer to, but their correlates, their counterparts, their complements, the solutions to some of their problems or something else that has a precise place and that attracts our attention for being undesigned. We then have an opportunity to *complete* the theories of Marx or his followers with Lacan's theory. The Lacanian theoretical contribution comes to correct a lack or to deal with a slope in Marxism. This is what happened, for instance, when Alain Badiou, rejecting both Freudo-Marxism and Marxist psychology, found in Lacan's work the 'theory of the subject' required by Marxism: a theory developed successively as an algebra of the lack and as a topology of excess with which we can elucidate Marxist categories as those of the masses or the party.¹¹ Marxism demanded a theory of the subject like the one that it receives from Lacan. The Lacanian reading of Marx and Marxism responds to what is read to complete it, complement it, ground it, justify it, answer its questions, satisfy its needs and continue it in the sense that it represents.

Since the 1980s the Lacanian reading of Marx, as we have just shown in the previous examples, has allowed for the effective development of Marxist ideas by addressing them in a positive manner. When problematised, historicised, generalised, confirmed or completed, each idea was explained or justified, deepened or extended, nuanced or detailed, prolonged or evolved—that is, it was developed. Each Marxist idea was developed through the consideration, respectively, of the problems it posed, the historical conditions in which it arose, its general scope, the situations that confirmed it or the unexplored dimensions that might have completed it.

Effect of effects: the Lacanization of Marxism and Lacanian Marxism

Certain effects of Lacan in the reading of Marx and his followers are positive as they positively develop Marxist ideas. But the important result is that they develop them in a specifically Lacanian direction. This development implies a Lacanization of Marxism, which, in turn, logically produces what I have obstinately called 'Lacanian Marxism'.¹²

The emergence of the Lacanian Marxist orientation, one of the strangest episodes in the history of Marxism, has its origins in Lacan's own approach to Marx, as well as in the work of some of Lacan's first

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11 Badiou 1982, 132-133, 144-151, 195-197, 245.

12 E. g. Pavón-Cuéllar 2009, 2014a,

readers and disciples. After the death of Lacan in 1981, from the 1980s until now, the Lacanization of Marxism has led to one of the most fertile political-intellectual currents of our time, which is sometimes designated with the vague expression the 'Lacanian left'.¹³ Many of its adherents could be called 'Lacanian Marxists', but they avoid calling themselves that for several reasons: because they do not seem to want to name themselves in any way, because their adherence to Marx or their interest in his ideas does not necessarily imply an inclination for Marxism, because they are all too aware of the errors of Marx and Marxism that they learned from Lacan, because there is something that prevents them from recognising the greater successes of Marx and Marxism that Lacan also taught them, because they remain faithful to Lacan, who was not a Marxist and criticised Marxism, because their very fidelity to Lacan makes them reject any alliance between Marxism and psychoanalysis that reminds them of the Freudo-Marxism rejected by Lacan because Lacan demonstrates that Marxism and psychoanalysis cannot connect to one another without being embroiled, because the homology between Marx and Lacan makes a *Lacanian Marxism* as redundant as a *Marxist Marxism* or a *Lacanian Lacanism* because Marxism implies a positivity that contradicts the negativity accentuated in the dominant reading of Lacan, because we no longer live in a time when being a Marxist intellectual is fashionable or means something like what it meant before, and because of the postmodern discrediting of Marxism and any *-ism* in general.

However powerful some of the aforementioned arguments may be, I have stubbornly sustained myself as a Lacanian Marxist for a decade. I have done so based first on certain personal positions and convictions: because I am a communist, I am in the Marxist tradition and I would never renounce Marxism to adopt a Lacanian theory, which interests me mainly for the service it can render to communism. Now, in addition to my 'subjective' political reasons, there are also 'objective' theoretical reasons and dogmatic rationalisations that appear to me to provide unquestionable evidence to embrace Lacanian Marxism: because there seems to be nothing insuperably incompatible between the Lacanian and Marxist discourses, because Marxism does not cease to be consistent by rectifying the errors that Lacan imputes to it, because this rectification can only purify and reaffirm the Marxist theory, because this theory needs to develop in a Lacanian direction in order to deal with much of what it encounters in the current world, because the new forms of domination and subjectification pose difficulties that Marxism cannot even conceive without being Lacanized, because Lacanian psychoanalysis requires radical positions such as Marxism so as not to degrade itself by dissolving into psychology or dominant ideology, because many of the ideas of Marx and his followers underlay Lacanian theory, because to go deeper into

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13 E. g. Stavrakakis 2006, Alemán 2013.

Lacan inevitably leads us to Marx, because the entanglement produced by adding Marxism to psychoanalysis only mirrors the opacity and complexity of the material reality for those who try to conceive it, because Lacanian Marxism can only be redundant for those who accept its truth, and because most of the reasons to avoid Lacanian Marxism seem more suspicious and tempting than persuasive or dissuasive.

In addition to so many compelling reasons to speak of Lacanian Marxism, there is the decisive factor that I have already referred to, namely that Lacanian Marxism already exists; it is already there since it has been created by the rather affirmative effects of Lacan's theory in readings of Marx and Marxist thinkers. These effects, as we have seen, can be synthesised in a single theoretical effect: that of *Lacanizing Marxist ideas*. The resulting *Lacanian Marxism* is *Lacanized Marxism*, that is, Lacanianly problematised, historicised, generalised, confirmed and completed Marxism. These five effects, previously illustrated in the works of Badiou, Jameson, Žižek, Askofaré and Laclau and Mouffe, will now be exemplified through my own theoretical work, in which, navigating against the air of the times, the effect of the effects, Lacanian Marxism, is assumed and elaborated upon explicitly, deliberately and systematically.

Problematising

Although existent and justified, Lacanian Marxism is extremely problematic, doubtful and controversial, both for internal and external causes, that is, both for its constitution and its position in the field of knowledge. One of the main internal causes of this problematicity is that Lacan's ideas cannot come into contact with the Marxist ones without problematising them. We have already referred to the problematisation of the Marxist notion of the subject in the Lacanian sensibility of Laclau and Mouffe. Under a totally different Lacan influence, I have also problematised the subject of Marxism, as well as various theories related to it, among them one on which I would like to dwell a moment: the Marxist theory of reflection in which it is postulated that consciousness reflects the external world.

In its simplest version, the one elaborated by Lenin, the reflection theory epistemologically generalises and legitimises a particular interpretation of a deceptive subjective experience of the specular imaginary in Lacan: the internal world is conceived as a conscious surface on which the external world is reflected as in a photograph, and if there are errors or mental distortions in the reflection, it is surely because of imperfections in the cerebral surface that reflects it.¹⁴ In problematising this theory of reflection, my Lacanian reading of Lenin coincides with the arguments of other Marxists. Let us consider some of these overlaps.

For me, as for Engels, there is no internal world clearly separated and differentiated from the external world since the external, in addition

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14 Lenin 1908.

to being what is reflected, unconsciously modifies the reflective surface that ideologically distorts the reflection, which is its own reflection.¹⁵ Mental distortions, therefore, are of ideological external origin and not only internal, mental or cerebral. In fact, by adopting a Lacanian symbolic materialism in which I radicalise Engelsian dialectical materialism and agree with Plekhanov in his ephemeral hieroglyphic materialism, I consider that the mental can only exist in an ideologically distorted form because it is formed by its own distortion, because it must distort what it interprets, because it must translate and thus betray what it reflects, because its images are narrated, because it is discourse, because it is determined symbolically, because its structure is language and not a supposed reality independent from language, and because its elements are signifiers and not just reflections.¹⁶

There is at least one point, that of the discrepancy with the Leninist theory of reflection, at which my Lacanian vision agrees with the Vygotskian vision: the psyche cannot reflect the exteriority without interpreting it, signifying it or, better yet, *signifierising* it, symbolising it according to codes and structures that derive from the same cultural exteriority and, in particular, language.¹⁷ It is, then, the symbolic external world itself that manifests itself symbolically in what it makes us conceive as an internal world. We can suppose, therefore, just as Vygotsky supposed, that thought is internalised speech, but perhaps it does not make much sense to pose the concept that way since interiority itself is an internalisation of exteriority.¹⁸

Interiority is nothing more than a kind of crease or fold of exteriority. It is the same language because there is no metalanguage.¹⁹ There is no reflection that would be different from what is reflected, but rather, as Korsch pointed out in criticising the theory of reflection, there is a 'very special part of the whole'.²⁰ Or, better still, there is a moment of the not-all. We cannot even say that this moment is differentiated from the rest by being composed of qualitatively different elements, mental elements such as ideas, since these elements also make up the exterior, as Pannekoek noted in the same Western Marxist tradition of Korsch.²¹

The recognition of the 'mental' aspect of exteriority, which betrays more of a materialist conception of the mind than an idealistic conception

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15 See Engels 1888.

16 Pavón-Cuéllar 2009, 2012.

17 See Vygotsky 1934 and Pavón-Cuéllar 2010.

18 See Pavón-Cuéllar 2017a.

19 Lacan 1960-1961.

20 Korsch 1923.

21 Pannekoek 1938.

of the external world, is a fundamental point of my Lacanian Marxist vision. This point, as we have seen, is not new in the Marxist tradition: it has already been developed in Western Marxism, but also in the Soviet field and particularly in the theory of activity constructed by Sergei Rubinstein, who deeply examined the 'psychological contents' of 'material external activity'.²² Taking Rubinstein's theory to its ultimate consequences, to the Lacanization of his ideas, we even realise that the most external can be the most intimate component of the subject, the '*extimate*', as Lacan would say.²³

The concept of *extimacy* overcomes the apparent, superficial distinction between the interior and the exterior since it designates a single and unique space that is beyond the exterior and beyond the interior. The interior and the exterior are here only specular reflections that reflect each other in an imaginary game while covering the *extimate* behind them, namely the capitalist system studied by Marx, but also the symbolic system of culture and the unconscious studied by Freud and Lacan. In other words, when I go deeper into my Leninist inner reflection, I cross it and come to the same place where I arrive by delving into the outside and crossing it: to the field of research of Marxism, which is also that of psychoanalysis, that is, the most radical exteriority that is also the deepest intimacy, the extimacy, which is behind the interior and exterior mirrors of the imaginary.

In my Lacanian problematisation of the Leninist theory of reflection, not only the exterior is reflected in the interior, but, as the Marxist-Freudian surrealist Karel Teige wonderfully expressed it, the psyche 'makes the material world its reflection and image, the illustration and manifestation of its desire'.²⁴ It cannot be otherwise when we admit what Lacan thought regarding the imaginary and the specular reflection. The reflection exists in both senses. The psyche reflects the external world based on the reality principle, while reality reflects the psyche based on what is desired according to the pleasure principle. The problem is, of course, that it is practically impossible to distinguish one from the other.

The external world, like the internal world, responds to our desire. As André Breton pointed out, the same processes of 'condensation, displacement, substitution, retouching' by which desire forms the dream also allows it to create the reality that surrounds us when we are awake.²⁵ This surrealist conception coincides with the notion of Lacan, a worthy heir of surrealism, that reality is imaginary and that we somehow dream or delude our world.²⁶

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22 Rubinstein 1945, p. 169; 1959, p. 340.

23 Lacan 1968-1969.

24 Teige 1945, p. 296.

25 Breton 1932, 123-129.

26 Lacan 1954-1955.

Our more or less shared delusions internally organise our world by deploying the transindividual exteriority that constitutes our unconscious. This is what makes us all crazy at least in some way and to some extent. The reason for this madness is well explained by Attila József in his original Freudo-Marxist perspective: we are all crazy because it is not our conscience that always responds to our existence, as some Marxists would like, because it is not our psyche that always reflects our world, as Lenin explained, but constantly, as Freud showed us, it is our world that reflects our psyche, which, in a pathological way, 'forms' and 'deforms' our world.²⁷

It is not deplorable that the psyche is also madly reflected in the world instead of only reflecting it. This madness allows us to attend to our desire in reality and not only in dreams. Or, rather, it helps to revolutionise reality by realising the dream in which desire is fulfilled. Hence such madness was the goal of revolutions in the political program of surrealist Freudian Marxism to which my Lacanian Marxist perspective also adheres, but only in its imaginary front, which is not the only or the most important front, as we shall see in the next section.

In the imaginary my orientation aspires to a communist idea that should be insanely reflected in the world besides reflecting it with a strategic dose of sanity. My orientation thus diverges from strategies based unilaterally on the Leninist theory of reflection. The revolutionary conscience, if it wants to be truly revolutionary, cannot limit itself to reflecting reality by adapting or adjusting to it. This is something that Lenin understood very well, but that many Marxist-Leninists forgot. What they forgot is that reflecting reality is nothing more than a way of reproducing it. Of course, such reproduction is necessary for success, but it may end up compromising that success. This is how real socialism, through state capitalism, ended up successfully repeating in its own way, in one country, the capitalist reality of the world with which it maintained its aggressive, imaginary rivalry.

No matter how successful they are in the world, the scrupulously realistic, neurotically- obsessively realistic revolutionaries fail to transform it in a 'historical', 'hysterical' way, according to the revealing Lacanian pun.²⁸ Realists cannot enact more than a small revolution that only describes a circular movement in order to finish at the starting point. It is the circularity inherent in any specular game. As in Lampedusa's *Leopard*, everything has to change so that everything remains the same. Another revolutionary process, one that is fully historical, open and spiralling, cannot be based exclusively on the Leninist theory of reflection. Consciousness that only reflects tends to be conservative, reactionary, and surely ahistorical, even anti-historical.

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27 József 1934.

28 Lacan 1977.

Historising

In fact, as we have seen, it is the world itself that resists history, that reacts to conserve itself and that reproduces itself by reflecting itself through its consciousness. This consciousness is part of the world that logically seeks to persevere in its being, but the world is also historical and historically transforms itself through consciousness by not only reflecting on it. On the one hand, as we saw in the previous section, in addition to the reflection of the world in consciousness, there is the reflection of consciousness in the world. However, on the other hand, something more interesting may also happen: what we can describe as breaking the mirror that allows us to symptomatically discover the logical space of extimacy that lies behind the inner surface of consciousness, beyond the game of the reflections of the imaginary. This symptomatic discovery in turn produces what Lacan has described as a subversion with which the revolution is triggered and, more importantly, the revolutionary circle is opened, something changes and a historical spiral movement is assured.

We have, then, in addition to the reflection, the possibility of a symptomatic discovery of what is behind the mirror: a discovery that provokes a transformation. This is what we find eloquently illustrated in Marx's work when we read it in a Lacanian manner. This reading allows us to historicise Marx when we see how the world and its history are manifested, debated, realised and revolutionised in his thoughts and through what his thoughts do not only reflect, but simultaneously reflect and discover.

What is reflected and what is discovered of the historical world through Marx? What is reflected with frightening fidelity is what had already begun to be reflected in the English liberal political economy: the structure of the capitalist system in the nineteenth century. This material structure must have reached the development it had in Marx's time to be able to externalise itself as it did in the structuralism and materialism of Marx. If Marx was materialistic, it was not only because of everything we already know, but also, as Habermas and others have shown, because he lived in a materialistic world in which materiality reigned impudently; brazen material interest guided all actions, money bought everything, and the economic determined the ideological and dominated the social and the political.²⁹ Similarly, as Lacan showed, if Marx was the first structuralist, that was because globalised capitalism offered the best example of the structure of structuralists: a set of relations between exchange values determined by their differences and mutual relations, a symbolic universe without an exterior, a language without a metalanguage, an Other without

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²⁹ See Habermas 1968.

an Other³⁰ and a closed and unidimensional system comprised only of one qualitative dimension and its quantitative variations and proportions, devoid of otherness and negativity, as Marcuse already showed.³¹ In short, Marx's structuralism and materialism belonged to nineteenth-century capitalism, to capitalist modernity. This historical world was the one that faithfully reflected itself in the work of Marx.

However, in addition to what is cognitively reflected, there is what is symptomatically discovered: the covered-discovered by the reflection, the *extimate* processes that underlie external or internal states, the production of the product and the enunciation of the enunciated, but also the negativity of positivity, the misery of wealth and the abstract character of the most concrete. The discovery is made in the same reflection, in the open and hollow structure, in the imperceptible matter that must be calculated through the microscope of 'abstraction'.³² It is here, in the abstract, mathematical, empty and unfounded material structure, where we discover that the most apparent is the least apparent, that the evident is contradictory, that the whole is not-all, that the Other is barred and that the king is naked, that he is a proletarian, a subject without attributes, except to be alive.

The symptomatic discovery of Marx is what makes him not simply materialistic and structuralist, but what has been called, roughly, 'dialectical' and 'historical'. What is important here is that the structure and its economic materiality appear in Marx as what they are: precarious, transitory, crossed by history, by conflicts and contradictions, by tensions and struggles, by movement and by life, by disrupting desires and corrosive drives and also, on a genetic level, as products of negation, destruction and alienation, expropriation and privatisation, exploitation and pauperisation, fetishisation and reification. We can reject some of these conceptualisations, but we cannot deny that they designate in a more or less accurate and adequate manner what is revealingly embodied by the proletarian and understood as the historical truth of capitalism, as a symptom of how bourgeois society strips and reveals to Marx everything that he discovers.

The discovery of Marx is also a discovery of history. It is as historic, then, as the reflection. However, no matter how historical it is, it is not limited to the moment in which it occurs. Its moment is also ours. History does not stop being our history. We discover ourselves in the proletariat that is discovered through Marx. The particular discovery acquires a universal character.

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³⁰ Lacan 1968-1969, 1969-1970.

³¹ Marcuse 1964.

³² Marx 1867, p. xiii.

Generalising

The universal proletarian is at the centre of my proposal of Lacanian Marxism. Among the effects that Lacan has on my reading of Marx, one of the most important is the generalisation of the category of the proletariat.³³ This category allows me to describe a general experience of the subject and not only the particular situation of the industrial worker who does not have his own means of production, who has only his own life, and is forced to sell it as a labour force in exchange for a salary.

Like the proletarian studied by Marx, the subject conceptualised by Lacan (\$) must detach himself from his life that will be exploited as a labour force to execute the work of the unconscious, to pronounce the discourse of the Other, to express what is articulated by language (S1-S2). The subject, the universal proletarian, is thus exploited by the symbolic system of culture as the worker studied by Marx is exploited by the capitalist system, which is a historical particularisation of the symbolic system of culture. In both cases, while life belongs to the subject who loses it by selling it as a labour force, the work done by such force is owned and used by the Other, by language, by the system.

Language uses the work performed by the subject to produce a surplus value, a surplus of symbolic value, by which discourse is signifying or significant (S1-S2) and not insignificant or tautological (S1-S1). We confirm here the Lacanian idea that it is language that 'employs' the subject to express it instead of being the subject who utilises language to communicate.³⁴ In other words, it is not language that has a use value as a communication tool for the subject, but rather it is the subject who has a use value as an enunciating labour force exploited by language.

The use value of the labour force is the expression of all the signifiers articulated by language (S2). As for the exchange value, as with Marx's proletarian, it is the price of the subject's existence (S1). It is the signifier that allows the subject to exist in the symbolic system, the signifier with which he is identified, the only signifier he receives in exchange for the arduous work of the expression of all signifiers.

The identification of the subject with the signifier, his gain of an identity to exist symbolically, causes him to lose his life, which is alienated in the discourse of the Other. This life is used as a labour force for the production of a symbolic surplus value, a surplus of significance, which will certainly be earned by the Other, but at the price of a surplus enjoyment (*a*). What we have here, in the *plus-de-jouir*, is the surplus of *jouissance* that is gained when we lose the experience of our life, which is reduced to a role in the labour force of the Other, that is, the workforce of the unconscious.

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³³ Pavón-Cuellar 2009, 2010.

³⁴ Lacan 1969-1970, pp. 74-75.

What happens is that our life experience cannot be transferred to the Other who takes our life because the Other, behind his fetishised appearance, is pure insensitive language that cannot experience anything. Instead of experiencing our life, the Other simply *enjoys*, possess a labour force in which our life and possible experience are dissolved. Correlatively, instead of the experience of our life, we experience our alienation in the fetishism of the signifier. We suffer the dispossession of our life in its possession by language. We feel our inertia in the Other's *jouissance*, in its enjoyment of our life, in the satisfaction of the death drive.

If *jouissance* is the satisfaction of the death drive, the *plus-de-jouir* is the surplus of *jouissance* that is produced by losing life, by transmuting the living into the dead, the real into the symbolic, the vital existence of the worker into the death essence of capital and capitalism, the life spent by the subject on the surplus value gained by the Other, the experience of life in the possession of labour power, the generous life experience converted into deadly possessive *jouissance*. This is how *having* supplants *being*, private property replaces the community and the sexual relationship and the social bond are replaced by the signifying chain between things. But this is not something that is only experienced by the workers exploited in capitalism. The proletarian condition is widespread.

We know from Lacan that proletarianisation is the only 'social symptom'.³⁵ Everyone in society is, in a way, a proletarian. Even the capitalists lose the community, the social bond, the being and the experience of their life that is converted into the possession and enjoyment of capital. This was something that Marx understood very well when he showed how the will and consciousness of the capitalists were possessed by capital or, rather, how the vampire of capital derived its existence from the capitalists who obtained their enjoyment, their possessive essence, from capital, but at the price of the experience of their own lives.³⁶

While the capitalists gain their enjoyment from capital, capital obtains its very life from the capitalists. This exchange is found in the different relationships that we establish in the symbolic system. In all relationships, subjects embody what represents them. The signifier receives from the subject its literalness, its conscience and its will, its body and its life, while the subject acquires the deadly enjoyment of its identity, the very being of the signifier that will represent it for another signifier.

The exchange is apparently fair: while the signifier gives a being to the subject, the subject gives an existence to the signifier. And yet, Marx shows us here that there is a trap, a scam and an injustice. Where is this

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³⁵ Lacan 1975, p. 187

³⁶ Marx 1867.

injustice that justifies the frustration, indignation and insurrection of the subject?

First, in quantitative terms, subjects give the Other more existence than the being they receive from it. While we give our whole life to express all the discourse of the Other and all the signifiers articulated by language (S2), the Other pays us only the signifiers we need to identify with them and be who we are in the symbolic sense (S1). This general surplus of the predicates over the subject, of the signifying chain over a single link in the chain, is the general situation that is revealed in the particular case of the surplus of use value over the exchange value of the labour force of the proletariat.

Secondly, in qualitative terms, there is another injustice in the relation of the subject with the signifier. While the signifier obtains its existence effectively from the subject, the subject receives its being from the signifier only in an apparent manner. The subject, in fact, will never be the signifier that represents it. The signifier will never coincide with the subject. The subject will never be completely absorbed by discourse. Hence our alienation (*Entfremdung*) in the Other (S2) implies our division (*Entäusserung*) as subjects (\$). We are never what we are. We never get confused with what we have. This is also why there can be exploitation: the subject can be exploited because he is excluded from what exploits him.

We come here to a fundamental rule of the system: the exploited could not be exploited if he were not excluded with respect to the fruits of his exploitation. The surplus value cannot be accessible to those who produce it. Exploitation requires exclusion. This is why inequality necessitates a separation between the unequal, discrimination requires segregation, workers must remain in their poor suburbs, and high border walls and harsh migratory laws must protect the wealth of Europeans and Americans against Asians, Africans and Latin Americans.

In general, there is no place for the producers in the world that they themselves have contributed to produce. The discourse must eradicate the being that has enunciated it. Linguistics abstracts from its enunciators. The experience of our life does not belong to us, but is forbidden to us; it is the enjoyment of the Other.

Confirming

The symbolic system, both in general and in its capitalist particularisation, excludes the same subjects who are exploited by it. And, nevertheless, these subjects are possessed by the system as if by a demon. The Other manifests in their actions, in their words, in their thoughts and even in their deepest feelings.

Nothing seems to escape the Other. In Marx, for example, the capitalist system, capital itself, is the one that acts, speaks, thinks and feels through the capitalist, but it is also the one that works with the labour force of the worker, which, for that reason, is a component of capital,

the most important component, the capital of capital, variable capital. To be generalised, this conception of Marx does not require a Lacanian reading. Marx himself generalised it when he unravelled the operation of the successive systems of production at the very centre of subjectivity, when he saw an 'open book of psychology' in the field of industry³⁷ or when he referred to the machines that absorb knowledge, skills and the other capacities of the 'social brain'.³⁸ We have a general theory, which, by being Lacanized, can only be confirmed. This confirmation is the most that Lacanian Marxism can offer here.

From the perspective of Lacanian Marxism, as in that of Marx, we think on the outside through language, with the symbolic system of culture. It is out there, not inside our head, where our thinking organ resides. It is an external, cultural-symbolic device, not an internal, organic-cerebral organ. We do not think with the cells of the brain, but with enunciations, with social interactions, with historical events or with economic operations. These are the constitutive elements and the basic processes of our psyche. Our inner life is external. We come, once again, to the Lacanian concept of *extimacy*: the most intimate is external. I leave myself when I go deeper into myself, the ego is two-dimensional and I cannot enter myself without crossing through my imaginary appearance in the mirror.³⁹

Extimacy is only one of multiple concepts, among which there is also that of the unconscious understood as exteriority or as politics or as the discourse of the Other, through which a Lacanian reading can confirm the traditional monistic orientation of Marxism and its correlative opposition to any dualistic perspective that remains trapped in the inner/outer or mind/body dualities. In the same sense, Lacan can also serve to confirm the convincing historical explanation of dualism we read in Marx and especially in Engels, with its three acts: first, at the origin of civilisation, the division of classes; then, on the basis of class division, the division between manual and intellectual work, with the dominant class monopolising the intellectual work and condemning the dominated class to do the manual labour, in such a way that people belonging to the former class think with their minds what people belonging to the latter class perform with their bodies; and finally, because of the division of labour, the mind/body duality appears since the mental and the corporeal, when situated and developed separately into two classes, begin to be separated and differentiated one from the other.⁴⁰

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37 Marx 1844, p. 151.

38 Marx 1857-1858, p. 220.

39 Lacan 1954-1955.

40 See Engels 1876.

A Lacanian reading allows us to confirm the process described by Marx and Engels by rediscovering it at another level through the Hegelian relationship between the master and the slave. As in Marxism, the position of the master, that of power, will have the privilege of consciousness, while the position of the slave is that of the body, that of the unconscious. The soul/body duality has its origin, here also, in a dominant/-dominated duality. Everything begins with a dialectic of domination that unfolds in the discourse of the master with its difference between the master-signifier (S1) of the consciousness that dominates and all the other signifiers (S2), namely those of the discourse of the Other, those of the unconscious that works with the labour force of the subject, with his life and with his body (\$).⁴¹

The interesting thing about the Lacanian reading is that it allows us to appreciate the way in which the historical explanation given by Marx and Engels not only refers to the origin of human civilisation, but also to each discursive gesture, to each enunciation, by which subjects are situated in a position of power, move away from their body and appear as pure souls or psyches, as agents of cognition or thought, by pretending to overcome their unconscious, control their discourse and dominate their body, as if it belonged to them and not to the Other. Thus, a power relationship, a class division with the correlative separation between mental and manual labour, constantly divides each subject between an authoritarian mind and an obedient body. The perspectives of Marx and Engels are confirmed through a Lacanian reading that also allows us to confirm the Foucaultian inversion of the Platonic description of the body as a jail of the soul. The truth is the reverse: 'the soul is the prison of the body'.⁴²

The soul, whether it is conceived as such or as consciousness or spirit or reason or the psyche or otherwise, is the fundamental seat of power. This usually goes unnoticed because the mental domination usually takes the opposite form of freedom for a subject identified with his soul, be it *homo religiosus*, *spiritualis*, *rationalis* or *psychologicus*. In all cases, something dominates us when we believe that we are dominating ourselves and thus freeing ourselves, and even when we believe that we are 'freeing our own body', as Marcuse showed.⁴³

What dominates us through the soul? It does not matter whether we respond by referring to the Lacanian concept of the master-signifier or to the Marxist-Engelsian notion of the dominant ideology understood as the ideology of the ruling class. The important thing is to understand that it is something that is not us, does not concern us and does not even

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41 Lacan 1969-1970.

42 Foucault 1975, p. 34.

43 Marcuse 1964, pp. 89-11.

correspond to our desires or our interests. What dominates us through our soul is rather something that possesses us, represents us and usurps our identity in such a way that we can act against our interests and against our wishes. The soul is necessary, therefore, for the subjects to turn against themselves and help their master to master them.

Our domination requires, then, the support of our soul. This can be well seen, as I have tried to show, in Spanish colonialism that uses evangelisation to generate a soul, to dig an internal world, to build a mental prison in those Amerindian, though not all of them, who had managed to resist the stupid temptation of the soul. In the indigenous communities in which the soul did not exist, the non-existence of a soul correlated with the absence of private property, of social classes and of the division of labour. The processes of colonisation, appropriation and primitive accumulation demanded, and continue demanding at every moment and in each one of us, a process of psychologisation.⁴⁴

Completing

The development of psychology is inseparable from the advance of capitalism. The advancing capital is personified by the capitalist, who, as a bourgeois, is also the prototype of the *homo psychologicus*, the man identified with his soul or psyche, that is, with the fact of being intelligent, thoughtful, calculating, self-absorbed, introspective, depressed, stressed, frustrated, sentimental, in love, jealous, possessive, interested, capricious and so on. Marx and Engels demonstrated that the ego, with its personality, ideas and emotions, constitutes the most intimate private property of the bourgeoisie, the possession of its own existence, the enjoyment of itself, the confusion of being with having in the psychological objectification of the subject.⁴⁵ However, by completing the Marxist demonstration with a Lacanian observation, we should add that the bourgeois cannot limit themselves to enjoy this self, but must verify it again and again through their own reflection on the surface of the mirror, which makes them impose it on the whole society through disciplinary devices, ideological apparatuses of the State, various sectors of the cultural industry and many other specular means.

The *homo psychologicus* becomes as universal as its internal mental world. However, as we have seen, the imposed and universalised mind is not neutral. It is inseparably linked with the dominant class, reflects it and can serve as a means for the dominated to help dominate them by dominating themselves. This may be the case for many reasons, including the origin of the mental sphere as a class privilege, its imaginary specular constitution and its monopolisation and production-reproduction by the

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44 Pavón-Cuéllar 2016.

45 Marx and Engels 1846, chapter III.

ruling class, whose members devote their lives to cultivating their mind and spreading it in society.

In modern society, just as psychology is predominantly bourgeois, so the bourgeoisie is preponderantly psychological. Let us reiterate that the bourgeois class is the *homo psychologicus* class. It is, so to speak, a mental class that sometimes seems to have neither body nor external world and to obey exclusively the 'psychological factor', the ideas, emotions and other impulses coming from the internal world, as Plekhanov observed in certain literature of the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ There is nothing here but intrigues in which souls without bodies participate. The corporal, particularly in its sexual expression, is repressed and reappears in a symptomatic way in Freud's hysterics. As if by chance, this symptomatic return of the body and its drives repressed in the mental class, in the dominant class composed of the intellectual workers, occurs at approximately the same time as the symptomatic return of the repressed mental potentialities of the dominated class, the corporal class of the manual workers of Marx and Marxism. In both cases, among the bourgeoisie and among the workers, the symptom is the irruption of the truth of monism in the dualistic ideological constructions.

A present task of my Lacanian Marxist proposal is to examine how one of the consequences of the Marxist findings, the emergence of the inconceivable proletarian soul under the form of class consciousness, is perfectly correlated with the Freudian discovery, the revelation of the unconscious where the body of the bourgeois has been confined. The problem is that such discoveries seem to have led not to the reconstitution and liberation of total humanity through the overcoming of the mental-bourgeois and corporal-proletarian human halves, but to the proletarianisation of the bourgeois and the embourgeoisement of the proletariat that Lacan perceived so well in showing how the working class regained a master consciousness, a 'master knowledge', while the bourgeois recovered a 'slave body'.⁴⁷ After all, in the kind of society in which we live, there are only models of dominant souls and dominated bodies. No other models are available! This is also something that can be deduced from the point raised by Lacan.

A Lacanian reading allows us to complete Marx and Engels, not only by considering the bourgeois unconscious correlate of the class consciousness of the proletarians, but also by strategically foreseeing the consequences of both correlative expressions of the return of the repressed. We may fear, for instance, that such symptomatic irruptions of the truth of monism do not have the expected subversive effects because of an irremediably dualistic and classist functioning of

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46 Plekhanov 1907, pp. 98-99.

47 Lacan 1968-1969, pp. 172-173, 1969-1970, pp. 20-35.

subjectivity, society, history and culture. This was already observed by the Frankfurtians, particularly by Adorno, and made them opt for the theoretical critique of the dualist-class division, of the tearing of the individual and society, instead of a monist-communist solution that could only come from practice and that in any case still did not seem possible.⁴⁸

Why would it seem that it is still impossible today, and perhaps always impossible, to overcome dualism and classism? We know the Lacanian response that refers to the real as impossible, to castration, sexuation and the non-existence of the sexual relationship.⁴⁹ This response can complete the forgotten intuition of Marx and Engels about the deep link between patriarchy and class society.

Marx and Engels highlight the conjectural simultaneous emergence of the exploitation of man by man and the exploitation of woman by man. According to this hypothesis, the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy coincides with the dissolution of the original community and primitive communism. How is it that private property and the resulting oppressive appropriation of the other originate at the same time as the possession and oppression of women in the monogamous family?

We know the Engelsian explanation of the father who exercises his power over the woman to be sure that the heirs of his private property will also be his children.⁵⁰ This explanation is crucial, but incomplete, because it already presupposes the existence of private property that should still be clarified and it thus frames a situation in which there is no longer either matriarchy or communism, which were practically the same thing and which ceased to exist at the same time and not one after the other. We must still explain why the matriarchal community disappears and gives way to patriarchy and private property.

What if there was a strictly logical relationship between patriarchy and private property, between patriarchal masculinity and possession-possessiveness, between having the phallus and having in general understood as phallic enjoyment, as well as a strictly logical relationship between being the phallus and the being that is at stake in desire, between being a woman and an inevitably common and singular being, between femininity and community, between matriarchy and communism? These relationships, which must be nuanced and complicated through the Lacanian logic of sexuation, have already served me to Lacanianly complete what was just outlined by Marx and Engels.⁵¹ The Lacanian Marxist result already has several old precedents in the field of Freudian

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48 E. g. Adorno 1955.

49 Lacan 1968-1969, 1969-1970, 1971, 1971-1972.

50 Engels 1884.

51 Pavón-Cuéllar 2017b.

Marxism, among which those of Erich Fromm⁵² and Oswald de Andrade⁵³ stand out. They and others elucidated what would later be well sensed in feminism: that the anti-capitalist struggle is futile as long as it is not also anti-patriarchal.

If we must face patriarchy to fight efficaciously against capitalism, it is not only because capital rests on the possessive logical element of the patriarchal function, but because this same function involves another element that is also at the base of the capitalist system, an element that was pointed out by Lacan⁵⁴ and emphasised by Jorge Alemán,⁵⁵ and that has also recently allowed me to add something to help completing the Marxist intuition of the link between capitalism and patriarchy.⁵⁶ I refer to the masculine *for-all* and its contradiction to the feminine *not-all*. While the *not-all* respects the singularity on a case-by-case basis, the *for-all* reduces the singular to the exceptional, to the exception to the rule, or tends to dissolve it into a generality in which there are no singular cases that are qualitatively different from each other, but simply individual expressions of the general category or units that can be counted and calculated in quantitative terms.

Marx and several of his followers have studied how for several centuries, since capitalism has progressed unstoppably in the world, the quantitative dimension of money and exchange value has tended to gain ground over the qualitative dimension of things themselves and their use value. This evolution implies the most diverse transformations, such as those that make us go from the unquantifiable truth to a supposedly quantifiable reality or from knowledge to data and information. My Lacanian reading of such evolution, which aims to complete the Marxist vision, has not only raised the insufficient and arguable hypothesis of a progressive symbolisation and derealisation of the world, but also the conjecture of the advancement of the generalising and homogenising masculine logic of the *for-all* to the detriment of the irreducibly singular feminine element of the *not-all*. This conjecture is politically relevant because it could serve to explain the development of the masses at the expense of the communities, that is, the progression of aggregated and massified interchangeable individuals at the expense of community integrations between different subjects. The same conjecture could also explain the development of quantitative inequalities between income or capabilities or anything else over the qualitative differences between subjects who are so different that they cannot be judged unequal.

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52 Fromm 1934.

53 Andrade 1950.

54 Lacan 1972-1973.

55 Alemán 2013.

56 Pavón-Cuéllar and Boggio Éwanjé-Épée 2018.

In the absence of conclusion

Both the development of inequality at the expense of difference and the advancement of the masses at the expense of communities are victories of capitalism over the subject of communism, but also over the subject of psychoanalysis. The irreducibly singular and absolutely different Freudian subject is the only one that can effectively organise with others to fight for communism or to coherently join and knot with others to form the community for which the communists fight. And this subject has nothing to do with the generalised, interchangeable and summable individuals of the masses, of capitalism and psychology.

The totalised individuality, closed on itself in its general definition, is the antithesis of what remains incomplete, open, undefined, pending, in suspense. The subjects of psychoanalysis and communism respond to the not-all by which they doubt, ignore, desire, struggle, organise and knot with others, make and unmake groups, discuss in endless assemblies and try in vain to complete themselves. On the contrary, the individual of capitalism and psychology obeys the for-all rule that guides most of the psychological tests, *prêt-à-porter* diagnoses of the DSM, opinion polls, mass production for undifferentiated consumers, *emojicons* and *likes* of social networks, the bourgeois democracy of the summable votes and the anatomo-political and biopolitical devices elucidated by Foucault.

The dominant ideology in capitalism, the same that gives rise to psychology, makes us imagine that it is the collective that is composed of individuals, while Marxism and psychoanalysis have taught us that it is individuality that is made up of group components that are knotted in it, namely social relations for Marx⁵⁷ or mass identifications for Freud.⁵⁸ It is the Other who becomes One, who makes the One exist, and not the One who already exists and relates to the Other. There is, then, no socialisation of the individual, as Piaget thought, but an individualisation of the social, as Vygotsky recognised.⁵⁹ Or better yet, there is a generation of individuals in a discourse of the Other that only retroactively, *après coup*, appears as transindividual. In this discourse that does not close in a totality and that is not the same for all, that is not-all and different for everyone, the subject of Marx and Freud is not an individual subject among others, but the result that is always still postponed, always indefinable and evasive of a convergence and unique combination, which is irreducibly singular and absolutely different, of innumerable signifiers corresponding to individual identifications.

The subjects of Marx and Freud are intrinsically subversive because they resist in one way or another that which defines them. They do not

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57 Marx 1845, Marx and Engels 1846.

58 Freud 1921.

59 Vygotsky 1934.

allow themselves to be caught in any signifier, be it the race, the nation, the father or man of patriarchy or any symbol of power, success, health or normality, especially the most important and irresistible of all in capitalism, namely money, something whose only use value is its exchange value, pure possession, principle of possessiveness or quintessence of enjoyment.

Money is the most powerful of the signifiers because it is the most perfect, the purest, the most arbitrary, that is, as Lacan pointed out, the 'most destructive of any significance', the least dependent on a precise meaning, since it can mean everything by being able to buy everything.⁶⁰ However, as Marx remarked brilliantly, money is never enough to buy everything, as its 'quantitative limitation' always prevents the realisation of its 'qualitatively unlimited nature'.⁶¹ This inherent characteristic of the signifier produces the insatiable avidity, the typical enjoyment of capitalism, for which we try to possess more and more, to have more and more money to fulfil all that the signifier is and offers us, to really possess it, a result that is impossible to realise in any way.

By resisting and not just giving in to the enjoyment of money, the subject of Marxism and psychoanalysis, the subject of history and desire, is radically subversive to capitalism. Of course, capital always finds a way to recover what subverts it. There is no need to remember what the communist parties and ego psychologies have been. However, in addition to what is recoverable, there is always something irrecoverable, incurable, in the truth that is revealed symptomatically through Marx and Freud. This makes everything in the capitalist reality conjure itself against the revelation. Everything is like an immense reactive formation to refute Freud and especially Marx. Everything is as it is to show that there is no truth in the truth of our uniqueness and our community. As I tried to explain it once when describing an experience in Tokyo, communism is a truth, the one posed as such by Sen Katayama, that internally moulds, in a negative way, everything that works so impeccably in the Japanese manifestation of capitalism, everything that is possible and visible, everything that is done so that the truth is invisible and impossible.⁶²

Here we must understand the principle of negativity whereby truth is not confused with a reality that Lacan correctly describes as imaginary. Reality is always so wrong and misleading, especially in capitalism, that it cannot but differ from the truth and contradict it. In fact, especially in capitalist society, it is precisely to contradict the truth that reality is what it is when it is constituted ideologically. That is why the truth always has a strange, counterintuitive, incomprehensible aspect, as in the work of Lacan.

The Lacanization of Marxism, like that of psychoanalysis, can also

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⁶⁰ Lacan 1956, p. 37.

⁶¹ Marx 1867, p. 91.

⁶² Pavón-Cuéllar 2017c.

serve to preserve the truth of what is Lacanized, preserving it as it is: incomprehensible, counterintuitive, strange. Thus Lacan may also help to prevent capitalism from reabsorbing and recovering what Marx and his followers discovered. Lacanian Marxism should be for now, at least for now, an entity that is still too irrational to be assimilated to capitalist rationality. Perhaps it can never be rationalised, just as it was never possible to carry out the rationalisation of the encounter between Marxism and psychoanalysis in surrealism, in which, as if by chance, we found the first Lacanian Marxist, the brilliant René Crevel⁶³, who perhaps should have been our starting point.

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⁶³ Crevel 1933, see Pavón-Cuéllar 2014b.

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Volume 6 /
Issue 1

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Volume 6 /
Issue 1