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Introduction

The journal *Problemi* was established in 1962. It was founded by the then Socialist Youth Organization and its initial aim was to provide a platform for the younger generation of philosophers, social theorists, writers, poets, artists, people working in humanities etc. It would be difficult to disentangle a common denominator to the variety of young authors, but one could provisionally say that as far as theory is concerned it was initially based in the critical theory of the Frankfurt School in the broadest sense, while in literature and art the journal promoted modernism and avant-garde movements. The journal went through tumultuous times in the sixties and seventies, with a number of groups of different orientations (among them notably Heideggerians) negotiating a difficult cohabitation under the same label. The group whose work was based on structuralism and psychoanalysis, which joined the journal in the late sixties, was just one of the groups. In the eighties, the tensions were largely resolved by the establishment of two new journals, *Nova revija* and *Literatura*, where the other groups could get their proper space, while the ‘structuralism and psychoanalysis’ group, which increasingly developed in the direction of Lacanian theory, became the core group of the journal. In the beginning of the nineties, with the end of socialism and of Yugoslavia, the Society for Theoretical Psychoanalysis (established in 1981) became the official publisher of the journal (along with the book series *Analecta*). — This is a very brief reminder of the journal’s convoluted history, something that would demand a much longer elaboration.

There is a paradox with the establishment of *Problemi International*, the English edition of the journal, whose first issue is launched now in 2017. Since the mid-eighties, *Problemi* has already been massively international. Slavoj Žižek made his big international break-through with the publication of *The Sublime Object of Ideology* in 1989, and has since become one of the best known and most widely discussed theorists globally. He published more than thirty books in English since, and his work has been translated into nearly thirty languages. Several other authors followed suit, including the new generation over the last years. The paradox is that the vast majority of texts, ideas, and arguments that gained international fame and reputation (often described as the ‘Ljubljana School’) have been originally published in *Problemi*, a journal of limited circulation and published in a very small language (two million speakers). *Problemi* has been international for decades, the ideas stemming from this modest journal have gained global audience, while only few people are aware of the point of origin. So, the launch of *Problemi International*, which is to become a regular publication accompanying and supplementing the hard copy edition in Slovene, is a belated actualization of what this journal has been, if not ‘always already,’ then for a very long time.

Problemi has also always been international in the opposite direction, namely by the space, time, energy and care devoted to the translation of most relevant contemporary theorists into Slovene, in the majority of cases providing the first Slovene translations for a number of key figures (notably Lacan, but also many others). The number of international collaborators, whose work was translated in the journal, constantly grew, and it is with great pleasure that the international issue now features our international friends and collaborators alongside with the Slovene authors.

Vivat, crescat, floreat.

Mladen Dolar

The Varieties of Surplus

Slavoj Žižek

The Paradox of Lustgewinn

Lacan begins the eleventh week of his seminar *Les non-dupes errent* (1973–74) with a straightforward question directed back at himself: “what was it that Lacan, who is here present, invented?” He answers the question “like that, to get things going: *objet a*” (Lacan 1973–74). His answer is not the idea that “desire is the desire of the Other,” or “the unconscious is structured like a language,” or “there is no sexual relationship,” or some other candidate from the list of usual suspects: Lacan immediately emphasizes that his choice is not just one among the possible ones but THE choice.

Objet a has a long history in Lacan’s teaching, preceding by decades his systematic references to the analysis of commodities in Marx’s *Capital* (Marx 1976). But it is undoubtedly this reference to Marx, especially to Marx’s notion of surplus-value (*Mehrwert*), that enabled Lacan to deploy his “mature” notion of *objet a* as surplus-enjoyment (*plus-de-jouir*, *Mehrlust*). The predominant motif, which permeates all of Lacan’s references to Marx’s analysis of commodities, is the structural homology between Marx’s surplus-value and what Lacan’s baptized surplus-enjoyment. Freud called this phenomenon *Lustgewinn*, a “gain of pleasure,” which does not designate a simple stepping up of pleasure but the additional pleasure (the “bonus” or “yield of pleasure” in Strachey’s English translation) provided by the very formal detours

in the subject's effort to attain pleasure. Think of Brecht's *Me-ti* (see Brecht 2016) which, in its retelling of the history of revolutionary movements in Europe, transposes them into an imaginary China (Trotsky becomes To-tsi, etc.): our re-translation of pseudo-Chinese names back into their European original ("Aha, To-tsi is Trotsky!") makes the text much more pleasurable—just imagine how much *Me-Ti* would have lost if it were to be written as a direct report on European history. Or—the most elementary example—how much a process of seduction gains with its intricate innuendos, false denials, etc.: these detours are not just cultural complications or sublimations circulating around some hardcore Real. This hardcore Real is retroactively constituted through secondary detours—"in itself" it remains a fiction.

In libidinal economy, there is no "pure" pleasure principle undisturbed by the perversities of compulsion-to-repeat, which cannot be accounted for in the terms of the pleasure principle. In the same way, in the sphere of the exchange of commodities, there is no direct closed circle of exchanging a commodity for money in order to buy another commodity; the circle of simple commodity-exchange is not yet corroded by the perverse logic of buying and selling commodities in order to get more money, i.e., by the logic in which money is no longer just a mediator in the exchange of commodities but becomes an end-in-itself. The only reality is the reality of spending money in order to get more money. What Marx calls C–M–C, the closed exchange of a commodity for money in order to buy another commodity, is ultimately a fiction whose function it is to provide a "natural" foundation of the process of exchange ("It's not just about money and more money, the whole point of exchange is to satisfy concrete human needs!"). M–C–M' is the symptomal point at which a gap or reversal which was operative from the very beginning, even in the simplest commodity exchange, breaks out into the open.

In short, in the same way that *better is the enemy of good*, more pleasure is the enemy of pleasure... The process of the

“gain-of-pleasure” or *Lustgewinn* operates through repetition: one misses the goal and one repeats the movement, trying again and again, so that the true aim is no longer the intended goal but the repetitive movement itself of attempting to reach it. One can also put it in terms of form and content where “form” stands for the form, the mode of approaching the desired content: while the desired content (object) promises to provide pleasure, a surplus-enjoyment is gained by the very form (procedure) of pursuing the goal. Here is the classic example of how oral drive functions: while the goal of sucking a breast is to get fed by milk, the libidinal gain is provided by the repetitive movement of sucking which thus becomes an end-in-itself. Is something similar not at work in a (dubious) story about Robespierre often mentioned by the critics of Jacobinism? When one of Robespierre’s allies was accused of acting in an illegitimate way, he demanded (to the surprise of those close to him) that the charges be taken seriously and proposed the immediate constitution of a special commission to examine the allegations; when one of his friends expressed his worry about the fate of the accused (“What if he is found guilty? Will this not be bad news for the Jacobins?”), Robespierre calmly smiled back: “Don’t worry about that, somehow we’ll save the accused ... but now we have the commission!” The commission which will remain at the disposal of the Jacobins to purge their enemies—for Robespierre, this was the true gain of what appeared to be a concession to the enemies. Another figure of *Lustgewinn* is found in the reversal that characterizes hysteria: the surrendering to pleasure reverts into pleasure of/in renunciation, repression of desire reverts into desire of repression, etc. In all these cases, gain occurs at a “performative” level: it is generated by the very performance of working towards a goal, not by reaching the goal.

Imagine a Walmart store closing in the evening, with many shopping carts full of items thrown into them found among the shelves; they were mostly abandoned there by members of the newly impoverished middle-class families who are no longer able to buy things. A whole family might visit the store, go through the

ritual of shopping (throwing things needed or desired into a cart) and then just abandon the full cart and leave the store. In this sad way, they obtain the surplus-enjoyment of shopping in its pure isolated form without buying anything. And are we not often engaged in similar activities even if their “irrationality” is not so directly visible? We do something—including shopping itself—with a clear purpose, but we are really indifferent towards this purpose since the true satisfaction is brought about by the activity itself? The example of Walmart merely lays bare something that is already at work in “real” shopping. This example also enables us to perceive clearly the link between *Lustgewinn* and surplus-value: with *Lustgewinn*, the aim of the process is not its official goal (satisfaction of a need), but the expanded self-reproduction of the process itself. The true aim of sucking the mother’s breast, for example, is not to get fed by milk but the pleasure brought about by the activity of sucking itself. In an exactly homologous way, the true aim of the process of exchange is not the appropriation of a commodity that would satisfy a need of mine but the expanded self-reproduction of the capital itself. This process is by definition infinite, without a final point.

And does exactly the same not hold for bureaucracy? There are two memorable scenes in Terry Gillian’s *Brazil* which perfectly stage the crazy excess of bureaucratic *jouissance* perpetuating itself in its auto-circulation. After the protagonist’s plumbing breaks down and he leaves a message to the official repair service for urgent help, Robert De Niro’s character enters the apartment. He is a mythical-mysterious criminal whose subversive activity is that he listens in on the emergency calls and then immediately visits the customer, repairing his plumbing for free, bypassing the inefficient state repair service’s paperwork. Indeed, in a bureaucracy caught in this vicious cycle of *jouissance*, the ultimate crime is to simply and directly do the job one is supposed to do—if a state repair service actually does its job, this is (at the level of its unconscious libidinal economy) considered an unfortunate by-product, since

the bulk of its energy goes into inventing complicated administrative procedures that enable it to invent ever-new obstacles and thus postpone indefinitely the work. In another scene taking place in the corridors of a vast government agency, we meet a group of people permanently running around, a leader (big-shot bureaucrat) followed by a bunch of lower administrators who shout at him all the time, asking him for a specific opinion or decision, with him nervously spurting out fast “efficient” replies (“This is to be done till tomorrow latest!” “Check that report!” “No, cancel that appointment!” ...). The appearance of nervous hyper-activity is, of course, a staged performance which masks a self-indulgent nonsensical spectacle of imitating or playing “efficient administration” — again, a case of *Mehrlust*, of the surplus-pleasure gained by the very unending bureaucratic performance...

But if one wants to see a much more radical, clinically-clear case of the opposition of pleasure and enjoyment, it is enough to take a look at Joseph Goebbels’s (in)famous speech on total war (“*Wollt Ihr Den Totalen Krieg?*”, “Do you want a total war?”) delivered in *Sportpalast* in Berlin on February 18 1943. In it, Goebbels addressed the public shocked by the Stalingrad defeat: he fully admitted the difficult (if not desperate) situation, and then asked the public ten questions (and, of course, got an enthusiastic YES in response to each of them). Here are some fragments of the speech:

I ask you: Are you and the German people willing to work, if the Führer orders, 10, 12 and if necessary 14 hours a day and to give everything for victory? [...] I ask you: Do you want total war? If necessary, do you want a war more total and radical than anything that we can even imagine today? [...] I ask you: Is your confidence in the Führer greater, more faithful and more unshakable than ever before? Are you absolutely and completely ready to follow him wherever he goes and do all that is necessary to bring the war to a victorious end? [...] Tenth and lastly, I ask you: Do you agree that above all in war, according to the National Socialist Party platform,

the same rights and duties should apply to all, that the homeland should bear the heavy burdens of the war together, and that the burdens should be shared equally between high and low and rich and poor? [...] I have asked; you have given me your answers. You are part of the people, and your answers are those of the German people. You have told our enemies what they needed to hear so that they will have no illusions or false ideas. [...] Now, people rise up and let the storm break loose! (Goebbels 1998)

What these questions demand is a gigantic surrender to pleasure and more sacrifice, even sacrifice brought to extreme, “absolute and complete”; Goebbels promises a war “more total and radical than we can even imagine today” with the civilians working up to 14 hours a day. And yet, his ecstatically shouting voice and weirdly grimaced face at the climactic moments of the speech bear witness to a *jouissance* in renunciation itself which reaches beyond imagination and approaches the absolute. In these moments, the outwards-directed rage subtly turns into passivity, as if the face is twisted in an orgasmic way, passively experiencing a painful lust—a case of “pleasure in pain” if there ever was one, an expression of a distorted Kantian sublime in which the pain of renunciations coincides with an ecstatic witnessing of a noumenal dimension.

This is why the humanitarians who bemoan “the end of Europe” should be taught the great Hegelian lesson: when someone is painting a picture of Europe’s overall and utmost moral degeneration, the question to be raised is in what way such a stance is complicit in what it criticizes. No wonder that, with the exception of humanitarian appeals to compassion and solidarity, the effects of such compassionate self-flagellation are null. If we in the West really want to overcome racism, the first thing to do is to leave behind this Politically Correct process of endless self-culpabilization. Although Pascal Bruckner’s critique of today’s Left often approaches the ridicule, this doesn’t prevent him from occasionally generating pertinent insights—one cannot but agree with him when he detects in the European Politically Correct

self-flagellation the inverted clinging to one's superiority. Whenever the West is attacked, its first reaction is not aggressive defense but self-probing: "What did we do to deserve it? We are ultimately to be blamed for the evils of the world, the Third World catastrophes and terrorist violence are merely reactions to our crimes..." The positive form of the White Man's Burden (responsibility for civilizing the colonized barbarians) is thus merely replaced by its negative form (the burden of white man's guilt): if we can no longer be the benevolent masters of the Third World, we can at least be the privileged source of evil, patronizingly depriving them of their responsibility for their fate (if a Third World country engages in terrible crimes, it is never their full responsibility, but always an after-effect of colonization: they merely imitate what the colonial masters were doing, etc.). This privilege is the *Mehrlust* earned by self-culpabilization.

Along these lines, the Politically Correct logic often mobilizes the mechanism of what one could call "delegated sensitivity"¹: its line of argumentation is often "I am tough enough, I am not hurt by sexist and racist hate speech or by making fun of the minorities, but I am speaking for all those who may be hurt by it." The point of reference are thus the presupposed naive Others, those who need protection because they will miss the irony or cannot stand attacks. It's yet another case of what Robert Pfaller called "interpassivity" (Pfaller 2014): I delegate the passive experience of a hurt sensitivity onto a naive other, thereby enacting the other's infantilization. That's why we should ask ourselves if Political Correctness is really something that belongs to the Left—is it not a strategy of defense against radical Leftist demands, a way to neutralize antagonisms instead of openly confronting them? Many of the oppressed feel clearly how the PC strategy often just adds insult to injury: while oppression remains, they—the oppressed—now even have to be grateful for how liberals try to protect them...

¹ I owe this term and point to Jela Krečič, Ljubljana.

One of the most deplorable by-products of the wave of refugees that entered Europe in the Winter of 2015–16 was the explosion of moralist outrage among many Left liberals: “Europe is betraying its legacy of universal freedom and solidarity! It lost its moral compass! It treats war refugees like infested intruders, preventing their entry with barbed wire, locking them up in concentration camps!” But what if the authors of such appeals knew very well that they contribute nothing to the terrible plight of the refugees, that the ultimate effect of their interventions is just to feed the anti-immigrant resentment? What if secretly they know very well that what they demand will never happen since it would trigger an instant populist revolt in Europe? Why, then, are they doing it? There is only one consistent answer: the true aim of their activity is not really to help the refugees but the *Lustgewinn* brought about by their accusations, the feeling of their own moral superiority over others—the more refugees are rejected, the more anti-immigrant populism grows, the more these Beautiful Souls feel vindicated: “You see, the horror goes on, we are right!”

Surplus-Power, Surplus-Knowledge

The next step to be made here is to grasp the link between this surplus and lack: it’s not just that surplus fills in a lack, surplus and lack are the two sides of the same coin. Hegel produces here the exact formula of this paradoxical relationship between lack and surplus apropos “rabble”:

§ 245 When the masses begin to decline into poverty, (*a*) the burden of maintaining them at their ordinary standard of living might be directly laid on the wealthier classes, or they might receive the means of livelihood directly from other public sources of wealth (e.g. from the endowments of rich hospitals, monasteries, and other foundations). In either case, however, the needy would receive subsistence directly, not by means of their work, and this would

violate the principle of civil society and the feeling of individual independence and self-respect in its individual members. (*b*) As an alternative, they might be given subsistence indirectly through being given work, i.e. the opportunity to work. In this event the volume of production would be increased, but the evil consists precisely in an excess of production and in the lack of a proportionate number of consumers who are themselves also producers, and thus it is simply intensified by both of the methods (*a*) and (*b*) by which it is sought to alleviate it. It hence becomes apparent that despite an *excess of wealth* civil society is *not rich enough*, i.e. its own resources are insufficient to check excessive poverty and the creation of a penurious rabble. (Hegel 2008, pp. 221–2)

It is the very surplus that (re)creates the lack it is supposed to fill in, so that we should even radicalize Hegel's formulation: it is not only that "despite an *excess of wealth* civil society is *not rich enough*," *it is the very excess of wealth that makes it not reach enough* (to get rid of poverty). In other words, the key question is: if there is a surplus (excessive wealth) on the one side and a lack (poverty) on the other side, why can't we re-establish the balance by simple redistribution (taking the wealth from those excessively rich and giving it to the poor)? The formal answer: because lack and surplus are not located within the same space where they are just unequally distributed (some people lack things, others have too much). The paradox of wealth resides in the fact that the more you have the more you feel the lack—it's again the superego paradox (the more you follow the injunction, the more guilty you are) discernible also in the paradox of anti-Semitism (the more Jews are destroyed, the more powerful is the remainder).

A different version of this same logic of lack and its surplus was also at work in the everyday experience of life in the so-called "Really-Existing Socialism." In spite of the oppressiveness of the political regime and the profound distrust of the majority of the population towards the ruling power, a kind of unspoken pact held between those in power and their subjects. Most of the time, the basic feature of life was, of course, lack in the guise of

shortages—something was always unavailable in the stores and in public services in general, not enough meat or milk products, detergents, no room in hospitals, not enough apartments, etc. etc. In order to survive, the majority of the people had to turn to petty violations of the law (bribery, personal connections, moonlighting, black market and other forms of cheating) which were discreetly tolerated by the power—while people were aware that everyone could be prosecuted, almost no one really was prosecuted, so although people lived in relative poverty, almost everyone felt that he is at an advantage, that he somehow got more than his due. This situation gave rise of a unique combination of cynical distance and an obscene solidarity in guilt: people were grateful for not being prosecuted; they were satisfied by gaining small illegal profits... This perception of getting more than one's due was literally the obverse of the life of shortage; it was what made this life bearable.

The same co-dependence between surplus (of power) and its lack (impotence) characterizes the functioning of political power. To provide a somewhat simplified example of the excess constitutive of the functioning of an actual power, recall the traditional liberal notion of representative power: citizens transfer (part of) their power onto the state, but under precise conditions (this power is constrained by law, limited to very precise conditions of its exercise, since the people remain the ultimate source of sovereignty and can repeal power if they decide so). In short, the state with its power is the minor partner in a contract which the major partner (the people) can at any point repeal or change, basically in the same way each of us can change the contractor which takes care of our waste or health... However, the moment one takes a close look at an actual state power edifice, one can easily detect an implicit but unmistakable signal: "Forget about our limitations—ultimately, we can do whatever we want with you!" This excess is not a contingent supplement spoiling the purity of power but power's necessary constituent; without it,

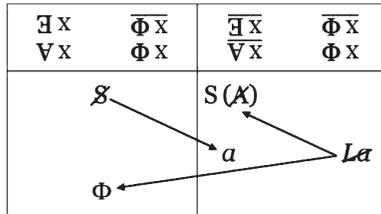
without the threat of arbitrary omnipotence, state power is not a true power, it loses its authority.

The “subject-supposed-to-be-in-power” is a structural illusion immanent to the functioning of power: the illusion that there is a bearer/agent of power, an entity which pulls the strings. Le Gaufey’s formula for overcoming this mirage is “*la toute-puissance sans tout-puissant*” (Le Gaufey 2014, p. 111): omnipotence is a fact of the symbolic universe in which we can retroactively change the past. According to the standard view, the past is fixed, what happened happened, it cannot be undone, while the future is open, it depends on unpredictable contingencies. What we should propose here is a reversal of this standard view: the past is open to retroactive reinterpretations, while the future is closed since we live in a determinist universe (see Ruda 2016 for a defense of determinism). This doesn’t mean that we cannot change the future; it just means that, in order to change our future, we should first (not “understand” but) change our past, reinterpret it in such a way that opens up towards a different future from the one implied by the predominant vision of the past.

The proper atheist/materialist position is thus not to deny omnipotence but to assert it without an agent that sustains it (God or another omnipotent Entity)—but is this enough? Do we not have to take a further step and assert the thwarted (inconsistent, constrained) character of the big Other *qua* depersonalized structure? And it is precisely this inconsistency/limitation of the big Other that resubjectivizes it in the sense of raising the question: “But what does the Other want?” And, of course, in a Hegelian way, this enigma of the Other’s desire is an enigma for the Other itself. Only at this level do we reach “symbolic castration” which does not stand for the subject’s “castration,” for his or her being at the mercy of the big Other, for his or her depending on its whims, but for the “castration” of this Other itself. The barred Other is thus not just the depersonalized Other but also the bar which cracks this depersonalized Other itself. Furthermore, the

specter of omnipotence arises when we stumble upon the limitation of the Other’s potency: *toute-puissance* (omnipotence) is *toute-en-puissance* (all-in-potentiality), the actualization of its power/potency is always constrained. As Le Gaufey argues,

Omnipotence is for Lacan not a kind of maximum, apex, or even infinitization of potency—to what one often reduces it in order to deny its actual existence—but a beyond of potency which only appears in the latter’s failure. It does not appear on the slope of impotence but on the slope of what remains “all in potency,” without ever passing over into the dimension of an act which belongs to the domain of some determinate potency/power. (Le Gaufey 2014, p. 20)



A reference to Lacan’s formulae of sexuation may be of some help here—it is crucial how we read the double line that points from the barred La to $S(A)$ and to capital Phi: we should not read it as a substantial division between two options (part of woman is subordinated to castration, caught into phallic economy of the symbolic order, while another part is outside, immersed in the unspeakable *jouissance feminine*). We should bear in mind that in both cases, Phi and $S(A)$, we are dealing with the same logic of the reflexive reversal of the lack of a signifier into a signifier of a lack—we are dealing with the same element in a different modality, maybe a little bit like the (in)famous soft-porn postcards from the pre-digital era with a woman who, when you look at the postcard from a certain edge, wears a T-shirt, and when you twist it around a tiny bit, her breasts appear naked... Recall that what Lacan calls “Master Signifier” is the reflexive signifier that fills in the very

lack of the signifier.² Spinoza's own supreme example of "God" is crucial here: when conceived as a mighty person, God merely embodies our ignorance of true causality. Examples from the history of science abound here—from phlogiston (a pseudo-concept which just betrayed the scientist's ignorance of how light effectively travels) to Marx's "Asiatic mode of production" (which is a kind of negative container: the only true content of this concept is "all the modes of production which do not fit Marx's standard categorization of the modes of production"), not to mention today's popular notion of "post-industrial society." All of these notions, while appearing to designate a positive content, merely signal our ignorance. Do we not get the same shift in Lacan's schema? The capitalized Phi is the fascinating quasi-divine presence, and just a slight shift in perspective makes it appear as a signifier of a lack. This brings us back to the link between omnipotence and impotence: the divine omnipotence is, as Lacan saw it clearly, a twisted mode of appearance of the divine impotence.

And does exactly the same not hold for knowledge? Is the "higher" metaphysical knowledge not a form of appearance of its opposite, i.e. of ignorance? More precisely, surplus-knowledge has two forms, masculine and feminine. The masculine form supplements ordinary knowledge of reality with another, higher knowledge as the exception (*gnosis*), while the feminine form is that of modern science where the surplus is inscribed into normal scientific knowledge itself which is constantly transforming/

² Let us imagine a mass political movement mobilized by "freedom and democracy": a closer look would quickly disclose that "freedom" does not mean the same thing to different parts of the movement, but insofar as they all identify with the signifier "freedom," an actual efficient social movement can emerge. What unites this movement is not its program but ultimately a signifier, and this signifier is literally the signifier of the lack/inconsistency of the Other: the excessive mythic resonance of this signifier ("freedom" as the name which makes us all tremble in enthusiasm, expressing something that cannot be put into explicit words, something "too deep" for that) is the form of appearance of a lack.

overcoming itself.³ There is a homology between the surplus-knowledge of modern science and the capitalist surplus-value: both are appropriated by the capitalist master. Until capitalism, knowledge was on the side of the servant—a master gave the order and the artisan servant was supposed to have the practical knowledge to execute it, a farmer was supposed to know how to grow crops, etc. With capitalism, the production process gets split from within, its scientific foundation and the organizational knowledge that regulates it are on the side of the capitalist and directed against the worker. As Lacan puts it:

I would call the state of knowledge before Descartes pre-accumulative. With Descartes knowledge, scientific knowledge is constituted on the mode of production of knowledge. Just as an essential stage of our structure that one calls social but is in fact metaphysical, and which is called capitalism, is accumulation of capital, the relation of the Cartesian subject to this being, which is affirmed in it, is founded on the accumulation of knowledge. After Descartes knowledge is what serves to make knowledge grow. (Lacan 1964–65, session 22)

If, then, the moment of Descartes stands for the primordial “accumulation of knowledge,” one should immediately raise the question: where is knowledge accumulated from? Not from ancient traditions: the new capitalist master appropriates it from worker’s artisanal *savoir-faire* and integrates it into science. Ancient wisdoms and teachings transferred to the initiated belong to masters and priests to whom operational expert knowledge appears as too low to care about, better left to the subordinated, while capitalists take expert knowledge from their servants/

³ The gap that separates Hegel and modern science is obvious: in Hegel, out knowledge progresses through self-relating critique, through the immanent analysis of its own inconsistencies, reflexively undermining every external measure of truth, while modern science is never a self-immanent movement, it needs some external measure, even in quantum physics where the observer seems to constitute external reality.

workers. Master's wisdom is repetitive, it functions as a fidelity to established tradition (if a revolution occurs, it has to appear as a return to true origins, as in Protestantism); it lacks the drive to self-renovation and expansion. In contrast to it, modern science is split between university and hysteria: like capitalism which can reproduce itself only through permanent expansion, scientific knowledge's mode of existence is self-expansion, permanent discovery, search for more knowledge, and this modality of knowledge is properly hysterical, a permanent experience of "This is not (yet) it!", a permanent search for more knowledge to be found elsewhere... One is tempted to propose here, in homology with the formula $M-C-M'$, the formula of the self-propelled accumulation of knowledge $K-H-K'$. In both cases, we have the same self-propelling circularity: money begets more money, knowledge begets more knowledge. In terms of the theory of discourses, this means that the university discourse in itself is not able to generate more knowledge out of itself, following its own logic. It has to make a detour through the discourse of hysteria the product of which is (new) knowledge:

Something changed in the master's discourse at a certain point in history. We are not going to break our backs finding out if it was because of Luther, or Calvin, or some unknown traffic of ships around Genoa, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or anywhere else, for the important point is that on a certain day surplus-*jouissance* became calculable, could be counted, totalized. This is where what is called the accumulation of capital begins. (Lacan 2007, p. 177)

This shift is the shift from the auratic *je ne sais quoi*, what Plato called *agalma*, i.e. that which in a charismatic person is "more than him- or herself," the surplus over measurable qualities, the mysterious ingredient which by definition cannot be measured (the X that makes a master a master, a star a star ... or, for anti-Semites, a Jew a Jew), to a purely quantified surplus, a surplus that can be measured in the guise of profit.

For Lacan, modern science is defined by two concomitant foreclosures: the foreclosure of subject and the foreclosure of truth as cause. A scientific text is enounced from a de-subjectivized “empty” location, it allows for no references to its subject of enunciation, it is supposed to deliver the impersonal truth which can be repeatedly demonstrated, “anyone can see and say it,” i.e., the truth should be in no way affected by its place of enunciation. We can already see the link with the Cartesian *cogito*: is the “empty” enunciator of scientific statements not the subject of thought reduced to a vanishing punctuality, deprived of all its properties? This same feature also accounts for the foreclosure of truth as cause: when I commit a slip of the tongue and say something other than what I wanted to say, and this other message tells the truth about myself that I am often not ready to recognize, then one can also say that in my slips the truth itself spoke, subverting what I wanted to say. There is truth (a truth about my desire) in such slips even if they contain factual inexactitude—say, an extremely simple example, when the moderator of a debate, instead of saying “I am thereby opening the session!” says “I am thereby closing the session!” he obviously indicates that he is bored and considers the debate worthless... “Truth” (of my subjective position) is the cause of such slips; when it operates, the subject is directly inscribed into its speech, disturbing the smooth flow of “objective” knowledge.

How, then, can Lacan claim that the subject of psychoanalysis—the divided subject, the subject traversed by negativity—is the subject of modern science (and the Cartesian *cogito*)? Is it not that, by way of foreclosing truth and subject, modern science also ignores negativity? Is science not a radical attempt to construct a (literally) truth-less discourse of knowledge? Modern science breaks with the traditional universe held together by a deeper meaning (like a harmony of cosmic principles—yin-yang, etc.), a universe which forms a teleologically-ordered Whole of a multiplicity of hierarchically ordered spheres, a Whole in which everything serves a higher purpose. In philosophical tradition,

the big vestige of the traditional view is Aristotle: the Aristotelian Reason is organic-teleological, in clear contrast to the radical contingency of modern science. No wonder that today's Catholic Church attacks Darwinism as "irrational" on behalf of the Aristotelian notion of Reason: the "reason" of which Church speaks is a Reason for which Darwin's theory of evolution (and, ultimately, modern science itself, for which the assertion of the contingency of the universe, the break with the Aristotelian teleology, is a constitutive axiom) is an "irrational" universe as a harmonious Whole in which everything serves a higher purpose.

Freud's arch-opponent Jung is on the side of this traditional universe: his approach to psychic phenomena is effectively that of "depth-psychology," his vision is the one of a closed world sustained by deeper archetypal meanings, a world permeated by spiritual forces which operate at a level "deeper" than that of "mechanical" sciences, a level at which there are no contingencies, where ordinary occurrences partake in a profound spiritual meaning to be unearthed by self-exploration. Life has a spiritual purpose beyond material goals, and our task is to discover and fulfill our deep innate potential by way of engaging in a journey of inner transformation which brings us in contact with the mystical heart of all religions, a journey to meet the self and at the same time to meet the divine. Rejecting (what he perceived as) Freud's scientific objectivism, Jung thus advocates a version of pantheism which identifies individual human life with the universe as a whole.

In clear contrast to Jung, Freud emphasizes the lack of any harmony between a human being and its environs, any correspondence between human microcosm and natural macrocosm, accepting without any reserve the fact of a contingent meaningless universe. Therein resides Freud's achievement: psychoanalysis is not a return to a new kind of premodern hermeneutics in search of the unknown deep layers of meaning which regulate the apparently meaningless flow of our lives, it is not a new version of the

ancient interpretation of dreams searching for deeper messages hidden in them; our psychic life is thoroughly open to unexpected traumatic encounters, its unconscious processes are a domain of contingent signifying displacements; there is no inner truth in the core of our being, only a cobweb of *proton pseudos*, primordial lies called “fundamental fantasies”; the task of psychoanalytic process is not to reconcile ourselves with the phantasmatic core of our being but to “traverse” it, to acquire a distance towards it... This brief description makes it clear how psychoanalysis relates to modern science: it tries to re-subjectivize the universe of science, to discern the contours of a subject that fits modern science, a subject that fully participates in the contingent and meaningless “grey world” of the sciences.

The question that arises here is: How does capitalism fit into this passage to modern science? Although capitalism is intimately linked to the rise of modern science, its ideologico-political and economic organization (liberal egotist individuals pursuing their interests, their messy interaction secretly regulated by the big Other of the Market) signals a return to premodern universe—but does this mean that Communism extends the logic of modern science also to the ethico-political sphere? Kant’s goal was to do exactly this, to elaborate an ethico-political edifice that would be at the level of modern science—but did he effectively achieve this, or is his theoretical edifice a compromise? Did he not openly state that his goal is to limit knowledge in order to make room for faith? And are Habermasians not doing the same when they exempt intersubjectivity from the domain of objective science? (And, in this vein, does Hegel not stand for a return to Aristotelian organic-teleological view of reality as a rational Whole? Is his thought not marked by a rejection of the universe of modern science characterized by meaningless contingency?) Which, then, is the ethico-political space that fits modern science—Kant’s or a new one to be invented (for example, the one proposed by philosophers of neuroscience like Patricia and Paul Churchland)?

What if the two are necessarily non-synchronous, i.e., what if modernity itself *needs* a pre-modern ethico-political foundation? What if it cannot stand on its own? What if the fully actualized modernity is an exemplary ideological myth?

The return of the traditional order in capitalism is thus not simply an indication that the logic of science is somehow constrained in capitalism. Rather, it is an indication that this containment is immanent to the universe of modern science, implied by the foreclosure of the subject. To put it bluntly, science cannot fully stand on its own, it cannot account for itself (no matter how much positivist accounts try to do it), which implies that the universality of science is based on an exception.

When, then, will “politics be consistently in sync with modern science and inhabit the same universe”? It’s not that the universe of modern science should directly impose itself onto the sphere of politics, so that social life will be regulated by the insights based on the cognitivist/biogenetic naturalization of human life (the tech-gnostic vision of society regulated by the digital big Other). It’s simply that the subject engaged in politics should no longer be conceived as the liberal free agent pursuing its interests but as the subject of modern science, the Cartesian *cogito*, which, Lacan *dixit*, is the subject of psychoanalysis. Therein resides the problem: can we imagine an emancipatory politics whose agent is the empty Cartesian subject? Jacques-Alain Miller’s answer is that the domain of politics is by definition the domain of imaginary and symbolic collective identifications, so that all psychoanalysis can do is to retain a healthy cynical distance towards the sphere of politics—psychoanalysis cannot ground a specific form of political engagement. The wager of the Communist hypothesis is, on the contrary, that there is a politics based on the empty Cartesian subject: the political name of the empty Cartesian subject is a proletarian, an agent reduced to the empty point of substanceless subjectivity. A politics of radical universal emancipation can only be grounded on the proletarian experience.

Beyond Homology

We have thus the surpluses of knowledge, of enjoyment, of value, and of power—and one can argue that we should add to the subject-supposed-to-know,⁴ subject-supposed-to-believe, and subject-supposed-to-enjoy, the subject-supposed-to-be-in-power. But how far can we push the homology between these couples: pleasure—enjoyment, use value—value, meaning—sense, power—excess-power? When the very renunciation to (or postponement of) pleasure can bring a surplus-pleasure; when the very consummation of use-value, the “official” goal of producing commodities, becomes a means (or a subordinate moment) in the expanded self-reproduction of value; when the breakdown of meaning (explicit referential sense), and the ensuing non-sense, give rise to the specter of a “deeper” sense; when the exercise of power pushed to the extreme of impotence gives birth to the mirage of omnipotence; are we in all these cases really dealing with the same matrix? The ultimate horizon of a truly materialist approach is never formal homology—therein resides the limit of the Marxist approaches of Alfred Sohn-Rethel (who deploys the homology between the universe of commodities and Kant’s transcendentalism) or Lucien Goldman (who deploys the parallel between early capitalism and Jansenist theology). (An extreme version of this parallelism is found in Ferruccio Rossi-Landi’s *Language as Work* in which he develops the notion of modes of linguistic production, proposing terms like linguistic capital, linguistic exploitation, etc.) One should pass from metaphor to metonymy, from homology to the immanent deduction of the very multiplicity of levels—say, it is not enough to articulate the homology between the universe of commodities and a certain

⁴ In his *Mother*, Brecht provides a nice formula against the subject-supposed-to-know: “What you do not know for yourself, you do not know. Check the bill. You will have to pay it.”

(Christian, usually) theology; one has also to deploy why the universe of commodities can only function if it redoubles itself in theology, why it cannot stand on its own. For Marx, it is not enough to reduce superstructural phenomena to their material base, one has also to deduce the need for superstructural phenomena out of the antagonisms of their material base. To do this, one should enact a transposition from metaphor to metonymy, something that Benjamin does apropos of translation: instead of conceiving translation as a metaphoric substitute of the original, as something that should render as faithfully as possible the meaning of the original, both original and its translation are posited as belonging to the same level, parts of the same field. The gap that, in the traditional view, separates the original from its (always imperfect) translation is thus transposed back into the original itself: the original itself is already the fragment of a broken vessel, so that the goal of the translation is not to achieve fidelity to the original but to supplement the original, to treat the original as a broken fragment of the “broken vessel” and to produce another fragment which will not imitate the original but will fit it as one fragment of a broken Whole may fit another. The same move is enacted by the early Hegelian Marxists (Lukács, Korsch) in their critique of the orthodox Marxist “theory of reflection” approach to knowledge (our knowledge mirrors external reality, asymptotically approaching it), so that the problem is how faithfully does the cognitive reflection mirror objective reality: for Lukács and Korsch, reality and cognition relate as a Whole and its part, i.e., the focus should be on the immanently-practical aspect of cognition: the way in which cognition itself is part of the process it mirrors (say, how does the class awareness transform its bearer into an actual revolutionary agent).

A truly dialectical-materialist approach should nonetheless go a step further than Lukács and Korsch. Acts of exchange (of products) cannot be constrained to the mediated satisfaction of needs (I give you what you need in exchange for getting from

you what I need—wheat for salt, etc.). Anthropologists like Lévi-Strauss have long ago demonstrated that there is always a “phatic” dimension at work in exchange of commodities: an act of exchange is always minimally self-reflexive, its goal is (also) to establish a social link between agents of exchange. But which excess is primordial, the excess of production (over the utility of products) or the excess of exchange (over the need for exchanged objects, but also the excess of symbolic exchange over the communicated content)? The automatic answer is, of course, that we have here a parallax structure: there is no choice to be made, the split between production and (symbolic) exchange is irreducible and constitutive for both of them; we are dealing with the same excess in its two forms, with the same entity inscribed into two different topologies... Such a solution is nonetheless all too easy—it leaves unexplained how the gap between production and exchange arises; ultimately, it leaves us in a position not unlike the one of Habermas who distinguishes between work (instrumental reason led by the norm of efficiency of domination and control) and language interaction (led by the emancipatory norm of free argumentation and mutual recognition). The standard Marxist solution is, of course, to assert the primacy of production, and to account for different modes of exchange in terms of different social organizations of production. Ultimately, the very appearance of the autonomy of exchange is the outcome of an immanent antagonism (“alienation”) in production.

Here, however, things get complicated: How does economic exchange relate to *symbolic* exchange? Can symbolic exchange also be grounded in social relations of production? While Marx’s position is clearly the predominance of production, Hegel—in the famous passage of his *Phenomenology*—conceives human labor as the outcome of the struggle for recognition, i.e., he asserts the primacy of intersubjectivity. Furthermore, there are some other options which should also be rejected, among them the thesis (popular in the heyday of discourse theory) that both speech

and labor are processes of production (of meaning, of objects), and the fetishist effect is crucial in both domains (the product obfuscates the production process); however, without specifying the precise difference between speech and labor, the homology is all too abstract.

The notion of *praxis*, of engaged activity that sustains a collective life-world, also remains rooted in the Aristotelian unity of soul and body. Recall the notion (elaborated by different authors from Bakhtin to late Wittgenstein) of language as an organic moment of social praxis, as an active moment of a life-world. The critical target of this approach is the allegedly “idealist” notion of language as a medium of designation of reality, as its mirroring and not a part of it and an active intervention into it. Language is primarily a way to interact in the world, to achieve something, say, to seduce a love partner, to exert domination, to regulate collaboration, to convince others, not just a passive medium designating it. Language, labor and other forms of human interaction all together form the living Whole of praxis. But, again, from the strict Lacanian standpoint, the proposed alternative of language which serves to talk about reality from a distance and of language as an organic moment of life-practice misses (or, rather, presupposes) something: the very opening of the gap that (potentially) separates words from things. In other words, the true question is how does the gap that allows a speaking being to acquire a distance towards reality arise within reality itself. Prior to functioning as a mode of active intervention into reality, language enacts a withdrawal from direct immersion into life-world activity. Prior to the safe distance there is thus a violent process of acquiring-a-distance, of tearing apart reality — this is what Lacan focuses on when he talks about “symbolic castration,” and this is what Deleuze is dealing with when he tries to discern the contours of the process by means of which the child-subject enters the order of sense proper, of the *abstraction* of sense, gaining the capacity to abstract a quality from its embeddedness in a bodily Whole, to conceive of it as a

becoming no longer attributed to a certain substance. As Deleuze would have put it, “red” no longer stands for the predicate of the red thing, but for the pure flow of becoming-red. So, far from tying us down to our bodily reality, “symbolic castration” sustain our very ability to “transcend” this reality and enter the space of immaterial Becoming. Does the autonomous smile which survives on its own when the cat’s body disappears in *Alice in Wonderland* also not stand for an organ “castrated,” cut off from the body? This is why “quasi-cause,” the operator of this abstraction, is Deleuze’s name for the Lacanian “phallic signifier”: the quasi-cause “*extracts singularities from the present*, and from individuals and persons which occupy this present” (Deleuze 1990, p. 166), and, in the same movement, provides them with their relative autonomy with regard to the intensive processes as their real causes, endowing these impassive and sterile effects with their morphogenetic power. Is this double movement not EXACTLY that of “symbolic castration” (whose signifier is phallus)? First, the impassive-sterile Event is cut off, extracted, from its virile, corporeal, causal base (if “castration” means anything at all, it means THIS). Then, this flow of Sense-Event is constituted as an autonomous field of its own, the autonomy of the incorporeal symbolic order with regard to its corporeal embodiments. “Symbolic castration,” as the elementary operation of the quasi-cause, is thus a profoundly MATERIALIST concept, since it answers the basic need of any materialist analysis. As Manuel DeLanda writes: “If we are to get rid of essentialist and typological thought we need some process through which virtual multiplicities are derived from the actual world and some process through which the results of this derivation may be given enough coherence and autonomy.” (DeLanda 2002, p. 115)

For decades, we have heard how language is an activity, not a medium of representation which denotes an independent state of things but a life-practice which “does things,” which constitutes new relations in the world—has the time not come to ask the

obverse question? How can a practice which is fully embedded in a life-world start to function in a representative way, subtracting itself from its life-world entanglement, adopting a distanced position of observation and denotation? Hegel praised this “miracle” as the infinite power of Understanding, the power to separate—or, at least, to treat as separate—what in real life belongs together. Mystics celebrate the inner peace we achieve when we withdraw from the immersion into the eternal crazy dance of reality where everything is caught in an incessant movement; Hegel and Lacan render visible the violent obverse of this inner peace. Language never “fits” reality, it is the mark of a radical imbalance which forever prevents the subject from locating itself within reality.

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Philosophy and Courage

Frank Ruda

“Philosophy without courage is
complaint or ... criticism.”

(A. Badiou)¹

I. Courage Today

Is there any internal reason why a philosopher should talk about courage? Is there any (and if so, what kind of) relation between philosophy and courage? To begin with, it may seem that there is no internal need for philosophy to address or to refer to the affect or concept—whichever it may be—of courage. This is more than just a rhetorical question of which the answer is clear in advance so that raising it would be part of an academic exercise. But these days academic philosophy seems precisely to be very little occupied with the category, affect, concept of courage. Starting off from the contemporary situation of philosophy one could easily assume that philosophy always thinks in cold blood. Does this mean that even if there are philosophers who talk about courage, they talk about it coldly so that no courage is needed to think courage? Very few thinkers today refer to the category of courage, but there are of course exceptions. So, one may start from these exceptions to address the question raised above: What is the link—if there is any—between courage and philosophy? One can

¹ Badiou (2007–08). He has also once remarked: “For my part, I often have the idea that each philosophy is determined by the definition it gives of courage.” (Badiou 1993–94)

then begin by attempting to answer this question in two ways: either historically or by taking into account the fact that courage never seems to appear alone. It always implies at least one other term and one can immediately see that one of the terms is and must be anxiety (or in a more pedestrian manner that is familiar even to the average Hollywood movie, no courageous act can occur without a bit of fear involved).

In this latter perspective, courage is a supernumerary concept or affect: a concept added to another one, namely anxiety (or fear). Courage in this sense is a way of treating or dealing with anxiety (or fear), a way of working with it or maybe even of putting it to work. But if today philosophers rarely speak about and of courage, this may have to do not only with a general disinterest in courage, but with the fact that one also does not find that many philosophers who talk about anxiety. Since, anxiety has today a very bad reputation. To be anxious, to feel anxiety means to have the feeling that things and the world are not necessarily and immutably the way they are. Anxiety—as the most basic defence mechanism (Freud 1990, pp. 101–38)—makes us aware of a fundamental inconsistency. It indicates the non-necessity of the world as it is, and this is one of the reasons why, as Lacan famously put it, it never deceives (Lacan 2014, pp. 297, 311). Yet the one who feels anxiety also has the insight that there is a fundamental lack of necessity that could explain why the world is how it is. If one feels that there is no such necessity this can generate a profound dislocation, a feeling that all things crumble, a feeling that can be described as one of terror.

Anxiety co-appears with another affect, namely that of terror, resulting from the feeling of being uprooted, displaced, dislocated, and from the “space of placements” (Badiou 2009a, pp. 1–51). The co-appearance of anxiety and terror is the world itself becoming unstable. It may come as no surprise that in a world which seems to be filled by terrorist and nihilistic acts committed by those who are radically excluded from the same world, that is, in a world filled with terror anxiety and its terrorizing effects do have a bad

reputation. Instead, one rather wants to get rid of it, for example by implementing increasing security measures, border controls, police presence, etc. But these security measures seek not to find the root of the terror produced by anxiety, but rather attempt to avoid it and get rid of it altogether. And one way of achieving this is to transpose and translate anxiety into another affect, namely into fear.² For, as it is well-known, anxiety and fear are not the same. A trivial, yet fundamental way of distinguishing between the two is to state that fear always comes with an object and is always oriented by and with regard to an object of the world, which is considered to be dangerous or malicious. Fear is always, as Heidegger already elaborated (Heidegger 2008, pp. 184–91), in relation to an object, whereas anxiety does not have an object in this sense of the term. If one feels fear, to use an example from horror movies, at the sight of an uninvited guest with an ice hockey mask and a machete appearing in one’s apartment, this is obviously quite understandable and normal. Yet, what one feels in such a moment is fear and not primarily anxiety.

The same structure holds for the contemporary political situation, such as in Europe where some are afraid of the refugees entering their respective countries (regardless of whether the threat is actual), because they are dangerous (and might be terrorists) or damaging (they might ruin the supposed financial stability), etc. There is a specific politics of fear which has become the dominant parameter of the present situation. Such politics³ seeks to prevent anxiety (all the time). It entails an operation of the recuperation of anxiety (*cf.* Badiou 2014–15) in terms of fear, and this peculiar kind of translation of the one into the other has an effect on the contemporary status of courage too (since courage is always

² Alain Badiou has spoken of a “politics of fear” and to my mind one should see this as result of a specific translation of anxiety (which I will specify subsequently). *Cf.* Badiou 2008, p. 8 and *passim*.

³ The question whether the term “politics” can be deployed here at all would require a much more extensive discussion.

“accompanied” by anxiety). Through this operation, anxiety as that which for Heidegger does not have an object (in and of the world), is literally objectified, equipped with an object (whatever this object may be). One inscribes an object into it and turns anxiety into fear. This also has an impact on the contemporary status of anxiety, which one would also have to address.

The following remarks will proceed in two steps: First I will return to the concept of courage and present a highly selective panorama of some positions from the history of philosophy, namely that of Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas and Hegel. This will enable us to determine the relevance of the concepts of courage and anxiety—and their linkage—for philosophy. In the second step, I will refer to a holy trinity of thinkers, i.e. to Hegel, Lacan and Badiou (or the father, the son and the holy spirit, so to speak), to draw a consequence of these reflections.

II. Four Fundamental Concepts of Courage

In the history of Western philosophy, courage appears to be a crucial concept from the very beginning. Browsing very quickly through some of the most influential historical positions on the issue in question one discovers that philosophers have always and frequently attempted to find and offer a definition of courage. And maybe one could even go as far as to state that the sort of philosophy one gets and defends is determined by the definition of courage one has given.⁴ To cite a few prominent examples: in his last published book, *The Passions of the Soul*, Descartes states that only a kind of courage that he calls generosity can free us from our indecision and external determination and lead to a proper usage of our own rational capacities, i.e. of thought as such (Descartes 1985, p. 380). Thus, for the founder of modern

⁴ Alain Badiou has once remarked: “For my part, I often have the idea that each philosophy is determined by the definition it gives of courage.” (Badiou 1993–94)

philosophy, courage is needed to overcome heteronomous determinations, as well as wrong conceptions of deliberation and thought, and to start to think properly. After Descartes, Kant famously took the enlightenment project to ultimately revolve around the “courage to use your *own* understanding,”⁵ *Sapere aude*, implying that without courage we simply tend not to make use of what makes us rational beings, that is to say: we tend not to act as the ones we are supposed to be.

After Kant, Hegel stated that “the *courage of truth, faith in the power of spirit is the first condition of philosophical study*” (Hegel 1985, p. 404). At another place he remarks that this courage goes along with a constitutive kind of passivity of its own, following a “method” that “tie[s] thought down, lead[s] it to the matter, and maintain[s] it there” (Hegel 1991, p. 5), adding that courage is needed to follow “the inner necessity that is stronger than the subject, by which his spirit is then driven without rest [...] the impulse of reason [...]” (*Ibid.*, p. 22) After Hegel, Kierkegaard supposedly once hailed courage as being “the only measure in life”⁶: Without acts in which we put everything that is dear to us at stake in a leap of faith which then provides us with a measure, we have no sense of life’s value. After Kierkegaard, Heidegger argued for the liberating effects of anxiety and referred to a necessary “*courage for anxiety*” (Heidegger 1962, p. 298) that is needed to overcome our immediate everyday beliefs, i.e., what one could call the spontaneous ideology of everyday life. And finally, after Heidegger, Badiou made courage into the fundamental element of any process and practice in which one becomes a subject proper. No subject ever comes into being without a crucial operation of courage (*cf.* Badiou 2009, pp. 140–76; Badiou 2009b, p. 86 and *passim*).

⁵ Kant 2003, p. 54. If taken as a technical formula, this formulation gains within the framework of Kant’s philosophy a puzzling character. For, how could one not use one’s own understanding?

⁶ There is no such claim, to the best of my knowledge, in Kierkegaard, but there is an ongoing rumour that he mentioned this even several times.

What one can conclude from this incomplete list is that, in one way or the other, all these different characterizations of courage are linked to the profound idea of courage as providing orientation in one's life or existence. Courage offers a kind of different orientation, a different vision of the world, enabling one to overcome one's indifference and to make use of one's own thinking; courage makes one capable of giving oneself to a movement (of thought). It provides a new orienting measure and thus has to do with what it means to become a subject, that is: something that is fundamentally oriented and directed towards something. Courage is needed to see things differently and sustain such difference. If courage is another name for what it means to gain orientation, then not knowing what courage is implies not knowing what it means to be oriented, or in short: to be disoriented in one's existence and life. But this panoramic overview of philosophical references was only meant to provide some preliminary orientation. Intricate reflections on courage can be found already at the very origin of philosophy, namely in Plato. I will not be referring to his famous *Republic*, which can be read as an extended dialogue on the need for the function and the very understanding of courage.⁷ Instead, I will refer to another less famous dialogue, which has the concept of courage as its guiding thread and main theme, namely his *Laches* (Plato 1997).

III. Plato's Example: Singularity

Plato's dialogue begins with the question of proper education of children. Lysimachus and Nicias, who initiate the conversation, are looking for the right teacher for their children. Early on in this search courage starts to play a major role. For, how does

⁷ In the theatre-play version of his hyper-translation of the *Republic*, Badiou brings this out in all clarity (Badiou 2016, pp. 7–284).

one teach courage? Can courage be taught at all, and if so, by whom? Attempting to answer these questions in the course of the dialogue the following elaboration of courage is offered by General Laches. This is how Badiou describes this scene: “General Laches, questioned by Socrates, replies: ‘Courage is when I see the enemy and run towards him to engage him in a fight.’ Socrates is not particularly satisfied with this, of course, and gently takes the General to task: ‘It’s a good example of courage, but an example is not a definition.’” (Badiou 2008, pp. 71–2)

It is a good example. Running towards one’s enemy and thus affirmatively confronting a dangerous situation demands courage. A coward would certainly shy away from it. Such action proves that its agent is not afraid. It is also a good example, because it shows that courage is not a theoretical concept, but one—to state the obvious—that cannot be thought outside practice. But this is also the reason why Socrates is slightly unhappy with this example; one cannot simply generalize this kind of situation by assuming that courageous acts are always acts of confronting an external enemy. Nor is it the case that courageous acts necessarily imply a voluntary engagement in a life and death struggle with such an enemy. This example thus does not enable one to decipher the meaning of courage as such; it only tells us something about the courage of a soldier in a specific situation, but not of courage in general. General Laches replies, confirming Socrates’ reservation: “I still think I know what courage is, but I can’t understand how it has escaped me just now so that I can’t pin it down in words and say what it is.” (Plato 1997, 194b; p. 679) Nearly at the end of the dialogue, Socrates ultimately concludes that “we have not discovered [...] what courage is.” (*Ibid.*, 200a; p. 685)

So, Plato’s dialogue on courage, the *Laches*, does not offer any solid definition of courage. We end up not knowing what courage is. And maybe courage is nothing that one can know. We do, however, get an example of it—and it is important to note that at the very end of the dialogue the two fathers looking

for a teacher to educate their children decide that it is Socrates who should educate them.⁸ So, we do not get a definition, but we ultimately get not one but two examples: General Laches' example of the courageous act and Socrates' exemplary gesture, if one may say so, acknowledging that he and the others do not know what courage is—a confession that seems to qualify him as the best teacher. Courage seems to be linked to exemplarity. On one side, there is an exemplary case of courage involved in the practice of radically raising the question of what courage is (Socrates–philosophy): it seems to take a lot of courage to refuse all definitions and admit that one only knows examples but no definition. On the other side, there is the transparent practical example that General Laches gives. If one limits one's knowledge only to the exemplary elaborations of the *Laches*, that is, to the knowledge of examples, one could assume that due to courage's fundamentally practical nature there can be nothing but examples of courage. A definition of courage may be forever impossible.

If there are only singular cases of courage, only exemplarily courageous actions this obviously does not mean that these examples foreclose all universality. Every example constitutes a universal class for which it stands (*cf.* Chiesa and Ruda 2011, pp. 163–80). Any new example (of courage) adds another grain of singularity to the universal class and thereby reconstitutes it. Although each example presents a singular case and not the universal as such, the emphasis on exemplarity in the *Laches* can be read such that one ends with a peculiar concatenation of singularity or even of singularities—one ends with two examples of courage—and universality. And yet, the dialogue leaves the link between the singularities and universality undetermined, which is another way of stating that it does not offer any definition.

⁸ See the instructive comments on this dialogue in Foucault 2011, pp. 117–76.

IV. Aristotle Knows: Fear and Confidence

While Socrates repeatedly withheld definitions in this dialogue, Plato's student Aristotle has been called *the* philosopher of definitions. Elias Canetti, for one, once remarked that Aristotle is an all-defining omnivore and has a compartment for whatever thinkable being (Canetti 1978, p. 31). Aristotle did much better defining courage than General Laches and Socrates did. Aristotle, who had been educated by the one who raised the question of what it means to educate someone in a courageous way, comes up with a quite clear and refined definition of courage: in the ninth chapter of his *Nicomachean Ethics* he deals with courage and defines it first of all as a virtue (Aristotle 2004, 1108b; p. 34–5). For Aristotle, every virtue is situated in the midst and middle of two extremes. Virtue is what measures the extreme by balancing it. Aristotle claims that “in fear and confidence, courage is the mean” (*ibid.*, 1170b; p. 32). Courage is situated in between what makes us afraid and our own self-confidence, such that we do not have too much confidence or too much fear. Aristotle then specifies that courage does not have to do with all kinds of things that we fear, but rather is the name for confronting very specific things that we are afraid of. For there are certainly things that one cannot help but fear and it is rational to do so, yet it is not virtuous to confront them: things that make us ashamed in the eyes of others are, for example, things that we certainly fear. Yet it makes no sense to confront them confidently, for committing shameful acts has nothing to do with virtue (shameful acts are themselves an extreme). Such a confident way of dealing with what one fears cannot be called courageous. What are then the things that courage deals with, the things one fears but needs to confront with the right amount of confidence?

Aristotle's first answer is death (*ibid.*, 1114b; p. 49). Aristotle is a Heideggerian. Yet, he adds that not just any kind of death can be the aim of courage: it must be a death that is linked to

honor, which is paradigmatically the case with deaths that occur in military battles. As in the military example of General Laches, war here is the paradigm of the courageous act. Aristotle claims that the courageous are as fearless as a human being needs to be, while also fearing things that exceed human power. This is the most rational way of being afraid. Rationalization was invented by Aristotle. Accordingly, fear is a rational matter of degree. The right measure of fear determines the right amount of courage. Only the “madmen or insensible” (*ibid.*, 1115b; p. 50) fear nothing. And he who fears too much is a coward. The courageous person feels the right amount of fear and confronts it with the right amount of confidence (without being or turning mad or insensible) and thus acts in absolute calm. This is what defines the ethically good, whereas its converse is the ethically bad.

Thus, this is the definition of courage we get from Aristotle: Courage is the combination of experience and knowledge that are virtuously put into practice, thus enabling us to confidently overcome the fears in precisely the right, that is to say: rational way. Whereas in Plato’s *Laches* we are given two exemplary figures of courage (that of the philosopher and that of the soldier), in Aristotle we ultimately only get the soldier. This has to do with the function of confidence that Aristotle associates with courage. Confidence derives from a certain kind of knowledge: We know what we have to fear and how we have to fear it, while at the same time knowing and being conscious of our own capacities. We know what we are confronting and we know what we are capable of doing. This is the basic structure of courage. Courage is a concatenation of subjective and objective knowledge. Knowing what is the case provides us with confidence in the case and thereby also with the basis of courage. This basis is the objective knowledge of a situation (and of a subject within it).

Those who know from their own experience what they can do, what they have to fear, how they have to fear it and are thus confident to the right degree, are deemed courageous. Yet, one

thing is left out in Aristotle. If war is the paradigm for courage, then the paradigmatic figure of courageous acts is the soldier and not the philosopher, who for Aristotle is somewhat of an administrator of all the things that exist, including courage. It is difficult to imagine a courageous administration and bureaucracy. But what about courage in non-militaristic contexts? Plato allowed for the exemplary courage of Socrates, but Aristotle (who is usually seen as a moderate pacifist) turns the military battle into *the* paradigm of courage. But can one not imagine a courageous artist? Aristotle cannot. A courageous lover? Aristotle does not. A courageous philosopher? Aristotle would disagree. A courageous politician? Only if and insofar as he is a military expert. The latter is certainly of crucial importance for Plato as well, who in his *Republic* conceives of the citizens of the community as capable of defending themselves and thus as well-trained experts in defending their very organization. However, for Aristotle, military exercise seems to absorb courage fully. There is yet another problem: Does it not seem also quite plausible that some courageous acts are acts that are performed without any previous knowledge? Could courage—as in Plato—lie not precisely in admitting that one does not know and in nonetheless seeking to deal with a situation? These questions are merely intended to indicate why at one point in history (following Aristotle) the category and concept of courage have become problematic; and they have become problematic not only in the history of philosophy but in history in general. As soon as one starts to give a definitive and stable criterion and definition of courage, and one that even is situated within a military paradigm, it seems one cannot avoid substantializing courage. Courage then becomes the virtue not only of the soldier, but of the male soldier (as all soldiers were male back then). And part and parcel of the critique of courage that occurs at one point is precisely motivated by this identification of courage not only with the actions of the soldier, but also with masculinity (which, at least in principle, differs from Plato's account of courage). The disappearance of

courage from the contemporary philosophical discourses (and from many fields of practice outside of philosophy) thus may have to do with this peculiar kind of substantializing of courage into a militaristic virtue of the male soldier.⁹

V. St. Thomas: The Courage to Lose

A third account of courage can be found in the work of one of the most important Christian interpreters of Aristotle in the Middle Ages, namely Thomas Aquinas. He most explicitly linked courage to a specific understanding of justice. Thus, with Aquinas another element enters the scene after exemplarity and singularity (Plato) and after the concatenation of fear and confidence (Aristotle). For Aquinas courage is also a virtue and one of the most important ones. Taking up a definition of Augustine, namely that to be courageous implies to resist and to attack evil, *sustinendo et aggrediendo* (Augustine 2003, pp. 19, 4), for Aquinas courage constitutively presupposes vulnerability. God can never be courageous because he is not vulnerable. To be courageous means to accept to be hurt.¹⁰ Therefore, for Aquinas courage is courage in the face of death, the ultimate wound. It is the readiness to fall, and any courage that is not ready to risk falling is not courage proper. The paradigm of this definition of courage is therefore the ordeal, the readiness to become a martyr. What Aquinas calls the “joys of courage” is linked to suffering through the pains of the ordeal. But the courageous person does not take the suffering upon herself just for her own sake. By suffering through an ordeal, by dying for one’s faith and belief, one overcomes death and the seeming superiority of evil. And Aquinas goes as far as to say that we only properly win over death and evil, if at the same

⁹ For this see also Badiou 2012, pp. 41–60.

¹⁰ Here and in the following I quote from: Pieper 1959. Translations are mine.

time we seem to lose, namely when we lose our life in fighting it. This is to say, courage's essence does separate the courageous action from the maintenance and subsistence of life's own vitality. As in Aristotle, courage also relies on knowledge, namely the knowledge of what is good. Because courage needs knowledge, courage is not the primary virtue, but wisdom and justice are prior to courage. Without those there is no real courage; courage is not for daredevils.

Only wisdom provides a measure by receiving measure from the real world. It receives its measure from reality toward which it is oriented, while at the same time giving measure to will and action (like in Malabou's concept of plasticity). And to find the right measure for one's actions in relation to the situation in which that very action takes place is precisely the definition of justice. One does justice to oneself and to the circumstances of one's actions, if one finds the right measure. Courage is thus secondary, because courage without justice is a lever of evil. Therefore, to be courageous also does not imply the absence of fear. The courageous person is not indifferent; rather, she sees that the wound that she is ready to take upon herself is an evil, but she is nonetheless ready to face the wound for the sake of a higher good. For, whoever fears God will tremble in front of nothing. While the two principles of courage are both to withstand and to attack, the former is more determinant. One withstands and adheres to the good whatever one may encounter. Aquinas is all about endurance. What is crucial is that Aquinas does not defend a form of courage that is indifferent to one's life. Rather, it is a courage that seeks to avoid losing what is essential in one's life. He formulates this by stating that she who loves her life is ready to lose it. One only has a life, if one is ready to risk it, otherwise one reifies life and has thus already lost it.

From Aquinas' perspective, the lack of courage is therefore a sickness. If one is overly attached to one's own life, this very attachment that leads one into the lack of courage is precisely

what is defined as sickness: a life that is ill, somehow a life that is ill of itself. Against the negative version of a life reifying itself, Aquinas distinguishes three different types of perfecting the virtue of courage. The first one is political and everyday courage (civil courage, as one could say): It takes courage to do good things within a socio-political community. The second one is completely purified from the everyday aspects and creates the very image of the good and of god in oneself by simply withdrawing from action: It takes even more courage not to act and withdraw. The third and most complete kind of perfecting courage is the so-called *fortitudo purgatori animi*, the complete purification of the soul, which acts such that the world here is already the very beginning of eternity. What takes courage is to let go, to let oneself be guided by the one who created it all, that is God—Heidegger will later call this letting it be. For Aquinas, this act of a purifying or letting go entails a kind of heroism, by which the agent becomes part of the holy ghost of courage. It is an act of complete de-securing oneself, an internal negation of any kind of security. But this can only be done against the background of hope—one reason why for Aquinas courage is not primary, but constitutively derivative of faith. For only if one hopes and has faith that there is eternal life, one will be able to sacrifice all security in this one. Through true hope and true faith alone one is able to risk everything one cares for. Aquinas thus gives us a Christian reformulation of Aristotle, which seeks to democratize and demilitarize courage. Everyone can be courageous, if only one commences to live truly—in faith—and to be constantly ready to sacrifice one's life in the name of this very life.

VI. Hegel: *Courage for Truth*

The fourth figure I will consider in this overview is Hegel. Hegel was often attacked for being a militaristic defender of courage; a symptom of this was, *inter alia*, seen in his logical deduction of

the necessity of war.¹¹ And he indeed argued from his early work onwards that war can teach us something, namely that the state of the world is not a given and hence not immutably how it is. It is precisely in times of war that we comprehend—through facing a certain anxiety of full-blown collapse of the world—that things are how they are because we accept them, yet also that they can be different.¹² Therefore, he also argued that within a functioning socio-political community there need to be people whose primary occupation is to protect this very community, the military. A peculiar profession as they must protect the status quo but they need to have “courage, the negative side of infinity” (Hegel 1975, p. 450), that is to say: they are constantly facing the “absolute insecurity of all enjoyment, possession, and law” (*ibid.*, p. 458), which turns them into an institution, a class or estate that peculiarly embodies the fact that things could be fundamentally different, so much so that they would not be in the picture any longer. But it is important for Hegel that, in modern societies, these people voluntarily choose their profession—even though in times of war everyone might be called to the weapons. Hegel is thus not a militarist. There is even a certain institutional need for military courage, but this does not exhaust the relevance of courage at all.

Hegel also speaks of courage in a fundamentally different manner; and here one may recognize a certain repetition of Plato’s position, namely of “the will and courage for the truth”

¹¹ For a different reading—emphasizing the overcoming of the ossifications and indifferences of freedom—see Žižek 2012, pp. 417–54.

¹² The early Hegel argues that there is an emancipatory dimension in the “ability to die” (the ability to commit suicide), namely in the insight that no one is just a member of a socio-political commonwealth; rather, if one is a member of it, one decided—even if not consciously—to be and remain its member. Nothing, not even what seems most natural to us (our embeddedness in a family or community or state) is just a given, but it relies on an act of freedom. In this sense, “the ability to die” (*Fähigkeit des Todes*) is not at all different from one crucial aspect of freedom properly understood—and it takes courage to uphold this aspect (*cf.* Hegel 1975, p. 448).

(Hegel 1991, p. 5) that are constitutive of any thinking proper. And in the very beginning (even before its proper beginning, to be precise) one finds a similar claim in his *Science of Logic*. There is an implicit and hidden, yet constitutive and crucial reference to courage before the book even begins properly; and just to remind the reader: this is the book that claims no less than to depict from the immanence of thought what happens in the creation of the world and with the advent of (the conditions of) history.¹³ Before beginning with his actual exposition, Hegel states that something extraordinary had happened: Kant. Kant has founded philosophy (anew or, depending on the reading, for the very first time¹⁴) because he demonstrated that philosophy is and can only be, if it overcomes all kinds of dogmatisms and unjustifiable beliefs, while being at the same time able to stand firm against the dangers of scepticism and indifferentism. Philosophy has to do with reason alone. For Hegel, this is a new and fundamental idea. Yet Kant has failed to derive a proper philosophy from it. Hegel therefore gives a surprising depiction of Kant's achievement. In his introduction to the *Science of Logic*, he states that "critical philosophy did indeed already turn *metaphysics* into *logic* but, like subsequent idealism, it gave to the logical determinations an essentially subjective significance out of fear of the object [*Angst vor dem Objekt*]" (Hegel 2010, p. 30). Usually this claim is read as proof of Hegel attacking Kant's subjectivism. Yet one rarely considers the reason why, for Hegel, Kantian philosophy regresses to such a subjective standpoint, namely, out of anxiety: Kant was anxious in face of the object of thought.

¹³ Hegel famously states that the Logic is "*the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and of a finite spirit*" (Hegel 2010, p. 29), which also implies that the end must also give an account of the creation of nature and of finite spirit and that at its end this creation will reach an end.

¹⁴ Eckart Förster claims that Kant—in his own understanding—was the first to ever properly do philosophy, while twenty-five years later Hegel declared to have ended it (*cf.* Förster 2012).

What happened with Kant was a true novelty, because Kant was the first to introduce anxiety into philosophy (thereby demonstrating that the safe distance of philosophy to its object cannot be upheld); Kant was the first to feel anxious with regard to philosophy's proper object, namely truth. My rendering of Hegel's formula (Kant was anxious in face of the object of thought) is in this sense an accolade; Hegel credits Kant for being the first anxious philosopher. Yet Kant was not courageous. He did not have what it takes to be a thinker of the enlightenment. This is the reason why in some sense one might claim that for Hegel there is not much to revisit in Kant apart from this very introduction of anxiety and the peculiar object it comes with. One may forget Kant, but one should never forget what he has done for and to philosophy in terms of anxiety. This is to say that after Kant one must have the courage to think what Kant discovered but shied away from. The first step is to conceptually re-introduce anxiety, not only into philosophy (where it is also certainly needed), but into thought in general. This re-introduction will allow us to distinguish between two different types of objects, to introduce a split between the objective realm and the realm of objectivity. But this is only the first step. One is also in need of courage to think the object which differs from all other objects.

VII. Lacan / Badiou: Un-Anxiety

To end, and to begin with the task mentioned above, one should raise the following question: If Kant's anxiety is the signal or the mark of Kant's greatness, what was his anxiety all about? What was he afraid of? The obvious answer is truth, or, to move in a slightly different direction, freedom (even though this answer makes the setting even more paradoxical by suggesting that one of the most important philosophers of freedom was anxious vis-à-vis freedom; yet again, this was precisely his greatness). But

truth is not an object in the same sense that a tree or a phone is an object. This means, as indicated, that there are at least two kinds of objects, and Hegel claims that philosophy's business is with the object that is not an object in the common sense of the term. It is not an object of the world, something that one can see or touch (although one sees something of it and one feels touched by it). Lacan revises Heidegger's claim that fear does have an object in the world, while anxiety does not have an object in the world. In contrast to Heidegger, Lacan stated that anxiety does not have an object, but that it is at the same time not without object (Lacan 2014, pp. 69–70). In French this formula reads: *n'est pas sans objet*. In its French version, the formula indicates that even though anxiety is not without an (*pas sans*) object, the object of anxiety must be specified as a passing (*pas-sans*) object. It is something which passes, something that indicates a passing, in short: something that happens or an event.¹⁵

For Hegel, Kant was in this sense unable to think the passing, the passage, the pass of an event, as he only arrived at indicating that this is the proper object of thought. But to think it one needs courage. In this sense, anxiety is always an occasion for courage. Anxiety indicates that something can come to pass, that one can change the world; it indicates the fundamental non-necessity of the world as it is, and it is courage which introduces this very change. But Hegel (and one could suspect, as many did, that at this point things go wrong or become reactionary again) also indicates that one must be courageous to do philosophy. Why? Because philosophy basically thinks the constitution of the world, and thus that the world has been (and thus can be again) constituted. But what kind of courage does one need to effectively inscribe the impossible possibility of change into the world? Hegel answers that one has to do one simple thing which is at the same time the

¹⁵This is why—contra Aristotle—knowledge as such does not help. Hegel's account of courage exceeds deducing courage from knowledge of the objective (subjective-objective) situation.

most difficult one: One has to “set aside every reflection, [and] simply [...] take up, *what is there before us*” (Hegel 2010, p. 47). The German term for “taking up” is *aufnehmen*, not *aufheben*. And what is there before us? Hegel again: “There is only present the resolve, which can also be viewed as arbitrary, of considering *thinking as such*.” (*Ibid.*, p. 48)

Hegel emphasizes in these lines that one cannot simply and voluntarily decide to change the world. Rather, this has always already been decided, and his *Science of Logic* will describe what happens in *the immanence of (the creation of) truth*.¹⁶ One does not decide to transform the world because one thinks this is a nice and convincing idea. One transforms the world when there is something that passes, when one is not without an object and when one’s object is a passing object; when there is a decision to investigate the consequences of such a passing and such a decision. Love is a cheesy but good example; and it is no accident that Lacan’s seminar on anxiety includes a whole session on love (Lacan 2014, pp. 170–81). Nobody decides to fall in love. It is decided for us in us, and then we can see what follows from such a decision. It takes courage to make a decision that one did not make consciously or voluntarily as an orientation in one’s life. But this seems to be not only a possible definition of courage, but also a possible definition of freedom (that exceeds all the closet liberalisms).

At some point, Lacan has also defined the goal of psychoanalytic cure as an elevation of an incapacity to a point of impossibility, and Alain Badiou’s thinking of the event has been constitutively informed by this formula, notably because an event occurs when the impossible *qua* impossible happens. It seems to me that there is a lot of labour to be done to unfold what it means to be courageous today, what a courage of the impossible, an impossible courage might look like. It certainly cannot be a virtue

¹⁶ The reader will perhaps know that this is the title of the third and final volume of Badiou’s “Being and Event”-series.

and it certainly cannot be (mainly) militaristic. A valid starting point seems to be to ask what it means to take up the decisions that are before us (when they are before us); decisions we did not make but which nonetheless abruptly appear before our eyes, yet remain invisible. Being confronted with such decisions cannot but produce anxiety. However, it seems to me that what is first and foremost needed today is the courage to find that which makes us anxious. Because then, and only then, one can experiment with what may be the means of becoming un-anxious or to de-angstify again. To become un-anxious is not simply to overcome anxiety; rather it is an attempt to translate a term that Lacan introduced into the French language: *se désangoisser*. To become un-anxious implies starting by finding that which produces anxiety and then working with it. What exactly this could mean is a complicated story; to start with anxiety to then become un-anxious and to repeatedly re-introduce “bits” of anxiety to keep on going and to avoid any objective recuperation of courage. Courage in this sense is not a virtue, but a way of working with, putting to work, working through anxiety. Therefore, courage cannot have an object in the world, but at the same time is not without an object. This might be a starting point for a contemporary conception of courage, but this remains to be seen.

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Of Drives and Culture

Mladen Dolar

It would seem that drives and culture stand at opposite ends of an antagonistic relation, that they form a conflict that is structural, pertaining to the nature of the two entities and thus never to be assuaged, lifted or suppressed. Drives appear to be the enemies of culture. What one commonly assumes about the notion of drives—and I will not start by some textbook definitions but rather with common assumptions—stands on the side of the physiological, the somatic, the bodily. Drives are commonly understood under the heading of nature and thus “spontaneously” opposed to culture which stands on the other side of the divide, and this is the most dramatic divide that exists. The old translation of Freud’s term *der Trieb* as “instinct”—proposed by James Strachey and systematically used throughout the *Standard Edition*—is indicative of such an assumption. The drive would seem to stand for the instinctual, something outside the realm of culture, and culture would thus be called upon to mold these instinctual forces, make them manageable, pliable, tame them and thus enlist them for its own aims. Our humanity is defined by our culture, while the drives would seem to be something that we share with our animal substratum. If we look at the title of Freud’s famous text that I will be considering here, *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1929–30), *Civilization and its Discontents*, one can quickly assume a script implied by this title and subtending it: we don’t feel well in culture, there is a discontent, a malaise, a discomfort (the latter was, by the way, the English translation proposed by

Freud himself), an unhappiness that sticks to our being-in-culture, a discontent that is necessary and structural, unavoidable, not to be done away with and pertaining to our cultural being as such. And if there is this perpetual unhappiness to which we are doomed as human beings (the first intended title was actually *Das Unglück in der Kultur*, “the unhappiness in culture”), this must be due to the way that culture imposes on our drives, on our natural urges. Yet, although culture restricts our drives, inflicts constraints upon them, it can never quite fulfill its task, however much it tries by ever more sophisticated means. For the drives are recalcitrant, they strike back, they don’t easily let themselves be imposed on; they don’t readily give in to renunciation, and the price we must thus pay for our entry into culture is this constant discontent, a very high price to pay for the glory of our cultural achievements. Already in the early *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) Freud maintained that there is “the inverse relation holding between civilization and the free development of sexuality” (Freud 1977, p. 168), thus giving ample backing to the kind of understanding I just described. The idea is also expounded in “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness” (1908), where the very title already suggests and delivers this message.

In what follows I will try to dismantle this common assumption; and I can state from the outset that in psychoanalysis everything depends on abandoning the very presuppositions of such an understanding, despite the fact that Freud may seem to endorse it himself. I will proceed by following Freud’s steps in the third section of *Civilization and its Discontents*, which are simple and even in many ways commonsensical, yet they contain a number of side implications, abysses and traps in their very self-evidence, jeopardizing the presuppositions that we start with.

“*Das Leben, wie es uns auferlegt ist, ist zu schwer für uns,*” Freud writes (Freud 1982, p. 207). “Life, as we find it, is too hard for us; it brings us too many pains, disappointments and impossible tasks.” (Freud 1985, p. 262) Life is too much for us, there is

more life than we can bear. “... *wie es uns auferlegt ist*” — a more accurate translation would be “life such as it is imposed on us,” implying that life is an imposition. There is a “too-muchness” of life, to use the expression proposed by Eric Santner, a constitutive too-muchness that we can never contain.¹ Life is not made by human measure. One cannot read such sentences without some bemusement and precaution, for nowhere else as in *Civilization* does Freud have such a propensity for “coffee-house” philosophy: the sort of general wisdoms that are easily dispensed while sitting in cafés (and Vienna is notoriously the city of cafés). There is a thin edge between the stringent theoretical pursuit and the questionable wisdoms about the nature of the world and the unhappy fate of humankind. As Freud himself put it:

In none of my previous writings have I had so strong a feeling as now that what I am describing is common knowledge and that I am using up paper and ink [...] in order to expound things which are, in fact, self-evident. (Freud 1985, p. 308)

Hence, our task is to disentangle, from within Freud’s argument that can easily be seen as verging on the commonplace, something that goes profoundly against any self-evidence and common sense.

If life is too hard for us, it is because the reality principle is at great odds with the pleasure principle that guides our psyche, and the reality principle is displayed in three basic forms: nature, which we cannot fully master; our bodies, which are fragile, vulnerable and mortal; and our fellow human beings with whom we cannot reach a co-existence free of conflicts and traumas. The first two

¹ “Psychoanalysis differs from other approaches to human being by attending to the constitutive ‘too muchness’ that characterizes the psyche; the human mind is, we might say, defined by the fact that it includes more reality than it can contain, is the bearer of an excess, a too much of pressure that is not merely physiological.” (Santner 2001, p. 8)

sources cannot be removed, but the third one lies fully within our powers; it is a constellation that we have produced ourselves, and hence we could order and arrange it to our benefit. But it is here that lies the source of our troubles: we seem to be unable to prevent suffering that we have imposed on ourselves, and if our co-existence with others is another name for culture and civilization, then we arrive at the paradox contained in the title of Freud's text, namely that the principle culprit for our misery (*das Elend*) is "our so called culture" (Freud 1985, p. 274).² The main source of misery is what makes us human, the very instrument we have invented against suffering and against our dependence on nature. As Freud writes in *The Future of an Illusion*:

Human civilization, by which I mean all those respects in which human life has raised itself above its animal status and differs from the life of beasts—and I scorn [*ich verschmähe es*] to distinguish between culture and civilization. (Freud 1985, p. 184)

The cure turns out to be worse than the disease. Every cultural progress produces ever more trouble which is then supposed to be cured by ever more cultural progress. Culture appears to be an auto-referential project that ultimately serves to attend to troubles that it itself produces. If culture can be seen by a rough approximation as the attempt to master nature, then the paradox is that it itself produces something more intractable than the proverbial indomitable forces of nature.

Let me take up the basic traits of culture such as Freud enumerates and scrutinizes in the third section of *Civilization*. Freud has no high ambitions in this section. He is not trying to work out a definition of culture, but rather following a more modest question: What do we speak about when we speak of culture? He

² "This contention holds that what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery, and that we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions." (Freud 1985, p. 274)

takes up a number of common assumptions that we make when using this notion and proposes a number of elementary traits. The list is a bit haphazard, rather than systematic, and could very well be extended, yet it presents some basic ideas about what we usually understand by the term culture (here I will follow Freud's lead in not distinguishing culture and civilization, although the distinction between the two is not trivial and has given rise to quite a bit of discussion). Tracing Freud's footsteps, I will (in view of simplification and systematicity) consider six traits and examine their relation to the enigma of the drive as culture's supposed other.

The first trait, the most obvious and seemingly self-evident, is that culture is based on progressive mastering of natural forces. Its starting point is the initial use of tools in order to gain control over fire and to construct the dwellings. This is the germ of a gigantic progress, the incredible increase of human powers, with the tool placed at its core: the tool figures as an elongation, extension of the human body, expansion of its limits. Machines prolong the muscles, microscopes and telescopes enhance the eyes, photography and gramophone stop and stack the time, computers prolong the brain, ships and planes conquer distances—the human body, equipped with these gadgets, is magnified and extended to enormous proportions. Science thus appears to be the realization of the fairy tale: we can indeed fly over mountains and seas, talk at great distance, see the invisible. Man becomes equal to god by his increasing omniscience and omnipotence. But he can only be compared to god as long as he has his extensions at hand, his auxiliary organs, says Freud, so in a famous phrase from *Civilization* man has become *ein Prothesengott* (Freud 1985, p. 280; 1982, p. 222), “a prosthetic god,” i.e. man is godlike only as long as he is endowed with prostheses. Our divinity resides in our prostheses, *Prothesen*, it depends on the bodily supplements, it is a divinity on crutches. Yet a man without prosthesis is not a man—if he is indeed “a tool-making animal” (the proposal that stems from Benjamin Franklin and that Marx was very fond of), then the prosthesis makes him a man in the first place.

This view of technology, even in this minimalistic (or rather massive) scope, already implicitly indicates a connection between technology and drives. A lot depends on how one conceives the drives. Freud most often employed the model of energy that flows in one direction or the other, of a “reservoir of libido,” of a somatic pressure to be released, of energy that can be dammed up and discharged, etc. Let’s call this the energetic model, where drives are seen as a free-flowing energy that seeks release. In Lacan’s view, this model was limited and rather misleading, so he proposed to conceive the drive in topological terms: not as a somatic pressure or an energy flow, but as an extension of the body, something that elongates the body towards the outside without quite falling into externality or remaining internal. Neither inside nor outside, the drive is the creature of the edge and the transition, always pertaining to bodily orifices, that is, to the privileged points of transition between the inside and the outside (hence the oral drive, the anal drive, etc.), the points where the most dramatic epistemological line has to be drawn that relates a subject to an object—drives are thus placed in a zone in between subject and object. Thus, Lacan proposed that drive should rather be conceived as an organ, a paradoxical organ (Freud already spoke of “an auxiliary organ”), a strange kind of organ, “situated in relation to the true organ” (Lacan 1979, p. 196), but nevertheless an “ungraspable organ, [...] in short, a false organ” (*ibid.*), “whose characteristic is not to exist, but which is nevertheless an organ” (*ibid.*, pp. 197–8), “an unreal [*irréel*] organ [...] Unreal is not imaginary. The unreal is defined by articulating itself on the real in a way that eludes us, and it is precisely this that requires that its representation should be mythical” (*ibid.*, p. 205).

To elaborate his own myth about the drive, Lacan offers something of a parody of the Platonic myth of the missing halves: the missing half that would complement a human being (human being as sexed) and make him/her whole, would be a lamella, “something extra-flat, which moves like the amoeba [...] it goes

everywhere [...] it survives any division [...] it can run around. [...] And it is of this that all the forms of the *objet a* [...] are the representatives, the equivalents.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 197–8) So, in order to imagine the object of the drive, one has to conceive an organ that is lost and missing, but which nevertheless prolongs and extends the body. The missing organ is molded by the orifices and the borders of our body, the transition between the inside and the outside (and what Lacan called object *a* stems precisely from that topological location in all its forms), infinitely pliable, yet never fitting and never quite graspable, except through the “tour of the drive.”

I cannot dwell on this any further, but I want to highlight a hidden implication in Freud’s description of the tool as prosthesis. The tool always steps into the place of the missing organ, as an expansion and extension of the body, and in this topological location it inevitably becomes the object of the investment of the drives. The drive intervenes, as it were, in the gap between the body and its prosthesis; it is itself prosthetic in nature. The missing and lacking organ is as if presentified in the tool, and the tool is secretly endowed with the nature of lamella which denaturalizes every natural relationship. It sublates nature, thereby gaining the quality of a blind driving force that can appropriate everything, regardless of the benefit, driven by its own expanding force and pursuing its own agenda.

Freud speaks a few times somewhat enigmatically about a *Wistrieb*, the drive for knowledge, but maybe one can see in science, and technology as its extension, a sort of paradoxical embodiment of the blind nature of the drive. Natural forces are blind, as one says, but the forces that tame nature may turn out to be equally blind. Technology can never be caught into a homeostasis, synergistically working for our best advantage (hence, among other things, all the ecological problems). What drives science? The thirst for knowledge? The endeavor to benefit mankind, to improve its well-being, to make life easier and more livable? The

effort to alleviate that in life which is too hard for man to tackle, its too-muchness? It is clear that within all these reasons there is something else at stake and that these noble goals—progress of knowledge, usefulness to humanity—may well function, at some point, as a rationalization, an excuse, a stand-in reason, an ersatz justification for something that cannot be quite justified in these terms. In science and its progress, in the progressive technological mastering of nature, there lurks an automatism that doesn't heed utility, benefit, welfare, advantage, and pays no attention to ethical norms—hence the necessity of ethical committees designed to bridle its excesses and to remind us of the true values (just as throughout history we constantly attempted to bridle the excesses of sexuality by imposing ethical norms—the analogy is strange, but maybe not entirely unjustified). The paradox is that what is designed to tame nature (and the drives) itself behaves as a drive that one cannot tame. The tools as extensions of the body take over the body, rather like drives driving the body that they merely prolong.

Let me end this first point with a quote by Slavoj Žižek, making a similar point:

Is not the paradigmatic case of such an “acephalic” knowledge provided by modern science which exemplifies the “blind insistence” of the (death) drive? Modern science follows its path (in microbiology manipulating genes, in particle physics etc.) heedless of the cost—satisfaction is here provided [...] not by any moral or communal goals scientific knowledge is supposed to serve. All the “ethical committees” which abound today and attempt to establish rules for the proper conduct [...]—are they ultimately not desperate attempts to re-inscribe this inexorable drive-progress of science which knows of no inherent limitation [...] within confines of human goals, to provide it with a “human face”, a limitation? [...] Any limitation like this is utterly foreign to the inherent logic of science. (Žižek 1997, p. 149)

If the first trait of culture is placed under the heading of utility, the benefits of mastering nature and improving our lives with

technological gadgets, then *the second trait* is placed under the heading of futility. The true indications of culture, Freud says, are to be sought above all in something that is completely useless, irreducible to the function of survival and the taming of nature. Culture manifests itself in something that doesn't serve any purpose, in an ornament, adornment, a supplement, in something merely beautiful for its own sake, without a function (one can be reminded of Kant's "purposefulness without a purpose"). From embellishments and flowerbeds that adorn our living space, to jewelry, bracelets, earrings, make-up that supplement the natural bodily beauty (again, the prostheses?) to finally the great works of art. It is only when we occupy ourselves with the useless, when we waste time and energy ("when friends converse and waste their time together," in Shakespeare's words), are we truly in culture. Cultural functions are irreducible to the economy of survival and the increase of power, calculation and progress. One needs *otium* for culture, free time and exemption from work, waste. If one says "the culture of food" or "the culture of clothing," then one means precisely those traits that are beyond what is necessary for survival, a frivolous addition, but at the same time highly codified (one can recall the entire opus of Claude Lévi-Strauss in this respect). The moment of expenditure, of the non-functional, of waste, which defies the logic of self-preservation and survival, is the true breeding ground of culture. (One can recall Georges Bataille whose reflections massively turn around the fact that culture is built around pure expenditure, spending for nothing, sacrifice, the excess which transgresses economy.)

What is the function of that which has no function? The telltale sign of culture resides in the fact that what is useless is at the same time most highly valued. Only in the futile and the non-functional can a human being be on his/her own. Hence, as noted in philosophical and sociological speculations ranging from those of Huizinga to Roger Caillois, when we play games, a frivolous and futile pastime, we pursue something set apart from the satisfaction of our needs. It's only in this that we elevate

ourselves above our animal nature; this is where we appear to be more than simply an animal that happens to be more successful than other animals in the skills of survival. And if we could detect the dimension of the object of drive in tools and technology, then we can detect its obverse side in the supplement, the high valuation of the futile. Isn't the object of the drive by its nature an addition, a supplement, a *parergon* (to use another Kantian term)—an ornamental accessory and embellishment, literally *para ergon*, beyond work,³ an excessive object, an objectal excess?

The first two traits form a paradoxical couple: on the one hand, culture as the maximization of utility; on the other hand, culture as uselessness, pure expenditure. Is culture something that serves best or something that doesn't serve at all? Utility or futility? The maximum purpose or no purpose at all? But purpose for what, in view of what?

The third trait of culture is in a way connected to the second one, namely the endeavor for order and cleanliness. Dirt is the sign of barbarism, cleanliness the sign of cultural progress. The simple yardstick of civilization can be the use of soap, in Freud's words, the bathroom being the true sanctuary of civilization, its temple, far more important than the so-called cultural institutions. Culture begins with hygiene. "Dirtiness of any kind seems to us incompatible with civilization." (Freud 1985, p. 281) Cleanliness becomes intriguing when, to make this point again, there is something other than the function of survival at stake. It is of course true that it greatly improves health and enhances the chances of survival, yet animals on the whole do very well without it and the knowledge about its blessings is of rather recent date. Hygiene is in some ways just as dysfunctional as the ornament and it was not implemented primarily on the basis of knowledge about its benefits for health. The more decisive part is its libidinal investment—the link between

³ Cf. Derrida who made such a big case of Kant's reflections on *parergon* in *The Truth in Painting* (Derrida 1987).

filth and the body in its natural functions, or more pointedly, between filth and enjoyment. Purity is the path of elevation beyond enjoyment, the path of purification, *askesis*, the rise above the body, the liberation from the flesh. However, it produces another kind of enjoyment as a side effect that sustains this elevation beyond enjoyment: a surplus enjoyment in the very renunciation of the bodily enjoyment. Cleanliness is linked to purification as the metaphor of spirit elevated over carnality. So, the first act of culture is the control over the excremental function, its reglementation, regulation, its confinement to a particular place and time, to a schedule and to a place apart. “Is this child clean?” To every infant who has ever crossed the threshold of a kindergarten it is crystal clear what is the first stage of culture, what constitutes the entry ticket into civilization and what divides the human from the sub-human. For Freud, the discipline of bodily functions in the anal stage is the very model of discipline. Each transgression of this prohibition evokes “dirty enjoyment” and the banned link between filth and enjoyment. Animals have no such problems, they don’t find excrements repulsive or odious. The first prohibition that the child must be submitted to, Freud states in the *Three Essays*, is the prohibition

against getting pleasure from anal activity and its products [which] has decisive effect on his whole development. This must be the first occasion on which the infant has a glimpse of an environment hostile to his instinctual impulses, on which he learns to separate his own entity from this alien one and on which he carries out the first “repression” of his possibilities for pleasure. From that time on, what is anal remains the symbol of everything that is to be repudiated and excluded from life. (Freud 1977, p. 104)

As an aside: when Lacan was touring American universities in 1975, he had a lecture at the MIT where he brought up, to the consternation of his audience, the question of elephant shit—there must be masses of it, yet it doesn’t seem to present any problem, whereas for us even the tiniest amount is a ponderous problem.

Hence his line (which he repeated on several occasions): *Cloaque, c'est la civilization*. Civilization is cloaca, shit management.⁴

The endeavor for cleanliness and purification stands in a close connection with striving for order. However, the imperative to achieve order presents a slightly different kind of issue than the imperative for cleanliness, which is why it can be identified as an independent *fourth trait* of culture. Order imposed by culture tends to take, in its initial gesture, a natural cycle as its model—as opposed to cleanliness, which is inherently “unnatural.” Its pattern and support can be provided by the regularity of astronomical cycles, the rhythm of day and night, the seasons, the movement of celestial bodies returning to the same place, providing the model for the calendar as the elementary disposition of ordering and partitioning time. Some of the oldest monuments of civilization (from pyramids to Stonehenge) were erected on the basis of an astronomic pattern, with a view of culture to be attuned to celestial order. Order enables the economy of time and space, the economic use of the one and the other. Yet again, its functional use disguises rather than reveals its libidinal impact. What is at stake, beyond functionality, is an excess which manifests “the compulsion to repeat,” and this is precisely the mechanism in which Freud sees the basic property of drives. “Order is a kind of compulsion to repeat” (Freud 1985, p. 282). Drives are endowed with a vector which compels them to return to the same place, the scene of the crime, that is, the scene of satisfaction beyond use and need, and this is what epitomizes the object of the drive. There is a blind automatism built into the drive which entails repetition, insists as repetition, the repetition of what procures pleasure (and ultimately, enigmatically, also the repetition of something which is “beyond the pleasure principle”—the problem that Freud highlights in his most remarkable text of that name [1920]). Order is tightly connected to automatism, regularity,

⁴ “Excrements perhaps come from the interior, but the human characteristic is that man doesn’t know what to do with his excrements. Civilization is the excrement [*le déchet*], *cloaca maxima*.” (Lacan 1976, p. 61)

compulsion (*Zwang*). There is always more in the insistence of/on order than mere utility, and this excess of libidinal investment makes it possible for order to be implemented and made acceptable in the first place. Utility doesn't explain the cultural compulsion and repetition. Something else must also be at work.⁵

The further trait of culture—*the fifth trait* by our count—is the high valuation of spirituality, of ideas and ideals. The leading role ascribed to ideas in human life is the sign and the measure of civilization, that is, the high valuation of everything that raises us beyond the survival function. Here again one can quickly see the link with the drives—precisely with one of the fundamental “vicissitudes of the drives” that Freud described as sublimation: the inherent trait of the drive, which renders possible the proclivity of the drives to be satisfied with proxies and stand-ins, with ersatz satisfaction, thus opening at the outset a leeway for the intellectual, spiritual, scientific, religious, artistic pursuits to spectacularly sneak in.

Freud posits an equation between sublimation and desexualization, e. g. in the 1908 “‘Civilized’ Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness”: “This capacity to exchange its originally sexual aim for another one, which is no longer sexual but which is psychically related to the first aim, is called the capacity for sublimation” (Freud 1985, p. 39). The sexual drive has the curious ability “to displace its aim without materially diminishing in intensity.” (*Ibid.*) What is more, and this is really astounding, this can happen “*without* involving repression” (“On Narcissism: An Introduction” (1914), Freud 1984, p. 89). There is a glaring paradox: one would think that the deflection of the aim from its original purpose, from a sexual goal, comes with a high price, but not at all. Sublimation averts the initial sexual aim without repression, foisting a surrogate in lieu of the real thing without imposing repression and without diminishing intensity

⁵ “Aber der Nutzen erklärt uns das Streben nicht ganz; es muß noch etwas anderes im Spiele sein.” (Freud 1982, p. 224)

(something one would not expect Freud to say). Already in the *Three Essays*, which introduced the notion of the drive and later in the 1915 meta-psychological paper on the vicissitudes of the drives (Freud 1984, pp. 113–38), one can see that the drive essentially consists in a roundabout, in the capacity for substitution, in a displacement from the direct satisfaction to indirect ones. To follow this basic insight, drives are not simply a primary given. They rather appear as intruders which denaturalize the supposed natural course of the satisfaction of needs and thwart it by sliding towards surrogates. They emerge only at the point of a slide of a supposedly natural course, being substitutive at their very origin (hence Freud's theory of *Anlehnung*, the drives emerging by "leaning on," taking support in, natural satisfaction of needs, what Strachey translated by the "anaclyctic" nature of drives). Drives, instead of being indomitable giants which always force their way to satisfaction, thus rather appear to be easily tamed, lured by stand-ins, fed by ersatz, prone to sublimation, to deflection from the true satisfaction. This doesn't make them any less indomitable, however, nor this satisfaction any less real. Could one coin an adage "Love your surrogate as yourself"? So, with sublimation as "desexualization" it would rather seem that already sexuality, in any common sense of the word, was itself retroactively thoroughly "desexualized" by Freud, bereft of its natural givenness and made dependent on a substitution.

Last but not least—and this is the last, *sixth trait* of culture—there is the regulation of social relations in such a way that it enables co-existence in the forms of a family, society, and state. In the hypothetical natural state the decisive factor was the supremacy of physical power, but the origin of society requires the insight that community is stronger than the individual. The first step of civilization is the supremacy of the social over the individual, so that all individuals have to accept a mutual limitation. Hence the idea of law and justice equally valid for everyone and not to be transgressed in favor of any particular individual. If everyone is equally submitted to the law, then everyone has to

accept the renunciation of the drives. An individual can ultimately be free only outside of society and culture (hence the model of a free individual is the primal father), while the realm of culture, in contrast, is the realm of restriction, the balance between the demands for individual freedom and autonomy, on the one side, and the demands of society, the heteronomy, on the other.

Thus, we arrive at, or return to, the central problem, that culture appears as the renunciation of the satisfaction of the drives. Freud uses a series of expressions, which all point in the same direction, exhibiting at the same time a terminological uncertainty: *Triebverzicht* (renunciation of the drives); *Nichtbefriedigung* (non-satisfaction, dissatisfaction); *Unterdrückung* (suppression); *Verdrängung* (repression);⁶ “*Kulturversagung*” (“cultural renunciation,” in quotation marks—a term which is (unwittingly?) ambiguous, for it can mean that we have to renounce in favor of culture, or that culture itself falls short, *versagt*, it fails to provide satisfaction); a bit later Freud speaks of *Triebeinschränkung* (the inherent limitation of the drives); and finally there is the constant use of the adjective *zielgehemmt*, namely, the inhibition of the drive on the way to its goal (Freud 1982, pp. 226–8).⁷ But the drive that doesn’t attain its goal nevertheless reaches its aim (to use Lacan’s helpful distinction). It gets its satisfaction on the way to satisfaction, it gets its bit in the very dissatisfaction, it is satisfied whether one wants it or not, it reaches its *Ziel* through being *zielgehemmt*. In the renunciation, in the inhibition imposed by society on the individual something is produced that keeps

⁶ Freud adds a question mark: “by suppression, repression or some other means?” (Freud 1985, p. 286)

⁷ “Here we can clear up the mystery of the *zielgehemmt*, of that form that the drive may assume, in attaining its satisfaction without attaining its goal [...]. When you entrust someone with a mission, the aim is not what he brings back, but the itinerary he must take. The aim is the way taken. The French word *le but* may be translated by another word in English, goal. [...] If the drive may be satisfied without attaining what [...] would be the satisfaction of its end [...], it is because [...] its aim is simply this return into circuit.” (Lacan 1979, pp. 179–80)

the drive going, something that drives the drive and which is its true object. This surplus is what sustains cultural and social co-existence as well as marks it with an impossibility.

Thus, we can see that the result of Freud's attempt to list the basic traits of culture is that it paradoxically coincides with the list of the basic traits of the drive. "Six fundamental traits of culture" can be read as the "six fundamental traits of the drive."

1. The mastering of nature, whose tool is precisely the tool, can be seen as the parallel to the fact that the tool as the prosthesis prolongs the body and is placed in the "grey zone," which reaches beyond the body without being simply external, the zone where the drive extends beyond the body and turns around the non-bodily organ, where the body extends over its physical limits.

2. The ornament (the *parergon*, the non-functional supplement, the addition) shows the object of the drive from the reverse side, as a useless appendage, as the object of enjoyment in the place of pure expenditure.

3. Cleanliness as the yardstick of culture points to the anal drive, the disciplining of anality. The (anal) drive doesn't start from the bodily needs but takes the demand of the Other as its object.

4. Order points to the compulsion to repeat, *Wiederholungszwang*, as the basic matrix of the drive.

5. Spiritual elevation, the high valuation of ideas, points to sublimation, i.e. to the inherent substitutive nature of the drive, its slide to the indirect ersatz satisfaction.

6. The social nature of culture points to renunciation and inhibition in relation to the supposed goal. In culture, the drive is necessarily inhibited and deviated, yet it forces its satisfaction by this very way.

So, what follows from these six traits belonging to both culture and the drives? If the unconscious is structured like a language (as Lacan's famous dictum suggests), are drives structured like culture? Do they get the basic traits from their opponent which is supposed to be there to restrict them and to mold them? What would they be "in themselves," if we could consider them apart

from this molding? Do they have an independent existence as a separate realm? Do they get their satisfaction from what was supposed to oppress them?

There is a paradox at the core of this. The cultural instances are supposed to restrict sexuality, and Freud indeed describes the progress of culture as the progress of growing restriction, constraint, displacement and channeling of sexual drives. Yet, is sexuality restricted by an external oppressor that is completely alien to it? Do the drives rather form a strange alliance, a compromise with what was supposed to oppress them, willingly espousing surrogates? Maybe we were looking at the picture from a wrong perspective. “Sometimes one seems to perceive that it is not only the pressure of civilization but something in the essence of the [sexual] function itself [*etwas am Wesen der Funktion selbst*] which denies us full satisfaction and urges us along other paths. This may be wrong; it is hard to decide” (Freud 1985, p. 295; 1982, p. 235). This seems to be a very strange idea—there is something in sexuality itself that resists its full satisfaction? This strange idea is not new. Freud gave it a voice already seventeen years earlier, in “On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love” (1912): “It is my belief that, however strange it may sound, we must reckon with the possibility that something in the nature of the sexual drive itself is unfavorable to the realization of complete satisfaction” (Freud 1977, p. 162). Freud, in this paper, goes on to give the humorous example of the happy relation between the drunkard and his bottle: the drunkard has no need to go to some faraway country where the wine is more expensive or the use of alcohol is prohibited. It seems that the relation of drunkard to the bottle is pure harmony, the model of a happy marriage as opposed to the “gender trouble” the rest of us are doomed to: the trouble that may mysteriously stem, not from the repression of sexuality, but from sexuality itself, from something in sexuality that resists straight satisfaction on its own grounds. Restriction is not due to external intervention and oppression, but rather appears as an

externalization, a consequence of an internal impasse. Restriction is not the cause of conflict, but its result.

But how to conceive of the nature of this conflict which at the outset seemed to be the conflict between the drives and the culture imposing restrictions on them, but which turned out to be far more convoluted, so that the restrictions turned out to be the extrapolation of something which is ridden with impasses in itself? Drives and culture thus appear to be inseparable, not on opposite banks, yet nevertheless structured and driven by a conflict that cannot simply be played out between the two but seems transversal, affecting both. And to start with, how many drives are there?

Freud famously proposed an all-pervasive conflict between two kinds of drives which in their antagonistic relation subtend all cultural formations in a strife that has no end in sight. There is, on the one hand, the Eros that is the force of unification, union and integration. In one part of the argument he speaks about the deflection of the libido from its immediate sexual aims which can then form the ties of friendship, neighborly love, groups, social formations, nation, state, humanity, the force of cohesion which—along with the mechanism of sublimation—forms the edifice of culture, providing its unifying glue. There is on the other hand the death drive, Thanatos, the force of disintegration, negativity, aggression, dissolution, destruction which strives in the opposite direction, preventing any unity, undermining union by its thrust to separate.⁸

⁸ “[C]ivilization is a process in the service of Eros, whose purpose is to combine single human individuals, and after that families, then races, peoples and nations, into one great unit, the unity of mankind. [...] These collections of men are to be libidinally bound to one another. Necessity alone, the advantages of work in common, will not hold them together. But man’s natural aggressive drive, the hostility of each against all and of all against each, opposes this program of civilization. This aggressive drive is the derivative and the main representative of the death drive which we have found alongside of Eros and which shares world-dominion with it.” (Freud 1985, pp. 313–4)

Thus one can ultimately regard all culture as “the struggle between Eros and Death, between the drive of life and the drive of destruction, as it works itself out in the human species” (Freud 1985, p. 314). Eros would thus be the building force of culture, while death drive would be its opponent, undermining and undoing the ties of cohesion. The apparent conflict between culture and drives is thereby transposed into the conflict between two kinds of drives: one promoting cultural goals and one undoing them. This is the spirit in which the famous closing page of *Civilization* is written: “Thus I have not the courage to rise up before my fellow-men as a prophet, and I bow to their reproach that I can offer them no consolation” (*ibid.*, p. 339). The most fateful issue of culture is thus how to master and subdue “the drive of aggression and self-destruction,” since technology has advanced to the point that humanity can annihilate itself (“exterminating one another to the last man”). But Freud is helpless and has no answer: “And now it is to be expected that the other of the two ‘Heavenly Powers’, eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result?” (*Ibid.*, p. 340.) This is the last sentence of this work, and as the editors’ note tells us: “The final sentence was added in 1931 [in the second edition two years after first publication]—when the menace of Hitler was already beginning to be apparent.”

So, in this eternal struggle the best we can do is to hope that the balance will be swayed on the good side, the side of Eros; all we can do is to keep our fingers crossed for the better opponent in an endless strife, a strife as old as humanity, knowing full well that the other opponent is equally mighty and ultimately unbeatable.

But one can easily see that this solution is far from being satisfactory. Doesn’t the dualism of the drives, posited as this eternal quasi-cosmic struggle of two “heavenly powers,” rather simplify that paradox and avoid its true sting? Freud himself spoke a number of times about the psychic mechanism of dealing with a contradiction by dividing it into the good part and

the bad part, say the image of the good father and the bad father, keeping the two separate, side by side, instead of addressing the complexity of their conflicting nexus. The story of the eternal struggle is suspiciously similar to the countless Manichean mythical accounts of the eternal strife between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. Freud himself, in “Analysis Terminable and Interminable” (1937), sang great praise for a quasi-mythical reference to Empedocles, one of the greatest Greek naturalists of his time, but also the author of the mythical account about the strife between *philia* and *neikos*, forces of love and forces of disintegration: “[T]he theory of Empedocles which especially deserves our interest is one which approximates so closely to the psycho-analytic theory of the instincts that we should be tempted to maintain that the two are identical, if it were not for the difference that the Greek philosopher’s theory is a cosmic phantasy while ours is content to claim biological validity” (Freud 2001, p. 254). Once again, Freud needs a recourse to a cosmic fantasy, just as, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he had to have recourse to the Platonic myth of the missing halves as the best account of the origin of sexuality. But where would that thin difference lie? Perhaps one should then take seriously Freud’s assertion in the *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1932) that “the theory of the drives is so to say our mythology. Drives are mythical entities, magnificent in their indefiniteness. In our work we cannot disregard them, yet we are never sure that we are seeing them clearly” (Freud 1973, p. 127). Mythical creatures, never to be seen clearly nor scientifically proven or provable, would thus entail a mythical account in order to talk about them at all. Could this be the ultimate answer, or is it rather an admission of defeat?

How many drives are there? When Freud first introduced the notion of the drive and libido in the *Three Essays* (1905) a quarter of a century earlier, it was presented in a completely different light than at the end of *Civilization*. The reader of *Three Essays* would be completely confounded to find out that the fragmented,

partial, polymorphous nature of libido in the first book would turn into the cultural hero of unification and love in the second. In the shift from book one to book two, the libido becomes our best hope for the salvation of culture, endowed with a high cultural mission, which is difficult to tell apart from the traditional praise of the forces of love. If the first book made a scandal (one of the biggest early scandals inaugurating psychoanalysis), it was precisely for presenting an image which was completely at odds with the traditional views of sexuality and love: a libido depicted by deviations and aberrations, *Abweichungen* and *Abirrungen*, by autoeroticism, polymorphous perversion, anarchy, fetishism and partial objects (objects that are partial in themselves, not just parts of objects). A libido that is “partial” in this way can never be totalized, seized or encompassed by One and is thus as far removed from the force of unity as possible.

Freud tellingly started his argument in the *Three Essays* by considering sexual aberrations, *Abirrungen*, and then proceeded to consider sexual *Abweichungen*, deviations regarding the sexual object and the sexual goal. There is something in sexuality as such that is defined, for Freud, by deviation and aberration, or in another word, by a declination, a *clinamen* from the path of natural causality and the satisfaction of physiological needs. There is a deviation in the very concept of sexuality, in the very concept of the drive, which, to put it in a nutshell, cannot be grasped independently of its deviation. There is the famous adage by Brecht at the end of *The Threepenny Opera*: “What is a bank robbery in comparison with the establishment of a bank?” What are all the petty thieves in comparison with a systematic, legalized and long term robbery accomplished by banks? By analogy (a strange analogy, I know), one could say that Freud’s treatment of deviations and perversions in that book presents the following argument: What are all these perversions—deviations from the usual sexual object or goal—in comparison with sexuality as such, which is in itself nothing but a massive deviation, more spectacular

than any perverse deviations? Aberrations and deviations are not placed at the beginning of the argument in order to lead us to the consideration of “normal sexuality,” but in order to show that “normal sexuality” is itself based on an aberration and a deviation.

The old idea of *clinamen*, stemming from Epicurus and Lucretius, from the early origins of materialism in the history of thought—the idea of a departure from a straight path and from the supposed natural causality, a swerve that the universe may hold at its origin and its core—is perhaps a useful tool to think about this. *Clinamen* presents not a principle or a substance as the point of departure or origin, but precisely the very departure from a principle, a swerve. The drive is such a *clinamen* of human nature.⁹

So how many drives are there? I made this excursion into the *Three Essays*, the originating point of Freud’s theory of drives, to arrive at a simple point: the drive, libido, is not a One, it is not a substance; it possesses the key quality of the drive by the very impossibility of being substantialized and totalized. It is not a substance that one could ever delimit and localize, say by positing sexuality as the firm determining force, a substratum that lies under all seemingly higher endeavors, a universal answer. It consists precisely in the very impossibility of such a delimitation or localization; it is a universal question rather than an answer. It is not reducible to biological needs and pressures nor separable from them, occurring only in their bosom, nor can it be seized independently. No doubt Freud’s less than satisfactory dualistic account can be criticized precisely because he thus turned the drives into two opposing substances or principles. The drive is neither One (and this was Jung’s idea of turning libido and the drives into a unified notion of life energy) nor a Two, Eros and Thanatos, the positive and the negative, the binding and the unbinding, in eternal

⁹ Lacan, in a felicitous pun, implied a relation between clinics and *clinamen*: “clinical relations (clinical, the analyzand is on a couch [indeed *reclining*, one can add], there is the question of a certain *clinamen*, cf. Lucretius ...)” (Lacan 1976, p. 58). On the question of *clinamen* and psychoanalysis cf. Dolar 2013.

dualism. Nor is it simply a multiple heterogeneity, “multiplicities of multiplicities” in Badiou’s parlance; to recur to multiplicity is usually rather a way to avoid tensions and contradictions by relegating them to multiplicity, thus avoiding the break and the cut (the negative one, as it were) which subtends it.

But this brings us to the core of the problem. If the nature of the drive consists in deviation and substitution, if the symbolic is the obverse side of this deviation and substitution, then the drive shares from its “origin,” its deviating origin, the ground with culture. Culture molds, not nature or instinct, but something that it produces itself. Or rather, both culture and the drives share the same lack of origin, which is placed in something that could be seen as a deviation to start with. What follows is that we are never dealing with the problem of having a natural substratum that culture would then come to restrict, but rather we are always dealing with their interface, the interface that comes first, as it were, the field of tensions and contradictions, which “precedes” or dislocates the neat division into nature and culture. Or in other words, we don’t have two separate, independent and opposed areas, neatly localized and delimited, which would come into conflict with always unsatisfactory outcome. We have instead a field of tensions and overlaps, an interface where inter “precedes” the two faces, whereas the neat opposition between nature and culture, drives and culture, is precisely a way to avoid this paradox or to repress it or to circumvent it or to obfuscate it. “Drives are the representatives of the somatic in the psychic.” This is Freud’s recurrent formulation from which it follows that they are precisely an interface. And yet, it is wrong to assume, as we spontaneously do, that there are constituted independent areas of the somatic and psychic or nature and culture prior to the interface.

The history of psychoanalysis has always oscillated between the two poles of naturalization and culturalization. On the one hand, there was the strong tendency, already in Freud, to pin

psychoanalysis to the sciences of nature in the hope of finding the chemical and physiological grounding for what it describes (Freud sometimes even presented psychoanalysis as a provisional science valid only until the discovery of our true natural basis in the biological and the chemical; an interim science in suspense). Nowadays this is what drives the attempts to make it compatible with cognitive sciences. On the other hand, psychoanalysis has largely made its career as a theory of culture, in humanities and social sciences, where it is mostly taught in universities, Freud is occasionally presented as a cultural hero in the *Zeitgeist*.¹⁰ But there is something that gets lost and obfuscated in both these receptions and accounts, a point where neither nature nor culture can be totalized and neatly opposed, where they both reach beyond themselves into their other, the blind spot of their opposition. Both nature and culture appear as non-all, not fully constituted, but held together by their impossible overlap. We cannot simply oppose two massive totalities of nature and culture, for the Freudian notion of the drive can be seen as the concept the aim of which is ultimately to de-totalize the two, to undermine this very opposition and its self-evidence.

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¹⁰ I must refer, concerning this central point, to the brilliant work by Alenka Zupančič (2011 in Slovene, soon to appear in English, *What is sex?*, Boston: MIT 2017), which also served as one of the major inspirations of this paper.

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Back and Forth from Letter to Homophony

Jean-Claude Milner

In *L'Œuvre claire*, I propounded a general reading of Lacan's work.¹ I still maintain the main tenets of my attempt. Nevertheless, I must admit a serious defect concerning Lacan's last phase of activity.

After *Seminar XX*, Lacan multiplies the innovations. More than ever, his doctrine seems to be in a state of permanent crisis. In Kühnian terms, however, it appeared to me that the last paradigm shift had happened in *Seminar XX*. Accordingly, the perpetual movements of the following period were but a development of what was implied in this shift: essentially the introduction of the knots and a new doctrine of the autonomy of the letter. Such a conception allowed me to adequately comment on some aspects of the last seminars, but, all in all, I was missing the point. *Seminar XX* did in fact enact a shift of paradigm; ordinarily, a certain amount of time is necessary in order to stabilize the new state of things, but Lacan began to feel the necessity to accelerate. Time was running out. If a new shift of paradigm appeared to be opportune, so be it. It was inopportune to wait. As soon as the shift of *Seminar XX* had been initiated, Lacan engaged in another shift.

This is precisely what I did not perceive. What exactly did I miss? Why this lack of awareness? When did I take it in account? How was I made aware of it? All these questions must be raised and answered.

¹ Some elements of this article have been presented orally on the 1st of July 2016 before the Institute for Cultural Inquiry in Berlin.

La Troisième played a crucial role for me, but not immediately. Lacan presents it orally before the 7th Congress of l'École freudienne de Paris, which was held in Rome in 1975. He explicitly states that he is drawing on a manuscript of 66 pages, which he just completed; understandably, he had to abridge his talk. He did not communicate the original document, but a transcription of his conference was published in 1975 in *Les Lettres de l'École freudienne*. In 2011, in *La Cause Freudienne*, Jacques-Alain Miller published a new version (Lacan 2011); it was based on the 1975 version (Lacan 1975b), but had been carefully revised.

A passage of *La Troisième* is especially remarkable. Lacan seeks to define his own concept of *lalangue*. He connects it to the following decision: to refuse to attribute to mere chance the fact that *vœu* (wish) is also *veut* (he wants), that *non* (no) is also *nom* (noun), that *d'eux* (of them) sounds like *deux* (two). “*Ce n'est pas là pur hasard ni non plus arbitraire comme dit Saussure,*” says Lacan and concludes: “*c'est le dépôt, l'alluvion, la pétrification [...] du maniement par un groupe de son expérience inconsciente.*”²

The whole paragraph deserves to be scrutinized sentence by sentence. The chosen examples are most intriguing. The apparition of the group in connection with the Unconscious raises several questions. In particular, it would be most interesting to compare Lacan's approach to Freud's approach in *Der Mann Moses*. The constitution of the Jewish people could also be held as a “petrification of the handling by a group of its own unconscious experience.” The fact that Freud thinks in quasi historical terms, while Lacan prefers to listen to the sounds of speech cannot be considered as negligible. It reveals the differences of their methods, but also the proximity of their concerns. However, one and only one aspect of the text was of importance for me. Despite its shortness,

² “It is neither mere chance nor arbitrariness, as Saussure says ... It is the sediment, the alluvium, the petrification [...] of the handling by a group of its own unconscious experience.” (Lacan 2011, p. 20.)

the list of examples shed a blinding light on the real cause of my previous blindness, which in that case was also a deafness. What I did not want to listen to, I could henceforth define and name. It was not even new. For many years, Lacan had drawn everybody's attention to it and named it *homophonie* (homophony).

I am not even saying that my awareness was immediate. On the contrary, I neglected *La Troisième* when I read it for the first time in 1976. I still neglected it when I read it a second time in 2011. As a first motive for that lack of attention, I could mention my indifference to Joyce. Joyce's work had become essential to Lacan's progress after *Seminar XX*. Hence an abundance of admirable commentaries and interpretations left me absolutely cold. I even concluded that the "Joycean turn" was a dead end compared to the fecundity of the "linguistic turn" or the more recent "topological turn." Just recently in 2016, I finally recognized my indifference for what it was: a resistance.

No doubt I was resisting Joyce's program of research, but after all it did not matter so much. Far more important was the fact that I was resisting Lacan's work itself. He had pointed to an object I could not bear. The more attentive I had wanted to be till then, the more neglectful I had constrained myself to become. This lack of vigilance, remaining sufficiently discreet, escaped my attention. Indeed, I recognized my resistance as such only when it ended.

This event is very recent. It is directly related to Eric Laurent's book *L'envers de la biopolitique* [The Other Side of Biopolitics] and to Jacques-Alain Miller's findings, which Eric Laurent quotes abundantly. I never failed to recognize what I owe to Jacques-Alain Miller. He introduced me in 1963 to Lacan's work; later, he made me conscious of the importance of that work as compared to others that were then and sometimes still are far better known. Thanks to him, I am now able to identify the nature and the cause of my previous resistance: I could not accept the fact that homophony had become a cornerstone of Lacan's doctrine.

As Freud says, however, “I have always known this.” The reality of homophony is familiar to me. I had encountered it when I worked with Roman Jakobson on Baudelaire’s poem *Spleen IV*. In *For the Love of Language*, I had studied Saussure’s anagrams without however mentioning their condition of possibility, namely the total or partial homophony between several morphemes. Lacan’s wordplays always seemed important to me. I had noticed that the permutation *lituraterre* created in French something analogous to a Chinese ideogram. Like the latter, the former combines several units, *littérature*, *rature* (crossing out), *terre* (earth), *litura* (erasure). The principle of simultaneity replaced the principle of succession on which alphabetical writing is based. What is more, I raised these word plays to the rank of mathemes. In order to spell out the elements of knowledge they are the recipient of, it is both necessary and sufficient to display the various homophonies they are made of.

I already mentioned Lacan’s struggle against time. Since the seventies, he endeavored to write and to speak on several levels at once, in order to convey a maximum number of significations. If he had submitted his discourse to the constraints of linearity, he would have lost his battle against the most formidable of adversaries, namely Death. *Ars longa, vita brevis* (Art is long, Life is short), the old saying is relevant here. The unlimited effects of partial or complete homophony enable Art to compensate Life’s shortness. In *La Troisième*, Lacan mentions openly the possibility of his sudden death occurring during the very speech he was giving then: “*même si je défuntais, à la suite – ça pourrait bien m’arriver ...*”³ This passing remark sheds an oblique light on the systematic use of word play in the same text.

These presentations are accurate in many respects; they are however misleading with respect to the essential fact: homophony

³ “[E]ven if I were to die in the following instant—it could very well happen to me ...” (Lacan 2011, p. 12)

is not an addition to the various dimensions of language; it is not an ornamental superstructure that does not modify the foundations of the building. On the contrary, it transforms radically everything that can be theorized about the Unconscious and its relationship to the fact of *lalangue*. Moreover, I had fallen into a trap I had built with my own hands. By getting closely acquainted with homophony, I felt as if I had domesticated it. I could not suppose that this false security concealed in fact a resistance. While reading *La Troisième* anew, with Laurent's and Miller's findings in mind, I suddenly understood what had been at stake: linguistics, my own position as former linguist, my faithfulness to my own past as linguist. I had payed lip service to homophony in many circumstances, but my resistance to it would remain irreducible as long as I kept believing *la langue*.

For the difficulty lays there: there is nothing wrong in believing in *la langue*; its existence must not be put in doubt; its definition in strictly negative terms remains one of the major discoveries of the 20th century. But to *believe in* and to *believe* are two different things; one must not believe *la langue* exclusively; that belief must constantly undergo what Secret Services call a debriefing; indeed, *la langue* must not have the last word. There precisely lied my resistance: I conceded to homophony all kinds of importance, but the last word still belonged to *la langue*. Its materiality seemed to me both necessary and sufficient to give access to *lalangue*. Hence an implicit axiom: *the material of lalangue is la langue*. I mistrusted Lacan's Joycean turn, because its axiom was exactly the reverse; it could be summarized as follows: the material of *lalangue* is homophony, but homophony does not belong to *la langue*.

La Troisième challenges directly all experts of *la langue*, whether they conceive themselves as grammarians or as linguists. The examples Lacan quotes summarize exactly what the experts have spontaneously agreed to ignore. Their agreement is so unshakable that it goes without saying. If someone dared to mention

this kind of data, the immediate answer would be: It is a matter of mere chance, it is of no consequence. Lacan's expression "*ce n'est pas pur hasard*" (it is not mere chance) directly opposes the expert's reply "*c'est un pur hasard.*" In fact, given the Lacanian definition of *lalangue*, a symmetrical definition follows for *la langue*: *la langue* is defined by the decision to consider the homophony between *vœu* and *veut* as haphazard. Such a decision amounts to an annulment of the data; they exist, but count for nothing.

By the way, Lacan's expression "It is not mere chance" does not imply that any necessary rule should be expressed. The "no chance" is neutral between chance and necessity. It just qualifies as a denial the attempt to annul all examples of homophony.

From these examples, nothing follows except their existence. The fact that two morphemes are homophones does not define any connection between them except homophony itself. Two homophones are neither bound nor separated. They just wave at each other like strangers travelling on two different trains. One could say of homophony what Heraclitus said of the god in Delphi: "it does not reveal, it does not conceal, it gives a sign." We know that Apollo's oracles required to be interpreted. The same is true of homophony. Once the echo between *vœu* and *veut* has been heard, the time of interpretation has come.

Moreover, different types of chance are involved in a language. Saussure's distinctions have not lost their relevance. The thing signified by the sign *wish* is not to be confused with the "signified" (*signifié*) of the same sign; the former is external to language in general and to *la langue* in particular, while the latter is internal to *la langue*. The phonic "signifier" (*signifiant*) /wish/ is not to be confused with the sign *wish*; it constitutes but one of the two faces of the sign. The conceptual *signifié* is generally expressed by repeating the phonic "signifier" and enclosing it between quote marks, 'wish'. The relation between all these elements oscillates between chance and necessity; once English is considered as a given reality, the relation between /wish/ and 'wish' cannot be

different from what it is; it is necessary. But it is also possible to conceive of a world where English phonology would be slightly different from what it is; the fact that English, as a whole, is such as it is depends on chance. But what is true of the whole is also true of its parts. In that case, the relation between /wish/ and 'wish' depends on chance, since the phonological form /wish/ itself depends on chance. All these cases of "chance" differ from each other; moreover, they have nothing to do with the "chance" to which the linguist would reduce homophony.

Lacan does not examine in *La Troisième* the labyrinth of the Saussurean theory of the linguistic sign. It is both necessary and sufficient for him to isolate the phenomenon of homophony. He openly rejects the Saussurean term of "arbitrariness"; even if it were relevant for the linguistic sign (which he denies), it would be irrelevant concerning homophony, because homophony does not belong to the space where the linguistic sign may be defined. While the Saussurean *la langue* has no exteriority, and finds in itself its own and only experience, homophony and, thanks to it, *lalangue* result from the unconscious experiences of a group. It is to be noted that Lacan opens the way to a new theory of culture. Instead of connecting culture and *la langue*, he connects culture and *lalangue*. The inscription in a given culture depends on the ability of hearing homophony and its effects. Freud's notion of *Unbehagen* (discomfort) should be connected nowadays with the obvious distrust of the various social institutions against *lalangue*. Many educational systems in the Western world promote the globish, in other words *la langue* deprived of *lalangue*. In truth, homophony is everywhere, but it has been instrumentalized as a tool for commercial or political marketing. Anagrams, rhymes, alliterations, word plays are used in the fabrication of slogans. Even an excessive knowledge of *la langue* raises some distrust, because one can never be sure whether *la langue* may not be corrupted and evolve into *lalangue*. Humanities are stigmatized as useless, but that cannot be the real reason, since many useless

practices are taught in Western societies. What makes humanities suspect, is not their lack of usefulness, but their ability to extend the field of *lalangue*. Obviously, they multiply the opportunities for partial or total homophony. Lacan was able to produce a new matheme concerning the unconscious by using the homophony between the German adjective *unbewusst* and the French phrase *une bévue* (some mistake). Such a procedure required of him and of his audience what is commonly called in French *culture générale* (general culture). Clearly, the decline of the humanities will make it impossible for a majority of readers to understand this word play and its implications. I do not share the melancholy of those who regret the loss of the classical languages and the classical culture; but I must admit that it entails almost mechanically the muteness of *lalangue* and the instrumentalization of homophony.

Lalangue's name derives from *la langue*. In other words, the name itself involves homophony, while its *designatum* also involves homophony. All Lacanian word plays are mathemes. This one implies that *la langue* and *lalangue* are two separate beings, although the latter is produced by transforming the former. It is tempting to think of a Klein bottle, that had been crafted artisanally with a usual bottle as its starting point. It is easy for a glassblower to craft such an artefact. But the comparison would be misleading.

Contrary to the two bottles, *la langue* and *lalangue* are not made of the same material. *La langue* is entirely reducible to negative relations; each linguistic sign exists only as opposed to another; its elements have no positivity by themselves; their sensorial qualities are of no consequence. In particular, the phonetic *qualia* are dissolved and replaced by formal features. Homophony, on the contrary, depends on the *qualia*. *Lalangue* is integrally positive and affirmative. This positive affirmation however is punctual. *Lalangue* manifests itself in separate word plays; in each case of homophony, *lalangue* is involved in its entirety, but no homophony is related to another. There is no network of

homophonous pairs, of anagrams, of alliterations, of word plays that would constitute *lalangue* as a whole. Indeed, *lalangue* is not a whole, it is *pastout*. There is no *x* that does not belong to *lalangue*, while there is an *x* at least that does not belong to *la langue*. The existence of such a limit is the requirement of grammar and linguistics. Consequently, *la langue* is a whole; its negative relationships are connected in networks that may be expressed in various ways, the most traditional being the grammatical rule. In short, *lalangue* is homophonous to *la langue* because it attracts to itself, in the manner of a black hole, the unlimited infinity of homophony, the existence of which *la langue* must deny.

Given the homophony between *la langue* and *lalangue*, which of the two comes first? Apparently the name *la langue* comes first and its counterpart *lalangue* comes second. In the same way, it would seem that the speaking subject begins by learning *la langue* and reaches homophony subsequently, through his knowledge of *la langue*. The real process is quite different however. Even from the point of view of ontogeny, the child experiments with homophony and word plays before having a complete sense of *la langue*. His babbling has more to do with *lalangue* than with *la langue*. Indeed, what makes a speaking being of the infant is neither *la langue* nor *le langage*, but *lalangue*. Babies seem to play with sounds in the same way they play with water or sand. The main forms of their play imply repeated vowels or consonants, as is shown in baby language: *baby*, *dada*, *mama*, etc. But the repetition of sounds is simply a subspecies of homophony.

It is tempting to suppose that the *Fort-Da* represents a first discovery of *la langue* as separated from babbling. It could be considered as a repression of homophonous repetition of phonemes. It is at least a farewell to the baby talk the child used to exchange with his mother. Her absence puts an end to the age of homophonous repetitions. From now on, the phonological difference and more generally the regularities and negative relations of *la langue* will prevail. The well-known privilege of the mother

tongue depends on the fact that it is the sole language whose first form was babbling. It is then the sole language where some continuity remains between the preceding *lalangue* and *la langue* that followed. In many cases, the pleasure of homophony in its various forms (rhymes, alliterations, anagrams) is but an echo of the early childhood, when the mother tongue was still embedded in babbling.

Nature abhors a vacuum, according to Greek science. Lacan suggested a correction; “*la nature a horreur du nœud*” (nature abhors a knot), he said.⁴ I am tempted to add: Linguistics and grammar abhor homophony. Even more than the annulment of it in the name of mere chance, the best proof is provided by the cases where homophony is annulled in the name of necessity. After all, the inflection of a regular verb in English is based on homophony. But no grammarian, no linguist would think of it in these terms. Instead of considering the total homophony between *(we) exist* and *(they) exist*, or the partial homophony between *(they) exist* and *(he) exists*, they would posit a unique base form subsequently modified by adding *-s* or *-ed* or *-ing*, etc. While homophony implies a multiplicity of identical forms, the inflection implies the unicity of one morpheme. Here the notion of regularity absorbs homophony just as efficiently as did the notion of mere chance in Lacan’s examples. Both procedures are opposed, but they derive from the same horror.

This horror is such that the grammarian and the linguist avoid mentioning the phenomenon. In the few cases where the procedures do not suffice to erase it, another notion comes immediately to the rescue, namely homonymy. In this way, the difference in meaning contributes to the required annulment. *(River) bank* and *(savings) bank*, *their* and *there* are not homophonous, says the linguist, they are homonyms. Lacan distinguishes sharply between *la langue* and *le langage*; *la langue* has no exterior, *le langage*

⁴ Lacan 1975b, p. 101.

belongs to the means of communication, it has a practical use in the external world thanks to the meaning. By invoking homonymy, the linguist relies on the external world and the practical use of language. In order to save *la langue*, he puts his trust in *le langage*. In an obscure way, he feels that homophony's very name would be lethal for *la langue*. If Lacan's examples are real, then *la langue* vanishes.

But Lacan's examples are real. Hence the renouncement of linguistics that becomes apparent in *Seminar XX*. Lacan proclaims his own attachment to *linguisterie*.⁵ I have underlined the pejorative character of the suffix *-erie*; it appears in words like *piraterie* (piracy), *escroquerie* (swindling), *grivèlerie* (nonpayment of a bill), *pédanterie* (pedantry). Equally important is the fact that the word is based on *linguiste* (linguist) rather than *linguistique* (linguistics). Lacan could have fabricated *linguistiquerie*; he did not. His attention was not directed to a certain science, but to certain subjects who contributed to this science's progress. Among those, the first rank belonged to Jakobson, namely to a linguist who lent his ear to anagrams and poetry.

It is tempting to describe him as representing *lalangue* in the realm of *la langue* and *la langue* in the realm of *lalangue*. In truth, linguistics as a science had become less preoccupied with the negative notion of *la langue*; Chomsky had progressively substituted to it a positive definition that had more to do with *langage*. The revolution culminated in the conception he expressed in his *Reflections on Language*: Language is an organ. From Lacan's point of view, linguistics was free to adopt such a definition, however, if such a definition is accepted, language and linguistics shed no specific light on the structure of the Unconscious; they are not even relevant in the cases where language data interacts with unconscious phenomena. Consequently, there was no reason

⁵ Lacan 1998, p. 15. This lexical creation appears in the second session, dated 19 December 1972 and titled "To Jakobson".

to grant a special significance to the linguists' general proposals about language, even though they still could point out remarkable details in the various languages. But such empirical observations were due to individual linguists, who were studying narrow fields of data. *Linguisterie* prevailed over linguistics. Small positivities prevailed over comprehensive doctrines.

Poetry became a privileged domain of study. A poetic event happens whenever a dehiscence fractures the continuous surface of *la langue*. It defines its own regularities, that may be opposed to *la langue's* regularities; it plays with numbers while they have no relevance in *la langue*; the limits of the verse may overrule the boundaries of the phrase. Last but not least, homophonous word plays contribute to building up the poetic unit. A poem is a homophonic space, whose laws have to be defined each poem at a time. The relevance of the various forms of homophony confirms the connection between *lalangue* and the general possibility of poetry. It comes as no surprise that those linguists who deal with poetry are precisely the ones who listen to *lalangue*. Jakobson is of course a case in point. So is Saussure.

When his research on anagrams was partially published by Starobinski in 1971, many specialists considered it delirious. Nowadays they inspire several researchers in the field of comparative poetry. Saussure conjectured that the data he had collected reflected an intentional technique, the procedures of which were secretly transmitted among groups of specialists in the ancient Indo-European societies. He abandoned his hypothesis when he discovered anagrams in the verses of a contemporary neo-Latin poet. The latter did not even reply to Saussure's inquiries about his supposed knowledge of a secret technique. Nowadays, some linguists consider that this counter-experiment was not as conclusive as Saussure believed it to be. Jakobson on the other hand never believed in a specific technique. According to him, the anagrams were both real and unintentional. Lacan's word plays occupy an original position. They are obviously intentional, but on the

other hand Lacan considers as irrelevant the difference between intentional and unintentional homophonous echoes. A slip of the tongue and a “*mot d’esprit*” (spoken wit) are strictly equivalent.⁶ Whether the irruption of *lalangue* in *la langue* is intentional or not, its status remains the same. Freud showed very early on that the Unconscious may be tracked down equally in our most carefully calculated decisions and in our involuntary mistakes. The same is true of *lalangue*. Saussure’s historical conjectures and Jakobson’s ahistorical conception testify to the same real.

Linguisterie, Joyce, poetry, autonomy of the letter, central position of homophony, all these features characterize the last period of Lacan’s work. They imply a farewell to linguistics. The Chomskyan revolution bears some responsibility in this matter, but it is not sufficient in itself to explain the shifts of the Lacanian paradigm. In 1964, Lacan raised a question: What is a science that includes psychoanalysis?⁷ His answer at that time was centered around Koyré. Mathematized physics embodied the ideal type of modern science, as opposed to Greek *epistèmè*. Galileo, Newton, Einstein, these names identified the landmarks of the progression. Structural linguistics belonged to the same movement. What was more, it proved that modern science was able to take into consideration phenomena that were not included in the classical conception of nature. The same was true of structural anthropology; its object obviously belonged to the field of *thesis* (convention) rather than *phusis* (nature). Hence the birth of what I have called an extended Galileism: it adhered to Galileo’s axiom “Nature’s book is written in mathematical letters,” with two corrections however. Modern nature had nothing to do with classical nature; rather than mathematization in its narrow sense, literalization was required; mathematization was but a subspecies of it. Structural linguistics and structural anthropology were

⁶ Lacan 1990, p. 50.

⁷ Lacan 2001a, p. 187.

literalized, even though their mathematized part was narrow or non-existent. They were then integrated into modern science.

But they proved to open new perspectives on the Unconscious and for psychoanalysis. Such is the import of the synthetic presentation given in Rome in 1953. New sciences are born. Thanks to their empirical discoveries, but also to the theoretical innovations they propounded, the general definition of modern science could be understood in a new way. The main representatives of extended Galileism changed the conditions of the quest for a science that were compatible with psychoanalysis.

This quest lasted till 1968. The events of May '68 offered to Lacan new themes of meditation. He certainly did not renounce his quest concerning science, but a new research program prevailed. Meanwhile, an important event took place in the field of science. Lacan was well aware of it. Mathematized physics was entering the phase that Kühn qualifies as "normal science." Of course, new discoveries were still to be expected, but nothing seemed to modify neither the problems nor the solutions. When Lacan draws attention to the exploration of the moon, he does not underline its novelty but rather its continuity with Newton. The LEM does not show anything new about modern science.⁸ Yet, on the other hand, something had happened in biology. The discovery of the genetic code, the unexpected fruitfulness of the linguistic modelization in this area, all this is, till the present days, leading to new empirical discoveries and new concepts. Moreover, the developments in biology do not conform at all with Koyré's construction. Mathematics plays no essential role; the literalization is obviously important, but it does not answer to the requirements of structural linguistics; it has rather to do with the positive techniques of writing or editing. The double helix is crucial for its architectural and material properties; for now, it does not appear that it could be reduced to a mere algebraic formula in terms of analytical geometry. What is

⁸ Lacan 2001b, p. 423.

striking is the prevalence of artisanal representations and material procedures: deletion, addition, substitution, permutation, displacement of sequences, rather than calculations. In short, the question should be raised: Is genetic biology Galilean at all?

If modern science should include biology, then Koyré's doctrine is refuted as a general doctrine of modern science. Its validity must be confined to certain restricted parts of the natural sciences and to certain periods of their developments. If this is the case, then Lacan's quest of 1964 undergoes a radical transformation. Newton's God made no error. It is unclear whether the same is true of the God of genetics. A genetic mutation could be compared to a typing error; some physiological defects are attributed to spelling errors in the code; it is tempting to compare such a God to an *étourdi* (scatterbrain), as opposed to the impeccable architect of a so-called Great Design. Such a typist would greatly benefit from psychoanalysis. Lacan's saying "*Dieu est inconscient*" (God is unconscious) would then acquire a new meaning. The only obstacle is the simple fact that the typist does not exist, but that does not preclude a possible compatibility between genetics and psychoanalysis. They at least share the experience of *bévue* (slip-up). In his back-cover text written for *Autres Écrits*, Jacques-Alain Miller underlined the importance of the genome and expressed the hope that its decrypting holds a promise of "*noces nouvelles du signifiant et du vivant*" (new marriage of signifier and life). He was alluding to the title of a celebrated work of late Antiquity *On the Marriage of Philology and Mercury* that was written by Martianus Capella (5th century) and constitutes an extensive encyclopedia of the classical knowledge. In a parallel way, Jacques-Alain Miller implied that a new kind a philology is being born that may concern both the letters of life and the letters of the Unconscious. Genome and homophony wave at each other without knowing anything of one another. Both might be subjected to an analogous sequencing. Both concern the speaking being as being also the bearer of a body.

To this union between genome and *lalangue*, *la langue* gives several names; in French, one of these names is *l'homme*. Relying on homophony and trying to stir up an echo with genome's decipherment, Lacan transcribed it as LOM, three letters like DNA, homophonous with *l'homme*. The French speaker takes some pleasure in finding its twins at the end of *génome* and in the beginning of *homophonie*.

La Troisième's penultimate section may now be granted a more complete interpretation. Returning to Galileo's discoveries, Lacan writes: "*la science naît [...] à partir du moment où Galilée a fait des petits rapports de lettre à lettre avec une barre dans l'intervalle [...] la science part de là. Et c'est pour ça que je mets espoir dans le fait que, passant au-dessous de toute représentation, nous arriverons peut-être à avoir sur la vie quelques données plus satisfaisantes.*"⁹ Relations of letter to letter, rather than mathematics, are the real point of departure here. Koyré is thus directly challenged. After a long period in which mathematics had annexed the letters in science, letters as such have now reappeared in their full autonomy. For that reason, it is possible to hope for some better data about life. Why? Because the reemergence of autonomous letters in modern science happened in biology. For many centuries, life had been the mother of all imaginary representations, the most tragic example of which had been given by the politics of race and *Lebensraum*. Thanks to the letter, it is possible to hope to move beyond the representations, even on the subject of life.

Some paragraphs earlier, Lacan had drawn a Borromean knot. In the circle of the Real, he inscribed life. His commentary is illuminating: "*Cette construction chimique qui, d'éléments répartis dans quoi que ce soit et de quelque façon que nous voulions*

⁹ "Science is born [...] from the moment when Galileo established minute relations from letter to letter with a bar in the interval [...] this is where science takes its starting point. And this is why I have hope in the fact that, passing beneath any representation, we may perhaps arrive at some more satisfactory data on life." (Lacan 2011, p. 32; trans. *Problemi*)

le qualifier, se serait mise à édifier par les lois de la science, une molécule d'ADN, comment a-t-elle pu prendre son départ? Tout ce à quoi nous induit la science, c'est à voir qu'il n'y a rien de plus réel que ça, ce qui veut dire rien de plus impossible à imaginer."¹⁰

Is life here equivocal between biology and ethics? Of course it is. If literalized, life is *the* Real as such; if biogenetics, rather than mathematics, is *the* science of the Real, then all forms of pseudo-representation that pretend to be based on life's reality lead to the fundamental myth of modern humanity, namely racism. Conversely the ultimate weapon against racism is not pity or fear, but the irrepresentability of life's lettering. Is life's name related to homophony? Of course it is. In the dialect of modern science, *life* is spelled *bio-*. Even in this dialect, *lalangue* may insinuate itself. Thanks to the invisible presence of its dialectal substitute, the word *life* alludes to one of Heraclitus's most celebrated sayings. It is not mere chance that it is based on homophony: "The name of the bow (*bios*) is life (*bios*), but its work is death."¹¹

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¹⁰ "This chemical construction which, starting from elements distributed in whatever medium and in whatever way we wish to qualify it, would build, by the laws of science alone, a molecule of DNA—how could it set off? All that science leads to is but the perception that there is nothing more real than that; in other words, nothing more impossible to imagine." (Lacan 2011, p. 30; trans. *Problemi*)

¹¹ Heraclitus, DK B48.

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Lying on the Couch

Alenka Zupančič

In what way can the conceptual framework of psychoanalysis help us understand the intimate link between culture and lying? More specifically, what can it say about certain modes of lying (“polite lies,” “white lies”) as constitutive of (our) culture?

Let us begin with a kind of “fundamental truth”: one cannot treat the question of the lie separately from the question of truth. And this is not because they always go in pair as antonyms, supporting each other as two facets of the same coin of speech. Their relationship is much more interesting than this, and it is in no way symmetrical. To a certain degree, the cultural “phenomenology of lying” originates in an inherent problem of truth. If truth were not problematical in itself, if it were possible to say “the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth,” there would be no need to discuss the cultures of lying. I am not at all trying to play the old relativistic or sophistic game here: “How can we speak about lies if we don’t know what the truth is? What if, by uttering what we think to be a lie, we actually tell the truth? How can a physician, for example, tell the ‘whole truth’ to a patient about a set of symptoms, their causes and likely effects? He certainly does not know all there is to know himself. And even if he knew, etc., etc.” I am not suggesting that we meditate on this kind of questions to finally arrive at a skeptical wisdom: “But what is truth, and what lie?” It is a fact that this kind of “abyssal” reflection has but little bearing on our everyday practice of speech. What I am trying to point out is something else. First, truth and lie are not symmetrical. If the lie is the opposite of the truth, then this is the case in only

a very small segment of what is called lying, a segment which is precisely not of much relevance for the discussion of “cultures of lying.” The dimension of truth is more fundamental than that of the lie: not in any theological or moral sense, but simply by virtue of the very nature of speech. There can be no speech which is not situated in the dimension of truth. Let me quote Jacques-Alain Miller who formulates most concisely what is at stake here:

There is no doubt a truth which is but the opposite of falsehood, but there is another which stands over or grounds both of them, and which is related to the very fact of formulating, for I can say nothing without positing it as true. And even if I say ‘I am lying,’ I am saying nothing but ‘it is true that I am lying’ — which is why truth is not the opposite of falsehood. Or again we could say that there are two truths: one that is the opposite of falsehood, and another that bears up both the true and the false indifferently. (Miller 1990, p. xx)

In other words, a dimension of truth is an indispensable background of lying, whereas *vice versa* is not the case. The dimension of truth thus has to be distinguished from exactitude. This redoubling of truth has an important consequence for lying since it introduces a split into lying itself: for one can also say that lying cannot be reduced to or identified with falsehood. Yet, and once again, this double dimension of lying is not symmetrical to that of truth. A lie, as different from falsehood, is nothing but the effect of truth that a falsehood can produce on the level of speech (that is, on the level of its formulation).

In order to demonstrate this (asymmetrical) intertwining of the truth and the lie in more detail, let us take the example of two strategies that one often encounters in psychoanalysis as well as in the everyday practice of speech, namely that of “lying with truth” and “telling the truth by means of a lie.” These two strategies would not be possible if lying and truth were simply symmetrical, and if truth were not simultaneously situated on

two levels. For “lying with truth” is nothing but “lying with exactitude,” i.e. lying by uttering something that in itself is correct. And “telling the truth by means of a lie” is nothing but “telling the truth by means of falsehood.”

Both strategies are also very explicit cases of yet another feature that we have to consider in this discussion: when we speak, and especially when there is a question of telling the truth or lying, we take into account the position (knowledge, expectations) of the other (our interlocutor).

It often happens, writes Freud, that an obsessional neurotic who has already been initiated into the meaning of his symptoms, says something like: “I’ve got a new obsessive idea, ... and it occurred to me at once that it might mean so and so. But no; that can’t be true, or it couldn’t have occurred to me” (Freud 2001 [1925], p. 235). This is an interesting example of “lying with truth.” The knowledge about psychoanalysis is used here in a way that enables the patient to deny a certain content by admitting it immediately, counting on the fact that the analyst will be suspicious of what is offered to him on a plate, so to speak. The reasoning behind this: “If I can say it openly, it could not be repressed—at least, this is what my analyst will think.” The other strategy that takes into account the presupposed knowledge on the side of the analyst is the strategy of “telling the truth by the means of a lie.” A good example of this can be found in Freud’s analysis of “Dora” (Freud 2001 [1905a], p. 69). At a certain point, her dreams, as well as her reflections focused on a particular object, a *Schmuckkästchen* (“jewel-case”). When Freud suggested to her that “*Schmuckkästchen*” is a word often used to refer to woman’s genitals, she replied: “I knew you would say that.” Freud’s ingenious answer: “Yes, you did *know*, didn’t you?” (or, literally: “That is to say, you knew that it *was* so.”) In other words, and as it is often the case with hysterical subjects, Dora used her knowledge of psychoanalysis in order to say something (“true”) by saying something else (“false”).

An important thing that should not escape our notice in these examples is the following: If this kind of “lying with truth” and “telling the truth by means of a lie” clearly illustrates the mechanism of “taking the other into account,” this should not impel us to reduce the situation to a (purely) dual relationship between two subjects. In other words, there is more than one other involved here. Lying can in no way be reduced to a dual relationship between the subject who utters the (“untruthful”) message and the subject who receives it. The moment two subjects are addressing each other by means of signifiers, we are always dealing with an irreducible third dimension or instance. When I take the other (the hearer) into account (i.e., when I take into account his knowledge, beliefs, “vocabulary” ...), I am actually taking into account his position vis-à-vis this third instance. This is quite clear in the previous example of Dora using the word “*Schmuckkästchen*,” as well as in the case of the obsessional neurotic claiming that something cannot be true since it would contradict the “psychoanalytical knowledge.” In other words, when I lie to the other (my fellowman, my imaginary counterpart), I am always doing so via the symbolic Other. And one could say that in order for a lie to “go down” with the other (i.e. in order for the other to “swallow” it), the lie has to produce an effect of truth in the Other. More precisely even, in order for my interlocutor to “swallow” my lie, she does not simply have to believe *me*; she has to believe that the Other believes it. Lying requires the structure (and the support) of the symbolic Other as the condition of its possibility. When Lacan insists that the locus of the Other is the locus of truth—the truth which has no opposite—he aims precisely at this.

Let us now turn to the other important feature that determines the relationship between lying and truth. In the dimension of speech, truth is not only more fundamental than the lie (in the sense described above), it is also problematic in itself, it is haunted by an inherent impossibility. Lacan formulates this impossibility with his famous statement that truth is “not whole” (or “not all,”

pas-toute), and that it is impossible to say “the whole truth and nothing but the truth” (Lacan 1990, p. 6). Now, this has nothing to do with the frequent pragmatic or empirical objection to this imperative to say the “whole truth.” It has nothing to do with the claim that we can never say the whole truth because we never know the *whole* truth, nor does it have to do with the claim that even to tell all that we know is a task impossible to be carried out entirely. The Lacanian thesis aims at something very different, and related to the previous discussion: what makes the truth not-whole is the fact that it is simultaneously a constitutive dimension of speech as such *and* something within speech. More precisely, what makes it not-whole is the fact that, in the realm of our spoken language, it is not possible to simply delimit these two levels on which truth operates and treat them separately. Quite independently of Lacan and psychoanalysis, logicians have arrived at the same conclusion. Tarski, for instance, demonstrated

that truth is undefinable within the language one speaks: To define it, one must step outside of that language, as is done in formalized languages which are numbered and hierarchized; at the $n+1$ level, you establish the η -level truth; this uncoupling of levels, termed “metalanguage” by Carnap, cannot be carried out in the case of the language we speak, for it is not formalized. (Miller 1990, p. xxii)

“And that is,” Miller adds, “the meaning of Lacan’s aphorism that there is no such thing as a metalanguage,” as well as of his statement that the truth is “not whole.” Truth about η -level appears on η -level, truth about what we say is part of what we say, and this is what prevents it from being a closed, complete entity.

To say that truth is “not whole” does not imply that a statement cannot say all there is to say, that there is always something still lacking, something that cannot be said or fails to be said. The problem is rather the opposite: By saying the truth, we say more than the truth. What keeps getting in the way of the possibility of saying “the whole truth” is not a lack, but an excess, a surplus

that sticks to whatever we say. The level of enunciation cannot be separated from or eliminated from what is enunciated, but sticks to it. If truth were not a constitutive dimension of speech, that is to say, if it were not a dimension *inherent* to speech, if it were possible to locate it somewhere outside of speech, then there would be no problem to tell “the whole truth and nothing but the truth.” But since this is not the case (and since speech is not simply a tool we can use to express whatever we want to express), truth stumbles. And the problem of cultural “phenomenology of lying” should be considered on this level, as resulting from, or at least as partly finding its driving force in the inherent stumbling of truth. It often happens that a polite lie is a better way of telling the truth about what is really at stake in a given situation than the “blatant truth” would be. This is especially so because the level of enunciation is not simply an empty form of truth that accompanies every statement (“It is true that ...”), but also the very point of the enunciating subject’s inscription into the enunciated statement. This implies, for example, that it can be the vehicle of a considerable quantum of affect (emotions ...).

Freud refers to this problem in one of his rare polemical writings, “On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement”:

Experience shows that only very few people are capable of remaining polite, to say nothing of objective, in a scientific dispute, and the impression made on me by scientific squabbles has always been odious. Perhaps this attitude on my part has been misunderstood; perhaps I have been thought so good-natured or so easily intimidated that no further notice need be taken of me. This was a mistake; I can be as abusive and enraged as anyone; but I have not the art of expressing the underlying emotion in a form suitable for publication and I therefore prefer to abstain completely. (Freud 2001 [1914], p. 39)

What does it mean to “express the underlying emotion in a form suitable for publication”? It does not mean to conceal it. It

means to formulate it in such a way that it will not overshadow what is at stake on the level of the statement. So that the supposedly scientific argument would not go on like this: “You idiot!” — “You imbecile— “You moron!” Speaking of which, it springs to mind that in his analysis of the “Rat Man,” Freud gives a perfect example of a situation where the level of enunciation gets a complete upper-hand over the level of the statement. Statements like “Idiot!” or “Imbecile!” still contain a strong link between their “content” and the injury, which makes this reversal less obvious, since we might be induced to think that it is simply the meaning of these words that is offensive. Freud relates an episode from the “Rat Man’s” childhood (Freud 2001 [1909], p. 205): When he was a little boy, he did something naughty, for which his father decided to give him a beating. While he was beating him, the child became very enraged and started shouting abuse at his father. But since he knew no bad language, he called his father all the names of common objects that he could think of, and had screamed: “You lamp! You towel! You plate!” (*Du Lampe, du Handtuch, du Teller*). Here, we get the most literal example of what is involved in the expression “to call someone names.” It is also a good example of how rather “innocent” signifiers (“lamp,” “towel,” “plate”) can produce, on the level of enunciation, something like: “I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!”

In many situations, polite lies are used where there is a risk of considerable discrepancy between the level of the enunciation and the level of the statement. Take another example of “polite lies.” Say I gave a talk somewhere, and some people in the audience found it rather awful. Yet, if after the talk, I were to ask one of these individuals directly what she thought of my paper, she would probably say something like: “Well, it was very interesting.” One should not rush to qualify this kind of responses as “hypocritical.” Although there is often a thin line between hypocrisy and “polite lies,” there is a line nonetheless, and a difference. Suppose this person was to “speak her mind”

in this kind of situation, replying to me: “To tell you the truth, I thought your paper was utterly uninteresting, incoherent, and it isn’t worth the paper it is written on.” (By the way, I should probably reply: “If this is what you think, why didn’t you simply say ‘well, it was interesting’? I would have understood this perfectly well.” In other words, and to borrow the punch-line of the famous joke that Freud quotes in his book on *Witz*: “Why do you say you are going to Cracow, if you are indeed going to Cracow?”)¹ The difference between the two replies, the polite one and the direct or “sincere” one, is that the latter obviously contains an injury. Yet, the injury at stake is not simply in the fact that “the truth hurts,” since in this case the polite reply (“Well, it was interesting.”) already indicates clearly enough that the other doesn’t think much of my paper. Usually, this kind of answer doesn’t dupe me into thinking that the other actually found my paper great and most inspiring. Which is to say that “the truth that hurts” is not necessarily absent from the polite reply. But even in those cases of polite lies where it is absent, we nevertheless have the feeling that a direct and brutal answer would *also* somehow miss the point, i.e. the truth. The reason for this is that what really hurts in these configurations is not simply the “truth” (i.e. the statement), but the fact that the other chooses to say it in this manner, thus willingly assuming the “hurting” dimension of the statement. In other words, what sticks to the statement “Your paper was worthless,” is—on the level of enunciation—something like “I am willing to hurt you.” Which has nothing to do with the quality of my paper, nor with the “truth” about what someone thinks of my paper.

There are situations in which we clearly feel that by being sincere and saying the truth we will be saying *more* than the

¹ “If you say you’re going to Cracow, you want me to believe you’re going to Lemberg. But I know that in fact you’re going to Cracow. So why are you lying to me?” (Freud 2001 [1905b], p. 115)

truth. Moreover, we might actually feel that we are being more “sincere” — in our relationship with the person before us — when uttering a polite lie than when uttering a blatant truth. But what exactly does this “more than truth” consist of? In a rather approximate way of speaking one could say that the direct answer somehow fails to keep the discussion restricted to the level of what is being discussed. It easily crosses the line between the “object” related to me that is being discussed and “myself.” In other words, it can be taken as an attack not simply on my paper, but on my *being*. That is to say, it can be of utmost difficulty to say to the person in front of you, “Your paper was terribly bad,” without saying at the same time something like, “*You* are incompetent, stupid, boring ...,” or even “You are an impostor.” Moreover, it could be difficult to say it without at the same time saying, “You get on my nerves,” “I can’t stand you,” or even “I hate you.” This is to say that a line can also be easily crossed in the other direction, in the direction of the one who utters the statement and utters more about his own “state of being” than he intended to. In most of our everyday interactions it is impossible to completely separate the level of the enunciation from the level of the statement, and this is precisely where the above described troubles come from. It is also impossible to separate what is said from the effect it produces in the other. Polite lies are one of the established ways of dealing with this problem. But let us try to determine this problem more closely, or rather, what problems might be in relation to the question of truth-telling. I will try to isolate and conceptualize one of these problems or aspects that, although not the only one, is responsible for a considerable portion of polite lies and is particularly relevant for the discussion of the relationship between culture and lying.

There is something that one might best call the “obscenity of truth” or, more precisely, the obscenity of truth-telling. I am using the term “obscenity” in roughly the same sense as Aron Ronald Bodenheimer in his book, *Warum? Von der Obszönität*

des Fragens [Why? On the Obscenity of Asking Questions].² Bodenheimer shows that there is an obscenity that essentially pertains to questions, to the very act of asking a question, beyond the content of the question itself. (Some examples: “Why are you playing with your pen?”, “What do you mean by that?”, “Do you love me?”, “What are you thinking of?” ...) Bodenheimer’s definition of obscenity is that it takes place in the conditions where certain parts of my personality — parts that I normally hide from others or from myself — are revealed directly and without me being prepared for exposure. I am unable to prevent my exposure. In the situation of obscenity, we witness an act of exposure on the one side, and the effect of shame on the other. The additional characteristic of obscenity, Bodenheimer writes, is that the one committing it will not acknowledge what she has done. Rather, she will add to the already existing situation of shame another obscenity, asking, for example: “What is the matter with you? Is there something wrong?”

In respect to the question of polite lies, Bodenheimer’s argument is very illuminating in two points. First, it can make it easier for us to detect a similar dimension of obscenity in certain circumstances of “blatant truth-telling.” Second, a great number of polite lies are actually answers to questions. To return to the previously discussed example: If I asked someone (particularly someone I didn’t know well, or not at all) directly what she thought of my paper, I might very well be the one who creates the “impossible situation.” The question is far from being innocent. I might be in desperate need of some flattering words, I might be in agony since nobody “spontaneously” felt the need to show some appreciation for my work, and this silence is all too deafening. So, I pick on someone, I ask her this question in order to hear what I want to hear. In this case, I am literally asking to be exposed and at the same time pleading not to be. The other might accept

² Bodenheimer 1984.

the game I am proposing and offer some polite flattering words, which will probably fail to satisfy me, but they will at least keep the imminent exposure at bay. They will also smooth away—at least to a certain degree—the exposure that has already taken place the moment I asked the question and thus revealed that I desperately needed some approval.

In supplementing Bodenheimer's argument, I would suggest that the obscenity of asking questions does not operate only on the level of exposing the other (the addressee of the question), but also on the level of exposing oneself. It can put the other in a rough spot (of feeling embarrassment or shame) because it reveals something of myself (some weakness or obsession) that would better remain hidden. We all know that shame and embarrassment can be "inter-passive" feelings, to deploy Robert Pfaller's term (Pfaller 2014): we can feel shame and embarrassment on account of another person, especially—but not exclusively—if this other person doesn't seem to notice that he or she is (publicly) making a fool of him- or herself. Take the stereotypical example of a couple attending some public occasion. The husband gets drunk and starts making a fool of himself. Everyone notices that, but continues smiling politely. Then the wife, who feels especially embarrassed because of her intimate tie with this person, decides to free herself of embarrassment by making clear to the others that her husband mightn't know he is making a fool of himself, but she *does* and doesn't approve of it one bit. So, she says (aloud) something like: "Just look at yourself! You are acting like a fool!" This is a clear example of truth-telling which inevitably creates an obscene situation. People can no longer politely pretend not to see or notice the best-remained-hidden part that the husband is publicly exposing. They have to turn their gazes toward something that they would "culturally" rather look away from. It often happens that polite lies, as well as polite silence, function as a cultural device that keeps this kind of exposure at bay. They occur when we try either to avoid pointing the finger to the lack in the other (when

this lack is already perceptible) or else to avoid saying something that would expose the other's lack. They also occur when there is a risk of an object appearing where there should be nothing or where this object should have remained concealed. In this respect, the manifestation of a lack and the uncalled-for appearance of an object are correlative: they are both states of exposure. Suffering, humiliation and similar "states," which are often evoked as excuses or reasons for white and polite lies, should also be considered on that level. It is not enough, or not precise enough, to say that polite lies are tolerated and even invited, if they allow us to avoid inflicting unnecessary pain and/or humiliation upon the other. Pain, suffering, humiliation are equally states of exposure. Even in cases when we decide to invent a lie to avoid telling the truth that would inevitably hurt the other, the conceptual frame of "suffering—compassion" is not enough to account for the mechanism of this kind of "culture of lying." It could be viewed as very important, for instance, that the compassion itself takes the form of a "lie." What I mean by this is that sometimes the best, if not the only way to show some compassion is precisely not to show it, or not to create a situation that would call for a manifestation of compassion. There are situations where compassion and pity themselves are humiliating, playing the role of the finger pointed at the distress of the other.

The thesis that could be inferred from this is that a large part of white and polite lies is bound, more than with anything else, with the notion of *decency*. I am leaving aside some other interesting occasions of cultural lie-telling such as hospitality-lies for one: their functioning follows a different, although not an entirely different logic. Then there are lies with which we try to avoid the effect of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" that could occur if we were to say openly what we think. (For example: our friend has a new lover and it is obvious to us that their story will never work. However, we won't say so if asked, since we know that our statement "This won't work" could itself bring about the catastrophe

it announces and which, because of some circumstance unknown to us, can perhaps be avoided). Then there is what I would call the founding-lies: they usually take the form of declarations. There are (at least) two kinds of declarations. One can be simply and more or less entirely identified with performative speech acts such as: "I declare this session opened." Here, we are dealing with a kind of "creation *ex nihilo*," a statement which, by virtue of declaring what it declares, creates a specific symbolic configuration where there is no causal chain leading to it. The other kind of declarations also has a certain performative dimension, but in terms of causality and temporality its functioning is more complex. Take, for instance, a declaration of love. It is supposed to follow from a subject's feelings, yet it cannot be simply reduced to an *expression* of these feelings. There is no simple logical or causal connection between the state of my feelings and the statement "I love you." Why say it now and not tomorrow? Why today and not already yesterday? There is no right time for this statement, it is always either too early or too late. There is always a *leap* involved in the passage from one's feelings to the declaration of love. This passage is never linear. To suggest that there is a dimension of a "lie" in every declaration of love is not to suggest a lack of sincerity. It is to suggest that a declaration of love says more and does more than just to describe the state of my feelings. It could be said to be composed of a (more or less) accurate description of my feelings *plus* something else that corresponds to nothing in reality (not even in my subjective or "psychological" reality). With it, I say more than I am "justified" to say in the given circumstances. By declaring love to another person, I engage more than what I "have." There exists a felicitous expression: "to give someone a token of one's love." A declaration of love could be considered as precisely such a token. This, of course, implies a certain circularity, which brings us to the following characteristic of such declarations: they are precipitated statements that (retroactively) create the conditions of their own enunciation. It can happen that

the addressee of our declaration reacts to it by asking: “Do you *really* mean it?” This inevitably creates a difficult situation, since neither one of the involved could be said to know exactly what the “it” (in “Do you really mean it”) refers to. “It” is something that remains to be seen. It is a “lie” that may or may not become true.

But let us return to the particular genre of polite lies closely connected with the notion of decency. Decency, of course, is itself a slippery notion. Not only does it vary from one culture to another (as well as within the history of the same culture), it also very much depends on our personal “sense of decency.” But these cultural and subjectively-cultural variations don’t change much in the basic logic of its functioning. There are things which should not be exposed, said, pointed at. If they are, they can cause embarrassment and shame. This is not to say that they necessarily have to remain materially hidden; rather, we must be able to act as if we don’t notice them. It is clear that, in spite of all the moral condemnation that lying has always been subjected to, it was also *morally* encouraged: first in the sense of not saying something (i.e. of “holding something back”), and then also in the sense of saying something else (something “polite”) instead. Of course, lying wasn’t morally encouraged under the heading of “lying,” but under the heading of “manners” and “respect,” this is, precisely under the heading of decency. When we teach children not to scream out loud on the street, “Look mommy, what an ugly man!”, when we teach them “manners,” we teach them to identify the situations in which certain things should not be said (out loud) or pointed at (pointing a finger is another practice that children are strongly discouraged from), and these two practices are far from being unrelated.

Thus, one might claim that the “culture of lying” has a great deal to do with the possible “obscenity of truth-telling.” The next question that needs to be addressed in this respect is whether the obscenity is in itself, and intrinsically, a sexual notion. Bodenheimer suggests that it is not. According to him, the link between

obscenity and sexuality is purely accidental and as such the product of certain historical-cultural circumstances that have confined sexuality to the sphere of intimacy. He claims that if obscenity is defined by the disclosure of something most personal and “our very own” (*das Eigenste*), it is clear that sexuality does not meet these requirements, since it is something most general or universal. This argument, however, has two weaknesses. It confuses sexuality with (the empirical activity of having) sex, as well as failing to account for the universality pertaining to the notion of obscenity. Why is it that regardless of *what* the most personal and intimate thing that is disclosed *is* (i.e. regardless of what constitutes, in each particular case, one’s innermost Being), this kind of disclosure inevitably produces an effect of obscenity? The answer to this is, I believe, that the very act of disclosure is in itself sexualized. The sexual component—which one cannot expel from the notion of obscenity—is not at all related to the content of the hidden thing that is suddenly exposed, but to this exposure itself. More precisely: the passage of an intimate or as yet hidden object (be it a thought, a feeling, a weakness) through this dispositive of disclosure results in its sexualization, whereby—and here one can agree with Bodenheimer—the object does not need to be “sexual” in itself. In other words, it is the property of speech (and therefore of culture and of certain symbolic configurations) to sexualize certain things, *including sexuality*. This last point might seem paradoxical, but if we consider the question what distinguishes human sexuality from, say, animal or vegetable sexuality, is it not precisely the fact that human sexuality is sexualized? And is this not precisely where most of our sexual difficulties (and pleasures) come from? This does not simply mean that all sexuality is culturally (or symbolically) mediated or “constructed.” It rather means that culture (or the symbolic order) is in itself already sexualized. Here we encounter a circularity which is responsible for what Freud calls “*das Unbehagen in der Kultur*.” Culture originates in a certain sexual impasse, it is a response to it—but by responding

to the sexual impasse, culture creates new impasses (that require a “cultural” response).

The structural mechanism of exposure or disclosure provides a very common figure of this kind of a sexualized/sexualizing frame or dispositive. This is why whatever is framed by it is endowed with a special feature that calls for a reaction. As witnesses of this kind of exposure (be it of the lack or of an unexpected object) due to a “blatant truth-telling,” we can look away in embarrassment; we can (“voyeuristically”) observe the scene from the corner of our eyes; we can openly (“sadistically”) enjoy the thus produced split in the other; we can pretend not to notice a thing. But none of these reactions are neutral or indifferent.

As said before, blatant “truth-telling” can produce the effect of exposure, and polite lies can produce the effect of avoiding it (or else of making it pass as if unnoticed). However, this is not to say that culture—and its polite lies—are some neutral or “spiritual” shield that we raise in defense against, say, obscenity. Culture works both ways: exposure (and its effect of obscenity) is as much a cultural (or symbolic) phenomenon as polite lies are. Which is to say that culture produces (more or less efficient) remedies for its own structural impasses—for impasses that spring from the fact that culture originates in the very sexual reality that it endeavors to regulate.

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The Subject of Chinglish

Rey Chow

“Each of my two languages was an entirety, and that is precisely what made them uncombinable, incapable of forming a new totality.”

(Todorov 1994, p. 213)

For those who have traveled to the People’s Republic of China in recent decades, it is quite common to encounter a hilarious kind of translanguing writing.¹ On everything from merchandise, billboards, and restaurant menus to toilets, parks, construction sites, and other public facilities appear bilingual signs in Chinese and English giving directions, warnings, and cautionary advice. These signs have become a popular source of humor, because the English used is often unidiomatic and ungrammatical, or comes across as nonsensical. Oliver Lutz Radtke, a German sinologist and the author of the book *Chinglish: Found in Translation* (Radtke 2007), writes that his book has sold tens of thousands of copies since it was first published in 2007, and that because of it he has appeared on media all over the world. His blog, which began as a personal homepage with a limited collection of these, what he calls “Chinglish beauties,” now gets thousands of hits every week. In 2009, he published a second volume, *More Chinglish: Speaking in Tongues* (Radtke 2009).

¹ [The article first appeared in *Testo a fronte: teoria e pratica della traduzione letteraria* (n° 48, pp. 155–62). The editorial board of *Problemi* would like to thank the editors, Edoardo Zuccato and Tim Parks, for their kind permission to reprint it in this issue.]

To give you a sense of why and how Chinglish has provoked so much laughter, let me cite some examples. Depending on whether you can read both languages or only the English, these signs will provoke you differently:

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 先下後上 文明乘車 | After first under on, do riding with civility. |
| 小心滑倒 | Slip and fall down carefully. |
| 北京東大肛腸醫院 | Dongda Hospital for Anus and Intestine Disease Beijing. |
| 請勿忘隨身物品 | Don't Forget to Carry Your Thing. |
| 文明方便 清新自然 | You can enjoy the fresh air after finishing a civilized urinating. |
| 禁止跨越 | Forbid to Cross. |
| 小心墮落 | Take care to fall. ² |

Such efforts of bilingualism are wonderful illustrations of what translation in cross-cultural situations can do, if unintentionally, to the ideals of communication and communicability. Just how are we supposed to think about such bilingual acts in the context of globalization, or as some have called it, Anglobalization? If such acts constitute a form of writing, how should the form, which is riddled with errors, be approached? To begin to answer these questions, we need to try simultaneously to consider another one, namely, why are these Chinglish signs so funny?

What appears funny can be a tricky issue in a cross-cultural situation, as laughter, which for some is equated with the state of being laughed at, can be an index to injured cultural pride. As can be expected, the native Chinese response to Chinglish is usually that of embarrassment, followed by prompt correction wherever possible. When China was preparing for the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the Chinese government was so determined to present a positive image to the outside world that it implemented various measures to clean up aspects of Chinese life, including attempts

² Radtke 2007, pp. 21, 60, 93, 110, and Radtke 2009, pp. 19, 41, 83.

to eliminate the ubiquitous Chinglish signs.³ This native response is underwritten with the memory of national humiliation, experienced for a century and a half by China, since the Opium War of 1839–42, in relation to Euro-America. Since then, as in most of the non-Western and postcolonized world, the necessity to know English has been accepted as an injunction for cosmopolitan lingual normativity. A lack of proficiency in English, accordingly, is treated with heightened self-consciousness, anxiety, and often shame. For those who know something about the history of the non-Western world of the past few centuries, such emotional reactions to English, which far exceed the ordinary experience of acquiring a foreign language, are nothing new. Such reactions are characteristic of what might be called a post-imperialist and postcolonial predicament, which is typically borne by those on the non-Western side of the divide.

For the same reasons, reactions to Chinglish from those on the non-Chinese side tend to be quite different. Free from the historical memory that burdens native speakers, many foreign observers, in particular those from Euro-America, typically respond to Chinglish in a more lighthearted manner. They may frown on the mistakes as things that urgently demand correction; they may be charmed by them as passing amusements or as weird treasures to be salvaged.⁴ To the sinologist, Victor Mair, for instance, “Chinglish has a charm and fascination all of its own, even for those who don’t know any Chinese. But for someone who knows Chinese, the appreciation is enhanced by an understanding of how its special features are generated” (Radtke 2009, p. 9). Or, in the words of Chinglish’s staunch defender, Radtke: “I am not arguing against correcting mistakes, but rather for a more relaxed attitude toward the so-called standardization of language.

³ For an informative account of the measures taken, see Henry 2010.

⁴ See Radtke 2007, pp. 7–8 for a brief account about David Tool, a retired army colonel from the United States, who is one of the main proponents of the campaign to clean up Chinglish in China.

After all, Chinglish is a major contributor to the English language, and it also provides a counterweight to the burden of political correctness, which, especially in the United States, threatens to whitewash everything” (Radtke 2009, p. 5).

In thought-provoking contrast to the embarrassed, native Chinese response, these foreigners seem readily tolerant of the flawed translations, which are treated as a creative kind of local color, indeed, as windows into the Chinese mind. In an endorsement of Radtke’s work, for instance, Susian Stähle, a Chinese lecturer at Heidelberg University, writes:

A high-class translation comes about only through a detailed understanding of cultural backgrounds and great sensitivity to minuscule language differences. ... Language and thinking are closely intertwined. This book [*Chinglish*] provides the reader the opportunity to explore *the Chinese mind*, their language and creativity. It serves as an interesting and insightful guide not only for translators, students, and teachers of Chinese but also for anyone involved in the discovery of a foreign language. (Radtke 2007, p. 15, my emphasis)

Unlike the symptom of anxiety exhibited by the native speakers, then, these friendly reactions from the Euro-American observers, specialists of the Chinese language, locate the manifestation of Chinglish rather in a wistfully neutral cross-cultural encounter, in which improprieties, however objectionable they may be by the criteria of “high-class translation,” are to be taken as the features of an exotic artifact, which is deemed fascinating on account of its peculiarly homespun, that is, unrefined, quality. If the native Chinese response has subjectivized these translingual signs by attaching to them a kind of injured cultural pride, which can only be restored by restoring proper English, the foreign observers’ more lenient reactions rather objectivize the signs as quaint native curios. For the latter, it is precisely the ludicrousness of Chinglish that constitutes its irreplaceable value. If there is a sense of anxiety here, it is that such curios will soon, under efforts

of linguistic cleansing, be entirely eradicated and become extinct. As Radtke writes: “My aim is to show the nowadays endangered species of Chinglish in its natural habitat” (Radtke 2007, p. 6). These polarized perspectives on Chinglish are summed up perceptively by Eric Steven Henry in the following manner:

Chinglish is ... one of the ways in which the speech community is structured into unequal groups. Expertise in English, and thus the authority to judge the acceptability of the utterances of others or to relegate them to the category of Chinglish, maintains divisions between native speakers, Chinese foreign language professionals and students. While the members of this common speech community engage with each other in frequent conversations, it is Chinese students who produce Chinglish, and linguists and teachers who interpret it ... [T]he magic of Chinglish is the ability of this [interpretative] discourse to mask relations of inequality as linguistic differences of form rather than the judgment of experts sanctioned by the authority of their expertise as native speakers or language professionals. (Henry 2010, p. 684)

The Comic Character par excellence

Notwithstanding the sophistication of the aforementioned sinological and sociolinguistic perspectives, the question as to why the Chinglish signs are so funny seems far from having been exhausted.

At the most basic level, what creates the effect of apparent nonsense is not exactly incompetence in the English language but the fact that a transaction is being conducted between two languages, with the implicit goal of a unified or synthesized meaning that is transparent or common to both. Rather than gauging the laughable errors at the level of only one of the two languages, English, it would be more precise to stress that it is the two-ness, the bifurcation (or multiplication) of linguistic situations that is the source of the difficulties. A story told by the literary and cultural critic Tzvetan Todorov is of special relevance at this juncture.

A Bulgarian, Todorov writes that he had spent eighteen years studying and working in Paris before making his first return visit to Sophia, Bulgaria. Being fluent in two languages, Bulgarian and French, he found that his bilingual capability had given rise to an increasing sense of malaise and psychological oppression, because switching from one language into the other involved such fundamental reorganization of assumptions, perspectives, relations with the audience and other factors that are intimately embedded in any linguistic context. For Todorov, double linguistic fluency did not, as might have been expected, lead to an expanded sense of social wellbeing in the form of a bridging with people; rather, it intensified his realization that neither of the two languages “was clearly subordinate to the other” (Todorov 1994, p. 212). This internal dialogism, which exerted pressure on every instance of speech, made him feel “split into two halves, one as unreal as the other” (Todorov 1994, p. 211). Mediating between two languages was tantamount to a form of madness or warfare: “It was too much for a sole being like me! One of the two lives would have to oust the other entirely” (Todorov 1994, p. 213). The experience was so painful, he writes, that in order to avoid it (while he was in Sofia), he “sought refuge whenever possible in physical labor, beyond the reach of social contact”: “I cut grass in the garden, trimmed trees, moved earth, somewhat as we do when, ill at ease in unaccustomed circumstances, we are quick to volunteer to peel the potatoes or accept an invitation to a game of table tennis, *happy at least to recover an integrity of the body*” (Todorov 1994, p. 213, my emphasis).

What is salient from Todorov’s riveting autobiographical account is the emphasis he puts on the process of subjectivization involved in the so-called translation zone, the state between languages that, for him, is disorienting to the point of being unbearable. Whereas other theorists may valorize translation as a potentially democratic activity, one that makes way for a boundless polyphony, Todorov accentuates instead the hierarchical

subordination that is necessary for effective dialogue to happen. By eschewing, in an unfashionable manner, the facile endorsement of pluralism that often accompanies neoliberal discussions of translation, Todorov reminds us of the profoundly conflicted place occupied by *the translating subject as an enunciating subject*. “The equality of voices makes me feel the breath of insanity,” he confesses. “Their asymmetry, their hierarchy, on the other hand, is reassuring” (Todorov 1994, p. 213). Most remarkably, he writes that under circumstances when both voices are vying equally for validity, the condition of *not speaking* is preferable because it is like recovering “an integrity of the body.” Linguistic equality, asymmetry, and hierarchy, and most of all what Todorov calls an integrity of the body: these are precisely the stakes pertaining to the phenomenon of Chinglish as well.

On closer examination, most of the Chinglish signs in question fall into two categories. The first is that of *naming*. Restaurant menus may be the most convenient cases in point (“Advantageous Noodle,” “Black Pepper Cowboy Bone,” “Strange Juice” [Radtke 2007, pp. 22, 39, 40]), but other instances of labeling, such as the translated names of public facilities (“Anus Hospital,” “Deformed Man Toilet,” “Cash Recycling Machine” [Radtke 2007, pp. 93, 80, 99]) are also eminently pertinent. The second category is that of *instructions-giving*: “Don’t forget to carry your thing,” “You can enjoy the fresh air after finishing a civilized urinating,” “Take care to fall,” and so forth. In both of these communicative capacities, the anonymous signs, while referring to something of an empirical nature, also announce the presence of an authoritative figure: someone in the know is talking to us. As Radtke suggests, this voice characteristic of the Chinglish signs is reminiscent of the schoolmasterly or maternal-sounding tones of the mass education campaigns of the Chinese Cultural Revolution period known for their deployment of propagandist slogans (Radtke 2009, p. 8). This performative linguistic affinity between China’s orthodox socialist and postsocialist regimes may be further clarified with

terms borrowed from psychoanalysis. The omniscient voice giving orders, be they names or other kinds of directions, may be thought of as a “subject supposed to know,” a superego guarding the common spaces shared by everyone. Invisible and intangible except through the commands it issues, this voice evokes a transcendent being, a bossy someone who enjoys summoning forth the unknown (by naming things) and telling people how to conduct themselves in public.

To help crystallize the comical nature of the situation—to zero in on exactly why it is so funny—let me borrow from Alenka Zupančič’s work on comedy (Zupančič 2008). In a boldly imaginative, theoretical stroke, Zupančič traces the genre of the comical to a particular type of movement and transition—indeed, one might say translation—that is constitutive of various forms of Western representation since Christianity: the transition from spirit to flesh. Although the terms spirit and flesh cannot be more familiar, what interests Zupančič is rather the ideological structure that supports, that insists on, the *presumed link* between the two realms, even while, as she suggests, such a link is missing. The locus of this missing link is, accordingly, the site where a certain phenomenology of the spirit—to follow the logic of Zupančič’s reading of Hegel through Lacan—materializes as a clumsy body; the site where, in aesthetic terms, the comical makes its appearance. To use a banal example, the moment a character slips on a banana peel is so funny because it is a moment when the transition from smooth motion to “stupid” physicality is the most palpable. This is how Zupančič theorizes incarnation: literally, as becoming-flesh (that is, when the body slips and falls), but also as the void where the presumed link to a transcendent meaning is corporeally staged and exposed as nonexistent.

Zupančič’s analysis unwittingly sheds light on the issues of authority and physicality that lie at the heart of the Chinglish phenomenon—a phenomenon that includes not only the signs themselves but also their receptions—making way for a possible

engagement with these “Chinese beauties” at a level beyond the more familiar critiques of orientalism and of postcolonial power dynamics. Following her logic, we may venture this proposition: What Chinglish reveals in its low-brow, broken, and often gibberish modes is none other than the fantasy of bringing (two) separate languages into alignment with one another, a fantasy that is fundamental to all acts of translating.

More specifically, the voice we hear in many of these signs is, as mentioned, an authoritative one, signifying the presence of someone in charge, who knows what she is talking about. The need to be bilingual, however, forces this voice to assume the additional role of a translator, in effect making it speak or *ventriloquize itself* in a second voice. From this procedure of voice bifurcation, as in the case of Todorov feeling obliged to negotiate internally between Bulgarian and French, trouble ensues. As this authoritative voice plunges headlong into the split that is self-ventriloquy, the transition from Chinese into English becomes, *de facto*, the proverbial banana peel, on which the translating subject helplessly slips. And once the slip has occurred, the audience would, from sheer curiosity (“What is it that the Chinese actually says?”), want to take a second and harder look at the original message. In being thus subjected to a retroactive, that is, post-translation, “security check,” the original speech is now stripped of its authoritative-seeming status, brought down to the mundane level of a local, cultural oddity.

In his endeavor to preserve Chinglish, Radtke writes that its direct or “in your face” quality, which often shocks foreigners, is what exposes the latter’s assumptions. “Chinglish is very often funny because of the sometimes scarily direct nature of *the new meaning produced by the translation*. A ‘deformed man toilet’ in Shanghai or an ‘anus hospital’ in Beijing is funny because it instantly destroys linguistic euphemisms we Westerners have carefully built up when talking about sensitive topics. Chinglish annihilates these conventions right away. Chinglish is right in

your face” (Radtke 2007, p. 7, my emphasis). While in agreement with Radtke, I would hasten to add that this scary directness is less an essential quality of “the Chinese mind” as such than a new product—one might say a new body—that *materializes in the very process of translation*, when Chinese expressions try to be born again as English (and also conversely, when English expressions try to be born again as Chinese). Directness is another way of describing the literalism of the translations, in which the bulk of the effort seems to have been spent on making the English match the Chinese word for word, as though to close the gap between the two languages.

To that extent, is not the enunciating subject who attempts to close the gap—the translator who blithely and determinedly goes about her business as though the gap *can* indeed be closed (that is, without the aid of all kinds of complicated linguistic maneuvers, suppressions, exchanges, concealments, and inventions)—the comic character *par excellence*? What makes the Chinglish signs so funny, we may now say, is not simply a matter of poor English on the part of Chinese natives. Rather, it is the glimpse the signs offer of an impossible but ever-generative kind of labor—of translation as a form of suturing, soldering, and synthesizing, even where languages are, as Todorov writes, “uncombinable.” Chinglish functions in this manner as a kind of theater in which an upright persona, speaking in a tone that is supposedly in command of the situation, keeps slipping and falling on something like a banana peel. Between the dignified pose of the subject supposed to know (the translator who knows how to move and transition easefully into proper English) and its corporealization in the crazy figure delivering heterologies stranded awkwardly between English and Chinese, an abyss looms, reminding us of the inexorable bungling that lurks in all acts of bi- or plurilingualism. To that unbridgeable gap that Todorov in a more anguished state of mind equates with schizophrenia, Chinglish has provided a controversially animated form.

As the task of the translator is recognized as inextricable from translanguaging, do not some of the Chinglish signs begin to sound like metacommentary of the most prescient kind? “Forbid to cross,” “Take care to fall!”

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Comedy from *a* to *Z*

On the Subject-Matter of Ideological Interpellation

Simon Hajdini

Preston Sturges' *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek* (1944) is not merely an illuminating cinematic study in ideological interpellation, a study that precedes Althusser's invention of this notion by more than two decades, but also a surprisingly accurate anticipation of the Lacanian critique of this key Althusserian concept. The duality of interpellation, on the one hand, and its failure or inherent impossibility, on the other, that accounts for the core of the said Lacanian critique is felicitously inscribed already in the title of Sturges' film. The title oscillates between *miracle* and *creek*, between a miracle and an entry point, or a gap undermining it, hollowing it out, as it were, and marking its irreducible interiority, an interiority of an exceptional event defying natural laws with a gap of a paradoxical materiality blurring the boundary between the Inner and the Outer, while opening up the paradoxical domain of the Extimate (to deploy Lacan's useful neologism). In Sturges, *the miracle* of ideological interpellation, of an instantaneous recognition of oneself as the addressee of the call of social authority, finds itself *up the creek*, i.e. faced with its own impossibility.

Surplus-interpellation: Sturges, Critic of Althusser

According to Althusser's famous formula, "ideology interpellates individuals into subjects" (Althusser 1971, p. 170; translation corrected). The process of translating the pre-ideological individuality into ideological subjectivity is based upon a simple mechanism of

the call addressed to the individual by a figure of social authority. And as soon as the individual recognizes him- or herself as its addressee, he or she is immediately constituted as the subject of ideology; moreover, he or she is immediately constituted as an always-already ideological subject. And for Althusser the notion of an ideological subject is a pleonasm. As soon as it emerges, the subject emerges as the effect of ideology so that there is no other subject *except for* the subject of ideology, just as there is in turn no other ideology *apart from* the one actualized in the form of subjectivity.¹ To briefly summarize the Lacanian critique of Althusser's concept of interpellation as it was formulated by Mladen Dolar, its core amounts to the thesis that this process of subjectivity's frictionless emergence cannot transpire without a remainder. The miracle of the automatic process of interpellation finds itself "up the creek" insofar as interpellation is structurally marked with a failure, with an inner heterogeneous declination from its own inherent function.² The philosophical stakes of this critique are as high as it gets: what is at stake here is the very subject matter of subjectivity, and more particularly the concept of "the subject of the unconscious," which Lacan so uncompromisingly defends against the prevalent rejection of the very notion of subjectivity amongst his contemporaries. And this subject is nothing but the name for interpellation's inner heterogeneous declination, for the symptomatic embodiment of its failure and inherent impossibility.³

¹ "[T]here is no ideology except by the subject and for subjects. [...] I only wish to point out that you and I are *always already* subjects" (Althusser 1971, pp. 170, 172).

² "[T]his sudden passage is never complete—the clean cut always produces a remainder." (Dolar 1993, p. 77)

³ "In short: the subject is precisely the failure to become the subject—the psychoanalytic subject is the failure to become an Althusserian one." (Dolar 1993, pp. 77-78) Or, to put it in Eric Santner's concise terms, the Lacanian subject "informs" the subject matter of Althusserian subjectivity as its inner heterogeneous "*subject-matter*: a peculiar and often unnerving materiality, a seemingly formless or *informe* remainder of processes of subject-formation." (Santner 2015, p. 23)

However, the Lacanian critique of Althusser, as I aim to demonstrate, does not amount to a simple rejection of the ideological nature of subjectivity. The central point of this critique is in many respects compatible with Althusser, but at the same time—in its very compatibility—all the more at odds with the Althusserian position. This critique does not amount to a simple claim that in his theory of ideology Althusser fails to grasp the impossibility underlying any ideological interpellation. What is at issue in this critique is rather the fact that Althusser fails to notice how this point of impossibility of ideology is precisely the point at which ideology effectively holds us in its grasp. The ultimate example of this impossibility of the ideological machine's clean passage into the self-transparent domain of pure Meaning is provided by Kafka's notion of the Law. Therefore, it is no coincidence that in his first English book Žižek should formulate his critique of Althusser's notion of ideology by recourse to the example of Kafka. Kafka's heroes *fail* precisely to recognize themselves within the call of the bearers of social authority. However, this misrecognition as the mark of the failure of interpellation does not lead to their liberation from the constraints of authority and ideology, for *ideological interpellation is structurally a surplus-interpellation* that mobilizes not only the mechanisms of recognition but also the subject's enjoyment, i.e., the point of radical un-recognition as the lever of ideological efficacy (see Žižek 1989, p. 43). And it is precisely this leftover of un-recognition in the constitution of ideological subjectivity, or the ideological subjectivity's inner heterogeneous "subject-matter," that gets lost in Althusser's account.

The Lacanian critique insists on the point that the frictionless translation of the external materiality of ideological institutions into the inner self-transparency of an ideological subject never fully succeeds. And it is this failure that provides the key to the basic plot of Sturges' film. So, what is the plot? The United States are drawn into the maelstrom of World War II, the mobilization is in full effect, the boys are leaving for the front in millions. And

although there is a clear-cut difference between the *repressive* state apparatuses that govern “by force” and the *ideological* state apparatuses that govern “by ideology,” it is nevertheless the case that no repressive apparatus, including the army, can do without an ideological-ritual intervention, which secures its inner cohesion and the conditions of its reproduction.⁴ Consequently, the mobilization is accompanied by the institute of *farewell parties*, by ideological rituals that attract large crowds of American girls determined—in an act of conjuration and in an atmosphere of relaxed entertainment—to wish to the boys a safe return home. Trudy, the main female character, feels obliged to attend one of these parties. Her father, a single parent raising two daughters, is opposed to the idea, but Trudy—while pretending to go on a date with an innocuous local boy Norval Jones who, in her father’s eyes, presents no threat to his daughter’s innocence and the family’s good name—decides nevertheless to attend the party. Trudy admits to Norval her true intentions, and although reluctant, Norval eventually lets her go on with her little plan. What follows is a patchwork of scenes from the party, which Trudy visits by borrowing Norval’s car and where we see her dancing and drinking with the boys in uniforms. She finally returns home early the next morning, still visibly drunk, and notices that she is wearing a wedding ring. However, despite much effort she cannot bring herself to remember the events of the previous night. The ring obviously testifies to the fact that she got married to one of the boys in uniform that already left for the front, but Trudy cannot reconstruct the causality of this surprising effect, i.e., of the ring as a mark of the events that transpired the night before. Despite the lacking reconstruction, the wedding ring eventually suffices to wash ashore a small fragment of a memory, although she is still unable to “historicize” it, to incorporate it

⁴ “There is no such thing as a purely repressive apparatus.” (Althusser 1971, p. 145)

into a consistent narrative: the name of the boy she married, she suddenly remembers, “*had a ‘Z’ in it.*” From here her situation is complicated even further. Trudy eventually discovers that she is pregnant, thus revealing that the wedding ring and the fragment of a memory of the boy’s name were neither a coincidence nor an illusion or a screen-memory.

If we read the farewell party (which is a party organized by the State, by one of its principal repressive apparatuses) as an integral part of the repressive apparatus in its ideological function, then this provides us with the first opportunity at formulating a critique of the Althusserian notion of an ideological institution. It is self-evident that in her determination to attend the party, a determination that surpasses her respect for her father (the local constable), Trudy is not simply following the official ideological message of the army. And it is equally obvious that she cares more about the party itself than about attesting her devotion to the sublime messages of heroism, military power, or the nearing final victory. In short: what propels Trudy to attend the party and—consequently—to reaffirm the conditions for the reproduction of the state apparatus are not the official ideological messages as such but rather *the transgression of official ideology*.⁵ There are in fact two transgressive moments at work in her attending the party. First, Trudy transgresses against the prohibition of the father and thus betrays the paternal, familial ideology. However, what is more important is that she does so by way of a pretext, such that her transgression is not explicit (thus leaving the paternal ideology intact), but is an example of what Žižek termed “inherent transgression” (*cf.* Žižek 1994, p. 55), i.e., transgression as an inner declination from the norm which, however, does not thwart it but rather strengthens it. Second, the party itself constitutes a transgressive moment that follows the same logic, for it does

⁵ This transgressive moment is indicated in the film already by the fact that the said party takes place in the church basement.

not follow the rules of military behavior with its strict discipline and hierarchy, but precisely the transgression of these very rules. However, this transgression is once again not external but inherent in the sense that it does not thwart the coherence of the repressive apparatus but rather enables it.

Hence, if “ideology never says, ‘I am ideology’” (Althusser 1971, p. 175; translation corrected), this absence of a statement does not exhaust its denegational function. Quite the opposite: ideology repeats over and over again the statement “I am ideology,” but it does so not in a straightforward, frontal manner but rather by means of denegation. Ideology is like Freud’s famous patient who, upon being asked who this person in his dream might be, answers that he has no idea but is sure of one thing: “It’s *not* my mother.” (Freud 2001 [1925]) If ideology never says “I am ideology,” then it can be seen to reveal its ideological nature precisely by negating its own ideological character; in other words, ideology bears its true face *through* the act of masking itself, by saying: “I am *not* ideology.” And the points of the “inherent transgression” are precisely the places of this negation’s inscription, the traces of ideology’s negation by ideology, the loci of its supposed violation and impossibility, which effectively form *the scene of ideology’s surplus-operativity*. The interpellation of individuals into subjects always relies upon this structural moment of a “non-ideological” surplus of ideology itself.

This last point is irreducible to Althusser’s claim according to which those who are in ideology remain structurally blind as to their embeddedness in ideology, i.e., that “those who are in ideology believe themselves by definition outside ideology” (Althusser 1971, p. 175). One should radicalize Althusser’s point: it is not only that those “inside” (ideology) believe themselves “outside” (of it); the point is rather that they can believe themselves “outside” of it precisely because there exists a field of an “internal exteriority” of ideology, i.e., because ideology is not a realm of a pure, unthwarted interiority, but is rather marked by the Real

of an extimate “inherent transgression” as the singular point of ideological mystification. Put differently: a person subjected to the ideology of the Church of course does not consider his or her views to be ideological (insofar he or she believes him- or herself “outside” ideology, despite the fact that he or she is drowning in it). However, my point is subtler and it does not refer to the phenomenon of immediate, fanatical “self-deception,” but rather to the deception that appears *only in the form* of its opposite, i.e., in the form of a transgressive, critical distance towards ideology and its apparatuses. To paraphrase Dolar, the ideological subject in this reflexive sense of the term, which relies on the remainder of the mechanism of “inherent transgression,” this ideological subject is the impossibility of becoming an ideological subject. “Inherent transgression” is the field of an inner heterogeneous *declination of ideology from ideology by ideology itself*, it is the inner constitutive gap of ideology, a gap at once enabling and disabling its ideological self-enclosing. This inherent split effectively splits nothing, for it is only through it that ideology comes into being and gains its efficiency, and this inherent gap is now the place of the inscription of *the subject*, on the one hand, and the production of *the surplus*, on the other.

From here let us return to the film and to its two transgressions, the second of which in fact mirrors the first. The farewell party is internally transgressive; although suspending the rigorous rules of military ideology, it nevertheless serves its reproduction and guarantees for its cohesion. However, in the film this “inherent transgression” is related to another, analogous transgression of the paternal, or familial, ideology. And the paternal prohibition (of attending the farewell party) is inherently transgressed (inherently because it is transgressed by way of deceit) via the “inherent transgression” of the military ideology. Yet in an interesting reversal the transgression of military ideology is once again possible only in the form of that particular familial ideology which it had to subvert by means of deceit.

Here lies the emphatically *critico-ideological character* of the film's basic plot. Without this reversal, we would be dealing with a melodrama, which might unfold as follows: despite her father's prohibition, the girl attends the party, breaking with the constraints of paternal ideology. There, the soldiers get her drunk and abuse her (Sturges' film already hints at all of this), she returns home not remembering the night's events, whereupon she discovers that she is pregnant. Then the local "4-F boy" who is in love with her decides to help her, proposing to her so as to preserve her honor, and she reluctantly—knowing that she is merely using him—either agrees to the proposal or rejects him, but in either case remains confined to her solitude and excluded from the local community. Such an outcome would effectively rely upon a clear separation between the "interiority" of adhering to the familial ideology, on the one hand, and a pure "exteriority" of its transgression, on the other. The whole film after the event (of becoming pregnant) would insist on this pure cut between the "outer" and the "inner," on the impossibility of mediation or reconciliation. But what we get with Sturges' film is precisely the impossibility to ever step outside into a pure "exteriority." We instead receive the lesson that this "exteriority" is a mirage, depriving us of the insight into a more radical, extimate nature of every ideology. When Sturges' Trudy presumably steps out of the circle of familial ideology (i.e., when she transgresses her father's prohibition), she effectively enters the ideological space of the "inherent transgression" of the military ideology; she can only step out of ideology by stepping right back into it. Moreover, even as she transgresses her father's prohibition, she does so under the very conditions of this prohibition itself, which is why she returns home from the party as an "ideologically faultless" married woman and soon-to-be mother. Trudy's desire propels her to transgress her father's prohibition, it propels her to undermine the paternal-familial ideology. However, in a reversal, this desire ends up only being able to realize itself in the form of what it transgresses, viz., in the form of the familial-paternal ideology itself.

But Trudy's faultlessness is, of course, not entirely faultless. By way of a sheer automatism, without her consent and will, Trudy is interpellated into the subject of conjugal-familial ideology, assuming the role of a faultless soon-to-be mother. However, the interpellation does not unfold smoothly, for something is missing in it, namely her husband and the father of her child, who exists but merely as a blind spot of Trudy's knowledge. Hence, the whole plot is made up of the sequence of three institutions of 1) the paternal-familial, 2) the military and 3) the conjugal-familial ideology. What binds these three akin but nonetheless different elements of the ideological state apparatus into a sequence is precisely the inner point of their impossibility, of the "inherent transgression," the inner heterogeneous split that persists through the alterations of disparate ideological institutions. The plot begins with the impossibility, or "inherent transgression," of the paternal-familial ideology, continues with the "inherent transgression" of the military, and concludes with the "inherent transgression" of the conjugal-familial ideology.

What we defined as *the inner heterogeneous declination of ideology from ideology by ideology itself* therefore forms the homogeneous background of the sequence described above. Yet despite this central homogeneity, the three elements of the sequence nonetheless differ from one another such that their succession is not only a matter of their external co-placement, but rather of an inner structure and dialectical movement. The succession of the three transgressions of the paternal-familial, military, and conjugal-familial ideology is effectively presented to us as a passage from a naïve, pre-Althusserian, through to an Althusserian and thence to the Lacanian notion of ideology. In case of the first transgression of the paternal Law, ideology is presented as embodied in the *pater familias* as the bearer of authority who burdens the subject from the outside with the weight of ideological demands. Here, we are confronted with ideology in the pre-Marxian sense of a system of principles that the subject

can either accept or refuse, but always with a full awareness of this acceptance or refusal. In the second example of the farewell party we pass onto the level of the Marxian-Althusserian notion of ideology. Here, ideology is no longer conceived as an external constraint and a system of principles, but as something that inhabits the interiority of the subjects without them ever being aware of it. But there follows the third example that leads us to the concept of ideology proper. In this final example, ideology appears neither as something merely external that is forced upon us by figures of authority and ideological apparatuses, nor simply as a purely inner self-transparency of ideological belief, but rather as extimate, as at once within and without. If we formulate this development in terms of knowledge, we can say that it leads from the “knowledge that knows itself,” through the “ignorance that is ignorant of itself,” to finally resulting in the “knowledge that doesn’t know itself,” which is the true locus of the unconscious ideological belief. When Trudy transgresses her father’s injunction, she knows that she knows that she is rejecting an ideological injunction, i.e., *she knows that she knows that she is outside ideology*. Conversely, when she attends the party she doesn’t know that she doesn’t know that she is following an ideological ritual, i.e., *she doesn’t know that she doesn’t know that she is inside ideology*. At last, when she arrives home from the party and discovers that she is married and pregnant, she finally—and paradoxically—*knows neither that she knows nor what she knows*; knowledge and ignorance cease to form two clearly demarcated disparate fields relying on the difference between the inner and the outer and instead coincide within the extimacy of a belief as the inner constituent of knowledge itself. And it is precisely at this point of a knowledge that doesn’t know itself that we finally witness the emergence of the subject of ideology as the “subject-matter” of ideological interpellation.

It is only in this last subjectal form that we reach the core of the Lacanian critique of interpellation and the true meaning of

its remainder. As we have seen, in Sturges' film this remainder of interpellation, which undermines the distinction between the exteriority of ideological apparatuses and the interiority of ideological belief, is granted a very plastic embodiment and depiction. First, it takes the form of the wedding ring that betrays the existence of some knowledge of which Trudy, paradoxically, knows nothing; then it takes the form of a partial memory of her husband's name; and finally, it takes the form of the embryo. This triad coincides with the Lacanian triad of the *Imaginary* (the image of a shining ring), the *Symbolic* (the remainder of a name, not even a full name but merely a letter, a tiny "Z" as the phallic signifier, the signifier without the signified), and the *Real* (the ontologically unrealized embryo as an instance of *objet petit a*).

Matrixes and Discourses, or: How to Do Things Without Words

Before continuing along the outlined path, let me first proceed with a more detailed analysis of the critique of the Althusserian notion of ideological interpellation. We have seen that no repressive apparatus can do without its ideological supplement. Its mechanisms and technologies are necessarily accompanied by a discursive ideological practice that functions as the lever of its efficiency. Althusser conceives of the ideological mechanism of the reproduction of Power as relying upon the relation between the Subject (as the instance of social authority) and the subject (of interpellation), or—respectively—upon the relation between the Subject-addresser (S) and the subject-addressee (s):⁶

⁶ "It is convenient to designate this new and remarkable Subject by writing Subject with a capital S to distinguish it from ordinary subjects, with a small s. / It then emerges that the interpellation of individuals as subjects presupposes the 'existence' of a Unique and central Other Subject, in whose Name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects." (Althusser 1971, pp. 178–9)

$$S \rightarrow s$$

The Simple Matrix of Althusserian Interpellation

If we read this duality in terms of the relationship between S (the signifier), on the one hand, and s (the meaning), on the other, then it becomes possible to identify what already follows from Althusser's own description of the process of interpellation: First, that the subject (s) emerges as the subject of ideological *meaning* and, second, that this emergence relies on the *signifying duality* of a hailing or a call of the social authority, on the one hand, and a reply or a recognition, on the other. This is consistent with what is perhaps Althusser's most famous example of ideological interpellation (Althusser 1971, pp. 174–5): the policeman's hail rings out "Hey, you there!" and the subject answers "Yes? I'm here." The signifying game of hailing, or addressing, and recognition thus includes in its minimum form two signifiers, namely the signifying dyad of an "address" or a "call," and a "reply" or a "response." And for Althusser the subject of ideological meaning (s) is precisely *the product* of this signifying duality of the call "Hey, you there!" (S) and the response to it "I'm here" (S'). The above schema of the relationship between the Subject of the signifier (S) who issues the call and the subject of ideological meaning (s) who is the retroactive product of recognition in this call can be further explained with the following, "extended" matrix of ideological interpellation:

$$\frac{S}{\quad} \rightarrow \frac{S'}{s}$$

The Extended Matrix of Althusserian Interpellation

Both matrixes of Althusserian interpellation (i.e., the "simple" and the "extended" one) open up the possibility of introducing the Lacanian critique. The Althusserian subject of ideological

interpellation is constituted as the subject of “ideological meaning,” and this meaning first appears as the obverse of the signifying call, i.e., it appears as something that automatically results from it ($S \rightarrow s$). Despite the linearity of this matrix, Althusser is nevertheless fully aware—and not merely aware, but explicitly states—that the subject of ideological meaning is not simply the linear *result* of the progress from S through S’ to s, i.e., from the “call” through the “response” to the constitution of subjectivity.⁷ This progress involves a retroactive temporal loop pertaining to the process of signification and the constitution of subjectivity. That is why Althusser insists on the fact that the subject, although constituted as the product of the linear temporality of a “call” and a subsequent “response,” is constituted as an *always-already* ideological subject. Although the subject only *will have been* the subject, although it paradoxically only becomes what it has always-already been, in retrospect it nevertheless appears as a seeming foundation or origin of the interpellation process. Thus, the linear progressivity, on the one hand, and the retroactive causality, on the other, are two aspects of Althusser’s concept of interpellation. In short: the linear matrix $S \rightarrow s$ must also be read as $S(s)$.

The shortcomings of Althusser’s concept of ideological interpellation are not reducible to its supposed focus (via the key notion of recognition) upon the mere *imaginary relation* between the subject and the Subject (or, to put it in psychoanalytic terms, between the Ego and the ideal Ego), which then supposedly leads Althusser to overlook how this relationship is overdetermined by a symbolic relation, and more specifically by a relation to the symbolic place or the Ego-Ideal that is the precondition of

⁷ “Naturally for the convenience and clarity of my little theoretical theater I have had to present things in the form of a sequence, with a before and an after, and thus in the form of a temporal succession. [...] But in reality these things happen without any succession. The existence of ideology and the hailing or interpellation of individuals into subjects are one and the same thing.” (Althusser 1971, pp. 174-5; translation corrected)

establishing the imaginary mirror-relation. As we have seen, in Althusser the imaginary relation is grounded in a symbolic relation, i.e. in a dynamic of the signifying “call” and “response” that constitutes the subject as the retroactive product of the constitution of meaning. Hence, the Lacanian critique of Althusser can be based *neither* on the reproach of overlooking the symbolic dimension by way of focusing on a mere imaginary dynamic of recognition *nor* on the reproach of missing the retroactive character of the emergence of subjectivity. On what precisely, then, does this critique rest? Effectively, what is missing in Althusser is not a theory of the Symbolic, but rather *the concept of the Real*.

If we once again take a look at our “extended” matrix of Althusserian interpellation, we see that its “upper floor” corresponds precisely with the “upper floor” of Lacan’s matrix of the master’s discourse (Lacan 2007; 1999):

$$S_1 \rightarrow S_2$$

The basic signifying dyad can be read as the elementary matrix of ideological hailing, as conceived by Althusser. S_1 , the master-signifier, functions as the discursive agent of addressing the individual who—in a gesture of recognition in the call—is automatically constituted as a subject. The subject of meaning (s), as the result of the signifying address issued by the social authority (S_1), essentially appears as the subject of “ideological knowledge” (S_2). It appears as a subject constituted in an “instance of seeing,” or more precisely in an “instance of hearing” as the addressee of social authority. As soon as it hears the call (“Hey, you there!”) and by replying to it (“I’m here”), it recognizes itself as the addressee and constitutes itself as an obedient subject. The act of hearing the hailing of social authority automatically passes into obedience to social authority.⁸ This subject corresponds precisely

⁸ In Slovene, as well as some other languages, for example German, “obedience” derives from the verb “to hear;” “to hear” is “to obey.”

to the particular subjectivity of the “instance of seeing” (or “instance of the glance”) that Lacan introduces and develops in his text on “Logical Time.” This subject is essentially an impersonal subject or, put differently, the subject of subjectivization without the subject, i.e., without the subject in the proper, psychoanalytic sense of the term—the subject of a “one-knows-that,” of an impersonal, anonymous, automated “knowledge.”⁹ The impersonal nature of this form of subjectivity is perfectly in line with Althusser’s notion of ideology as the “interpellation of individuals into subjects.” Specifically, it is in line with the concept of ideological interpellation insofar as it relies on *a de-individuation of the individual as correlative with the emergence of the subject*.

What is lacking in this Althusserian schema of interpellation as a de-individuating subjectivization is precisely the “lower floor” of Lacan’s matrix of the mater’s discourse which essentially alters and complicates the simple Althusserian duality of the call ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), on the one hand, and, on the other, the impersonal, de-individualized subject of ideological knowledge (S_2/s) as *the product* of this call. S_1 and S_2 remain mutually irreducible, resisting passing into one another; between them there insists a gap depicted in the “lower floor” of Lacan’s matrix:

$$\frac{S_1 \rightarrow S_2}{\mathcal{S} \leftarrow a}$$

Matrix of the Master’s Discourse

The passage from S_1 to S_2 does not transpire without a remainder (a) as the product of ideological interpellation. And the psychoanalytic subject (\mathcal{S}) emerges precisely as correlative to this product/remainder and as the truth of the interpellation process,

⁹ “[...] the subjectivization, albeit impersonal, which takes form here in the ‘one knows that...’ [...]” (Lacan 2006, p. 167)

i.e., as *the truth of its impossibility*.¹⁰ A comparison of the two matrixes, viz., of the Althusserian matrix of interpellation and Lacan's matrix of the discourse of the master, shows a key difference between them, a difference that implies two different notions of subjectivity. As a subject of meaning, the Althusserian subject of ideological interpellation is *the product* of a successful passage from the call (S_1) to the response (S_2), while the Lacanian subject ($\$$) emerges as *the truth* of this passage, *the product* of which is not an ideological meaning (s) but precisely the impossibility of meaning, a nonsensical and non-signifying remainder (a) of the constitution of meaning. *For Lacan, the subject is not the product of interpellation, or ideological signification, but its truth, i.e. the truth of its impossibility.*

After this detour let us return to Sturges. The impossibility of interpellation which suspends the logic of the "instance of seeing," or the "instance of hearing," as the lever of obedience and ideological submission is hence placed at the very beginning of Sturges' film functioning as the motor of its basic plot. And if we follow Lacan's succession of the three "evidential moments" from his text on "Logical Time,"¹¹ we can say that this suspension of the "instance of the glance," this inner obstacle of interpellation, opens up the domain of the "time for comprehending" which makes up most of the film and in which the subject attempts to

¹⁰ When Lacan defines the fixed places of the permutations of the four elements in his matrix of the four discourses, he presents them as follows: $\frac{\text{agent}}{\text{truth}} \quad \frac{\text{other}}{\text{production}}$; in the master's discourse the place of the "agent" is occupied by S_1 , the call of social authority, confronted at the other end by the "other" of the Althusserian subject of ideological knowledge (S_2). However, this matrix "produces" a remainder (a) as correlative to the "truth" of the subject ($\$$), i.e., of the subject as the impossibility of the Althusserian subject of interpellation. Lacan writes down this "impossibility" right above the vector linking—in the discourse of the master—the place of the "agent" with the place of the "other": $S_1 \xrightarrow{\text{impossibility}} S_2$.

¹¹ The instance of the glance—the time for comprehending—the moment of concluding (cf. Lacan 2006).

confront this extimate remainder as at once the product and the point of impossibility of ideology. This passage from the “instant of hearing” to the “time for comprehending” is correlative to the particular “progress” indicated by Lacan in his matrix of the four discourses as a quarter-turn of the master’s discourse that explicates the “subject-matter,” or the properly subjectal logic, of its functioning. And in this passage or “progress” the place of the agent is now occupied by the subject, namely by the subject as the truth of the impossibility of ideological interpellation:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathcal{S} & \rightarrow & S_1 \\ a & \leftarrow & S_2 \end{array}$$

Matrix of the Hysteric’s Discourse

The said “progress” explains the structural position in which Trudy finds herself as the subject of surplus-interpellation, confronted with the “enigmatic” object in its imaginary (the ring), symbolic (“Z”), and real (embryo) function. When Trudy (\mathcal{S}) returns from the farewell party she is immediately confronted with the enigma of the night before, with the “Z” (S_1) as a residuum of a memory, with the enigmatic signifier without the signified: $\mathcal{S} \rightarrow S_1$. In this “relationship,” in this impossible relation to the enigmatic signifier, Trudy emerges as a split subject, and even though this impossible relation produces knowledge (S_2), this knowledge is structured as a knowledge that doesn’t know itself, a knowledge that cannot be subjectively assumed, and which as such—i.e., as unconscious—is “impotent” in grasping the remainder (a), the piece of the Real, that would—Trudy believes—heal up the universe of Meaning.¹²

¹² Once again, Lacan writes down this “impotence” right bellow the vector linking—in the discourse of the hysteric—the place of “production” (S_2) with that of the “truth” (a): $a \xleftarrow{\text{impotence}} S_2$.

Another note is required here. I have said that Trudy can only enact the transgression of ideology in the form of ideology itself. That is why she returns from the party as a married woman and soon-to-be mother. However, this enactment is thwarted and testifies to the inherent impossibility of the reproduced ideological form that is literally lacking. What is lacking in it is precisely—the father. Why not interpret Trudy’s pregnancy as a symptom of her interpellation into the paternal-familial ideology? More precisely: why not read it as a realization of desire? Not as a realization of Trudy’s desire or the desire of “the unknown soldier” but precisely the desire of her father, i.e., as a realization of the desire of the big Other, whose Prohibition she violated only to enact—in a symptomatic reversal—his desire?¹³ If interpellation is inherently failed and unsuccessful and if the subject of this failure coincides with the point of impossibility of interpellation, then this subject is nothing other than its symptom. To claim that a successful interpellation relies on the structurally necessary moment of failure, on an “inherent transgression,” or to claim that every interpellation is a surplus-interpellation that mobilizes not only the automatism of recognition and “rational” consent but also enjoyment, a passionate attachment to the ideological message—all of this amounts to claiming that there is *no interpellation without its symptoms*.

From the very beginning of the film the aforementioned main male character finds himself caught in the same ideological situation. Norval Jones is the embodiment of a failed interpellation, he is a creature of “a crisis of symbolic investiture,” to use Santner’s term (see Santner 1996, p. 26), however, in relation to Trudy he seems to display the other side of the same impossibility. Norval wants nothing more than to be accepted into the army,

¹³ It is not unimportant that her father is a single parent, and a widower; and also not irrelevant is his name, Mr. Kockenlocker, keeping his “chickens” locked away, at a safe distance from “cocks” ...

but unfortunately, he proves himself unqualified every time. On the one hand, we have a massive draft, a massive call of Uncle Sam who wants “You!”. Then, on the other hand we have Norval Jones who—in a very peculiar way—is left out each time. His interpellation fails not because he would fail to recognize himself in the call of the big Other. Norval more than recognizes himself in the call, but *the social authority fails to recognize him as the addressee of its own interpellation*. Norval recognizes himself in the call excessively, but the experts who are called upon to determine whether or not he is cut out for the job fail to see in Norval the particular object, the agalma, which is the condition for acceptance into the army. Put differently, Norval is interpellated, the interpellation is successful in the Althusserian sense of the term, the call passes without any friction or without any gap into the constitution of the ideological subject of “knowledge.” However, this mechanism of the master’s discourse does not suffice, and that which for the majority of interpellated American boys who easily pass the tests conducted by expert knowledge is but a formality becomes, for Norval, an unbridgeable obstacle. Moreover, as a successful example of Althusserian ideological interpellation Norval only becomes a split subject as a product of the functioning of expert knowledge:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} S_2 & \rightarrow & a \\ S_1 & \leftarrow & \mathcal{S} \end{array}$$

Matrix of the University Discourse

In the matrix of the “university discourse” the place of the “agent” is occupied by knowledge (S_2), which in this case is the expert military knowledge that decides whether the interpellated subject (i.e., the subject as the truth of interpellation) possesses the *je ne sais quoi* (a), that “special something” that qualifies him or her as the subject of interpellation and as a bearer of the military post with its uniforms, signifying ranks and insignia (S_1) that form

the basis of its hierarchical relations. And Norval wants nothing more than the uniform, this insignia of power and authority, and it is precisely at this point that he stumbles upon an obstacle, upon an “impotence” as a subject to seize the symbolic mandate.¹⁴ And this mobilizes him into the discourse of the hysteric (\mathcal{S}) who wants to take possession of the symbolic mandate, the investiture (S_1), but does not know what he is lacking, what that agalma (a) might be that would, in the eyes of the expert knowledge, grant him the dignity of a military post:

$$\begin{array}{c} \mathcal{S} \rightarrow S_1 \\ a \leftarrow S_2 \end{array}$$

Matrix of the Hysteric’s Discourse

In Norval’s case this split is, as it were, redoubled. The successful interpellation from the master’s discourse, its “upper floor” ($S_1 \rightarrow S_2$), relies on the “lower floor” of Norval’s fantasy ($\mathcal{S} \diamond a$), it relies upon an “ideological fantasy” as the condition of interpellation. And what is the content of this fantasy? Norval believes that the military post—or more precisely, the uniform as the mark of authority and power, the military rank as the “phallic signifier”—would grant him access to Trudy’s heart. His amorous impotence, or “lack of qualification,” is inherently linked to the “lack of qualifications” for assuming the military post. Because he is “unqualified” in war, he is “disqualified” in love, or that is at least what he has himself believe.¹⁵ Norval mistakenly believes that

¹⁴ This “impotence” is once again explicitly indicated just below the vector that—in the university discourse—links the place of “production” (\mathcal{S}) with that of the “truth” (S_1): $S_1 \xleftarrow{\text{impotence}} \mathcal{S}$.

¹⁵ *Make love, not war*—the slogan misses the point. Norval’s corollary states that the hippies got it all wrong and that love and war go hand in hand. For Norval, the war is an opportunity to prove himself in love; and in a crazy extrapolation World War II perhaps only happened so as to enable Norval and Trudy to get together.

Trudy would have desired him if only he were a soldier, but he fails to see that *it is in fact he who can only desire her on the condition that he is desired by her as a soldier*. The social authority, the big Other, the “military expert knowledge,” thus assumes the role of what Freud has called *Störer der Liebe*, the role of the “disturber” of the production of the couple (*cf.* Freud 2001 [1919]). But this disturber is merely an externalization of the inner condition of Norval’s desire that can only sustain itself in this suspense. In order to come to terms with the impossibility of a relationship, with the inner blockage of the production of the couple, Norval transposes it onto an external barrier to the realization of his own desire.

Psychoanalytic Interpellation

In Sturges’ film, the succession of the three transgressions of the paternal-familial, military, and conjugal-familial ideology is presented as a passage from the naïve, pre-Althusserian, through the Althusserian, and finally to the Lacanian notion of ideology. This succession of the three notions of ideology, a succession in which each step produces an inherent critique of the preceding one, is obviously grounded in a repetition of the ideological mechanism. However, it is crucial to add that what triggers the series of repetitions is not the form of interpellation itself, but rather its inherent impossibility. Hence, what is repeated in this succession is the very impossibility of repetition. This particular form of repetition as the impossibility of affirmative repetition, as well as the particular succession of the three notions of ideology, are repeated once again against the backdrop of the problem of *the triply repeated marriage*, the analysis of which enables us to answer the key question: How does the film eventually solve all these deadlocks, blockages, impotencies, and impossibilities? How does it manage to produce this utterly curious couple, this pseudo-couple (to deploy Beckett’s term)?

Since Trudy, as we have seen, can remember neither where nor whom she married, and since she is convinced that she got married under a false name, thus placing her future child at risk of being branded a “bastard,” an illegitimate child, she and Norval come up with the following plan: they will visit the appropriate office, Norval will pose as “Z” (who, after a long play of free associations,¹⁶ was branded by Trudy as private Ratzkiwatzki), he will put on the military uniform and *they will repeat the marriage*. Norval, who is unable to grab a hold of the symbolic insignia and who again and again is faced by the Other with the fact of his “castration,” of not being up to the mark, unable to assume the symbolic mandate, is now granted the opportunity to stage that which again and again eluded his grasp, and to occupy—if only for a brief moment, in a game of pretense and mimicry—the place of a soldier, lover, future husband, and father of Trudy’s child.

But the well thought out plan fails miserably. When it is time for him to sign the marriage certificate, Norval forgets about the role he is playing, he takes the whole thing a bit too seriously, and signs with his real name. The authorities immediately discover his deception, and Norval is exposed as a fraud, an intruder, an impostor. In the scene Norval finds himself once again face to face with the expert, administrative knowledge, which once again deems him unqualified to assume the desired role. Here, the value of the aforementioned link between sexual competence, on the one hand, and the military competence, on the other, becomes obvious. Being “unqualified” in matters of war, his inaptness to assume the symbolic position of “Z,” the “unknown soldier,” “disqualifies” him in matters of love, thus depriving him of that particular mandate (of the “husband”) that would enable him to “consume” his love object. However, the failure of the plan they forged, the failure of the marriage ritual of ideological interpel-

¹⁶ Ratzkiwatzki—Zitzkiwitzki—Razly-Wazly—Razzby-Wadsby—Katzenjammer.

lation, does not imply that the interpellation was not a success. Quite to the contrary, the failed remarriage was a twofold success.

First, by signing the wrong, i.e., the right, name, Norval left undisturbed the “ideological fantasy” as the support of his reality, the fantasy that if only he was able to assume the symbolic mandate he would become the object of Trudy’s desire. Without being aware of it, Norval sabotages the marriage ceremony so as to preserve the phantasmatic conditions of possibility of a successful relationship. His slip of the pen, his failed signature, is a symptom betraying the truth about his desire.¹⁷ And second: even though they were unable to reproduce the wedding, they nevertheless were able *to repeat it*—to repeat it precisely in the Kierkegaardian sense of repetition as the “impossibility of repetition.” And they have repeated the core, or the gist, of the “first” wedding, namely *its very failure*. The exposal of Norval as an impostor, the unmasking and the failure of the logic of pretense and deception was itself in the service of pretense, of the reproduction or mimesis of the very failure of the “first” wedding. The reproduction did not fail because it missed the mark, but rather because it hit the mark all too successfully, so that the “copy” coincided with the “original” and Trudy found herself once again in the position of a future mother lacking a husband.

Hence, the impossibility of a remarriage is not entirely without its consequences. The failed act of repeating the marriage is the condition of the successful marriage that occurs at the very end of the film. What happens? After posing as a soldier and attempting to get married under a false name, Norval first finds himself in jail and then on the run. When after six months he is still unable to track down “Ratzkiwatzki,” who could deliver Trudy of her

¹⁷ Norval is the embodiment of a parapraxis, his stuttering emerges each time he is faced with the task of assuming a symbolic mandate (of a soldier, husband, co-conspirator, father, etc.) and it betrays the truth about his desire which can only sustain itself at a distance towards its object, i.e., only as essentially unrealized, unsatisfied.

scandalous predicament, he returns home only to be arrested once again. In the meantime, Trudy and her family withdraw from the local community so as to conceal her pregnancy. The childbirth ensues. The viewer is witness to the events in the hallway of the maternity ward where Trudy's father, sister, a family friend, and a journalist are in expectation of the happy news. A nurse enters the hallway and announces that a baby boy has been born. A few moments later the scene is repeated, we now have twins. Once again: quadruplets; and finally: sextuplets, all boys. The news shocks the local community (and the world), it reaches the state administration, and mobilizes—in a gesture of etatization of sexuality—the repressive (military), the judicial, the political, and the information ideological apparatus, all of which are instantaneously set in motion to declare Norval to be the father of the children, to withdraw the arrest warrant, to legalize the failed wedding attempt with Trudy and to retroactively promote him to the rank of a colonel.

How are we to interpret this comical outcome that disentangles all the complications and impossibilities that fueled the film's narrative? Do we witness another attempt at interpellating the individual into the subject, which, following a series of failures finally succeeds without a remainder? Here, I believe a different reading is possible. What we eventually witness is not an interpellation without a remainder but rather a paradoxical structure of interpellation in which the remainder itself comes to occupy the place of the dominant, or the agent, of the discourse. More precisely: the end of the film can be read as *a passage from ideological to psychoanalytic interpellation*:

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

Matrix of the Analyst's Discourse

In the film, the remainder of interpellation is embodied in the incomprehensible message of the Other which the subject cannot integrate into the universe of ideological meaning; and this remainder appears in the imaginary form of a shining ring, in the symbolic form of “Z,” this “signifier without the signified,” and in the real form of an embryo, the object *a*. And this objectal remainder of interpellation is the lever of the plot’s unfolding and the cause of all the intersubjective displacements. In the analysis of the discursive matrixes it has hereto occupied three different places, and at the end of the film this remainder is placed center stage and is transformed from the motor of the plot into a lever of its resolution. And if we say that this remainder as the agent of the final resolution is embodied in a child, we say too little. Namely: why not one, two, three etc., but six newborns? Is it not obvious that what counts here is not the count as such but rather something that exceeds it? Is it not obvious that Sturges’ emphasis is not that as many as six children are born but that they are simply *too many* and that the mere addition produces at some point a new quality, the quality of an object which exceeds the count as such, resisting as it is the “count-as-one”? This excessive remainder, this “toomanyness” (or “toomuchness,” to deploy Eric Santner’s useful term)—i.e., the object *a*—finally occupies the place of the agent of a psychoanalytic interpellation resulting in the production of the (pseudo)couple (or perhaps a para-couple in the sense of logical, or paramilitary, paraconsistency).

It is interesting to note that Lacan, in *Seminar XX*, perhaps surprisingly describes the mode of functioning of the psychoanalytic discourse with recourse to the notion of interpellation:

In the little writing I gave you of analytic discourse, *a* is written in the upper left-hand corner, and is supported by S_2 , in other words, by knowledge insofar as it is in the place of truth. It is from that point that it interpellates [l’interpelle] \mathcal{S} , which must lead to the production of S_1 , that is, of the signifier by which can be resolved what? Its relation to truth. (Lacan 1999, p. 91; translation corrected)

The psychoanalytic subject, the subject of the unconscious, was produced as the subject of the impossibility of ideological interpellation, and the psychoanalytic discourse now interpellates the subject of the impossibility of ideological interpellation itself so as to produce the lacking signifier which can resolve the subject's relation to the truth, i.e., to the truth which the subject was unable to symbolize and which hence remained present and persisted in the unreadable form of its symptoms. The key difference between ideological and psychoanalytic interpellation lies in the fact that the analytic interpellation breaks the link between identification and the object *a*, or between the Althusserian Subject (as the agent of submission) and its remainder which undermines the recognition of the subject in the Subject, as well as the subject's self-recognition.¹⁸ The secretion of object *a*, its separation, mentioned by Lacan, is indicated in the film with the birth of the children, i.e., with their separation from their mother as the first Other.

Remember that Norval's immersion into ideology rested precisely upon the relation between the "phallic signifier," or the symbolic insignia, on the one hand, and the objectal remainder, the object-cause of desire, on the other, i.e., upon the relation between *a* and "Z." And if this relation was the foundation of the fundamental fantasy (of the presupposition that the insignia of symbolic power provide the key to a successful sexual relationship), then the introduction of a distance between "Z" and *a* is the necessary condition for the traversing of the fantasy, or for the radical transfiguration of the mode of enjoyment which subjected the subject to the shackles of the ideological fantasy. At the end of the film, Norval's desire is confronted with a radical test, and the only way to remain true to it, the only way "not to give up on his desire," is to resolve his relation to the truth. And

¹⁸ "For the fundamental mainspring of the analytic operation is the maintenance of the distance between the I—identification—and the *a*." (Lacan 1998, p. 273)

what is this truth if not that “Z,” who appeared all along to be an external “disturber of love” or the condition of (im)possibility of the production of the couple, was none other than *Norval himself*? This point also provides an answer to the question of why the remarriage had to fail. It had to fail because Norval was pretending to be “Z” without knowing that he *is* “Z.” What he always-already was, he could only become through a series of failed attempts.

One evening Trudy and Norval go out on a date and lose each other. She supposedly goes to a party in honor of the soldiers leaving for the front, while he goes to the cinema where he awaits her return. And when after a long night of drinking and dancing Trudy finally arrives back, she finds Norval in front of the cinema where he had slept through the night. Was the farewell party a mere apparition, a fantasy; was all of this simply Norval’s dream?¹⁹ Were they only able to come to terms with the truth of the night spent together by forgetting, or repressing it? And is the fact of a night spent together not signaled by the plate they unknowingly leave behind, a plate with the inscription “Just married,” that is only seen by us, the viewers, and which we get to see *only after* Norval joins Trudy in his car and they drive home? I am pregnant, Trudy discovers, and married; however, I cannot remember the name of my husband and father of my child. This missing memory finds its only support in a meaningless signifier, in the “Z,” a mere “sound bite,” which triggers a series of associations, a series of attempts to grant it a proper meaning: Ratzkiwatzki–Zitzkiwitzki–Razly–Wazly–Razzby–Wadsby–Katzenjammer. However, not a single signifier out of this bundle of knowledge Trudy (§) is able to produce is the right one, none of the names can measure up to the missing “Z,” the chain of knowledge cannot exhaust

¹⁹ The party-scenes are effectively filmed like so many episodes out of a dream-life. And when driving from one scene of the party to the next the company of soldiers and girls repeatedly sings: *Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily, life is but a dream...*

its meaning, the translation of S_1 into S_2 , of “Z” into the chain of knowledge, produces a remainder of non-meaning, a meaningless remainder (a), which undermines it from within and hinders its self-totalization:

$$\frac{\text{Trudy}}{a} \rightarrow \frac{Z}{\text{Ratzkiwatzki, Zitzkiwitzki itd.}}$$

Matrix of the Hysteric's Discourse

This chain is brought to a halt and consolidated in a contingently chosen name, the first that comes to Trudy's mind and that she takes as her “own”: “Ratzkiwatzki.” But the scene of remarriage, in which Norval must assume the role of private Ratzkiwatzki, demonstrates that this name, Ratzkiwatzki, is not entirely adequate. And it is here that Norval's proper name emerges for the very first time as a kind of return of the repressed, as a symptom of the quest for the proper name that could determine “Z's” elusive meaning:

$$\frac{\text{Ratzkiwatzki}}{Z} \rightarrow \frac{a}{\text{Jones}}$$

Matrix of the University Discourse

It emerges in the form of a signature, a writing, a letter, as opposed to a word, to the signifier “Ratzkiwatzki,” with which Norval identifies himself when trying to repeat the marriage. And it is perhaps this difference between the letter and the voice, between the writing, or the signature, on the one hand, and the signifier, or the auditory image, on the other, that finally provides the answer to all the entanglements of the story, as well as the key that can resolve them. That which—in confrontation with the administrative, or expert, knowledge—was momentarily produced

as a symptom, namely as *symptom of the signature*, is resolved in the final reversal of the film when the floor is taken over by the remainder that suddenly finds itself in the place of the agent and from here—supported by the knowledge that up until now had remained inaccessible to the subject—*triggers the subject's analytic interpellation and produces its proper name*. The “Z” they were after throughout the film never resided in a letter, neither did it resign in a proper meaning, that was their error; it resided in the “sound object,” in the sonorous image they were unable to read properly, i.e., by the letter. “His name had a ‘Z’ in it,” says Trudy when trying to find her husband and the father of her children, and this triggers a series of failed attempts of pinpointing the proper name. However, the real and proper father and husband, the real father and husband with a properly proper name, was present all along, but could only be found after a number of detours and failed repetitions. Even though he was there from the very beginning, he could only be found at the very end—at the end of the film and at the end of the name. But of course: dʒounz.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} a & \rightarrow & \text{Norval} \\ \hline Z & \leftarrow & \text{dʒounz} \end{array}$$

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The Impossible Object of Love: Shakespeare, Billy Wilder and Freud

Gregor Moder

After killing the old, inept Polonius, the young prince hides the dead body somewhere inside the Elsinore palace. This is a great nuisance to King Claudius, who dispatches his two henchmen, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, to retrieve the body of the late Lord Chamberlain. Upon being asked where the body was, prince Hamlet delivers a rather cryptic line: “The body is with the King, but the King is not with the body” (*Hamlet*, 4.2.26–27). It is a very well known line, but it is hard to say what exactly to make of it. It seems to be a reference to King Claudius himself more than it is a reference to Polonius. It seems to hint at the doctrine of King’s two bodies, the political theological notion of the separation of the King’s mortal natural body and the King’s immortal political body. Hamlet clearly doesn’t think much of Claudius as he continues: “The King is a thing [...] of nothing” (*Hamlet*, 4.2.27–29).

While there are many interpretations of these words readily available, we shall turn to one in particular, to Jacques Lacan’s, because it will lead us to a series of comic examples whose functioning is at the core of this essay. In *Seminar VI on Desire and its Interpretation*, Lacan quotes Hamlet’s words and presents a perhaps surprisingly simple explanation: “I would ask you simply to replace the word king by the word phallus in order to see that it precisely is what is in question, namely that the body is engaged in this affair of the phallus, and how, but that on the contrary, the phallus, itself, is not engaged in anything, and that it always slips between your fingers” (Lacan 2002, p. 247). To replace the word king with the word phallus may strike one as

a strange suggestion, but in Lacan's theory this makes sense, because phallus is the concept of the convergence of sexuality and (political) power. Hamlet's remark, splitting the King's body in two, becomes in Lacan's reading a general theoretical insight into the nature of human being. The point is not that Claudius is a failed king because he cannot personally measure up to the great political role he has taken on, but that the human body as such is incommensurable with the symbolic or social-political order.

Richard C. McCoy quotes Hamlet's words and writes that with Claudius on the throne, "a conjunction of the king's two bodies is impossible" (McCoy 2003, p. 196). While McCoy is perfectly correct in detecting the reference to political theology, he seems to be assuming that a harmonious conjunction of the two bodies in one person is even possible outside of the theological speculations about the dual nature of Christ. The point is rather that such a union is never (humanly) possible and that the relationship between the body and the phallus is always unilateral. The Lacanian concept of phallus is perhaps nothing but the concept of this fundamental incommensurability, inasmuch as it is through this very function that a subject of the symbolic order is produced. This operation comes, however, at the price of something being irretrievably lost, as if cut off from the body in the instance of entering the symbolic realm, the realm of language.

"One Thing to my Purpose Nothing"

Let us turn now to Hamlet's second phrase, to the idea that "the King is a thing of nothing." In general terms, Hamlet is clearly dismissive of Claudius, but one is tempted to at least try to say a bit more about what exactly he is comparing him to. What could "a thing of nothing" be? Is it simply a clever, witty way of saying that the king is nothing but dust to him, that the king is just like dirt under his nails, simply to be removed "with a bare bodkin" (*Hamlet*, 3.1.76)? Since this is Shakespeare, the reference could

very well involve a sexual allusion; while “nothing” alone usually indicates the female organ, it seems perfectly plausible to assume that “a thing of nothing” refers to the male part.¹ The king is a phallus. Lacan has no doubt about it, and it was this formulation that prompted him to suggest the substitution of words in the first place.

In order to support his interpretation, Lacan quotes from Shakespeare’s sonnet 20 where almost the exact same phrase is deployed in a clear allusion to the male sexual organ: “one thing to my purpose nothing.” Bearing in mind the juridical doctrine of king’s two bodies, as well as the Lacanian concept of the phallus, let us now analyze this beautiful sonnet.

A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;
A woman’s gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women’s fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues in his controlling,
Which steals men’s eyes and women’s souls amazeth.
And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing:
But since she pricked thee out for women’s pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love’s use their treasure.

The sonnet can be read as an obvious example of “phallocentrism,” even as a hymn to the penis. We can find misogynist tendencies in it, especially in comparing the object to “false women” and praising his eyes as “less false in rolling.”² If we follow the

¹ In his analysis of *Romeo and Juliette*, Stanley Wells writes: “We may recall that ‘nothing’ could be used of both the male and the female sexual organs” (Wells 2010, p. 155).

² This particular sonnet might even be the worst case of this: “This is perhaps the most explicit expression of generalized misogyny in the sonnets” (Edmondson and Wells 2004, p. 74).

interpretation that sonnets are autobiographical, we can understand it even as a pessimistic, bitter turn of a homosexual conformist who renounces the consummation of his love. These conformist readings are based on a rather simple difference between the spiritual love and the physical love and understand the last verse—*mine be thy love and thy love's use their treasure*—as a compromise with which the lyrical subject gives up the carnality of the fair youth because it is supposedly tailored to women (“for women’s pleasure”) and is satisfied with his spiritual ideal form of love. This split is implied in the classical Platonic ideal as exemplified in the *Symposium*: the philosophical love of ideas *versus* the procreative love of the bodies.

Shakespeare’s sonnets can be interpreted as embracing the phallogocentric dichotomy between male/spiritual love and female/bodily love, a reading that was perhaps prevalent until the 20th century.³ In the respective couplets, the sonnets that immediately precede the one in question (*Shall I compare thee to a summer’s*

³ Edmondson and Wells (2004, p. 75) write that “the poem ends by imploring the young man still to endow the poet with his love even though the existence of the beloved’s penis, designed to give sexual pleasure to women, means that the physical expression (‘use’) of that love can only enrich women. Or does it? At least since the 1960s reasons have been brought forward to argue that this sonnet does not necessarily deny the possibility of a sexual relationship.” – This is of course mostly because the thought that the National Poet of Great Britain could have praised homosexual bond (“sodomy,” which was a criminal offence) or even practiced it himself, was completely unacceptable to editors and publishers of the 19th century, but also to the romanticists like Coleridge. Bruce R. Smith distinguishes several periods of reception of the sonnets; sonnets 1–126, generally dedicated to a man, and especially sonnets 20 and 106, were historically, from 17th century onward, dealt with in very different ways. Some editors added captions that “heterosexualized” the narrative and praised “friendship”; others deemed the sonnets (morally) worthless. But what is especially worth of note, as Smith points out, is that the various anthologies and selections in which Shakespeare’s sonnets appear, even today (!), tend to produce a selection which excludes the “problematic” black lady sonnets, as well as those which are clearly dedicated to a man. Contrary to Edmondson and Wells, Smith sees the turning point for reception of the sonnets in Oscar Wilde—in the trial of 1895 and in the story “The portrait of Mr. W. H.” (Smith 2003, pp. 20–1).

day and *Devouring Time*) make a very clear point that the lyrical subject understands his poetry in the specifically Platonic sense of procuring eternity of the ideal order. “So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see / So long lives this [the sonnets, poetry] and this gives life to thee.” (*Sonnets*, 18.13–14) And: “Yet do thy worst, old Time: despite thy wrong, / My love shall in my verse ever live young.” (*Sonnets*, 19.13–14) Furthermore, it is precisely young man’s procreation by means of marriage and “breeding” (*Sonnets*, 12.14) which figures as the counterpoint to poet’s conceptual poetic love. One of the early couplets spells this out for us: “But were some child of yours alive that time, / You should live twice, –in it and in my rime” (*Sonnets*, 17.13–14). All of this reminds us of the teachings confided to young Socrates by the priestess Diotima, who says that love is “giving birth in the beautiful, in respect of body and of soul” (Plato 2008, 206b), because “procreation is a kind of everlastingness and immortality for the mortal creature” (Plato 2008, 206d). Reminding us that the etymology of the word poetry is “creation,” Diotima points out that all lovers are poets:

But [there are] those whose pregnancy is of the soul – those who are pregnant in their souls even more than in their bodies, with the kind of offspring which it is fitting for the soul to conceive and bear. What offspring are these? Wisdom and the rest of virtue, of which the poets are all procreators. (Plato 2008, 208d–209a)

All of this proves convincingly that Shakespeare, like so many other sonneteers and poets, purposefully and to great success drew from the Platonic doctrine of love. In fact, one of the formulations which the lyricist uses in insisting that the beautiful youth should marry and reproduce is the idea that nature carved him “for her seal, and meant thereby / Thou shouldst print more” (*Sonnets*, 11.13–14). The metaphor of the seal and its prints is not a bad example for Plato’s theory of ideas and copies in general; whether it was used by Shakespeare as a conscious reference is less important than the overall impression of the Platonic framework at play in the sonnets.

Although it is safe to assume that *Symposium* played a great role in *inspiring* Shakespeare, we should not conclude that the poet was in any way *confined* to the framework of the Platonic concept of love and to the split of the youth into the physical body and the spiritual “body.” In other words, just as it is clear that Shakespeare is borrowing the form of the sonnet while also playing with it and even criticizing some of its clichés, it should also be clear that the poet is using the material from the *Symposium* while reworking it in accordance with his own design. While we clearly see the references to the split between the body and the soul, between the procreational and the spiritual love, we can still detect and analyze the sexual nature of love that the lyrical subject addresses to the man.

That being said, is it not *also* in compliance with the *Symposium* that homosexual love, specifically that between two men, enjoys a somewhat elevated status, at least when compared to procreational love? Is it not true that the same-sex love is in itself already an example of what Diotima is teaching young Socrates, namely an example of love which does not seek immortality merely in reproduction, but already hints at the more sophisticated love, oriented toward virtue, truth, beauty? In his speech, Aristophanes argues that homosexual men are manlier than others, because they are seeking men out of “confidence, courage and manliness, and they embrace that which is like themselves,” adding that such men do not seek to get married, but engage in politics, in the field where they prove their virtue (Plato 2008, 192a). Seeking love in a partner of the same sex seems to imply a predisposition for political matters. Does this suggest that the split between giving birth in body and giving birth in soul presupposes a split between procreational and recreational sexuality? We shall come back to this at a later point.

Our main question regarding the sonnet remains unanswered: can we say with any certainty that the love for the fair youth in Shakespeare’s sonnets is sexual as well as poetical? It all comes down to this: how are we to understand the split, suggested by the

final verse, between “thy love” and “thy love’s use”? I argue that we should not interpret it in Platonic terms as a split between the youth’s poetical body and his natural body. Such a reading relies on a series of unjustified tacit assumptions: Firstly, we must accept that, for the poet, the only “natural” or “possible” physical love is that between a man and a woman; secondly, we have to assume that the sonnet is based on a dogmatic differentiation between the spiritual and the physical side of human beings; and, thirdly, that this differentiation leads to sexual difference, with physicality pertaining to the female and spirituality to the male sex.

The first assumption can be refuted by recalling, for instance, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, in which Shakespeare exhibits no qualms about dramatizing Oberon’s jealousy aroused by his wife Titania who refuses to share with him her beautiful attendant, not to even mention Titania’s sexual scene with a donkey (more precisely, with a simpleton that goes by the name of Bottom who carries a donkey’s head on his shoulders). Or, take, for example, *Twelfth Night*, in which Viola who is in love with Duke Orsino disguises herself as a man to serve Orsino as his page and thus win his affection and love, as well as to exact from him a marriage proposal. Lacan considered this to be a rather “peculiar way to promote oneself as a girl” (Lacan 2002, p. 208). Shakespeare’s body of work is full of examples of sexuality without scruples, which makes the assumption that a sexual encounter between two males is something impossible or unnatural quite risky. Shakespeare’s literary love practices are more Boccaccian than Socratic, and it should be added that it is entirely unjustified to expect his literature to conform to today’s primitive views about what is “natural.”

But let us turn to sonnet 20 and its explicit references to nature, which we find in some other sonnets as well. Judging solely from 20.1, “A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted,” we might think that nature is an instance ensuring that its object is a natural beauty (where natural means immediate, immaculate, unperverted, in contrast to the artificiality of women’s facial

painting).⁴ But there is a shift in the sonnet. 20.10 makes it quite clear that “nature fell a-doting”: it is the nature itself that overdid it by going a step too far; nature exaggerated and endowed our perfect object with one bit too much, one unfortunate addition. As understood in the sonnet, nature seems to be the very agent of the denaturalization of the object, that is to say, the denaturalization from a self-sufficient immediacy into a sexual object.

To refute the remaining two assumptions, that is, the assumption that it is even possible to differentiate between the spiritual and the physical love in the sonnet and inscribe the sexual difference in this split, we only need to read the sonnet itself. In 20.2, the sonnet talks about someone who as a “master mistress” escapes such distinctions (which is reminiscent of the boy-girl Viola from *Twelfth Night*). The young man not only looks like a woman (he has a woman’s face), but is also femininely gentle on the inside (he has a woman’s gentle heart), without one side fighting with the other. And is it really possible to unequivocally attribute the spiritual love to the male sex and the physical love to the female sex? If anything, the sonnet suggests precisely the opposite relation, since the young man attracts the man’s gaze (“which steals men’s eyes”) and the woman’s soul (“women’s souls amazeth”). If sexual difference is indeed inscribed in this distinction, then the physical-empirical or passionate level is ascribed to men, while the spiritual level to women: it is precisely for men that the young man is a physical object, merely a feast for the eyes, while for women he is an object of spiritual love. It seems that the oversimplified distinctions between male and female sexual pleasure, between the natural and the acceptable, between the physical and the spiritual must therefore be attributed to the excessive simplicity of the readers rather than to the sonnet itself.

⁴ Elisabeth D. Harvey writes: “Where women are associated with cosmetic ‘painting’ and the vicissitudes of fashion, the young man is ‘with nature’s own hand painted’” (Harvey 2007, p. 323). She adds, however, that “the bounds that differentiate the sexes are far from stable” and points out that this sonnet is one of only two that use feminine rhymes exclusively, as if subverting in form the primacy of the masculine order.

The sonnet reaches an important dramatic point when the object turns out not to be a woman after all; this information leads to the resolution in the final couplet. But this surprise, which is only a rhetorical surprise, should not be interpreted as producing a resignation on the part of the lyrical subject. Quite to the contrary, it only renders explicit the fact that the subject's admiration is sexual in nature; his love for the object is clearly sexual, for otherwise that little thing would not have been an issue at all. We could hardly say that this complication comes as a surprise; the reader perhaps expects it from the very beginning, recalling the trope from Shakespeare's other sonnets. In fact, there is a phrase in 20.3 that seems to announce this already in advance, as it describes the man as "not acquainted," which is an allusion to the lack of female genitalia (*quaint*).

But what can be said of the resolution in the final couplet, i.e. in the "addition" to the sonnet, often printed with an indent? Does the differentiation between "thy love," on the one hand, and "thy love's use," on the other hand, really imply a Platonic difference between the spirit and the body or at least between spiritual love and a sexual act? I suggest we understand it as an almost Boccaccian resolution, which could be formulated as follows: "I will love you and you will love them," or: "then be a woman for me and a man for them." James M. Bromley makes the case for such a reading in no uncertain terms: "Uninterested in the front side of the addressee's body, the speaker makes use of other available indentations to create pleasure and to give his love to the addressee" (Bromley 2012, p. 69).

In Shakespeare's oeuvre, such a formula of resolution is certainly not unthinkable. Recall the plot of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in which two young men, Lysander and Demetrius, fall in love with the beautiful Hermia. They are equals in all respects: in riches, in noble birth and in fair appearance, but Hermia loves Lysander. They function as each other's doubles so that we could even say that the difference between them exists purely on the level of the signifier: the only thing that separates them is that one

is called Lysander and the other Demetrius. The situation is quite different from that of Juliette who believed that names are empty words and that she would love Romeo even if his name were not Romeo.⁵ With the character of Hermia, Shakespeare gives us, perhaps, an example of love for the signifier as such.

Despite this, her father is so favorably disposed towards Demetrius that he is willing to kill his daughter or send her to a convent if she does not do his bidding. This angers Lysander so much that he tells his rival: “You have her father’s love, Demetrius: Let me have Hermia’s; do you marry him” (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, 1.1.93–94). Or, to paraphrase: mine be her love, and you can be her father’s treasure. Of course, this is a line from a light-hearted play and Lysander’s comment is both meant and received as a quip and not as a serious suggestion. But the point is this: could we not read the conclusion of the sonnet as a kind of a quip, as a remark that is indeed witty but nevertheless penetrates the symbolic bond and cuts into the flesh of the matrix in which

⁵ I refer, of course, to these famous lines: “What’s in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet; / So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call’d, / Retain that dear perfection which he owes / Without that title.” (*Romeo and Juliette*, 2.2.43–47) While Juliette seems to—*sancta simplicitas*—clearly distinguish between the thing and its name, the Lacanian point is that the name is also a thing, a special kind of thing, “a thing of nothing.” The name is not simply detached from the body; the point is that the name is re-attachable to the body. And specifically, when talking about “that dear perfection which he [Romeo] owes,” i.e. about his essence, his sweet smell, about the thing that pricks him out for her pleasure, it is safe to assume that the thing she has in mind is nothing if not its name. Juliette is the direct opposite of the old sonneteers, and of the old troubadours, who would often love their object specifically or even exclusively for its name, or for the sound of its name, while being quite indifferent to the fact that they never met their object. But Juliette’s words are in contrast even to the everyday experience of people in love, who are able to write the name of their beloved on a piece of paper a thousand times, with an almost religious fervor, or whisper their lover’s name in secret places as if performing some kind of magical ritual. For a more detailed critique of Juliette’s theory of the signifier I must refer the reader to Jure Simoniti’s inspiring analysis (Simoniti 2010).

the possible and impossible couples are arranged? Twelve verses of the sonnet stumble against the impossibility of the situation in which a young man is the perfect object of (male) adoration, the only problem being that he has a piece of perfection too many. I claim that, in the last two verses, this situation is resolved with a punch line that satisfies both sides of the sexual equation. It is only if we understand the young man's role in this way that we can understand it as the unity of man and woman, i.e. as the "master mistress." The latter is not (merely) someone that carries determinations of both sexes, but (also) someone who makes love with both sexes (that loves both and is loved by both). The love that the sonnet evokes is thus not only spiritual, but also physical, while the distinction in the couplet is perhaps a practical matter of an erotic arrangement of bodies, and not an intrusive introduction of a split between the spiritual and the physical.

Nobody's Perfect

In one of the arguably best films of all times, Billy Wilder's comedy *Some Like it Hot* (1959), we follow a story of two musicians on the run from the mafia who dress up as women and join an all-female band on its way to Florida—the place with "more millionaires than you can shake a stick at." Jerry, who assumes the artistic name of Daphne, actually, and against his own will, becomes engaged with one of Florida's millionaires. In the final scene of the film, as they are eloping on the millionaire's speedboat, Jerry, still dressed as Daphne, decides to lay his cards on the table. He cautiously tries to tell the millionaire that marriage may not be the best idea: he is not a natural blond, he smokes, he doesn't have a wedding dress, they will not be able to have children and so on. The millionaire has a response ready for all these reservations; he doesn't care, they will use his mother's dress, they can adopt children etc. Finally, Jerry takes off his wig and says that he is a man, upon which the millionaire utters the immortal punch line of the film: "Well, nobody's perfect."

The story of Daphne and the millionaire is an excellent example of what we could call comic love. What appears as a recipe for disaster for the most part of the film is finally resolved as something entirely contingent. The reason I mention this is that the final gag of the film resembles the dramatic structure of Shakespeare's sonnet. The sonnet belongs to the genre of comic love precisely in that it remains loyal to its object and perceives the external obstacle of love—the object's manhood—not only as giving flight to love, but also as completely inessential when compared to the ethical infinity of love. The contingent way in which, in Shakespeare's love sonnet, the phallus is attached to the penis enables us to define it as an example of comic love. To be sure, Shakespeare's sonnets in general are incredibly witty, full of humor, puns, clever ambiguities and other characteristics that bring them close to comic genres. However, it does not suffice to say that. I would like to propose a more daring theoretical move and suggest that perhaps the resolution of the sonnet—at least sonnet 20, though a similar claim could be made of many of them—should be understood as the punch line of a joke.

The formula of love in sonnet 20 is actually very traditional. Recall what Denis de Rougemont identifies in the European tradition of love as passion: love can emerge only as something forbidden, illegal, only as something that explicitly and radically opposes the official institution of marriage (Rougemont 1983). In a traditional plot the beloved object turns out to be already married or engaged. In sonnet 20, Shakespeare merely provides us with a variation of this classical romantic predicament: the beloved object turns out to be a man. Imagine, if you will, a variation in which the sonnet does not sing praises to someone who is a man, but to someone who is married, and ends along these lines: "my darling, since they married you off with someone else, well, have children with him, and we will love each other spiritually." What do we really get when accepting such an interpretation? We get a Tristan who doesn't risk everything (including his name, his

fortune and his life) for his Iseult, but rather brings her to King Mark's wedding bed and talks to her about the almighty God afterwards. We get a Werther who does not choose (his own) death so as to resolve in the only possible ethical way the unbearable love triangle, but rather marries the beloved object off and reduces her to a poetic object. We get a Socrates who does not drink the poison, but renounces his lifelong mission to search for Truth, boards the awaiting ship and becomes a respectable sophist on a remote island. I think that we can hardly imagine anything ethically shallower and poetically less satisfying; but it is above all clear that nobody in his or her right mind should ever consent to such a monstrous compromise. In such a resolution, everyone is humiliated: the beloved object, which obviously is undeserving of consummation and is not loved to the fullest; the official spouse can only receive physical gratification, while his or her soul is cheated, and is therefore doubly humiliated; and, last but not least, the lyrical subject himself, who degrades his love to an abstract idea and thereby reduces his own ethical demand to that which Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* named the "beautiful soul." If the sonnet's structure is not interpreted as a well-written comedy, which after all the troubles ends with a surplus of enjoyment, with a surplus of couples, and if we do not interpret the resolution of the sonnet in terms of what I propose to be the punch line of a joke, then we are not only denying the sonnet any poetic value, but also any ethical and philosophical value.⁶ The principal claim of the *Symposium*, namely that the

⁶ The idea that sonnets should be placed in an explicit reference to Shakespeare's dramatic works, and particularly to his early comedies, is not new: "It is in relatively early plays, especially the comedies believed to have been written around 1593 to 1595, along with the romantic tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, that we find the closest links with the Sonnets" (Edmondson and Wells 2004, p. 87; see also the entire chapter "The Sonnets as Theatre," pp. 82–104). Comedies often refer to sonnets as a form of wooing, and sonnets themselves use theatrical metaphors to enhance the poetic effect.

profession of philosophy is adequately explained as amorous business, already implies that the true philosopher will always be ready to die for his love, the Truth. The fate of Socrates the lover is thus sealed already in the *Symposium*. If we interpret the resolution of Shakespeare's sonnet 20 as giving up on the full commitment to the object of love, then I think we cannot really claim that we are interpreting it in accordance with the Platonic love of *Symposium*. The reason for this being that in the final analysis the so-called "Platonic love" does not imply the lessening of passion and a disinterested engagement, but on the contrary demands a full commitment of one's being to the object of love, that is, to the truth.

Nobody's Perfect, but Some Are Truly Far from It

Shakespeare's sonnet and Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* merely hint at the answer to the question of comic love: "Well, nobody's perfect." This phrase demands clarification or the introduction of a further distinction. By no means does it refer to the "wisdom" of everyday life according to which partners in love must learn how to forgive each other's small imperfections, occasional affairs and the like, since we all have our faults. The quoted phrase expresses precisely the opposite viewpoint: the trouble with love is not that as finite and imperfect beings we can never reach the high moral ideals of marriage, but that we are actually *all too perfect*. In this regard, it is essential that both Daphne and the object of the sonnet have something too much (and not too little), that they have an excess of perfection, as Shakespeare wrote, and that this piece of excess in the other must not be too hastily reduced to the literal meaning of the penis.

In connection with human imperfection, Freud refers to a Jewish joke in which a man in search of his future wife complains about the candidate suggested to him by the Schadchen, his marriage broker:

The *Schadchen* was defending the girl he had proposed against the young man's protests. "I don't care for the mother-in-law", said the latter. "She's a disagreeable, stupid person." – "But after all you're not marrying the mother-in-law. What you want is her daughter." – "Yes, but she's not young any longer, and she's not precisely a beauty." – "No matter. If she's neither young nor beautiful she'll be all the more faithful to you." – "And she hasn't much money." – "Who's talking about money? Are you marrying money then? After all it's a wife [eine Frau] that you want." – "But she's got a hunchback too." – "Well, what *do* you want? Isn't she to have a single fault?" (Freud 1981, p. 61)

There is no lack of imperfections: the future mother-in-law is horrible, the girl is neither young nor beautiful, she does not have much money, and on top of it, she has a hunchback too (*Buckel*). The logic of the joke corresponds precisely to the exchange of lines at the end of Wilder's film. As if Wilder cited Freud's (cited) joke in the script. After listing all the girl's imperfections, the young man finally arrives at the capital, unbridgeable one: the never-to-be bride has one physical bulge too many. Would I go too far in claiming that the hunchback in the joke is perhaps merely a metonymy of some other imperfection of the girl, of some other bulge, that is to say, of the imperfection of her not even being a woman? May I cautiously suggest that it is not accidental that the reproach about her bulge should appear at the precise point in the joke where the broker claims that he is not offering the young man money, but he will definitely get him a wife (*eine Frau*: a woman)? The spelled-out conclusion of the joke thus reads as follows: "After all it's a woman that you want." – "But she's not a woman at all. She's a man!" – "Well, what *do* you want? Isn't she to have a single fault?" This single fault is the same as the one in Wilder's film and in Shakespeare's sonnet. Wilder's version even somewhat improves the joke since it is now the bride herself that is complaining about her many defects, while the husband assumes the role of his own *Schadchen*, finally accepting that nobody's perfect.

Freud interprets the girl's hunchback as something absolutely unacceptable. According to him, the *Buckel* is "inexcusable": "Clearly the girl had a number of defects—several that might be overlooked and one that it was impossible to disregard; she was unmarriageable" (Freud 1981, p. 62). Therefore, it is all the more unusual that Freud discusses this joke merely within the framework of following the sophist logic, interpreting it in the same way as he does the joke about the broken kettle, failing to mention that the joke might also hinge on a deeper mechanism, where the hunchback is a metonymy of what might be regarded by the prospective husband as a truly unbridgeable obstacle: that the offered girl had an appendix to the body. Freud explains the joke as piling up defects that effectively add up to a terrible marriage proposal. He writes that the Schadchen "insisted on treating each defect in isolation and refused to add them up into a total" (Freud 1981, p. 62). To be sure, Freud's analysis is correct, and sufficient in analyzing the joke in the context of Freud's project; however, it doesn't really explain why the *Buckel* specifically functions as the final, unacceptable fault. Why not the lack of money? Why not her bad looks and her old age? Why not her mother? The accumulation of defects does not suffice to make her "inexcusable" or "unmarriageable," as Freud himself asserts. Clearly, the hunchback must indicate an allusion that questions her status as *Frau* as such. The accumulation is therefore not a simple matter of mathematical operation of addition, but rather a very precise dramatic build-up, albeit condensed in a form of a joke.

In pointing to the finale of *Some Like It Hot* and to the joke cited by Freud, I hope to have demonstrated that the bawdy sonnet 20 exhibits a structure that is no stranger to comedies and jokes. Of course, it is perfectly clear that my suggestion has the status of merely one of the possible readings of the sonnet, and makes no claim of being exhaustive. But since the general motif of love is especially abundantly present in Shakespeare's comedies, we may at the very least assume that there is a comic undertone

to this particular love sonnet, an undertone that allows us to discuss it in the context of comic love, rather than submitting it to the “spiritual love” which separates the human being’s eternal element from the mortal human body. Comedy as a genre generally rejects such a split. Comedy enables us to talk about a certain immortality pertaining to the order of the body itself: this is the very moment of the “minimal difference” that Alenka Zupančič points out as being characteristic of both comedy and love.⁷

* * *

Let us turn once more to the idea of “love’s use” from the last line of the sonnet. If we examine the use of the word “use” in other sonnets, it is clear that it denotes something sexual, however, it does not refer to the act itself and certainly not a sexual encounter.⁸ Its meaning is related to banks, profits and accountancy. The most revealing in this regard is sonnet 6, “Unthrifty loveliness,” which understands beauty as a loan given out by nature to be reproduced and multiplied. The youth is scolded for wasting his bounty: “Profitless usurer why dost thou use / So great a sum of sums, yet canst not live?” (*Sonnets*, 6.7–8). “Profitless usurer” is an interesting metaphor: it implies that, quite contrary to financial usury, in matters of beauty one cannot profit by keeping the sum for oneself; one has to invest it. The usurer is the worst kind of (mis)user of beauty; instead of reproducing his (or her?) own wealth—by having children, of course, but also by sharing

⁷ In her book on Nietzsche, Zupančič writes (2003, p. 175): “The other whom we love is neither of the two semblances (the banal and the sublime object); but neither can she be separated from them, since she is nothing other than what results from a successful (or ‘lucky’) montage of the two. In other words, what we are in love with is the *Other as this minimal difference of the same that itself takes the form of an object.*”

⁸ Recall that translating “love’s use” as a physical encounter is the understanding that even contemporary interpreters adhere to (Edmondson and Wells 2004, p. 75).

the pleasure of his beauty with others—he keeps it all for himself and thus enjoys no profit. “For having traffic with thyself alone,” the sonnet continues, quite clearly alluding to a form of sexual activity, “Thou of thyself thy sweet self dost deceive” (*Sonnets*, 6.9–10).⁹ He is cheating himself out of a fortune by keeping his “sweet self” to himself instead of investing it in a woman. The complex metaphorical nest of use and usury indicates that the phrase “love’s use” doesn’t refer simply to intercourse as such; it refers to the gift or the product or the bounty that the youth should not usuriously keep for himself, but rather invest it (“plant it” in a woman) and thus multiply his beauty (by having children).

Therefore, the true split at work in the sonnet is neither the one between the body and the soul, between carnal pleasure and the so-called Platonic love, nor the one between masculine and feminine beauty. Rather, it is a split between the logic of procreation (giving birth in *both* of Diotima’s meanings of the term, i.e. in the sense of natural reproduction and in the sense of the generation of ideas) and the logic of sexuality (sexual enjoyment). In her stunning analysis, Alenka Zupančič demonstrates that the notion of this split can be found even at the heart of Plato’s doctrine of love as formulated in the *Symposium*. Recalling the fascinating myth that Aristophanes recounts to the selected crowd, the myth of the spherical beings with two pairs of legs, two pairs of arms and two faces, Zupančič points out that the story doesn’t end with Zeus deciding to punish the spherical humans by splitting them into two bodies (thus producing what resembles our contemporary physique) so that in life each half is determined to seek “the lost other half.” Zupančič brings to our attention “the second intervention” of Zeus. As it turns out, the spherical humans had their genitals placed on what becomes the backside of the halves. It is only with the second intervention that the genitals were cut off

⁹ Compare to 1.11, another reference (according to Edmondson and Wells 2004, p. 72) to profitless sexual practices: “Within thy own bud buriest thy content”.

to be reattached to the front of the body. Plato has Aristophanes proclaim: “[Zeus] did this in order that when couples encountered one another and embraced, if a man encountered a woman, he might impregnate her and the race might continue, and if a man encountered another man, at any rate they might achieve satisfaction from the union” (Plato 2008, 191c). Zupančič argues that this second split, which clearly enables sexual pleasure independent of the logic of reproduction, introduces a new element into the story, one that “does indeed seem to introduce a supplementary factor into the destiny of splitting, as well as into the perspective of complementarity and the desired fusion of two into One” (Zupančič 2007, p. 189).

This brings us back to the question of political theology and the idea of a union of the political and the natural body in the single person of the King. As was mentioned above, the Lacanian point is that such a union or harmonious fusion in one person is not humanly possible and that the concept of the phallus is one possible way of conceptualizing this impossibility. In fact, Kantorowicz notes that the juridical doctrine produced more than a few practical contradictions. Citing one of his major sources, Willy Maitland, who ridiculed the doctrine, Kantorowicz mentions an occasion on which King George III had to ask for permission to buy some land as a man and not as a king, “since rights not denied to any of His Majesty’s subjects were denied to him” (Kantorowicz 1957, p. 3). And when the civil war broke out between the Parliament and Charles I, the Parliament raised armies “in the name and by the authority of Charles I, King body politic, the armies which were to fight the same Charles I, king body natural” (Kantorowicz 1957, p. 21). Lacan can replace the word king with the word phallus precisely insofar as phallus is the paradoxical signifier of the split on the level of the One itself. The same point can be applied to the splits implied in Plato’s doctrine of love. Zupančič explicitly refers to the notion of love as a seeking of union with the other as our complementary half, but the

argument is just as valid in the context of the split between the body and the soul. The metaphysical (“Platonic”) split obscures the fact that there is a much deeper, much more radical and much more persistent split at work on the level of the One as such. That split is what is addressed with the concept of the phallus.

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Heidegger's Movies

National Socialism and the End of Philosophy

Jan Voelker

0.

It is not easy to ascertain whether Heidegger ever went to the movies. His remarks upon the question of the cinema are rare. Among them, there are those of more general nature, pertaining to the question of technology. The publication of the *Bremer Vorträge* from 1949, however, offers a clue to the orientation of film in Heidegger's thought. In the preamble to his lectures, a *Hinweis*—translated as “The Point of Reference”—Heidegger begins with the following remark:

All distances in time and space are shrinking. Places that a person previously reached after weeks and months on the road are now reached by airplane overnight. What a person previously received news of only after years, if at all, is now experienced hourly over the radio in no time. The germination and flourishing of plants that remained concealed through the seasons, film now exhibits publicly in a single minute. Film shows the distant cities of the most ancient cultures as if they stood at this very moment amidst today's street traffic. Beyond this, film further attests to what it shows by simultaneously displaying the recording apparatus itself at work along with the humans who serve it. The pinnacle of all such removals of distance is achieved by television, which will soon race through and dominate the entire scaffolding and commotion of commerce. (Heidegger 2012, p. 3)

Modern technological machines turn the actual distance of an event into an apparent nearness, suspending the time previously required for this inversion. The film not only subverts, inverts the order of time and space, it is not only a technical medium, but also a medium that presents and integrates its users as further elements of the technical sphere. “The humans who serve it” are thus being integrated into the series of technical objects; the film is an apparatus that levels its users with the objects displayed. There is no question of art here; rather we are dealing with the problems of technical “domination” and “commotion.” In Heidegger’s text, *Verkehr* (Heidegger 2005², p. 3) can be understood as commerce, but in principle means traffic, thus taking up the velocity of the inversion of time and space and the mentioned “street traffic.” The film reproduces the most “distant cities amidst today’s street traffic” for one precise reason: it is itself an apparatus of traffic. Machines and the objects displayed by them are set into a circle of exchange, thereby leveling them and thus working toward the domination of all systems of traffic: travel, news, nature. What is suspended is the process of becoming in regards to the time of changing what is remote into something that is near. Heidegger continues:

Yet the hasty setting aside of all distances brings no nearness; for nearness does not consist in a small amount of distance. What confronts us at the shortest distance in terms of length, through the imagery of film or the sound of the radio, can remain remote to us. What is vastly far away in terms of length, can be near to us. Short distance is not already nearness. Great distance is not yet remoteness. (Heidegger 2012, p. 3)

Thus, this process achieves neither nearness nor remoteness; instead the result is a semblance of nearness and a semblance of remoteness. Effectively the technical machines present sameness: not the sameness of nearness and remoteness, but the sameness of an irritation, of a semblance of nearness or remoteness. It is this

irritation or semblance that is understood to be hasty and therefore subject to critique. Not only the hastiness, but the semblance is taken to be a problem. If the modern idea would suggest that it is precisely this semblance and this uncertainty that presents a new experience, Heidegger thinks from the point of the machine here. The machine suspends the distinctions of experiences and as such cannot bring about new experiences. The film produces an automatic repetition, the leveling of nearness and remoteness, as well as the leveling of the displayed objects and the apparatus itself. The apparatus effaces all distinctions, even the one between itself as an apparatus and those who use it. Moreover, the apparatus expands its logic beyond its own realm. In the context of the second talk on the *Ge-Stell* (translated in this text as “Positionality”) Heidegger states:

Radio and film belong to the standing reserve of this requisitioning through which the public sphere as such is positioned, challenged forth, and thereby first installed. Their machineries are pieces of inventory in the standing reserve, which bring everything into the public sphere and thus order the public sphere for anyone and everyone without distinction. (Heidegger 2012, p. 36)

The film is an apparatus that produces an order without distinction not only within the elements it displays, but also amidst its public beholders. The German text makes it clear that film and radio are not only *elements* of the *Bestand*, but that they also turn the public sphere itself into yet another element of the *Bestand*.¹ They are a disease. They do not only erase time and space but also install this indistinctiveness as a general paradigm. Thus while attempting to dominate their sphere via sameness, their sphere becomes endless since their realm is the public as such.

¹ “Ihre Maschinerien sind Bestand-Stücke des Bestandes, der alles ins Öffentliche bringt und so die Öffentlichkeit unterschiedslos für alles und jedes bestellt.” (Heidegger 1994, p. 38)

This argument on film and radio clearly prefigures the structure of Heidegger's general critical assessment of technology in his article on *The Question Concerning Technology* from 1954. The most famous declaration of this critique of technology claims that "the essence of technology is by no means anything technological." (Heidegger 1977, p. 4) If technology is essentially something not-technological, we can neither judge nor philosophically grasp it as such, i.e. as an in-itself. To understand or conceptually grasp technology therefore demands that it be understood in its essential inner difference. There are two major features that mark this inner difference. First, it is linked to the difference between the old Greek conception of *techne* as opposed to the modern conception of technology. Regarding *techne*, Heidegger underlines its "revealing" character; *techne* is "revealing" in the sense of "bringing-forth" as opposed to the sense of "manufacturing." (Heidegger 1977, p. 13) In turn, modern technology is a "challenge which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such." (*Ibid.*, p. 14) And second, the said inner difference is also inscribed in the process of modern technology as such. What is being challenged in nature in this manner becomes an element of the "standing-reserve" (*ibid.*, p. 17), of the *Bestand*, the stock, of the order of that which can be used. The *Bestand* is a process of storing and distributing, of a circulation of energy won out of nature. Within this circulation, the human being assumes an ambivalent position: although an agent is needed to organize and secure the circulation, the human is also in threat of becoming yet another element of this circle. However, the human being is not simply another element in this circle and of the *Bestand*; rather the human being is "claimed" by the "unconcealment of the unconcealed" (*ibid.*, pp. 18–9). It is this constellation of the human being in relation to nature that Heidegger then calls the *Ge-Stell*, translated here as "enframing": "Enframing means the way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which itself is nothing technological." (*Ibid.*, p. 20) Technology

then is deeply ambivalent: it is a medium for the human being's unconcealing essence, while also tending to integrate this human being into the series of the *Bestand*. To become an element of the *Bestand* constitutes the human being's fatal self-misunderstanding as it forgets about its essentially revealing character, finally misunderstanding itself to be but another element of the inventory or the stock of nature. Technology's Janus face allows the human being to dwell in its revealing essence, but it also turns everything into an element of the *Bestand*. This danger is not simply a danger of technology in the modern times, but a danger of technology as such. Thus, the double difference inscribed into technology unfolds the difference between *techne* and modern technology as a necessary development, while at the same time upholding the structural difference the human being marks in it.

Radio and film thus appear not only as apparatuses of technology as such, but rather as paradigms of the modern technology with its implicit concealing of the unconcealing capacity of technology. They do not only turn nature into *Bestand*, but also suspend the distinctions in the realm of the public—among human beings—and therewith the difference that distinguishes the human being from being only another element of the *Bestand*. It is a technology beyond hope, a technology that objectively introduces its own end: For a technology that has lost its ambivalent positioning of the human being might not be a technology any longer.

This feature of technology as having a tendency to abolish itself might then be considered as a third type of difference inscribed into it. But this difference exposes a difficulty of Heidegger's view on technology in general, for the theory of the *Ge-Stell* cannot conceive of a nihilist technological object. Thus, the third difference takes us beyond Heidegger by exceeding his line of thought from within.

In the general frame of technology, Heidegger clearly seeks a reorientation towards the old notion of the Greek *techne*: a bringing-forth as opposed to a pure challenging. But this reorienta-

tion would have to be a reorientation within modern technology, within the *Ge-Stell*. Towards the end of his essay on *The Question Concerning Technology*, Heidegger alludes to the proximity between art and the originary poietic quality of *techne*: art is a possible reference point that might be capable of reorienting the modern man toward a different quality of production. At first glance, this salvaging role of the arts does not apply to radio and film. This is the question then: Is a poietic reorientation of radio and film impossible? In his critique of the audiovisual representation, Heidegger's essential point mainly regards film, the inclusion of the users of the apparatus and the public beholders within the apparatus itself. The apparatus thus does not only produce elements of the *Bestand*, but also presents an order without distinction to the beholders of its images. But the realm beyond it is the reality from which the film now cannot be distinguished—a reality that Heidegger addresses as “the public” and which, within the Greek order, would have been the structure of the *polis*. This realm is, in other words, the realm of the common. Film amounts to a tool of political realization. This is what film in its technological truth is: a realization of a *polis* without distinctions.

A poietic reorientation would have to draw on this moment of a political realization. A different film would have to present (make present) a different form of political reality. A different film would be a “bringing-forth” of a different reality, of a different audiovisual reality of the *polis*. A *polis* is a constellation of voices and images, and to change the modern technological reality, one would have to overcome the semblance and to redirect the order of time and space. Such a redirecting is not simply a question of reestablishing the near as near and the remote as remote, but has to reorganize the significance of space and time. The reorientation would have to be one that reorganizes the realities of voice and image by and through thought. This would be a different film, a real film: not the overcoming of the film as such, but an inscription of a different reality of voices and images.

1.

At a brief and coincidental moment of his career, Heidegger apparently found the alternative audiovisual reality to be realized. At a brief moment, history presented itself in Heidegger's eyes and ears as an alternative to the film and radio of the *Bestand*; history was performed as the alternative audiovisual reality.

Thus, one might consider Heidegger's engagement with National Socialism in the early thirties from a different angle: Philosophically speaking it opens a whole set of technological problems. Heidegger's attachment to National Socialism, far from begging the ethical or moral question of whether Heidegger was a fascist, whether this compels us to ban him from philosophy — since the latter always has to be “good” — or whether we are still allowed to study Heidegger's philosophy, first and foremost reveals some questions as to the philosophical technology that is expressed in this attachment. This raises at least two distinct but interrelated problems: The first is the problem of the relation of theory and practice. Theory, on the one hand, taken in its ancient Greek meaning, is often connected with the metaphor of “viewing” and “seeing,” while practice, on the other, is connected to the act, to “doing.” Heidegger has always refuted such a distinction; his philosophy can be summarized as an attempt at demonstrating how the original understanding of theory effectively already implies a certain action and at developing its consequences. But at the core of this refusal to bifurcate the realms of thought and being (or theory and practice) lurks the complicated question of philosophy itself as practice, i.e., of philosophy as practically inscribed into the real itself.

At the same time, Heidegger is also well aware of the problem of semblance, namely of its reality. A semblance has a (technical) reality of its own: the apparatus produces the reality of the seeming nearness of something actually remote, and its opposite is not the cancellation of semblance as such. The problem is not one of

the film images in comparison to pure reality; the problem is one of the inner direction of the image. This problem corresponds to the first, while nevertheless differing from it. The second problem opens the question of competing realities: Amidst the unfolding of the history of technology, a chance to follow another path, another direction or another idea of history might present itself.

These two technical problems revolve around the question of philosophy as a reality and therefore might be called technical problems. They are problems of the possible realization of philosophy, which, as such, is an abolition of philosophy. In this ambivalence, the two problems are analogous to the situation presented by film and radio: The reality of a film—as an alternative audiovisual reality—will abolish the film as semblant, and the reality of a philosophy might abolish philosophy both as the split between theory and practice and as the split between different histories taking place. But, as is the case with radio and film, the tendency toward the realization is found to persist from the very beginning. Radio and film present a necessary and unavoidable development of *techne* (as technology conceals and unconceals itself at the same time) and perhaps it is also necessary for philosophy to seek its own realization, since philosophy can only exist *as philosophy* by *existing* in the world. Thus, by sharing the ambivalence of technology, philosophy (at least for Heidegger) might be said to repeat its self-destructing movement.

2.

The most decisive document testifying to Heidegger's attachment to National Socialism is his 1933 speech, *Rektoratsrede*, which Heidegger delivered on the occasion of assuming the position of dean of the University of Freiburg. The *Rektoratsrede* has since become the most incriminating document in the endless trial against the philosopher that seeks to establish whether he was a fascist thinker. In recent years, this trial has gained new attention

with the 2014 publication of the “black notebooks,” comprising Heidegger’s late notes, which he used to write down into notebooks with black covers (see Heidegger 2016). In the heated debate concerning Heidegger’s relationship to National Socialism, some commentators viewed these notebooks, containing his anti-Semitic reflections, as the missing-link to finally condemn Heidegger, calling for a ban of his works from philosophy altogether.

It is perhaps worth recalling that the debate on Heidegger revolves around certain issues of almost incalculable dimensions or at least of very far-reaching importance. On the one hand, to judge Heidegger to have been a fascist or anti-Semitic philosopher and to ban his works from philosophy entails a very difficult question that often seems to be forgotten in the debate itself: The question is, briefly put, whether there can be such a thing as anti-Semitic or fascist philosophy. Is a definition of philosophy that allows for anti-Semitic or fascist variants of philosophy possible at all? If the answer is no (there cannot be an anti-Semite or fascist philosophy), one has to explain why philosophy needs to be “good” rather than “evil” or at least why philosophy is always neutral. If the answer is yes (there can be fascist or anti-Semite variants of philosophy) one has to explain how philosophy as a universal medium and, more importantly, as a medium of the universal is capable of contradicting itself by ascribing universality to a particularity and by excluding other particularities from the universal it proposes.

This is a question of contemporary philosophy: the choice between neutrality and affectivity or the suspension of such a choice refers contemporary philosophy back to the problem of theory and practice. Heidegger—on condition that he is a philosopher—is a contemporary philosopher for not only having invested his philosophical work in this question, but also for attempting to inscribe this work into a historical practice. From this point of view, Heidegger’s position is on the verge of philosophy. This does not only complicate the question of the trial (Who is the

philosopher being accused of not being one?) but also complicates the question as such: How do we think a historical reality from within a philosophy? And where does its reality start?

To clarify this, one needs to start from a more philosophical ground before approaching the depths of the *Rektoratsrede*. These philosophical grounds can be found in Heidegger's lectures from 1935, which he delivered at the same university under the title of an *Introduction to Metaphysics* (Heidegger 2014). The aim of these lectures is not only to give an introduction in the sense of an explanation of the main concepts and questions of metaphysics; the goal is rather to provide a description of both the necessity of metaphysics and the necessity of its inner faultiness. Metaphysics is a necessary moment within the history of being, but its original movement is also a continuous dissimulation. For our purpose here, we might consider metaphysics as a technology: It reveals thought while simultaneously blocking it.

Heidegger gives the lectures on metaphysics in 1935. At a certain point in the lectures, Heidegger pauses to consider the actual historical situation, the historical localization of his speech, and this situation is, as he sees it, a specific situation of Europe:

This Europe, in its unholy blindness always on the point of cutting its own throat, lies today in the great pincers between Russia on the one side and America on the other. Russia and America, seen metaphysically, are both the same: the same hopeless frenzy of unchained technology and of the rootless organization of the average man. (Heidegger 2014, p. 41)

Thus, Europe finds itself in the middle between two variants of the same, i.e. between two variants of unchained technology under the reign of the average. The quote already implies that Europe differs from the situation, although we are told neither why nor in what way. But in the middle of the middle of this historical topology we of course find Germany, the difference that is threatened while at once standing for the possible turning point:

We lie in the pincers. Our people, as standing in the center, experiences the most intense pressure—our people, the people richest in neighbors and hence the most endangered people, and for all that, the metaphysical people. (Heidegger 2014, p. 42)

The attribution of a metaphysical trait is the consequence of the status of Germans as the most endangered people. Russia and America are, so to speak, lost for any retrieving of the question of Being. Interestingly enough, this argument is implicitly built on the possibility of qualitative differences in the state of metaphysics. Metaphysics and its forgetting of Being—as the unfolding of unchained technology—is not a state of Being as such, but rather presents itself in different shapes or qualities. But Heidegger's argument changes in quality when he presents metaphysics as unfolding a set of pincers to finally destroy the wedged other. For if he might be able to explain why metaphysics unfolds its tendencies in different shapes, the *localization* of a middle of this process is a pure injunction. It is an injunction and will stay one throughout the lectures on metaphysics. On other occasions, Heidegger attempts to establish the specificity of the German people via the notion of language, however here any such attempt is missing. Even if it were true that America and Russia represent the same “unchained technology,” no specificity of the German people can be inferred from this. What if they were the most boring people? The metaphysical role of the German people is a pure result of an indirect localization. What effectively follows from his account on technology, though, is the possibility of a qualitatively differentiated development of the unfolding of technology. This possibility is the consequence of technology being a realization and materialization (machines that obtain and reproduce energy) in space and time. Thus, there might be differences in the degree of concealment. If Heidegger proceeds to the deduction of a specific task for the German people as a consequence of its endangered situation, then this localization is a fiction. A fiction moreover that in a revealing way closes the

philosophical questioning at a specific point: It gives an answer at the point where it purports to insist on the question. Philosophy ends here, but we do not yet know why:

We are sure of this vocation; but this people will gain a fate from its vocation only when it creates *in itself* a resonance, a possibility of resonance for this vocation, and grasps its tradition creatively. All this implies that this people, as a historical people, must transpose itself—and with it the history of the West—from the center of their future happening into the originary realm of the powers of Being. Precisely if the great decision regarding Europe is not to fall upon the path of annihilation—precisely then can this decision come about only through the development of new, historically *spiritual* forces from the center. (Heidegger 2014, pp. 42–3)

Again, Heidegger delivers these lectures in the summer term of 1935. He envisions a decision facing Europe, but since Europe is in the middle of the pincers, the whole world is endangered; the decision finally amounts to the German people's ability to safeguard Europe and the world by acting upon their spiritual vocation. For Heidegger, this vocation amounts to the salvation of the world from the path of annihilation. And in four years this same German people will open the path of annihilation they were on already in 1935.

The interesting point is perhaps not so much Heidegger's somewhat schematic vision of the historical situation, but rather its determination as viewed from the point of metaphysics. In a simplified reading one might take this passage as deviating from the actual philosophical path that Heidegger is pursuing. Or else, it might be that he is only trying to illustrate his account on the question of being and that these attempts carelessly take their own turns and get entangled in awkward assumptions about the German people. In any case this description could be a distraction.

Contrary to the tempting easiness of such a solution, Heidegger's view on the German situation and its metaphysical vocation, while complicated, is the direct consequence of his account of

metaphysics, on the one hand, and a fiction, a decision, a will, on the other. This double game echoes the analysis of the historical situation of the German people in the *Rektoratsrede* from 1933, in which we find detailed propositions on how the German people will be able to take up their vocation.

But what is a “metaphysical people”? One has to take a step back at this point to consider the question of metaphysics. In the lectures of the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger understands metaphysics to be organized around a central question: “Why are there beings at all instead of nothing?” (Heidegger 2014, p. 1) This question is the first, most central and most essential question to be asked, because for Heidegger it is impossible *not* to ask it: Any question that wants to know what something is implicitly has to ask why there is something instead of nothing. The most originary question, however, entails a problem, because it orients the philosophical tradition of metaphysics toward an understanding of being as that which “is” or “exists.” For Heidegger, the question “Why is there something rather than nothing” implies an understanding of being as something existent. But being as such is quite different from anything that exists, because being qua being combines all the existing things. At this point the question proves to be a barrier; it hides the question of being qua being. Being qua being, being as the reason and ground of the existing things, does not find its place in the question of metaphysics, but is rather displaced by metaphysics such that metaphysics displays the forgetting of being qua being from the start.

But metaphysics is not simply wrong and to be abolished: in a certain sense, the question of being qua being can only be asked on the ground of this metaphysical question itself; it springs from there. The metaphysical question exceeds itself, it leads us to another question that needs to be developed, and this other question is what Heidegger calls “The prior question: How does it stand with Being?” (Heidegger 2014, p. 36) We realize that we cannot grasp being qua being, “neither by way of beings, nor in

beings—nor anywhere else at all” (*ibid.*, p. 37). But “[w]e are asking about the ground for the fact that beings *are*, and are what they *are*, and that there is not nothing instead” (*ibid.*, p. 36). And so, this ungraspable ground, to which our question is directing us, appears to be “almost like Nothing, or in the end *entirely* so” (*ibid.*, p. 39). “Being—a vapor, an error!“, Heidegger exclaims with reference to Nietzsche (*ibid.*, p. 40). But this can only be the climax of a loss. And thus, in the end, it might be that we are “long since fallen out of Being, without knowing it” (*ibid.*, p. 41).

This is the moment at which Heidegger interjects his analysis of the historical situation. At the point of our unwitting potential falling out of being, Heidegger addresses the actual metaphysical situation of his time. And this is a time that might be outside of being. The question “How does it stand with Being” (*ibid.*) proves to be a historical question. There is a relation to being to be upheld or to be lost, even if there is perhaps no guarantee for the stability or the loss of this relation.

Heidegger presents his analysis of the historical situation as an analysis of the metaphysical state the world is in, which by now we can understand to be an analysis of the existent beings and not of the state of being qua being. But why should it be the case that the duality of Russian socialism and American capitalism presents a metaphysical equivalence? Why should we believe that these forces present the falling out of Being? Why should there be a metaphysical people with a vocation? A called people? The vocation calls for the possibility to exceed the metaphysical arrangement of the world, to take the step from an order of existing beings to the question of being qua being. Nietzsche’s conviction might be faulty, but the only possible answer is to ask the question of Being over and again.

After pursuing this line of thought a little further—the contemporary distance from the truth of being—Heidegger comes back to the question of being qua being, at first attempting to analyze the word *being* in its grammatical as well as etymological

conditions. But as both reveal only “blurring and blending” (*ibid.*, p. 81) and do not give us any reliable hint regarding the question of being qua being, we might think that we can only start from distinct, existent beings. For Heidegger, this is a misunderstanding: The fact that we are unable to establish a safe ground for our understanding of being qua being does not allow us to ignore that question. As a matter of fact, he insists, we always already understand being as such. Being as such is not an “empty word” (*ibid.*, p. 98). Thus, at the end of the etymological and grammatical analysis we get a repetition of and an addition to the observation that Heidegger already made in relation to the question of metaphysics: Although being qua being withdraws itself, we cannot let go of this very question of being qua being. In the uses of the word being—in the sense of “there is something”—a sense of being is indicated. The fact that this indicated being is something that withdraws itself should not be taken as a sign of the impossibility to conceptually grasp it; instead, it needs to be taken as a result that necessitates a change in the *method*.

Heidegger then continues in a different manner. Instead of pursuing the path of what is given—the metaphysical question, the grammar and the etymology of being—he proposes a “restriction” of being (*ibid.*, p. 102). A “restriction” in German is a *Beschränkung* (Heidegger 1976, p. 100), which literally means “to set limits,” but limits that can be passed over. Thus, we might also speak of a principle of a deliberate limiting or closing off of the area of being qua being. *Beschränkung* is also reminiscent of the Hegelian difference between *Grenze* and *Schranke*, often translated as “limit” and “limitation,” or “limit” and “border.” We can assume that Heidegger is using this difference consciously, as Heidegger was a very careful reader of Hegel, whom we might call his principle opponent. *Beschränkung* can then be understood as the negative limitation of being reflected from within being itself, i.e., as a limitation to be exceeded. This *Beschränkung* follows upon the reflections on the indications in the existent uses

of the word being, which now can be understood as the limit of our understanding of being. Rather, being needs to be grasped from the viewpoint of the limitation, that is, from the viewpoint of being itself: “a meditation on the provenance of our *concealed history*” (*ibid.*, p. 101). This limitation or “restriction” of being qua being then proceeds via four categorical distinctions. We will see that being qua being as such is to be distinguished from becoming, seeming, thinking, and the ought.

The first two distinctions between being qua being and becoming, and between being qua being and seeming can be reconstructed quickly. The distinction between being and becoming seems to be inevitable. “What becomes, is not yet. What is, no longer needs to become.” (*Ibid.*, p. 105) Heidegger combines phrases of Parmenides and Heraclitus: Parmenides is saying that being qua being is the “perdurance of the constant” (*ibid.*, p. 106), while Heraclitus famously states *panta rhei*, “all is in flux.” For Heidegger, both statements belong essentially together, as will be shown in the following. The second distinction is that between being and seeming where seeming is taken in the double sense of the German *Schein*: seeming and appearing. For Heidegger, we have lost the original unity of being and appearing: appearing is the ground of being and being essentially is appearing. The original combination of being and appearing in a single figure implies that the Greeks did not yet possess the fundamental distinction between the object and the subject; for them, appearing is rather the essential appearing of being as such. But the transition is fluid: once being has appeared, it takes on a figure and thus turns into something that could be recognized as “objective.” As such, appearing becomes an object of the *doxa*, that is, it becomes, so to speak, excluded from its originary unity with being. So, there is a permanent process leading from the side of truth to the side of meaning, and the latter is inevitable. With the sophists and with Plato, appearance is degraded to a simple seeming and is deemed false, while the idea of being is ranked higher than the truth of being. While this announces a

movement of decay that originates in the beginning, Heidegger concludes that the human being has to go three ways: to being as such, to nothingness and to the appearance as standing to some extent half way between being and nothingness.

The third distinction concerns being and thought. "In the seemingly irrelevant separation between *Being and thinking* we have to recognize that fundamental orientation of the spirit of the West that is the real target of our attack." (Heidegger 2014, p. 129) This distinction is of such an importance because it mediates the first two distinctions: In the distinction between being and thought being as such is already posited as something, it already takes the shape of something. But here, once again a movement of decay is to be recognized. Thought is disconnected from the touch with being especially in logics. Logic is a thought that has lost touch with original being, *physis*, as the original appearing and disappearing that *is* being.

And it is precisely at this point that Heidegger comes back once again to the actual state of being, to the actual situation, to the moment of history in which his own intervention is situated: He comments on the general misuse of thought that in his time is called intellectualism. Now, although it might be right to reject intellectualism, there is an immanent danger in believing logical thought to be more righteous than intellectualism. However, for Heidegger, they are two sides of the same coin: Logical thinking and intellectualism share "the same roots" (*ibid.*, p. 135). He continues by making an interesting remark, thus short-circuiting the question of intellectualism with the political situation: "This reactive flight of the spirit into the past," he says, "which stems in part from natural inertia and in part from a deliberate effort, is now becoming fertile soil for political reaction" (*ibid.*). Instead of a conservative return to a past that is only the semblance of a past, we would rather need "a genuine and original thinking, [...] *nothing else*" (*ibid.*).

But how are the shapes of this originary thinking to be understood? It might be already clear that in opposition to a thinking that is built on the distinction between thinking and being,

an originary thought is rather to be grounded in a fundamental affiliation of the two. We have to think both: the originary unity of thinking and being, as well as the originary distinction and split between them. Thinking and being are one, although they are to be distinguished. Via the moments of “becoming” and “seeming,” the “restriction” of being leads us to the moment of thought as the most important form of “restriction.” It is in thought that it is decided whether existing things are understood in touch with being qua being, or whether they are misunderstood as things that are simply at our disposal. It is being decided—as a question.

We enter a very complicated point of the discussion, because it is here that Heidegger seeks to turn around the false understanding of thought and to establish the position of the human being in regards to the originary understanding of the relation of thinking and being. Thought is the angle from which the problem of metaphysics can be turned around. The last restriction is the distinction between being and the ought: Once thought is established as logos, and therewith as language, being becomes determined as idea. To determine being as an idea prepares for the highest idea, the idea of the good, and this highest idea introduces a distance to being, it is the idea of how being ought to be. The “ought” thus is not really a question for Heidegger, because it comes after the decision on being is made.

What is a metaphysical vocation? We can see now that a metaphysical vocation is grounded in an existent state of things, but grounded as an absence in the midst of existent beings. And it is a call to exceed the realm of the existent to make space for being qua being. With the taking place of metaphysics there necessarily also comes a call for its transgression as inscribed into the realm of beings. And this call demands first and foremost an active change in thought. It is a change in thought—a change in the distinction of being and thought—that guides the way to a different understanding of the distinction between being, on the one side, and becoming, seeming and the ought, on the other.

Thus, the metaphysical vocation is a consequence of Heidegger's understanding of metaphysics. But this vocation is in a strict sense not given; it is the result of an absence of truth. And if it is thought that decides upon the vocation, then thought does not only present the angle from which metaphysics can be exceeded, but also claims that there is a vocation. In this regard, the claim of a metaphysical vocation as such is not the attempt to describe the situation; it rather needs to be understood as an attempt to think. To think the loss is a decision in thought. But then again, the claim that it is the German people that bear the metaphysical vocation is a decision to fill in the place, to invent the missing people. For the loss of the sense of being can be claimed at any place in the realm of metaphysics. There is no indication of it within the realm of beings, and thus a change of method needs to be undertaken. The change of method consists in a restriction of being and revolves around a change of thought: precisely because being is of a different order than beings. But while proclaiming being to be of a different order than beings, to take Germany as the point of reference indicates that the loss of being is reflected on the realm of beings and unfolds in different degrees. To take Germany as a point of reference is not a thought.

3.

If we recall reading Heidegger's infamous *Rektoratsrede* for the first time, we might remember being repelled by its tone, the vocabulary of leading and leadership (*Führen* and *Führerschaft*), of rank, the German people, its vocation, duty, will, and power. It is a very, very strange text due to a double game Heidegger is staging. A double game of which, in the end, it is hard to tell whether this doubling is not rather a thought that combines two sides of a single endeavor.

Heidegger gives an account of the relation between different aspects. First, he introduces what could be considered a subjective

aspect of the university: the relation between teachers and students, the subjective necessity of an inner will and self-assertion. Second, he elaborates on what could be considered an objective aspect: the necessity of philosophy for the organization of science, and therefore philosophy's ranking as a *prima philosophia*. And as the third moment, we find the threshold, the mediation between these two sides, we find a link between the practical-political-historical situation and the specific situation of the university. But this third moment is not only a reference to the world outside of the university; it is rather the link between the subjective and the objective moment: it is the question of the university as a practical-historical-political place and as the actuality of the spirit. The university is the place at which the historical and the ideal either intersect or are bound in a real thought.

Combining, not paralleling, these three aspects, the inner kernel of Heidegger's speech is his vision of the future organization of a student body that is again oriented by the truth of freedom. Heidegger describes three bonds that bind the student body: "Labor Service," "Armed Service," and "Knowledge Service" (Heidegger 2003, p. 8). The first bond of the "Labor Service" "binds" the students "into the community of the people. It obligates to help carry the burden and to participate actively in the troubles, endeavors, and skills of all the estates (*Stände*) and members" (*ibid.*, p. 7). The second bond of the "Armed Service" "binds to the honor and destiny of the nation in the midst of other peoples. It demands the readiness, secured by knowledge and skill and tightened by discipline, to give all" (*ibid.*, p. 8). And then, finally, the third bond of the "Knowledge Service" "binds [the students] to the spiritual mission of the German people. This people shapes its fate by placing its history into the openness of the overwhelming power of all the world-shaping powers of human being (*Dasein*) and by always renewing the battle for its spiritual world. Thus, exposed to the most extreme questionableness of its own being (*Dasein*), this people wills to be a spiritual people.

It demands of itself and for itself that its leaders and guardians possess the strictest clarity of the highest, widest, and richest knowledge" (*ibid.*).

A few lines later, Heidegger translates the three services into bonds "by the people, to the destiny of the state, in a spiritual mission" and calls them "equally necessary and of equal rank" (*ibid.*). The People, the State, and the Spiritual Mission are three parameters on the level of being. Perhaps the seemingly most empirical paradigm is the figure of the state, which here seems to inscribe Heidegger's discourse directly into the existing state. But Heidegger's interest is, as we have to remind ourselves, different. In the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, we find a remark on the state. Heidegger asks: "A state—it is. What does its Being consist in? In the fact that the state police arrest a suspect, or that in a ministry of the Reich so and so many typewriters clatter away and record the dictation of state secretaries and ministers?" (Heidegger 2014, p. 39) It does not. Rather the being of the states needs to be referred to the categories mentioned in the context of the "Armed service": honor, destiny, knowledge, discipline.

The second notion, the notion of the people, might lead us back to paragraph 74 of *Being and Time*, in which Heidegger declares the being-there, the *Dasein*, as being always a being-with: As such, being-there is always already collective, and the historical name for this community is the people.² So, it is from these notions (the people, the state) that one could work one's way backwards through Heidegger's oeuvre and discuss its problematic implications. But it is also here that it becomes necessary to take a closer look at Heidegger's tonality in the text and to discern the actual content. On the level of its pure content, of what is being said, it is very difficult to prove that this text is fascist. The real problem

² "But if fateful Dasein essentially exists as being-in-the-world in being-with others, then its occurrence is an occurrence-with and is determined as destiny [*Geschick*]. With this term, we designate the occurrence of the community of a people." (Heidegger 2010a, p. 366)

is a doubling of the discourse, an inscription of philosophically determined concepts into the world of simultaneous *doxa*.

First of all, the tripartite structure—Labor, Military and Knowledge—addresses a structure that is of far more fundamental relevance for Heidegger’s thought than some definitions of the state or the people, which in Heidegger’s own understanding only scratch the surface. This fundamental structure is Plato’s ideal *polis*, which is built around three estates: producers, warriors and rulers. As it’s well known, in Plato’s understanding the ideal ruler would be the philosopher. Heidegger’s structure of the university reproduces this structure of producers, warriors and rulers in the terms of Labor Service, Armed Service and Knowledge Service. Thus, the discourse on the university envisages an ideal state in which the philosophers rule, although in a very specific manner. It is already here that it becomes evident that philosophy has to take on a different role in relation to the tripartite structure of “people–state–spiritual mission” and to their “equal rank” and “equal necessity.” We will see that this equality springs from philosophy as its condition; it emerges from philosophy as a condition of a human being that questions its being. We will also see that it is philosophy that enables a people to be its being—as a reality of language—in the state—as a reality of the image. Philosophy is the opening, a question, toward real film.

But first of all, one needs to recall that for Heidegger it is precisely Plato who is the first manifestation of a decay of the question of being qua being: It is Plato who degrades seeming into pure seeming and thus introduces the gap between the existent thing that has a recognizable visible form and the being of the idea that is at a distance from being as existent. At the same time, however, Plato’s thought represents the Greek constellation of man and being. This Greek thought is decisively different from our modern conception of man and being. This difference revolves around the sight and hearing of being. In *The Age of the World Picture*, Heidegger writes:

To be looked at by beings, to be included and maintained and so supported by their openness, to be driven about by their conflict and marked by their dividedness, that is the essence of humanity in the great age of Greece. In order to fulfill his essence, therefore, man has to gather (λεγειν) and save (σωζειν), catch up and preserve, the self-opening in its openness; and he must remain exposed to all of its divisive confusion. Greek humanity is the receiver [*Vernehmer*] of beings, which is the reason that, in the age of the Greeks, the world can never become picture. (Heidegger 2002, p. 68)

But if the Greek world can never become a picture, this is not only because of a different conception of sight in relation to being, but also because of a different relation to hearing that needs to be mentioned. In the winter semester of 1933/34, Heidegger gave a course on *The Essence of Truth*, a close reading of Plato's allegory of the cave. This course begins with a long introduction on the question of essence, which leads to the relation between truth and language. If the problem of sight corresponds to the question of the idea, the problem of hearing corresponds to the question of language, as Heidegger makes clear in a short observation in the later passages on Plato:

But alongside this, another fact also emerges, even if late—that is, first with *Aristotle*—a fact that rules over Greek Dasein as essentially as ideas and seeing. This is *hearing*. Indeed, Aristotle asks whether hearing might not somehow be the higher sense and, accordingly, whether it might condition the higher comportment of human beings.

In this context, hearing and seeing are not conceived of as confined to mere sense perception; rather, they are taken more broadly, as listening to what has been spoken, hearing the word of the other. *Language* is the fundamental element of the being-with-one-another of human beings. For the Greeks, *discourse* is a defining moment for the essence of human beings. The human being is a ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, that is, the sort of living being that has the capacity for talk, the sort that, insofar as it exists, *speaks out* to others. (Heidegger 2010b, p. 123)

Language and logos are the structures that found the political community in the figure of the state: “This with-one-another cannot be understood as based on the fact that there are many human beings whom one must keep in order; instead, we belong with one another to the state, we exist on the basis of the state. And this existence fulfills itself and takes shape through discourse, λόγος.” (*Ibid.*)

Just like language, ideas too are produced. But even if we “exist on the basis of the state,” there is a difference between the people and the state. The essence of the human being is its being-with-others as it is founded in language. Thus, the state is not a simple principle of order; it is rather that which binds those who are-with-others to a commonality. This function of binding is what Heidegger ascribes to the idea. “The ideas *are*,” as Heidegger states in his seminar on the *Essence of Truth*, “at all only *in* and *through* a *beholding* that first creates what can be beheld, a special sort of *creative seeing*” (*ibid.*, p. 133). This creative seeing refers to itself: “this catching sight is a self-binding.” (*Ibid.*, p. 135)

This tells us three things about ideas: They are a multiplicity (*ibid.*), they are created, and they bind. Only in this sense do they *precede*: “So the understanding and experience of the idea is the precedent that must be comprehended in order to understand the particular. The view of the idea *opens up* the view to the Being of the particular.” (*Ibid.*) Thus, we could understand the state as the realization of the idea that binds the people. The existence to which it refers (“we exist on the basis of the state”) connotes the creation of a sight of being, which is the form in which the human being exists in relation to its being. Still, the binding via the creation of the idea is a binding that is opposed to any idea of a stipulated order. It is better understood as the sight that corresponds to a question upon being.

This is a further consequence that Heidegger draws from Plato’s allegory of the cave:

With respect to what genuinely is, there are no truth and openness *in themselves* any more than there are ideas in themselves; rather, openness *becomes*, and it becomes only in the innermost essential relationship with *human beings*. Only insofar as the human being *exists* in a definite *history* are beings given, is truth given. There is no truth given in itself; rather, truth is *decision* and *fate* for human beings; it is something *human*. (Heidegger 2010b, p. 134)

Sight and hearing mark the essential paradigms of the human being who is in a relation to truth: Truth, in other words, is an audiovisual reality of the human being as such, an audiovisual reality that the human being essentially has to take on and to decide upon. Heidegger takes this “liberation” to be the human being’s “history”: “*an innermost change in the Being of man.*” (*Ibid.*, p. 157) History is being taken on and decided as the opening of the human being toward the question of being. In this positioning of the human being toward being, sight becomes a process of the creation of a real image (a real idea) of openness, while hearing becomes the opening toward the real language of being. Sight and hearing intersect in the question of being, as they intersect in the reality of their being. This then is history, the creation of a different reality of the human being in its language and in its sight. It is, at one and the same time, a realization of a commonality via its language *and* of a binding link via its idea.

Film and radio as technological semblants present the modern inversion of this conception of truth. Instead of a creation of an opening toward being, they frame sight and hearing as processes of the repetitive sameness of the *Bestand*. *Bestand* is the essence of truth (of sight and hearing) that has fallen out of the essence. The difficulty then is not to react to radio and film with the abolishment of the image and sound; rather, the difficulty is the necessity to open an access to another film, another language. How and where can the possibility of this process begin? Heidegger has a precise understanding of the figure that needs to take on the role of leading us out of the cavern in which the wrong film is shown.

The one that leaves the cavern and later returns to it is no other than the philosopher:

This grounding, fundamental happening in which the *essence of truth develops through human history*—and in this history, man acquires this inner steadfastness—this fundamental happening is *philosophy*. (Heidegger 2010b, p. 158)

The one returning, of course, is not the *professional* philosopher. The philosopher addressed here is the one who takes on and decides the history of the human being, thus liberating herself, while continuously returning to the cave at the risk of her own death.³ The philosopher at issue here is not a professional philosopher in the sense of providing the answers (there are no answers in themselves, just like there is no truth in itself), but a philosopher characterized by a “*distinctive questioning*” (*ibid.*, p. 159). Thus, a further reformulation is possible: The human being has to question its being at the risk of death, and it is this questioning that unconceals its essence as a spatial and temporal reality, a reality of sound and vision, a reality to be heard and spoken, to be seen and to become visible.

Notwithstanding the importance that Heidegger attributes to the role of the philosopher, he is still by far not a Platonist. As we saw, the project follows a different line, one of repetition and scission. Plato is the origin of the scission, at which Greek thought loses itself. A repetition of Plato is an intervention that is directed at this origin with the aim of repeating the possibility of a sight and a hearing as an opening toward being, as well as of opposing the structural moment in which sight and hearing are respectively reduced to an image and the data of the *Bestand*.

It is here, in Plato, that the problem of modernity (the problem paradigmatically culminating in radio and film) finds

³ “*This* philosopher exposes himself to the fate of death, death in the cave at the hands of the powerful cave dwellers who set the standards in the cave.” (Heidegger 2010b, p. 140)

its beginning. For it is Plato who in the model of the idea first foregrounds being as something recognizable.

“On the other hand, however, is the fact that the beingness of beings is defined, for Plato, as εἶδος (appearance, view). This is the presupposition which—long prevailing only mediately, in concealment and long in advance—predestined the world’s having to become picture” (Heidegger 2002, p. 69). It is in the same text (*The Age of the World Picture*) that we find the broader, technical figure of the argument against a specific sort of image. This figure is that of representation, but Heidegger is very careful in emphasizing the specific peculiarity created by representation:

In distinction from the Greek apprehension, modern representing, whose signification is first expressed by the word *repraesentatio*, means something quite different. Representation [*Vor-stellen*] here means: to bring the present-at-hand before one as something standing over-and-against, to relate it to oneself, the representer, and, in this relation, to force it back to oneself as the norm-giving domain. Where this happens man “puts himself in the picture” concerning beings. When, however, in this way, he does this, he places himself in the scene; in, that is, the sphere of what is generally and publicly represented. And what goes along with this is that man sets himself forth as the scene in which, henceforth, beings must set-themselves-before, present themselves—be, that is to say, in the picture. Man becomes the representative [*Repräsentant*] of beings in the sense of the objective. (Heidegger 2002, p. 69)

Man’s “putting himself in the picture” is not simply a change of perspective or a change in the understanding of the human being. Rather, it is a consequence of the necessary development of technology, the latter standing for a necessary link in the relation between the human being and its being. The film’s image, although rarely mentioned by Heidegger, is more important than the theory of representation because “modern representing” is brought about as a change of reality, as a change of sight and hearing, a change in the image and the sound of being. This is the real invention of

the picture that changes the perspective on being. But still, the necessity of this development is not hopeless. At any point, the human being is capable of questioning his or her being and is thereby able to take on and decide his or her own history. The human being is able to create a sight and a hearing; he or she is able to create truth with the mean of his or her own existence. To interrupt the film of representation with the reality of a different sound and a different image, i.e. with the creation of a different film in reality, one that makes the image to be real, does not mean to react against representation in its Platonic detachment from the real. It does not imply a critique of faulty nearness of things which are actually remote; such a critique would imply that the faulty nearness could simply be abolished by returning to the remoteness of the remote and to the nearness of the near. The still persistent problem is that even what is near can be remote and what is remote can be near. What is required is a different orientation of the picture and thus the creation of a different picture, one that integrates the human being. But the human being would not be integrated in this different picture as just a further element of the series of beings, but rather as the opening which realizes the question of being. To create a different picture does not mean to oppose representation, but to invert it from within, to turn it inside out: What is hidden and concealed within representation, is the question of the essence of all represented beings; if turned inside out, the question results in a different sight and hearing, that is, a different commonality and link. Against the materiality of the technical development, Heidegger proposes the openness of a questioning of being that unfolds its own reality, its own sight and hearing, its own language and image. It is here that Heidegger can also be understood to pursue not only a return to and scission of Plato, but also an inversion of German idealism.

At this point we have to return to the *Rektoratsrede*. How are we to interpret the fact that one of the most notorious anti-Platonists of the 20th century takes Plato's *Republic* as the model for his vision of the fascist state in which he wants to participate?

The first reason for this is the utmost importance that Heidegger attributes to the role of the philosopher. Heidegger moves from the notion of the philosopher as the best ruler of the state to the program of philosophy as the essential science of the university. Philosophy is the only science that is capable of giving a sense of order to the different sciences, because the specificity of the singular sciences cannot be understood without philosophy. Philosophy is needed to explain and establish the differences between the singular sciences. Philosophy therefore is the leading science in the university. But then again, the university is the place at which the youth is educated. And if the historical time demands the fulfillment of a metaphysical vocation, then the youth has to be prepared, not for different kinds of professional occupations, but precisely for spiritual leadership: for deciding and taking on the fate of history. Thus, the university prepares the youth for the fulfillment of the metaphysical vocation of the people, and without philosophy the necessary spiritual leadership cannot be attained. Thus, philosophers are strictly speaking not thought of as having to become kings; rather, they are thought to be the most important transmitters: They transmit the historical vocation by which they are led to others. Philosophers are the ones who—at risk of death—climb back into the cavern to liberate the others and to become who they are. In this sense, philosophers do in fact *lead* the way, but they lead by questioning and resisting answers. In the very first lines of the *Rektoratsrede*, Heidegger implicitly establishes a link between the metaphysical vocation of the German people and the role of the philosopher:

The assumption of the rectorate is the commitment to the *spiritual* leadership of this institution of higher learning. The following of teachers and students awakens and grows strong only from a true and joint rootedness in the essence of the German university. This essence, however, gains clarity, rank, and power only when first of all and at all times the leaders are themselves led—led by that unyielding spiritual mission that forces the fate of the German people to bear the stamp of its history. (Heidegger 2003, p. 2)

The German word is, of course, *die Führer*, “leaders” who themselves have to be *geführt*, “led” (Heidegger 2000, p. 107). *Führen*, “to lead,” is ascribed to the questioning philosopher. But, of course, taken outside of the context of Platonic philosophy, *führen* has a different reference, relating to the German political reality and insinuating an approval of the *Führer* as the leader who does not question and who does not lead others towards leading themselves.

The second decisive moment becomes obvious when considered within the contexts of Heidegger’s other writings. In his writings from the 1930s, Heidegger is obsessed with the question of the return to the beginning. The metaphysical vocation amounts to the task of reproducing the originary Greek beginning: The beginning at which being was for the first time thought by the human being. And since it is only in thought that being qua being can present itself and since the human being *essentially* is, this beginning is not only the beginning of something, but a beginning in the sense of an originary constellation:

This beginning is the departure, the setting out, of Greek philosophy. Here, for the first time, Western man rises himself up from a popular base and, by virtue of his language, stands up to *the totality of what is* which he questions and conceives as the being that it is. All science is philosophy, whether it knows and wills it—or not. All science remains bound to that beginning of philosophy. (Heidegger 2003, pp. 3–4)

For Heidegger, this beginning is not a beginning that is lost in the past, but one that is still present in its “greatness”: If something was great in its beginning, then “*beginning* of this great thing remains what is *greatest* about it” (*ibid.*, p. 5). And thus, he concludes, the “beginning still is. It does not lie *behind us*, as something that was long ago, but stands *before us*. As what is greatest, the beginning has passed in advance beyond all that is to come and also beyond us as well. The beginning has invaded

our future. There it awaits us, as the distant command bidding us catch up with its greatness." (*Ibid.*)

So, we do not have to return to the Greek beginning in the sense of returning to the past; rather, we have to return to the beginning that is still with us. We have to return to the beginning in the present. Essentially, we have to return to ourselves. Thus, this second moment linking Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede* with Plato's republic is the question of the return as the return of the philosopher to the Greek moment, at which the two tendencies of history originally parted paths.

But what does this return actually imply? It means, first of all, to ask again what Heidegger in the *Introduction to Metaphysics* called the "prior question," namely the question of "How does it stand with being?" To ask this question, Heidegger explains in the *Introduction*, "means nothing less than to *repeat and retrieve* [wieder-holen] the inception of our historical-spiritual Dasein, in order to transform it into the other inception. Such a thing is possible. It is in fact the definitive form of history, because it has its onset in a happening that grounds history." (Heidegger 2014, p. 43) And as it is not a return in the temporal sense, but rather a repeating and retrieving, the renewed beginning is to begin "*more originally*, and with all the strangeness, darkness, insecurity." The philosopher works at the threat of losing her life. The beginning always presents a risk, and the human being needs to break out of his or her "facilitations," *Bahnungen* (Heidegger 1976, p. 161). A certain violence is needed to counter the violence with which beings impose themselves. Violence becomes a question, which Heidegger discusses at length in the *Introduction to Metaphysics*, but also in the seminar on the *Essence of Truth*.⁴ Violence is clearly what is needed at the point at which a human being has not

⁴ In the *Introduction*, the discussion unfolds in the paragraphs 51–56 (Heidegger 2014, pp. 155–219). The seminar begins with an introduction to Heraclitus, while the discussion on the necessity of struggle is developed in Heidegger 2010b, pp. 72–98.

only *taken over* his or her history as a fate, but also has to *decide it*. After the change of method in the *Introduction*, i.e. after the restriction of being, Heidegger presents parts of his arguments by interpreting a passage of *Antigone*. He states: “The authentic interpretation must show what does not stand there in the words and nevertheless is said. For this, the interpretation must necessarily use violence.” (Heidegger 2014, p. 180) Again, this violence is the violence of the philosopher who dares to pose the question.

Thus, here we find a precise indication of what it means to return to Plato in the context of the *Rektorsrede*. On the one hand, Plato is the moment in the originary constellation of being that predestines the decay of this question. On the other hand, we see that the point of decay revolves around the moment of the picture. To have the world represented in front of the human beholder is what Heidegger considers to be the modern constellation. It is the concealment of the originary opening. The human being loses sight of being once the latter is represented as a stock of things at our disposal, i.e. as a consequence of the unfolding of technology.

The more things are considered to be objective parts of this picture, the more the subject arises as the opposite figure. This turn to the individual enables anthropology to become the main foundation of thought from the 19th century onwards. And under the premise of anthropology and the world being a picture, it is the worldview that comes into existence—the *Weltanschauung*. National Socialism, as Heidegger explains some pages later in the “appendices” or *Zusätze* to *The Age of the World Picture*, is precisely this: a worldview, a *Weltanschauung*: “The world view indeed needs and makes use of philosophical erudition, but it needs no philosophy since, as world view, it has already adopted its own interpretation and structuring of what is.” (Heidegger 2002, p. 75) Right before these lines he states: “The laborious fabrication of such absurd entities as ‘National Socialist philosophies,’ on the other hand, merely creates confusion.” (*Ibid.*) National Socialism

cannot have a philosophy. Heidegger, in his own understanding, cannot be a philosopher of National Socialism.

But if the *Rektorsrede* is not Heidegger's attempt to become the philosopher of National Socialism, what is it then? With Heidegger, we can also understand National Socialism to be one variant of the technical picture that the world has become. National Socialism is in itself a film. But as a film that is real, a film that presents itself as real, it shows us the semblance not as detached from being but as pertaining to it. Hence, it is a film that starts right where it has to start by overturning the Platonic film of modernity. In the *Rektorsrede* at least, National Socialism presents itself as the inversion of the Platonic film of modernity, an inversion that re-opens the originary question of being. National Socialism, in Heidegger's view, presents itself as the true Platonism.

Heidegger thinks that he can see and hear the fate of history; and as a philosopher he is convinced that he can take on the fate and decide history by inscribing the question of being into reality. If film and radio as paradigms of modern technology announce and make visible the end of the essential unconcealing practice of the human being—if they announce and make visible the end of the human being in its essence—then the realization of a different sight and hearing is the necessary vocation. This vocation calls for an inversion of Platonism to reveal its originary scission that is brought about as human being's essential questioning of being. This return is a fundamental question that the human being has to pose. But at the same time, this return, this question, this scission is to be unfolded as a reality, as an act of sight and hearing. The question becomes a being. It is a will to overcome the loss, to recuperate the lost contact with being. Implicitly and immediately the questioning changes into an answer.

Heidegger stages a double game: The philosopher as the true *Führer* and the *Führer* as a philosopher. It is a vision that conceals a deeper desire, namely to overcome philosophy, to put an end

to philosophy in the moment of its realization. The double game still upholds the ambivalence of a question (the philosopher as the true *Führer*) turned into an answer (the *Führer* being the true philosopher). The philosopher as *Führer* asks the question; the *Führer* as philosopher asks no longer. But the double game unmasks itself as it has to specify its location and indicate where the scene takes place. There could not be a double game of staging and reality, of question and answer, if there weren't a place. And for Heidegger, the double game takes place in Germany. Film becomes a real film, the question becomes an answer and philosophy becomes a *Weltanschauung*. Philosophy thus finds its end. But philosophy has already become a *Weltanschauung* the moment when the need for a question of being becomes a specific site assigned. The moment the double game unmasks itself, it loses the terrible irritation of the semblance, it turns real, it loses itself. Thus, the secret desire of the presentation of a different hearing and seeing of being under the lead of the questioning philosopher is the annihilation of philosophy presented within philosophy. The secret desire is to give the question itself the structure of a being, existing answer. The philosophical technology comes to an end because the evil apparatus of this technology as it reveals itself in philosophy's own eyes and ears will abolish it. The *Führer* as philosopher dissolves philosophy, and from what was thought to be a question, in the end, there is nothing more to see and to hear than a finite answer—strangely, in the end, we find a pure repetition of the sound of the machine replacing the question.

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On Ambivalence

Tadej Troha

The term “ambivalence” was coined a little over hundred years ago by Eugen Bleuler, the then director of Burghölzli, who despite sympathizing with psychoanalysis refrained from becoming a genuine part of the emerging Freudian collective body. In the end, his insistence on maintaining his individuality produced an ironic twist: while Freud (and Jung, for that matter) became popular authors, Bleuler was left with the impossible trophy of being the author of popular signifiers, the author of terms that seem to have appeared out of nowhere: in addition to ambivalence, he ought to be credited for inventing “autism” and “schizophrenia.”

It is well known that Freud was not very enthusiastic about the latter terms and kept insisting on paraphrenia and narcissism, respectively. As for ambivalence, he accepted it immediately and without hesitation. When introduced in Freud’s essays, ambivalence is accompanied with a whole series of laudatory remarks: the term is *glücklich, gut, passend, trefflich*, “happily chosen” (Freud 2001 [1905], p. 199), “excellent” (Freud 2001 [1912], p. 106), “appropriate” (Freud 2001 [1909], p. 239n), “very apt” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 131). Although he rarely fails to point out that he is not the author of the term, he never bothers to present the reader with the particular clinical framework within which the term has been invented. The praise of the author is here transformed into the praise of the term itself, the quotation does not add anything to Bleuler’s authority; it is rather an excuse to repeatedly point to the authority and breakthrough nature of the

very conceptual background that made the invention possible. Ambivalence entered Freud's theory at a certain point in time, but it seems as if it had been there from the very start, Bleuler's only credit thus being primarily one of craftsmanship. The expression is *trefflich*, it struck the field into which it was included; it is very apt, but for Freud it is by no means an intervention of a new theoretical content to which psychoanalysis would have to adapt. Ambivalence, in short, is *passend*; it perfectly fits the frame of psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, this excessive agreement contains a trap. The looseness of the term, which later blurred its theoretical origin, is perhaps not a fluke, rather the problem is already inscribed into the gesture of Freud's acceptance. This is also the way we can understand Lacan's remark regarding ambivalence in *Seminar XX*.

In no way does Lacan share Freud's explicit affirmation of the term, quite the contrary. Yet he remains very explicit, adding the following to Freud's series of laudations: the term is *bastardized*:

What I will willingly write to you today as "*hainamoration*" is the depth (*relief*) psychoanalysis was able to introduce in order to situate the zone of its experience. It was evidence of good will on its part. If only it had been able to call it by some other name than the bastardized one of "ambivalence," perhaps it would have succeeded better in shaking up the historical setting in which it inserted itself. But perhaps that was modesty on its part. (Lacan 1999, pp. 90–1)

While Freud accepted Bleuler's term without hesitation, not taking much heed of the original context, there seems to be an inverted situation here. Lacan not only acknowledges the Freudian context but is himself immersed in it—this, after all, is what makes Lacan Lacan—directing his critique precisely at the term which Freud immediately accepted as a part of his own theory. However, one should notice how Lacan actually sees more in ambivalence than Freud himself: what Freud, despite all the praise, still considers to be a particular element of the system, becomes

the possibly ultimate signifier of psychoanalysis. “Ambivalence” was indeed *trefflich*, it did hit the mark, the only problem being that the hit should have come from within.

There is, however, another difference between the two approaches. Freud, on the one hand, implicitly favours the couple of love and hate while, at the same time, definitely detecting a problem in it; however, he shifts the core of this problem to other manifestations of ambivalence, this shift being precisely that which effectively drives other levels of the discussion on ambivalence: in the case of other binary oppositions, the logic of the love/hate couple becomes increasingly more complicated. On the other hand, Lacan’s neologism focuses entirely on the love/hate relation; he seems to claim that the entire question of ambivalence can be pinned to this couple. But we must not overlook the fact that love and hate are no longer mere primary examples of ambivalence—Lacan pushes their exemplary status to the point where the referent of such an example itself disappears. It is precisely the montage-writing of the singular (*l’hainamoration*) that brings forth the emergence of the core of psychoanalytic experience. If Freud examined the excess of the love/hate couple in other fields, Lacan renounces other fields, thereby transforming the problematic excess of this opposition into a non-relation; everything is encompassed in this pair of love and hate, but only at the cost of it ceasing to be a pair at all. What, in Freud’s own work, provides the basis for this return to Freud?

The first indirect hint at an answer to this question is perhaps provided precisely by the multiplication of the pairs of opposites that Freud relates to the problem of ambivalence. In the time-period of almost thirty years between the introduction of the concept and Freud’s death, ambivalence left its mark in practically every field of Freud’s inquiry. The first and last mention of ambivalence concerns the problem of transference, with the simultaneity of positive and negative transference leading Freud to directly affirm the following: the “transference is ambivalent” (Freud 2001 [1940],

p. 175).¹ For Freud, ambivalence of transference is a consequence of another classic locus of ambivalence, namely the relation towards the father, which extends to the relation to God, thus implying the broader question of religious ambivalence (*cf.* Freud 2001 [1923]; Freud 2001 [1939]; Freud 2001 [1913]). Moreover, it concerns the already mentioned pairs of love and hate, the active and the passive, as well as—in *extremis*—the eternal struggle between Eros and the destructive drive. Viewed from this perspective, ambivalence would seem to always be at work within a given pair of opposites, with every pair displaying a tendency of appearing to oscillate between the two extremes, with the unity of this opposition remaining (exclusively) a matter of prehistory.²

The first question that strikes us when faced with such a manifold list is, of course, which of the pairs of opposites represents the original form of ambivalence, which of them serves as the prototype for the multitude of ambivalences. And one could say that, despite a few slips, such as the linear derivation of the ambivalence of transference from the originally ambivalent attitude towards the father, this question does not receive a definitive answer. The theoretical advantage of the privileged love/hate relation lies therefore in the fact that, in principle, it can be inscribed into any pair. This is true of course under the condition that the emphasis is not transferred to the triumph of emotions, that the

¹ See also Freud 2001 [1912], p. 107, where he limits the ambivalence of transference to curable forms of psychoneuroses: “Where the capacity for transference has become essentially limited to a negative one, as is the case with paranoics, there ceases to be any possibility of influence or cure.”

² Examples of this include the taboo and certain *Urworte*, such as the famous Latin word *altus* and the increasingly (in)famous *sacer*, which were also mentioned by Bleuler in a reference to Freud’s recently published text on the *Gegensinn der Urworte* (Freud 2001 [1910]). A perhaps more interesting theory of the ambivalence of words is the one Freud develops for the concept *unheimlich*: “Thus *heimlich* is a word the meaning of which develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*.” (Freud 2001 [1919], p. 226)

problem of ambivalence is not reduced to the question of the ambivalence of feeling. To put this differently, under the condition that ambivalence does not slip to the level of the predicate, the level of “being ambivalent,” but retains its structural dimension.

The second perspective that I would like to introduce at this point is not radically opposed to the first one, i.e. to the multiplication of pairs, but rather stands for its inner turn, its split into two. The very insistence that the main reach of ambivalence is the oscillation between the pairs of opposites introduces a certain doubt as to whether the essence of ambivalence is within the oscillation between two “actualized” affections or is instead a question of the *conditions* of this oscillation. The problem is that, in Freud, the second thematization does not appear separately from the first one; there is no text containing the theory of ambivalence independently of its phenomenal forms: ambivalence exists only in the material that appears in the form of a multitude of ambivalences.

And this is precisely the reason why it might seem that the focus on other phenomena of ambivalence may pose a danger of an impermissible extension of the original ambivalence of love and hate to other pairs of opposites. However, this impression fails to consider the fact that Freud’s accumulation of analogies effectively aims at introducing a formal aspect of the concept of ambivalence, that it is an extension that entails a narrowing down, a sharpening of the problem, i.e. its actual conceptualization. Although it may seem that Freud extends the circle of ambivalence because it had proven to be *trefflich* in relation to love and hate, it can be shown that the real reason for this extension is the fact that there is a problem in the love/hate relation that exceeds the common notion of them being two interconnected, yet autonomous affections.

However, as we cannot take a shortcut around Freud, we will proceed step by step, starting precisely with the love/hate opposition. The best illustration of the complexity of the latter—which is perhaps not surprising in view of the above—is provided by a

case dated just before Bleuler's invention of ambivalence, a case to which Freud added a note only *post festum*, pointing out the agreement between his own theory and the new term, i.e. the case of Rat Man.

The obsessional neurosis proves to be the most suitable field for the explicit emergence of the problem, insofar as in obsessional neurosis ambivalence appears in its explicit, or rather, explicated, "unravelling" form, i.e., it consists of a conflict between two impulses towards a single person, the conflict of love and hate. For Freud, this conflict is more challenging (both in theory and in praxis) than the other conflict that also marks the Rat Man, namely the opposition between two objects, his fiancée and his dead father. According to Freud, the latter corresponds "to the normal vacillation between male and female which characterizes every one's choice of a love-object [...] first brought to the child's notice by the time-honoured question: 'Who do you love most, Daddy or Mummy?'" This conflict can vary in intensity and can also lead to one or the other fixation of the subject's sexual aim, "but normally [it] soon loses the character of a hard-and-fast contradiction, of an inexorable 'either-or'. Room is found for satisfying the unequal demands of both sides, although even in a normal person the higher estimation of one sex is always thrown into relief by a depreciation of the other." (Freud 2001 [1909], p. 238)

Here, the choice of one element occurs smoothly and, in principle, reduces the intensity of the opposite element, i.e., the condition of the vacillation is a drop in intensity on the one side.³ In the conflict of love and hate, we witness an inverse logic. It is impossible to choose one at the expense of the other since the choice of one actually intensifies the other:

³ The decrease in intensity having external reasons, as is suggested by the following observation from Freud's analysis of Schreber: "Generally speaking, every human being oscillates all through his life between heterosexual and homosexual feelings, and any frustration or disappointment in the one direction is apt to drive him over into the other." (Freud 2001 [1911], p. 46)

We should have expected that the passionate love would long ago have conquered the hatred or been devoured by it. And in fact such a protracted survival of two opposites is only possible under quite peculiar psychological conditions and with the co-operation of the state of affairs in the unconscious. The love has not succeeded in extinguishing the hatred but only in driving it down into the unconscious; and in the unconscious the hatred, safe from the danger of being destroyed by the operations of consciousness, is able to persist and even to grow. In such circumstances the conscious love attains as a rule, by way of reaction, an especially high degree of intensity, so as to be strong enough for the perpetual task of keeping its opponent under repression. The necessary condition for the occurrence of such a strange state of affairs in a person's erotic life appears to be that at a very early age, somewhere in the prehistoric period of his infancy, the two opposites should have been split apart and one of them, usually the hatred, have been repressed. (Freud 2001 [1909], p. 239)⁴

The formula is thus inverse: choosing love always means choosing hate as well, and the entire spectacle of love only serves to conceal the failure of keeping both impulses apart. What is essential here, however, is that love and hate are caught in a specific causal loop. Not only is love a mere reaction-formation that fights in vain against the inert unconscious "truth," without access to the dynamics of the latter; it is rather love—and not hate—that is the central agent of the *unconscious mechanism* of repression. The process of defence is infinite, insofar as the reaction-formation is nothing but a repetition of the initial repression itself.

What we have before us here is a nice illustration of the quandary of defence, which Freud captured a few years later under the concept of vicissitude of the drive, *Tribschicksal*: at first

⁴ At one point, Bleuler uses the following accounting metaphor: "The split psyche of the patients [...] is keeping accounts on the active and the passive, but is unable to summarize both evaluation rows into a consistent record." (Bleuler [1910]).

sight, it would seem that this term designates the functioning of the drives in a closed space of the unconscious, i.e. the way that drives circulate in their inert nature. For Freud, the “vicissitudes” are at the same time the “modes of defence against the instincts” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 127); they encompass both the defended instance and the instance against which the former defends itself. In the last instance, it is this paradox that prompts us to focus on the economic aspect, i.e. on the problem of the quantity of a certain investment. And we could say that it is precisely in the places where this aspect comes to the forefront that Freud confronts the paradox of the unconscious in its pure form: there is a peculiar psychical quantity that traverses all dualisms.

Perhaps the original problem of the quotation posed above is that Freud is too quick in mapping the existing substantial opposition of love and hate that doesn’t allow isolating the one from the other onto the original, prehistoric separation of the two elements. For, by way of explanation, he immediately adds that we

know too little of the nature of love to be able to arrive at any definite conclusion here; and, in particular, the relation between the negative factors in love and the sadistic components of the libido remains completely obscure. What follows is therefore to be regarded as no more than a provisional explanation. We may suppose, then, that in the cases of unconscious hatred with which we are concerned the sadistic components of love have, from constitutional causes, been exceptionally strongly developed, and have consequently undergone a premature and all too thorough suppression, and that the neurotic phenomena we have observed arise on the one hand from conscious feelings of affection which have become exaggerated as a reaction, and on the other hand from sadism persisting in the unconscious in the form of hatred. (Freud 2001 [1909], p. 240)

What now appears as a dualism of conscious love and unconscious hate is not simply a consequence of the repression of hate, but rather of the repression of the sadistic component of love itself at a time when love had not yet been determined as

a tender opposite of aggression, i.e. when love was not yet love in the strict sense of “genital love.” It is precisely this repression of the sadistic component of love that forms not only the hostile pole but the dynamics of the relation as such.

There is no doubt that, in obsessional neurosis, there is an inexorable *conceptual* separation of the two impulses. However, on the existential level, the situation is precisely the opposite one: love and hate never seem to appear separately. This problem is most clearly observable in the example of the paradigmatic mode of symptom-formation in obsessional neurosis, i.e. in the so-called “two-stage” compulsive acts (*zweizeitige Zwangshandlungen*). A nice example of this is once again provided by the Rat Man’s well-known episode about the carriage, the road and the stone. On the day his beloved departed, Freud reports, the Rat Man

knocked his foot against a stone lying in the road, and was obliged to put it out of the way by the side of the road, because the idea struck him that her carriage would be driving along the same road in a few hours’ time and might come to grief against this stone. But a few minutes later it occurred to him that this was absurd, and he was obliged to go back and replace the stone in its original position in the middle of the road. (Freud 2001 [1909], p. 190)

Freud interprets this act as a plastic illustration of Rat Man’s struggle between love and hate: if, in view of this, the removal of the stone is a “deed of love,” then returning it to its original position betrays a hostile impulse, the wish “that her carriage might come to grief against it and she herself be hurt.”

We shall not be forming a correct judgement of this second part of the compulsive act if we take it at its face value as having merely been a critical repudiation of a pathological action. The fact that it was accompanied by a sense of compulsion betrays it as having itself been a part of the pathological action, though a part which was determined by a motive contrary to that which produced the first part. (Freud 2001 [1909], pp. 191–2)

It is evident that the third element traversing the pair is the element of compulsion, which accompanies and connects the first two. The unconscious of compulsion is by all means a different kind of unconscious than the unconscious of the hostile impulse—and if Freud focuses on Rat Man’s inability to realize that the critical repudiation of a pathological act (this time, the pathology of loving care) is not simply neutral but already contains a hostile impulse, then the introduction of compulsion once again brings into focus the two-stage act as a whole. Since it was preceded by a preliminary stage—i.e., the instant when he knocked his foot against a stone—it is as such *nothing but a reaction*, an attempt to decipher the sign brought to him by his foot, so to say, to respond to the non-neutrality of the sign, to its ambivalent nature, to the objective appearance of ambivalence.

In the analysis of Rat Man, the materiality of ambivalence appears at yet another well-known point when, during analysis, the Rat Man reproduces the triggering moment of his great obsessive idea, after which he was named. Freud presents the difficulties that Rat Man has in recapping a story told by the captain he dreaded about “a specially horrible punishment used in the East” from two aspects.⁵ On the one hand, the overcoming of resistances triggers the unintelligibility of expression and a painful progression from one detail of the narrative to the next. On the other hand, the resistances are granted their own plastic representation:

At all the more important moments while he was telling his story his face took on a very strange, composite expression. I could only interpret it as one of horror at pleasure of his own of which he himself was unaware. (Freud 2001 [1909], pp. 166–7)⁶

⁵ In the story, a pot was placed upside down on a criminal’s buttocks and then some rats were put in it, boring their way into the criminal’s anus.

⁶ A similar case of object-ambivalence is reported in the first few paragraphs of Bleuler’s text: “A [...] mother has poisoned her child; but in retrospect she is in despair over her deed. However, what strikes one’s attention is that despite

While the first aspect focuses on the vacillation between *telling and not telling*, i.e. on the struggle of symbolization when it strikes its Real core, the second aspect, the aspect of affection, makes this core appear in the most definite yet internally split form of the subject's own pleasure of which he himself was unaware. It is precisely this composite expression, demonstrating the subject's ignorance of his own pleasure, that receives its correlate in the triggered obsessive idea—the idea that this punishment is *impersonally* imposed on a person dear to him. The fact that both his beloved lady and his dead father can assume the place of the affected person is evidence that, in the obsessive idea, both Rat Man's prevailing conflicts, the ambivalence of love and hate and the opposition between two loved persons, are condensed in a specific way.

The example of the two-stage symptom showed that the core of ambivalence amounting to an indifferent act receives its extension in compulsion. At the first level, compulsion is ascribed to each act separately, while, at the second level, it—precisely as their common element, as the element traversing them—*demands* that the pair of opposites appear as a pair. In other words, compulsion in this case appeared as a correlate of the split into two impulses, as the persistence of this split.

In the second case, ambivalence is expressed through contradictory pleasure, a subject's pleasure of which he is unaware, thereby no longer appearing as a function of doubt but as one of certainty. Thus, the compulsion that first assumed the character of the certainty of vacillation itself, now receives its own

all the whistling and weeping *the mouth clearly laughs* [*der Mund ganz deutlich lacht*]. The patient is unaware of this [Letzteres ist der Kranken unbewußt]. [...] The mother who killed her child and now—despite her despair—*laughs with the mouth* [*mit dem Munde lacht*]. She did not kill the child by accident but following a long struggle. Hence, she must have had a reason to kill the child. She does not love her husband, and she loathes this man's child. That is why she killed the child and is now laughing about it; but the child is also hers and therefore she loves it and cries over its death." (Bleuler [1910]; my emphasis)

“representation,” its great obsessive idea. The great obsessive idea is not merely one among Rat Man’s obsessive ideas that he manages to defend himself against with his usual formulas (with “a ‘but’ accompanied by a gesture of repudiation, and the phrase ‘whatever are you thinking of?’” [Freud 2001 [1909], p. 167]); rather, it is an obsessive *representation* into which the correlate of compulsion is inscribed. It is a staging of the Real core, a staging of the creation of the Symbolic, in this sense coming close to what Freud would later capture by the concept of “construction in the analysis.” More precisely, if at first Rat Man manages to defend himself against this obsessive idea in the usual way, once an opportunity arises for the establishment of the series *Ratte*—*Spielratte*—*Raten*—*heiraten* this defence fails.

What, then, is the actual core of this great obsessive idea? What precisely is there in this obsessive idea that functions as a correlate to the composite expression? It is evident that it is not simply the primary idea of the rat punishment. As long as it appears as a compulsive thought, where compulsion is an external predicate of thought, it can be eliminated by formulas, which are likewise a compulsive repetition of the same content. The situation becomes complicated when compulsion is internalized, whereby the dualism of compulsive form and content loses its ground. The very content of the idea starts functioning as form, compulsively producing a signifying series whose core is no longer the signified “rat” or some external element (e.g., “debt”) but the independent signifying fragment “*r-a-t*,” which is the actual driving force in the formation of the series—but, we have to add, only and precisely insofar as it is itself already a record of the materialization of the signifier *Ratte*. This element functions as a correlate of pleasure represented by the composite expression of knowledge not knowing itself. In this element, the innermost part of the signifier, its ability to produce associative relations in the form of a series, comes into contact with a seemingly extra-signifying object, namely pleasure, which cannot be captured with words

and thus resists symbolization. The obstacle to symbolization is produced precisely as the materialization of the signifier.

In Freud, the inner contradiction of ambivalence is shown in its most expressive and speculative form at the point where he relates ambivalence to the question of the drives. In the already mentioned metapsychological essay *Triebe und Triebchicksale*, we come across a moment of productive unclarity. It seems that Freud's oscillating between the broader and narrower meanings of ambivalence (i.e., ambivalence of feeling) appears within a single text under the framework of a single question. When Freud lists "reversal into its opposite" as one of the possible vicissitudes of the drives that he observes, we at first have before us a situation suggesting an established use of the concept of ambivalence. At the first level, the reversal into the opposite is split into two different processes: first, a change from activity to passivity, and second, a reversal of its content. Later in the text, Freud examines the process of the reversal of content in the case of love changing into hate—which is "the single instance of the transformation" (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 127). For Freud, their frequent coexistence, their simultaneous focus on the same object, provides the most important examples of the ambivalence of feeling, *Gefühlsambivalenz* (*ibid.*, p. 133).

If this were all, ambivalence would serve only as a description of a special case of reversal, more precisely, it would designate the consequences of one of the cases of reversal, the coexistence of opposite feelings that a subject has for the same object. In this case, Freud would be speaking in terms of predicate ambivalence, of "being ambivalent." Although such a simplified understanding is no doubt abundantly exemplified by Freud's uses of the term, the concept proves to be much more complicated in the context of the vicissitudes of the drives.

At the first level, it seems that in the text there is only a parallel use of the concept of ambivalence, i.e. only the explication of its meaning. This claim is supported by the fact that the second part

of the “reversal into its opposite” —the change from activity to passivity—also becomes related to ambivalence: “The fact that, at this later period of development of an instinctual impulse, its (passive) opposite may be observed alongside of it deserves to be marked by the very apt term introduced by Bleuler – ‘ambivalence.’” (Freud 2001 [1915], p.131) The motif for extending the use of the concept seems clear: what makes up the essence of ambivalence is not determined substantially in terms of love and hate, but is a matter of a formal coexistence. So, when Freud notes that “the earlier active direction of the drive persists to some degree side by side with its later passive direction, even when the process of its transformation has been very extensive” (*ibid.*, p. 130), there is no reason not to describe the relation of active and passive using the same term.

The first consequence of this extension is that, despite the explicit separation of the two types of reversal into opposites, the two share a common point that concerns precisely the failure of the reversal: the second member of the pair does not eliminate the first one, the substitute does not annul the original. In this sense, ambivalence is no longer a specific characteristic of a special case of the reversal into opposite, but precisely the point in which both processes that are declaratively “different in their nature” (*ibid.*, p. 127) lose their fundamental distinguishing feature.

But at this point things are complicated even further. As mentioned, Freud lists all four vicissitudes undergone by the drives, but focuses on “the reversal into its opposite” and “turning round upon the subject’s own self,” while leaving the remaining two, “repression” and “sublimation,” for another time.⁷ The logic of pairs followed by Freud here works out on the declarative level, insofar as the distinguishing criterion between the reversal into its opposite and the turning round upon the subject’s own self lies in the fact

⁷ Freud addresses repression in an eponymous essay written in the same year. Sublimation was supposedly the topic of one of his lost metapsychological essays.

that each of them fundamentally concerns one of the dimensions of the drive. The first is determined by the change of the aim with the object remaining unchanged, while the second is characterized by the change of object with the aim remaining unchanged. Examples of the first process are provided by the following pairs of opposites: sadism–masochism and scopophilia–exhibitionism. The matter is clear: sadism relates to the active aim of “torturing,” while masochism relates to the passive aim of “being tortured”; scopophilia, *Schaulust*, is related to “looking at,” while exhibitionism is characterized by “being looked at.” But the problem is that the operation of turning round of a drive upon the subject’s own self, which supposedly entails the change of object while retaining the drive’s aim, is represented by the same pairs of opposites:

The turning round of an instinct upon the subject’s own self is made plausible by the reflection that masochism is actually sadism turned round upon the subject’s own ego, and that exhibitionism includes looking at his own body. Analytic observation, indeed, leaves us in no doubt that the masochist shares in the enjoyment of the assault upon himself, and that the exhibitionist shares in the enjoyment of his exposure. The essence of the process is thus the change of the object, while the aim remains unchanged. (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 127)

Not only have the two sub-processes of the reversal into its opposite been merged at the formal level; at the higher hierarchical level, the declarative disjunction between object and aim also merged the moment both examples were introduced. In consequence, Freud immediately ascertains that “we cannot fail to notice, however, that in these examples the turning round upon the subject’s self and the transformation from activity to passivity converge or coincide” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 127). And when he announces that he will present the *process* by considering the example of the sadism–masochism pair of opposites, it is not clear which of the above processes he is actually referring to—the presentation of the process can actually be conducted only in view of the example.

If, with the introduction of the example, the two separate processes merged into one, it is precisely this unified perspective that once again has to dissolve into two. Instead of two processes, we follow a double perspective, two interconnected explanations of one and the same process. The first, basically linear explanation is given as follows:

- a) sadism is an exercise of violence against another person as the object;
- b) the object is replaced by the subject's self and this is the point where the active aim changes into a passive one;
- c) an extraneous person is sought as the object which, due to the alteration in the aim, assumes the role of the subject, the bearer of activity.

But already within this linear explanation there occurs step *b*, which—*stricto sensu*—does not exist in sadism and masochism and would be unnecessary and invisible in the eyes of this transformation. But still, its theoretical construction is necessary, and according to Freud the first argument for its introduction is already provided by the fact that this is the point where obsessional neurosis stops: sadism is not transformed into masochism, the sadistic drive turns round upon the subject's own self without complementing this passivity with another person as the bearer of activity: "The desire to torture has turned into self-torture and self-punishment, not into masochism." (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 128) If, at first sight, the transformation of sadism into masochism seems to be a transformation of pure activity into pure passivity, it is nonetheless not realizable without this additional stage that marks the moment of the turn itself.

Freud is hesitant here. In the case of obsessional neurosis, this is the point where there is no pure passivity insofar as it is defined as "the passivity of another person"; what we have before us is a turning round upon the subject's own self, however, the aim,

i.e., that which defines the duality of active and passive drives,⁸ is not yet passive. This is also the reason why, from the viewpoint of grammar of the drives, Freud ascertains: “The active voice is changed, not into the passive, but into the reflexive, middle voice.” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 128) In obsessional neurosis, “to punish oneself” appears instead of “to be punished.”

However, describing the step *b*, Freud asserts the opposite: “With the turning round upon the self the change from an active to a passive aim of the drive is also effected.” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 127) In the case of the transformation from sadism to masochism, the stage where both processes of obsessional neurosis (reversal into its opposite and turning round upon the subject’s self) still appear in their minimal difference is precisely the moment of their coincidence. Insofar as the third stage also takes place, the point of transformation is at the same time the point of the already completed transformation; but if the process stops here, then the reversal of an active aim into a passive one effectively does not take place. Put differently, if point *b* is taken as a point of transition, we can already speak of the passive—in a sense, even of a pure passive without any extraneous factor. But the moment this point is actualized, brought into “existence” in obsessional neurosis, the pure passive ceases being a passive at all: *For Freud, the actualised pure passive is the middle voice.*

In order to resolve this contradiction, Freud has to introduce another explanation, which again requires a shift to the second of the two examples, i.e. to the *Schaulust*—exhibitionism relation. First, Freud repeats the above scheme:

- a) looking [*Schauen*] as an activity directed towards an extraneous object;
- b) the giving up of the object, the turning of the scopophilic drive [*Schautrieb*] towards a part of the subject’s own

⁸ “Every instinct is a piece of activity; if we speak loosely of passive instincts, we can only mean instincts whose aim is passive.” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 122)

Freud, who is here at the height of speculation, writes the auto-erotic stage α in two ways, equating both possibilities: “one-self looking at a sexual organ” and “sexual organ being looked at by oneself,” whereby a factually unified situation is split into two voices. And insofar as the preliminary stage is neither a nor c , insofar as it is formulated as “either-or,” both of the exclusive “either-or” positions can be derived from it. In this sense, Freud explains the reasoning underlying its introduction: “This preliminary stage is interesting because it is the source of both the situations represented in the resulting pair of opposites, the one or the other according to which element in the original situation is changed.” (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 130) If one’s own sexual organ is replaced by an extraneous object, the result is an active position of “oneself looking at an extraneous object” marked as β . On the contrary, the replacement of oneself produces a passive position of “one’s own object being looked at by an extraneous person” marked as γ .

How do the schemes “ abc ” and “ $\alpha\beta\gamma$ ” relate to one another? Is the introduction of the preliminary stage α merely an addition to the first scheme, as it would seem at first sight, or is the result a completely new scheme? Neither of the two. On the one hand, it is certain that the preliminary stage α is not only a preceding stage to the “ abc ” scheme, however, on the other hand, it is also true that the schemes do not overlap linearly: $\alpha\beta\gamma$ is not a transcription of abc . The second scheme is a repetition of the first one, but a repetition characterized by a specific shift.

In general terms, we can say that stage β coincides with stage a and that stage γ coincides with stage c , while each of them is derived *directly* from one of the variants of the preliminary stage α . Although the schemes do not overlap linearly, they nonetheless overlap, which implies a necessity of interconnecting the remaining elements: $b = \alpha$.

How can we justify this *equation*? It cannot escape us that already at the descriptive level b and α both refer to analogous

situations. If stage b involves “the turning round of the scopophilic drive upon a part of one’s own body,” then the preliminary stage α (being an auto-erotic stage) is also characterized by the object existing on one’s own body, meaning that a certain self-reference is at work in both situations.

A parallel can be detected also at the formal level. Both stages are marked by a paradoxical indeterminateness, neither of them being fully ontologically constituted; however, they nevertheless differ and it is precisely this difference that causes the shift in this repetition. We already indicated that there is no linear overlapping of the two schemes. At this point we can add that, paradoxically, such overlapping would only be possible if the preliminary stage would be understood as a fully constituted preceding stage, but this is not what Freud had in mind. On the contrary, we are faced with two modes of a comprehensive treatment; each of the schemes covers a totality, but it is precisely the radical overlapping of both totalities that first enables a correct understanding of the inner contradiction of each of them.

In other words, each scheme may be misleading if taken by itself: the first one implies the originality of pure activity with passivity being understood as an aberration, while the other posits the initial split that directly develops into two holistic opposites. Their juxtaposition, however, is condensed precisely where they seemingly do not agree, namely in the equation $b = \alpha$.

What we actually have before us here are two written accounts of the interference in linearity. In the abc scheme, b is the point of transition, which, according to Freud, is neither active nor passive, but rather a point of transition functioning as a “vanishing mediator” between the two positions of the drive. In the other scheme, activity and passivity are separated, they each develop directly, there is no possibility of transition between them, but only insofar as they coincide in the origin, which is a split of one into two, of one substantial situation into two voices. The radical overlapping of both schemes translates into the following formula: $(b = \alpha) = (\text{neither–nor} = \text{either–or})$.

But this is not the end of the story. Freud's texts suggest also the materialization of the latter formula. Freud notes the second example of the pairs of opposites in several ways. Firstly, when he sticks strictly to the level of the verb, he writes the pair as *(be)schauen–beschaut werden*, “to look at”–“to be looked at.” Secondly, when he speaks “in the language of perversion,” he translates the opposition into the pair voyeur–exhibitionist. Between the two extremes, there are intermediate formations, such as the pair *Schauen* and *sich Zeigen*, “to look at” and “to show oneself,” and *aktive Schaulust* and *Zeigelust*, “active scopophilia” and “desire for exhibition.”

We are again faced with a dilemma between form and content running along the demarcation line between the perspectives of “perversion” and drive. From the viewpoint of “perversion,” the passive “looking at” is always already exhibition. Thus, an ordered pair of the new active subject, the extraneous person, and the remainder of activity in the old subject is established which translates “looking” into its opposite, i.e. exhibition, or the active *Schaulust* into *Zeigelust*. But, for Freud, this ordered pair is nevertheless marked by the opposition of ambivalence:

With regard to both the instincts which we have just taken as examples, it should be remarked that their transformation by a reversal from activity to passivity and by a turning round upon the subject never in fact involves the whole quota of the instinctual impulse. The earlier active direction of the instinct persists to some degree side by side with its later passive direction, even when the process of its transformation has been very extensive. The only correct statement to make about the scopophilic instinct would be that all the stages of its development, its auto-erotic, preliminary stage as well as its final active or passive form, co-exist alongside one another; and the truth of this becomes obvious if we base our opinion, not on the actions to which the instinct leads, but on the mechanism of its satisfaction. (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 130)

Freud does not simply claim that after the transformation into the passive *Zeiglust* there remains some part of the *active Schaulust*, which surfaces from time to time, disturbing the completeness of the transformation, thus creating a whole person driven by a series of various impulses. In addition to the active and passive forms, Freud includes in the final co-existence the auto-erotic preliminary stage, the balanced “either-or” condition of this imbalance, whereby the latter “coordinative imbalance” or the alteration of activity and passivity is transformed into an “unwhole” imbalance, unable to form the entirety of an ordered pair. Returning to the equation $b = \alpha$, we can see how the stage of transition is “a pure passivity”; it is a transformation of the aim of the drive without the *addition* of activity: neither the old activity of the new subject nor the new exhibitivive activity of the old subject.

The advantage of the verbal transformation “to look at—to be looked at” is thus precisely that it shows what is preserved in this transformation. The answer seems to be obvious: what is preserved is the content, the “looking.” But, again, this hasty conclusion is misleading, as far as the answer is implicitly understood in terms of the persistence of the active verb. This is why we have to add two additional points. Firstly, the verbal transformation acquires its true meaning only under the condition that we read it together with the thesis on the persistence of the preliminary stage α , which postulates the split of one substantial situation into two formal modes of the same, thus demonstrating the impossibility of preserving the content of the situation as a referent of two perspectives—the content of the auto-erotic preliminary situation exists only through this doubling.

Secondly, we have to appropriately interpret the last sentence in the above quotation where Freud draws the line between actions engendered by the drives, *Triebhandlungen*, i.e., the actualizations of the forms of drives, and the mechanism of satisfaction. Recall that, within the *abc* scheme, we set out point *b* as the point

of transition where—according to Freud—it does not yet come to a passive position although the active aim is actually already transformed into a passive one, which is why we termed it the point of pure passivity. If we add that, for Freud, the “aim of the drive is always satisfaction,” we see that it is precisely in stage *b* that pure aim, pure satisfaction, is at work. Or better yet, stage *b* is the moment where the mechanism of satisfaction is displayed in its pure form: in the transition the aim or mode of satisfaction is changed, however, this change is not bound to a concrete *Triebhandlung*, but is precisely a pure impersonal drive. Moreover, if we consider stage *b* as equated with the preliminary stage α , we see that the moment of the pure passive is at the same time the moment of the pure active, a point where the opposition between the active and the passive is reduced to the duality of perspectives.

The name of this co-incidence is nothing other than *Schaulust*—insofar as we do not limit it to its active phenomenal form, to the *aktive Schaulust*. *Schaulust* is no longer the desire to look, the pleasure that accompanies the act of looking, but is in a strict sense the “pleasure of looking” and as such no longer bound to the active or the passive form. *Schaulust* instead stands for a point at which the looking and being looked at come together, an intersection of their non-relation and at the same time an element which prevents each form from being reducible to itself.

We said that stage *b* is the moment of the pure passive without *additional* activity in the form of the remainder of the old active *Schaulust* or of the new activity of another subject. How can we relate this to Freud’s thesis that every drive is “a piece of activity,” *ein Stück Aktivität*?

Perhaps we should return here to Lacan, who in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* forms his own variant of the paradox we attempted to capture with the equation $b = \alpha$. Lacan is well aware of the fact that, at the level of the drive, *pulsion*, the opposition of activity and passivity is “purely grammatical” (Lacan 1998, p. 200), insofar as “the enigmatic character of Freud’s

presentation derives precisely from the fact that he wishes to give us a radical structure—in which the subject is not yet placed” (*ibid.*, pp. 181–2).

It is support, artifice, which Freud uses in order to enable us to understand the outward-return movement of the drive. But I have repeated four or five times that we cannot reduce it simply to a reciprocity. Today I have shown in the most articulated way possible that each of the three stages, *a*, *b*, *c*, with which Freud articulates each drive, must be replaced by the formula of *making oneself seen, heard* and the rest of the list I have given. (Lacan 1998, p. 200)

What enables Lacan to condense the development from “*beschauen*, to look at an alien object, an object in the strict sense” to “*beschaut werden*, being looked at by an alien person» (*ibid.*, p. 194) into the formula *se faire voir*? It is precisely the realization of the passive activity of the object itself, which Freud proposes in the preliminary stage α . In the person looking, there is present the “being looked at” object:

It is not seeing oneself in the mirror, it is *Selbst ein Sexualglied beschauen* – *he looks at himself*, I would say, *in his sexual member*. But, be careful! It’s not right, either. Because this statement is identified with its opposite – which is curious enough, and I am surprised that nobody has noticed the humorous side of it. This gives – *Sexualglied von eigener Person beschaut werden*. In a way, just as the number two delights at being odd, the sex, or widdler, delights at being looked at. Who has ever really grasped the truly subject making character of such a sentiment? (Lacan 1998, pp. 194–5)

The active and the passive are not balanced insofar as they are joined in the origin. And since Freud’s preliminary stage is at the same time the point of the *return* of the impossibility of balance, we are faced with the very core of the basic paradox of repression where the moment of the paradox of repression unravels in the primal repression and the return of the repressed as its formal

repetition. Therefore, one should not be surprised to find the following sentence in the essay on *Repression*: “The ambivalence which has enabled repression through reaction-formation to take place is also the point at which the repressed succeeds in returning.” (Freud 2001 [1915b], p. 157)

Lacan’s contribution lies not only in the fact that *se faire voir* condenses both of Freud’s schemes, but, in the last instance, also in the way he connects the levels of pulsation and love. For Lacan, *se faire voir* fundamentally implies activity which is inherent to passivity and thus converges two fields that are separate in Freud’s work; the reciprocity of a subject’s loving and being loved is accompanied by pure activity “*durch seine eigene Triebe*” (cf. Lacan 1998, p. 191).

By pointing out Freud’s two schemes, we primarily want to suggest that a version of Lacan’s *se faire voir* is already at work in Freud, but is obscured both by his resistance to understand love as a partial drive, instead of conceiving it as an expression of *ganze Sexualstrebung*, and by the introduction of the three polarities dominating psychological life: the biological (active–passive), the economic (pleasure–unpleasure) and the real (subject–object or Ego–the outside world). By introducing these polarities, Freud failed to recognize that each of them is marked by an interference. The interference in biology can be seen in its grammar, ultimately in the equation $b = a$. The interference in economy can be seen in the problem of the excess of affect over the feeling of this affect, the pleasure of the organ. The error in the real can be seen in the original paradox of drive-formation:

We thus arrive at the essential nature of instincts in the first place by considering their main characteristics – their origin in sources of stimulation within the organism and their appearance as a constant force – and from this we deduce one of their further features, namely, that no actions of flight avail against them. (Freud 2001 [1915], p. 119)

But the problem is that the latter is not a plain deduction. In the preceding paragraph, Freud invites us to imagine the following situation: a helpless, living organism unoriented in the world receiving stimuli in its nervous substance is forced to make its first distinction. The stimuli against which it is able to defend itself with a flight, i.e. with muscular activity, will be ascribed to the external world, while the failure of a flight will become evidence of the existence of drive needs: “The perceptual substance of the living organism will thus have found in the efficacy of its muscular activity a basis for distinguishing between an ‘outside’ and an ‘inside’.” (Freud 2001 [1915b], p. 119)

That which seems a mere deduction is, in fact, a condition of possibility of the two other characteristics. The moment when an “outside” and an “inside” cannot be distinguished coincides with the failure of defence. This initial paradox is what drives the quantitative factor, the constant force. The drive does not have three “characteristics” but is a constant force of the impossibility of the pair of opposites.

To conclude, we can say that even Freud himself did not notice the humor of his inversion — which is no coincidence. The impossible equation between the subject looking at his sexual organ and the sexual organ being happy about it being looked at is not an expression of his humor but rather a sign of his grammatical madness concerning the identification of the object, not at the site of the sexual organ, but in the split of one situation into two voices. A sign of certainty that Freud was not mad enough to recognize.

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Abstracts

The Varieties of Surplus

Slavoj Žižek

This article begins with a discussion of the paradoxical nature of Lacan's notion of surplus-enjoyment by analyzing its proximity to Marx's notion of surplus-value as its conceptual predecessor. The said paradoxical logic is then applied to the constitution and functioning of scientific knowledge, ideological belief and political power. The final section of the article attempts to move beyond the initially analyzed homology and to elaborate on the disparate or parallax structure of their relation.

Key words: Lacan, Marx, surplus-enjoyment, surplus-value.

Philosophy and Courage

Frank Ruda

This article proposes the first conceptual coordinates for a renewal of the concept of courage. By distinguishing two forms of conceptualizing courage (as a male and military virtue based upon knowledge, on the one side, and as an element of becoming a subject constitutive of truth, on the other) that originate in Plato, it shows how one of these forms was taken up by an Aristotelian strand within the history of philosophy, whereas the other leads from Plato through Hegel and ultimately to Lacan and Badiou. The central thesis is that today it is the latter logically female version of courage that might be useful and even needed for rethinking not only contemporary forms of political action but subjectivization in general. The article suggests that a rendering of such a concept of courage must be conceived of as a specific form of working with anxiety.

Key words: anxiety, Aquinas, Aristotle, Badiou, courage, Hegel, Lacan, Plato, virtue.

Of Drives and Culture

Mladen Dolar

It is commonly assumed that drives are indomitable instinctual forces and that culture is called upon to mold them, restrict them and channel them, and since this conflict can never be happily resolved, we seem to be doomed to a perpetual discontent in civilization. This is the point that seems to be implied in the very title of Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930). The aim of the article is to dismantle this common understanding, for in psychoanalysis everything depends on doing away with its presuppositions. The paper will consider the placement of psychoanalysis in the rift between sciences of nature and humanities/social sciences, hence the very divide between nature and culture and the paradoxical ways in which psychoanalysis envisages that divide.

Key words: culture, drive, Freud, Lacan, nature.

Back and Forth from Letter to Homophony

Jean-Claude Milner

This article attempts to pinpoint what is at stake in Lacan's later work. Two major changes take place. On the one hand, homophony becomes the central phenomenon that materializes the dimension of the Real in *lalangue*. On the other hand, mathematized physics ceases to be the major representative of modern science. This function is devolved to molecular biology, which is literalized rather than mathematized. A connection is established between these two changes.

Key words: biology, DNA, homophony, *lalangue*, letter.

Lying on the Couch

Alenka Zupančič

Rather than taking it as a moral or epistemic phenomenon, this article reflects on lying as a cultural phenomenon. More precisely, it argues that the "culture of lying" is to be situated at a particular point in culture,

namely in the very gap in its positive foundations. With the help of (Lacanian) psychoanalysis the article attempts to propose a conceptualization of this gap, and of the paradoxes related to it, while also sketching out a logic and dialectics of lying at work in different cultural phenomena.

Key words: culture, lying, psychoanalysis, speech, truth.

The Subject of Chinglish

Rey Chow

Tourists in the People's Republic of China often encounter "Chinglish" signs giving directions, instructions, or warnings. Why are these signs so funny? The article explores this question by drawing on the perspectives of the PRC government, sinologists, sociolinguists, and literary critics. Citing Alenka Zupančič's work on comedy, she argues that Chinglish exemplifies the condition in which a subject-supposed-to-know stumbles and falls into flesh.

Key words: Chinglish, comic, incarnation, subject, translation, translingual.

Comedy from *a* to *Z*: On the Subject-Matter of Ideological Interpellation

Simon Hajdini

Against the backdrop of an analysis of Preston Sturges' 1944 comedy *The Miracle of Morgan's Creek*, this article revisits the topic of the Lacanian critique of Althusser's concept of ideological interpellation in an attempt to more closely examine the critique's main premises, as well as its consequences for a psychoanalytical notion of subjectivity. The article then goes on to propose and develop the concept of psychoanalytic interpellation.

Key words: Althusser, comedy, discourse, psychoanalytic interpellation, Lacan, Sturges.

The Impossible Object of Love: Shakespeare, Billy Wilder and Freud

Gregor Moder

This article analyzes elements of the doctrine of the king's two bodies in a passage from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and follows Lacan's suggestion that it should be explained through a reading of sonnet 20, dedicated to a beautiful youth and his "addition." The main part of the article's argument revolves around the interpretation of the sonnet as an example of a joke, pointing to other similar examples in Billy Wilder's *Some Like It Hot* and Sigmund Freud's book on *Jokes*. The article claims that the split between the political and the natural body of the king is not a simple distinction between the office and the person, but rather the concept of incommensurability of the symbolic order and the human being. The Lacanian term for the inscription of the symbolic order into the texture of the body is phallus, which happens to be the very same curious object that is at the center of Shakespeare's sonnet 20.

Key words: body, comedy, love, phallus, political theology, Shakespeare.

Heidegger's Movies: National Socialism and the End of Philosophy

Jan Voelker

This article reads Heidegger's engagement with National Socialism in the 1930s as an attempt to interrupt the film of modernity. For Heidegger, the modern audiovisual technology produces an infinity of sameness, while the combination of sight and hearing provides the essential structure of a polis: The combination of idea and language is the ground of politics. Therefore, Heidegger's critique of technology is also a political critique, so that history as opposed to the reign of technology needs to be understood as depending on a decision that directs sight and hearing toward the openness of Being, reconnecting it to Being as a question. But Heidegger's own decision seeks an answer; it is a decision that is not purely a thought, but also displays the will to overcome philosophy. Philosophy, like technology, brings about its own end.

Key words: film, Heidegger, idea, language, National Socialism, philosophy, technology.

On Ambivalence

Tadej Troha

This article discusses the concept of ambivalence in Freud. The term was coined in 1910 by Eugen Bleuler and Freud adopted it immediately. He did not pay much attention to Bleuler's conceptualization but rather used the term as a tool helping him develop his own theoretical project. Thus, ambivalence became associated with all the main problems of psychoanalysis, without it being formulated as a definite concept. Lacan on the other hand renounced the term but at the same time reaffirmed the central position of ambivalence as *l'hainamoration*.

Key words: ambivalence, drive, Freud, hate, Lacan, love, psychoanalysis.

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