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*A Matter Of Resistance*

One of the great problems we face today is what we propose to call, by paraphrasing Lacan, the growing impasses of the way out, or, more generally, the problem of resistance. This problem is all the more acute in the present constellation characterised by the worldwide victory of the alliance of capitalism and liberal democracy, insofar as this alliance seems to discredit the very idea of a “way out” as being ideological, utopian and, ultimately, irrational. In a remarkable way, a major shift that has been taking place in contemporary thought over the past two decades - namely, a drift away from an understanding of the way out as emancipation towards an account of the way out in terms of resistance - signals that contemporary theorising about the way out has reached an impasse.

To understand how the shift towards resistance has come to permeate the very activity of thought itself, and how this in turn bears upon our sense of the present deadlock of the way out, it may be helpful to turn to Lacan. His succinct remark gives us a penetrating insight into the problem:

“In relating this misery / caused by capitalism/ to the discourse of the capitalist, I denounce the latter. Only here, I point out in all seriousness that I cannot do this, because in denouncing it, I reinforce it - by normalising it, that is, improving it.”<sup>1</sup>

This cryptic remark can be read in two ways. At first sight, it seems to convey Lacan’s principled pessimism with regard to possible resistance. Understood in this way, Lacan’s remark would seem to gesture towards the well-known postmodernist or poststructuralist critique of Marxism, a series of which appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>2</sup> According to this

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<sup>1</sup> See Jacques Lacan, *Television*, New York: W.W: Norton & Co., 1990, pp. 13-14. Translated by Jeffrey Mehlman. This point has been further elaborated in Jacques-Alain Miller’s excellent comment on *Television*: “A Reading of Some Details in Television in Dialogue with the Audience”, *Newsletter of the Freudian field*, Spring/Fall 1990, Vol. 4, No. 1-2, pp. 4-30.

<sup>2</sup> Lyotard’s “libidinal” writings in particular provide a good example of such a critique. See, for instance, his *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud, Economie libidinale* and *Des dispositifs pulsionnels*. For a penetrating account of Lyotard’s early writings, see Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard. Art and Politics*, London and New York: Routledge, 1991.

critique, the fault of Marxism lies in its blind faith in the inexorable laws of development which will, eventually, bring about the collapse of capitalism. Lyotard, for instance, convincingly shows how Marxism, by trying to find capitalism's weak link, the final stage of its development, in short, by waiting for capitalism to approach "a limit which it cannot overcome", develops a critique that negates capitalism by merely inverting it, thus, paradoxically, remaining within the same framework as capitalism.<sup>3</sup> The lesson to be drawn from this account could be phrased as follows: all critique of capitalism, far from surpassing capitalism, consolidates it. Thus, if capitalism refuses to collapse, to come up against the limit of its own growth and expansion, this is due to its structural "greediness";<sup>4</sup> as Lacan puts it, as capitalism is nothing but the drive for growth: the growth of indifference as well as the indifference of growth.

What we have here, then, is the reversal of the usual "progressist" interpretation of Marx's dictum, according to which "the limit of capital is capital itself, i.e. the capitalist mode of production." As is well known, this definition of capitalism in terms of its inherent limitation is usually read as an announcement of its inevitable collapse: once the capitalist relations of production become an obstacle to the development of the productive forces, capitalism will come up against a limit it cannot overcome and therefore face its own ruin. For Lacan's as well as for Lyotard's account of capitalism, this structural deadlock, this growing impasse of capitalism, is considered as a stimulus rather than as an impediment to its further development. According to this account then, capitalism itself is nothing but the impasse of growth. By misrecognising how every objection, every obstacle to this pure drive for growth immediately simply provides more fuel for it, how such an attempt at impeding growth, instead of constituting a "way out" of capitalism, comes to be its condition of possibility, all critique of capitalism, be it as radical as Marxism, signals its surrendering, unbeknown, of course, to the impasses of growth.

The preceding remarks seem to be pointing to the following conclusion: all resistance to capitalism is vain, since capitalism is capable of overcoming not only its inherent deadlock but also any attempt at resistance or protest. What then, would a way out of capitalist domination be if all solution seems to become entangled in the growing impasses of the capitalist's drive for growth? Instead of a critique which is, by structural necessity, caught in the vicious circle of the drive for growth, Lacan proposes the following solution:

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<sup>3</sup> See Jean-François Lyotard, *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> See Jacques Lacan, *Television*, p. 28.

“The more saints, the more laughter; that’s my principle, to wit, the way out of capitalist discourse - which will not constitute progress, if it happens only for some.”<sup>5</sup>

How is the position of the saint to be understood in terms of resistance? As evidence that all resistance is illusory? This reading appears to be corroborated by Lacan’s rejection of both a critical and an “ethical” “way out”: the Marxist approach as well as the currently widespread practice of self-accusation that tends to burden thought itself with crimes it has not committed (Nazism, Stalinism, etc.), an idea that has been shared, as is well known, by the later Adorno and the majority of the leading postmodernist and/or poststructuralist thinkers (from Lyotard and Deleuze to Nancy and Lacoue-Labarthe). In response to those who would be taking “all the burdens of the world’s misery on to their shoulders”, Lacan states emphatically: “One thing is certain: to take the misery on to one’s shoulders ... is to enter into a discourse that determines it, even if only in protest.” What Lacan proposes instead is the following advice: those who are “busying themselves at /the/ supposed burdening, oughtn’t to be protesting, but collaborating. Whether they know it or not, that’s what they’re doing.”<sup>6</sup>

Does it mean that Lacan preaches the “heroism” of renunciation and collaboration? Indeed, if we are justified in using this term in connection with resistance, this is only on condition of its radical recasting, which implies the rejection of both classical positions: that of standing up against some immense power, on the one hand, and that of resignation, on the other. Though it may seem that there is no option left, Lacan puts forward a solution which consists, ultimately, in identification with what is left over, with the trash. This heroism, which could be called “the heroism of the trash” and by means of which Lacan designates the position of the saint since, for Lacan, to act as trash means “to embody what the structure entails, namely allowing the subject, the subject of the unconscious, to take him as the cause of the subject’s own desire. In fact, it is through the abjection of this cause that the subject in question has a chance to be aware of his position, at least within the structure.”<sup>7</sup>

What, then, characterises the resistance of the saint-trash, in particular, since for the saint, says Lacan, this is not amusing? According to Lacan, the saint plays the double role of a reminder/remainder: as “a cog in a machine”, the saint, no doubt, “collaborates” in producing an effect of

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

enjoyment, more precisely, the enjoyed-sense /*jouissance*/, as Lacan calls it, on condition that the saint herself/himself does not and cannot participate in this enjoyment. On the contrary, her/his role is to remain a mute witness to this enjoyment; indeed, s/he is that instance which resists enjoyment or, with Lacan, s/he is “the refuse of *jouissance*”.<sup>8</sup>

Lacan’s observations are important for our concerns here because by designating the saint as the site of resistance he clearly indicates that a resistance to capitalism, defined as a drive for growth that knows no limits, *no beyond*, can only be theorised in terms of some resistant instance which is, strictly speaking, neither exterior nor interior, but rather is situated at the point of exteriority in the very intimacy of interiority, the point at which the most intimate encounters the outmost. As is well known, the Lacanian name for this paradoxical intimate exteriority is “the extimacy”. Conceived in terms of extimacy rather than in terms of a pure alterity, resistance therefore consists in the derivation, from within capitalism, of an indigestible kernel, of an otherness which has the potential to disrupt the circuit of the drive for growth.

There have been several attempts to theorise resistance in terms of the indigestible kernel within capitalism itself, that is, in terms of the real. A solution put forward by Lyotard consists in revealing “another libidinal apparatus, still unclear, difficult to identify... in a non-dialectical, non-critical relation, incommensurable with that of *kapital*.”<sup>9</sup> In a typically deconstructive move, Lyotard exhibits what we may call the “complicity” of the two apparatuses. This is evident in the capacity of capitalism to maintain itself by drawing on the intensity of the unconscious drives. On the other hand, capitalism can never entirely subjugate the unconscious drives because their polymorphous perversity (i.e. their inherent unruliness) precludes any attempt to bring this heterogeneous multiplicity under the rule of one principle, to subsume it under the law of the One. On this reading, then, the unconscious drives, while constituting a source upon which capitalism draws, an apparatus that capitalism is fully capable of “exploiting”, remain an insurmountable obstacle for the rule of capital, an instance capable of subverting it; or, in Derridian terms, the libidinal apparatus represents for capitalism its condition of possibility and impossibility.

Basically, what is problematic about this “libidinal” deconstruction of capitalism is precisely Lyotard’s valorisation of the libidinal apparatus for its disruptive, destabilising capacity. As Bill Readings rightly points out, the

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

libidinal apparatus, in Lyotard's reading, "produces a transgression for its own sake which is entirely *indifferent* to the structure it opposes."<sup>10</sup> The price to be paid for this valorisation of the libidinal intensities, is, ultimately, a fall back into a pure alterity between the rule of capitalism and the unruliness of the drives: thus, the libidinal apparatus, instead of being theorised in terms of a relation which subverts the inside/outside opposition, comes to be situated wholly "outside".

Though Lyotard's account is not without its merits, the role that the drives play within the rule of capital, as we shall see, is far more complex and ambiguous than Lyotard wants us to believe. By showing how capitalism, in order to preserve itself, must draw on libidinal intensities, Lyotard presents one side of their complicity with capitalism. What remains completely unworked on in his account is the way in which the drives "parasitise" the apparatus of capitalism; or, put differently, Lyotard fails to show how capitalism itself constitutes the condition of possibility for the functioning of the unconscious drives.

This brings us back to Lacan's somewhat enigmatic expression "the growing impasses of civilisation" by which he, in opposition to Lyotard, who insists on the structural incompatibility between the commensurable law of capital and the incommensurable logic of the drives, tries to expose the structural homology between the logic of capital and the logic of drives. While Lyotard theorises the relationship between the two apparatuses in terms of the repression of the drives and resistance to this repression, Lacan, on the other hand, does it by demonstrating how a satisfaction of the drives is paradoxically procured by repression, exhibiting a perfect agreement between the two apparatuses.

In Lacan's reading, the structural homology and, as a consequence, the complicity between capitalism and the libidinal apparatus is therefore grounded in the fact that all obstacles - more precisely, the renunciation of enjoyment, the blocking of satisfaction - instead of impeding the unconscious drive in its blind search for satisfaction or the capitalist drive for growth, constitute that secret "cause" that sets in motion the search for the "satisfaction" of both drives: the capitalist drive for growth and the unconscious drive. In both cases we are dealing with some surplus, surplus-enjoyment in the case of the unconscious drives, surplus-value in the case of capitalist production, intimately tied to the lack or, rather, to the impossibility of satisfaction. What has been designated by Lacan as the growing impasses of civilisation or the greediness of the superego, is precisely this satisfaction

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<sup>10</sup> See Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard. Art and Politics*, p. 91.

in discontent, in dissatisfaction - that is, in the impossibility to satisfy.<sup>11</sup> The growing impasses of civilisation therefore mark a point where the greediness of the superego and capitalist greed converge; more precisely, they mark the conversion of the growing impasses into the impasses of growth. In the light of this convergence it could be said that capitalism is simply another name for the superego.

Once it is accepted that it is through the intervention of an instance that demands a renunciation that the drives, the capitalist drive for growth included, attain their satisfaction, it becomes clear that Lyotard's solution ultimately consists in proposing, as a means of the way out of capitalism, an apparatus which is caught in the vicious circle of growth, entangled in its impasses, or, put another way, an apparatus that is entirely dominated by the paradoxical dialectics of the renunciation of enjoyment and the production of surplus enjoyment.

In the language of Lacan, it could be said that by assimilating resistance to the drive for growth with what Lacan calls the imperative of enjoyment, Lyotard conflates two modes of resistance: on the one hand, that which could be called the resistance of the superego to being integrated in the subject's symbolic universe, since the superego's imperative, Enjoy! or Produce! Be useful! is experienced by the subject as nonsensical, "mad"; and, on the other hand, the resistance that the subject offers to the superego, this being a resistance that has been elaborated by Lacan in terms of the saint-trash. And it is precisely this confusion of the two modes of resistance, a resistance of the superego with a resistance to the superego, which compelled Lyotard in his later writings to theorise resistance in terms of the Law and the call of justice rather than in terms of the Multiple. Before we move on to a consideration of this shift, we must examine another aspect of resistance: the way it relates to thought.

### *A Sublime, Sentimental Mute*

An intriguing account of the transformation of the relationship between thought and resistance as a direct consequence of the ruin of politics can be found in Jean-Claude Milner's recent book, *Constat*.<sup>12</sup> According to Milner, politics maintains its pre-eminence so long as it is grounded in the conjunction of thought and resistance. What is meant by politics, in this reading, is the

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<sup>11</sup> See Jacques Lacan, *Television*, p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> See Jean-Claude Milner, *Constat*. Paris: Verdier, 1992.

capacity of thought to produce material effects in the social domain, the privileged figure of these effects being the insurrection of the social body. Seen from this perspective, the defeat or retreat of emancipationist politics (in this reading, identified with politics *tout court*) that we have been witnessing for the past two decades signals the incapacity of contemporary thought to translate its effects into resistance.

What is striking about Milner's account is the judiciousness with which the negative implications of the process of dis-union, of the drifting apart of thought and rebellion that we are witness to today, are brought to the fore: thought ceases to be politically subversive; indeed, thought is worth its name only by being conservative, hostile to all forms of rebellion, while rebellion, on the other hand, is true to its nature only by being "brute", unruly. Put another way, thought marks the dissociation from rebellion by its growing powerlessness to produce material effects in the political and the social field, whereas rebellion records its break with thought by turning into a resistance against thought.

The present antinomic relationship between thought and resistance can thus be accounted for in terms of a forced choice between "I am (not)" and "I am (not) thinking".<sup>13</sup> Confronted with the disjunction, according to which I am there where I am not thinking and vice versa, rebellion clearly opts for the "I am" and therefore for the "I am not thinking", suggesting that what is lost in this forced choice in any case is precisely thought of resistance - that is, thought which is appropriate to resistance. This is evident in postmodernist and/or poststructuralist theorising about resistance, insofar as that which is, strictly speaking, a problem (namely, the antinomy between thought and resistance), is proposed as a solution. It should be noted, however, that this idea, according to which resistance is identified by rebellion against thought, is one that has already been announced by Adorno and later picked up and further developed by the contemporary partisans of resistance. Yet this shift of resistance towards unthought is paradoxically accompanied by an almost obsessive concern about the "honour of thinking".<sup>14</sup> In what does this saving

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<sup>13</sup> For further elaborations on the forced choice, see Jacques Lacan, *Logique du phantasme*, unpublished seminar (1966-67).

<sup>14</sup> The most concise definition of the "saving of thought's honour" we owe, of course, to Lyotard. According to Lyotard, this is one of the central stakes of contemporary thought. Consider the following presentation of the problem: "Given 1) the impossibility of avoiding conflicts (the impossibility of indifference) and 2) the absence of a universal genre of discourse to regulate them (or, if you prefer, the inevitable partiality of the judge): to find, if not what can legitimate judgement (the "good" linkage), then at least how to save the honour of thinking." See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend. Phrases in Dispute*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press 1988, p. xii. Translated by Georges Van Den Abbeele.

of thought's honour consist? And how does the saving of honour connect with what it means to think and to resist?

Adorno's answer, which will serve as a model for contemporary postmodernists and/or poststructuralist thinkers, consists in assigning to thought the task of bearing witness to that which resists. On the one hand, this task poses an almost insurmountable obstacle for thought, as it is in the nature of thought, says Adorno, to do violence to that which is other than thought - that is, in Adorno's case, to things. On the other hand, Adorno maintains that thought is neither insensitive nor blind to the wrong done to its other: "While doing violence to the objects of its syntheses," says Adorno, "our thinking heeds a potential that waits in the object, and it unconsciously obeys the idea of making amends for what it has done."<sup>15</sup>

In this reading, the capacity of thought to bear witness to "a potential that waits in the object" would reside in the very splitting of thought between the victimising instance, on the one hand, and the instance which testifies to the inflicted wrong, on the other. What Adorno seems to suggest here is the idea that thought is unable to make "amends for what it has done" to that which tries forever to evade it - the unthought, the ungraspable - unless thought turns against itself; or with Adorno, the resistant thought is, ultimately, "thought thinking against itself."<sup>16</sup> Only then can thought assume the task assigned to it: to bear witness to resistance already operating in the world, and, at the same time, to augment this resistance with a resistance of its own. For Adorno, this resistance proper to thought consists essentially in its refusal to give in; in making it impossible for "a desperate consciousness to deposit despair as absolute,"<sup>17</sup> in a positive manner, the resistance of thought is identified with "the resistance of the eye that does not want the colours of the world to fade."<sup>18</sup> This means that thought must not only turn against itself, to reject its temptation to surrender; it must also "objectivise" itself. Adorno's metaphor of the "lingering eye" provides a particularly good example of what is meant here by the objectivisation of thought: "If the thought really yielded to the object, if its attention were on the object and not on its category, the very objects would start talking under the lingering eye".<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See T.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, New York: Continuum Publishing, 1973, p. 19. Translated by E.B. Ashton. For an inspiring account of Adorno's conception of resistance, see David Toole, 'Of Lingering Eyes and Talking Things. Adorno and Deleuze on Philosophy since Auschwitz', *Philosophy Today*, Fall 1993, Vol. 37, No. 3/4.

<sup>16</sup> *Negative Dialectics*, p. 141.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 404.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 405.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.



What strikes us first about Adorno's remark is the very wording used to designate the way in which thought perceives the resistance of things: instead of seeing, the eye is supposed to *hear* things, since Adorno states explicitly: "things would start *talking under the lingering eye*". Instead of showing to the eye or talking to the ear, as one would normally expect, we have "talking" to the eye.

Adorno's enigmatic remark thus seems to suggest that the "objects do not go into their concepts without remainder,"<sup>20</sup> signalling in this way that there is an insurmountable gap between the objects and their conceptual "envelopes" or, to put it in Lacanian terms, between the real and the symbolic. Essential here, as Adorno himself convincingly argues, is that this "something more" in the object which forever tries to evade all conceptualisation is not accessible as such; rather, it is only through the cracks in the conceptual envelope of things that we get a glimpse of the "talking things". It is at this point that the lingering eye intervenes: for this eye is considered as being endowed with a power to separate or, in Deleuze's terms, with "a 'dissociative force' which would introduce a... 'hole in appearances'... a fissure, a crack."<sup>21</sup> Put bluntly, the cracks are not simply there, waiting to be discovered; rather, they testify to the intervention of the eye. Only then can we say that by focusing on these cracks and fissures, the lingering eye not only exhibits the gap between things and concepts, as that which ultimately belies the subjugating identity imposed by the concept, but also allows us to see the thing in its "becoming", as Adorno puts it. To use Deleuze's no less fitting definition, it exhibits a thing "in its excess of horror or beauty, in its radical or unjustified character."<sup>22</sup>

Instead of staging some fantasy scene of the primal becoming of things in their substantial fullness - a scene in which things expose themselves to our gaze as they "really" are - we will insist that Adorno's theorisation of resistance can only be productive if the idea of such a fullness is discarded. It is true that it is only through cracks espied by the lingering eye in the conceptual envelope of things that we get a glimpse of the "abundance", the reserve of possibilities of what things could have become. Yet these possibilities, as Adorno convincingly points out, are always-already missed opportunities. Thus, to see a thing in its becoming is to glimpse what Adorno calls "the possibility of which their reality has cheated objects and which is nonetheless visible in each one."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> See Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1989, p. 167.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> *Negative Dialectics*, p. 52.

This becoming of things that is, strictly speaking, given only in retrospect, through cracks and fissures in their symbolic envelope, is no doubt a fantasy, a utopia, says Adorno. Nonetheless, this utopia yields hope. This yielding of hope is all the more paradoxical since it is grounded in a fantasy, staging not what a thing could have become but rather what it has failed to become; in short, it is grounded in the thing's failure to become the thing, i.e. in the failed thing.

The evoked failure of the thing as exposed by the lingering eye indicates that the link between the excess of the thing and the dissociative power of the lingering eye is more complicated than may appear at first glance. In Adorno's account, this relationship is represented, enacted, by way of an impossible encounter between the eye and the "talking" things. How are we to account for this "impossible" encounter, an encounter which, because of the incommensurability between the organ of perception and the object of perception, is doomed to failure from the start, and in what way does it relate to resistance?

It is stunning how Adorno's account about thought's bearing witness to the resistance of things seems to anticipate what Lacan theorised in terms of a chasm between the eye and the gaze. As is well known, Lacan, in his efforts to theorise the status of the subject in the scopic field, starts with the assumption that there is a pre-existence of a given-to-be-seen to the seen. In a similar way, by introducing the lingering eye into the picture, Adorno also draws our attention to the fact that, in the scopic field, we are not only the seers who perceive things with our eyes, that is to say, who focus on the concept instead of the thing since, even before the things are looked at by us, they are gazing at us; or, to put it in Lacan's terms, they are showing. Yet we are unaware of this chasm because, normally, we perceive, instead of the things, their "clichés", to borrow Deleuze's term, or, with Adorno, we see them as subjugated, mediated by language, enveloped in the conceptual schemata. Put another way, what we see is how they look; what we do not see is that they also show.

When, then, do things start to show, to provoke our gaze? Only when that which is normally excluded from the picture, i.e. the gaze, is re-introduced into it. This is precisely the function of the lingering eye: the presence of the lingering eye makes it possible for us to take our distance from "normal" perception, to see things in a different light, or, with Adorno, to see them "talking". Thus, strictly speaking, it cannot be said that the things are showing off for the lingering eye; rather, it is the presence of the lingering eye which exposes the showing of things. What Adorno urges us to trace, to

follow, to track is precisely the presence of the gaze in the picture, that which, under normal circumstances, passes unobserved.<sup>24</sup>

But this is only possible if we consider the lingering eye, instead, as an organ of perception, capable of seeing things as they “really” are, as a snare which provokes our gaze. The lingering eye is not there to look for the cracks in the conceptual envelope; rather, it is the cracks themselves, an anomaly in the picture “which is there to be looked at, in order to catch,” says Lacan, “to catch in its trap, the observer, that is to say, us.”<sup>25</sup> The lingering eye is therefore the imagined gaze of the things themselves, yet a gaze endowed with the power to “call us in the picture”, to photograph us. And conversely, insofar as the lingering eye is identified with the “resistance of the eye that does not want the colours of the world to fade”, as Adorno puts it, we could say that the lingering eye is nothing other than our gaze represented as caught, turned into a picture.

In what sense can it be said that the lingering eye is concerned with resistance if, as we have seen, the subject in the scopic field is defined as being under the gaze, as being photographed, in short, paralysed? To answer this question we must return to the relationship between the excess of the things and the lingering eye. The excess of the thing exposed by the lingering eye appears to be ambiguous to the extent that it evokes the cracks, the “hole in appearances”, in short, the void, as it is only through such fissures in the conceptual envelope of things that this excess shows; yet at the same time, its blazing presence, “its excess of horror or beauty”, seems to cover up, to dissimulate this void. This indecidability of the excess, or rather this convergence of the lack and the excess, has implications for our conceptualisation of the way out and of the task of thought.

Rather than reducing it to bearing witness to the excess of the thing, to its resistance, the task of thought consists in exhibiting the thing as a placeholder of the void, since it is only in this way that thought is capable, not only of rendering the installation of things by the “law” of a situation, its particular mode of symbolisation, radically contingent or, to use Deleuze’s term, unjustified, but also of exploring a given situation from the point of view of its inherent void, thus uncovering new, until now unknown, possibilities. This means that while Adorno models the way out on the

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<sup>24</sup> “In our relation to things, insofar as this relation is constituted by way of vision and ordered in the figures of representation, something slips, passes, is transmitted, from stage to stage, and is always to some degree eluded in it - that is what we call the gaze.”

See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, London: Penguin, 1979, p. 73. Translated by Alan Sheridan.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, op. 92.

resistance of the inexhaustible thing, we propose to conceive of it in terms of a double exposure, the exposure of exposure, since it is not enough to uncover in the conceptual envelope of things cracks and fissures through which things in their “excess of horror or beauty” emanate, as Adorno pretends to claim. What is needed in addition is “one more effort”, which consists in exhibiting the void behind this fearful and/or sublime mask of the thing.

Put another way, inasmuch as the way out implies the creation of a new situation, it depends upon a traversing, a shift from the blinding blaze emanating from the thing towards the void that has been dissimulated by this fearful or sublime mask of the thing. Yet it is precisely this second step that Adorno, as well as the contemporary postmodernists and/or poststructuralists, fail to accomplish: blinded by the blaze emanating from the thing, they can only powerlessly testify to that which has shocked them. Illuminating in this context is the way in which Deleuze draws parallels between the position of thought and that of “a seer who finds himself struck by something intolerable in the world, and confronted by something unthinkable in thought. Between the two, thought undergoes a strangle fossilisation which is, as it were, its powerlessness to function, to be, its dispossession of itself and the world.”<sup>26</sup>

The task that Deleuze assigns to thought consists essentially in its passively bearing witness to the intolerable world. However, this passivity, this powerlessness of thought, according to Deleuze, is not to be seen as a sign of inferiority, since this would still point towards all-powerful thought as a lost paradise. Rather, it should become our way of thinking, insists Deleuze, and therefore a means to restore the belief, not in a better or a truer world, as a Marxist critique would have it, but “in a link between man and the world,”<sup>27</sup> or, in Adorno’s terms, a link between thought and things. What is questionable about this conception of resistance is not so much the fact that the saving of thought’s honour converts thought into a passive witness to suffering, as in the convergence of impotence and enjoyment: evidence of such a secret, illicit enjoyment that thought draws on its impotence can paradoxically be found in Lyotard’s elaborations on the differend, perhaps one of the most accomplished theories of resistance.

It is well known that Lyotard is also concerned with remaining faithful to the rupture, the cleft, though he proposes to call it the differend.

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<sup>26</sup> *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*, p. 272.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

It is defined as “a case of conflict between (at least) two parties that cannot be equitably resolved for the lack of a rule of judgement applicable to both arguments.”<sup>28</sup> As a result, no tribunal can resolve the case, either way, without victimising one side or the other, thus rendering them “mute”. In so far as the victim’s (in)capacity to prove a wrong inflicted upon him/her is constitutive of a differend, it could be said that a victim is, indeed, a double victim: s/he has suffered a wrong, yet is unable to prove it, as it is in the nature of the wrong done to him/her to be “accompanied by the loss of the means to prove the damage.”<sup>29</sup>

Crucial to our concern here is Lyotard’s thesis that that which, ultimately, testifies to the differend, to the dis-unity, is a feeling, rather than a concept or a phrase.<sup>30</sup> Such feeling, which Lyotard, following Kant, calls the feeling of the sublime, arises when thought finds itself affected by some overwhelming event without being able to seize upon it. Essential here is that such an encounter which shocks thought’s power to grasp is announced by a paradoxical combination of pleasure and pain, exhilaration and frustration. The co-presence of these violent and ambivalent affects in itself evokes enjoyment, a paradoxical pleasure produced by displeasure. What concerns us here is this enjoyment: more specifically, it is the way in which thought secretly feeds on its impotence as manifested in the posture of a passive spectator overwhelmed by the spectacle displayed before his eyes.

In what follows we will enquire into the implications of thought’s illicit enjoyment as it manifests itself at the level of the constitution of the subject. What is important here is that the subject that concerns Lyotard is not simply given in advance; rather, the subject, as Lyotard is right in pointing out, can only emerge in the process of phrasing the wrong done to a victim or, more generally, in the process in which thought attempts to account for that which has shocked it. And it is precisely at this level that Lyotard’s valuation of the feeling proves to be highly questionable: on the one hand, a differend is

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<sup>28</sup> *The Differend*, RD: Title.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> The most persuasive illustration of what it might mean to testify to the wrong done to the victims and to their incapacity to prove it comes in Lyotard’s remarks on Auschwitz. “Auschwitz” is presented as “a non-negatable negative”, an “indigestible remainder” which, paraphrasing Lacan, “remains stuck in the gullet” of speculative logic. As a consequence, “it is not a concept that results from “Auschwitz”, but a feeling, an impossible phrase, one that would link the SS phrase on to the deportee’s phrase, or vice versa” (D, §104). Feeling thus signals that the very capacity to phrase - this being the capacity to speak and to be silent - has been suspended.

designated as a state in which “something ‘asks’ to be put into phrases, and suffers from the wrong of not being able to be put into phrases right away,”<sup>31</sup> thus indicating that the proper way of dealing with differends is to find the appropriate phrase for expressing the wrong inflicted upon the victim. According to Lyotard, the responsibility of thought lies in “detecting differends and in finding the (impossible) idiom for phrasing them.”<sup>32</sup> On the other hand, by designating “Auschwitz” as a case of a wrong beyond repair, a differend which, by definition, cannot be converted into a litigation (that is, into a repairable damage), Lyotard erects an insurmountable obstacle to the injunction that “every wrong ought to be put into phrases”. To make this point clear it suffices to ask this naive question: which phrase is capable of expressing the differend disclosed by the feeling without betraying it or smothering it in litigation? The only possible answer, of course, is none, as no phrase is capable of translating the wrong done to the victim without distortion. Thus, Lyotard’s ambiguous comment that the feeling is, in itself, the impossible phrase should be read in both senses: as a place-holder of such a phrase and, at the same time, as that instance whose role is precisely to prevent such a phrase from “happening”.

It is precisely at this point that the question of the subject of the wrong arises. For Lyotard, as we have seen, the feeling bears witness to the fact that “an ‘excess’ has ‘touched’ the mind, more than it is able to handle.”<sup>33</sup> In addition, the relationship between thought and that which has “shocked” it, as Lyotard posits it, is an antinomic one: “When the sublime is ‘there’ (where?), the mind is not there. As long as the mind is there, there is no sublime.”<sup>34</sup> This “either/or” alternative clearly marks the splitting of the subject: between the affected entity - namely, that which receives the “blow” - and another entity which testifies to the effects of this “blow”. Indeed, this separation is already evoked in Lyotard’s own enigmatic question: “What is a feeling that is not felt by *anyone*?... if there is no witness?”<sup>35</sup> To whom should we assign feeling, then? And what, on closer examination, is the subject of the differend?

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>33</sup> See Jean-François Lyotard, *Heidegger and “the jews”*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990, p. 32. Translated by Andreas Michel and Mark Roberts.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> See Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Heidegger and “the jews”’: A conference in Vienna and Freiburg,” in *Political Writings*, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993. Translated by Bill Reading and Kevin Geiman.

If the feeling “does not arise from an experience felt by the subject,”<sup>36</sup> as Lyotard maintains, then we might ask where the demand for phrasing comes from. While Lyotard is right in linking this demand for phrasing to the emergence of the subject, thus suggesting that the subject is where there is an attempt to phrase the wrong, he appears to be unable to account for their simultaneity. Basically, the solution put forward by Lyotard can be presented in terms of an irresolvable dilemma: to save the singularity of the differend or the universality of the injunction.

The first option, which insists on the idiosyncrasy of the differend, seems necessarily to condemn a victim to mutism, as the only appropriate expression of the wrong inflicted upon him/her is incommunicable feeling. The problem with this solution resides in the fact that Lyotard, by taking the feeling, the affect, as a criterion of veracity (or, to put it in Lacanian terms, as “that which does not deceive”), Lyotard establishes the body, the suffering matter, as a guarantor of truth, as the Other of the Other. Once the feeling is posited as *index sui*<sup>37</sup>, the injunction that all differends should be phrased is revealed to be an empty one, one which is impossible to satisfy. It is impossible to satisfy, to the extent that a passage through “the defiles of the signifier” necessarily distorts the feeling. If, however, there is no phrasing without the misrepresentation, the “betrayal” of the feeling, this means that a desperate search for the proper phrase is thus revealed to be a barely dissimulated refusal of all attempts at phrasing.

Lyotard’s fear that the feeling of the wrong might be “translated” into an inappropriate phrase (therefore smothered, distorted - in short, betrayed) has radical consequences for the status of the subject: by refusing to assume the distortion that the affect/feeling necessarily endures in the process of phrasing, by refusing to envelope the pain into a phrase, thus making it “speak” in the field of the Other, accessible to others, this pain remains intimate to the victim. And conversely, insofar as Lyotard seems to be unwilling to accept the wrong’s alienation, the fact that it can only emerge in the field of the Other as represented by the signifier, the victim remains forever chained to her/his pain. As a result, the only subject “appropriate” to the differend turns out to be a sentimental, sublime mute, condemned to the role of a “plaything” of the wrong inflicted upon her/him.

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<sup>36</sup> *The Differend*, § 93.

<sup>37</sup> “The feeling is, at the same time, this state and the signalling of this state. The *sensus is index sui*.” See Jean-François Lyotard, ‘Sensus communis’ in *Judging Lyotard*, ed. Andrew Benjamin, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p. 13. Translated by Marian Hobson and Geoff Bennington.

The second solution proposed by Lyotard seems to be no less problematic. The injunction according to which all differends should be phrased, and which is destined precisely to prevent the psychotic, solipsistic solution evoked in the first answer, is valid only on condition that the feeling testifying to it is conceived as universal, transcendental. But this is only possible if there is some transcendental support capable of receiving the “blow”, to use Lyotard’s more general term which later replaced that of the wrong; that is to say, as something ready to be affected. That is to say, the subject must, in a certain sense, already be there, if only as a material, corporeal support: a suffering matter. Lyotard’s conception of the affect thus implies that before there is a subject of the cogito (“I think”) there is a pure capacity of being affected: a “pre-subject”, a “subject in statu nascendi”<sup>38</sup> as Lyotard describes it.

The problem with this, unquestionably victimising conception of the subject, is that by presupposing an original capacity of being affected, that is, by presupposing an instance of a guarantee that the wrong will be received, the subject of the wrong, which emerges in the process of its phrasing, remains ultimately indiscernible, conflated with the suffering matter. Consequently, both options opened up by Lyotard’s dilemma prove to be problematic: though the first option preserves the wrong in its radically unrecognised nature, this is only possible on condition that the wrong inflicted upon the victim remains “unverifiable”, intimate to the victim; the supposition of a universal, transcendental receptivity, on the other hand, annuls the “blow” and/or wrong as a pure effect of surprise.

From this it follows that there is no universal injunction demanding that a wrong should be “treated”, and consequently there is also no original receptivity destined to be affected by the “blow”. Thus, contrary to Lyotard, who attempts to theorise the subject as divided between a pure receptivity destined to receive the blow and the equally passive witness who registers the effects of the blow, we will maintain that the emergence of the subject coincides with the phrasing of the wrong. Seen from this perspective, there is a simultaneous “birth” of both - the subject and the wrong. This co-birth remains radically contingent and precarious, as no preceding demand universally imposes the task of handling the wrong. This simultaneity can only be explained if we bear in mind that the crucial feature of the wrong is its non-recognition or misrecognition. In order to be recognised, a wrong must be brought to light. However, this can only happen retroactively, with the emergence of an entity which not only designates itself a victim of a wrong,

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<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.



but is also capable of giving voice to it; or, in Lyotard's language, an entity which is capable of inventing the "impossible" phrase to express the wrong. The relationship between the wrong and the subject can thus be articulated as follows: while the emergence of the subject definitely presupposes the existence of the wrong, this can be recognised, established as such, only once the subject that designates itself as the subject of the wrong emerges.<sup>39</sup>

What is lacking in Lyotard's account is precisely the subject which would emerge in the process of handling the wrong. But this subject remains unthought to the extent that Lyotard appears to be reluctant to accept such a solution, as it would put into question both his injunction that all wrongs should be phrased, as well as the victimising conception of the subject and, consequently, the division between a mute suffering "human animal," to borrow Alain Badiou's term<sup>40</sup>, and the compassionate gaze.

This fascination with victimisation, with suffering, indicates the complicity between the muteness of the suffering victim and the passivity of the witnessing gaze. This brings us back to "the saving of the honour of thinking". The "saving of the honour of thinking" evokes a division of the subject, but also a paradoxical division which renders the emergence of the subject impossible, as the subject is divided between two objectified instances: seen from the perspective of the "blow", the subject is reduced to its material support, to nothing but a reminder of the mute, animal suffering; seen from the perspective of the injunction of the phrasing of the differends, however, the subject is reduced to a pure gaze witnessing the inflicted wrong. As a consequence, there can be, strictly speaking, no "it happens" for the subject; on the contrary, the subject remains forever a subject to come, a subject "in abeyance", whose emergence is forever differed.

What, we might ask, motivates the saving of the honour of thinking? As already indicated by Adorno, it is the sense of guilt, insofar as the "smallest trace of senseless suffering in the empirical world" produces a sense of guilt (that is, reminds thought of the wrong done to things). On the one hand, thought seems to be guilty in advance, as it is in its nature to ignore, misconceive or misrepresent the wrong done to the victims; on the other hand, the feeling of guilt yields hope, since it testifies to the fact that thought

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<sup>39</sup> It is along these lines that we propose to read Rancière's thesis, according to which political subjectivisation is "the enactment of equality - or the handling of a wrong." See Jacques Rancière, 'Politics, Identification, and Subjectivisation' in *The Identity in Question*, ed. John Rajchman, London and New York: Routledge 1995, p. 67.

<sup>40</sup> For a penetrating (though biting) critique of the victimising conception of the subject, see Alain Badiou, *L'éthique. Essai sur la conscience du Mal*, Paris: Hatier, 1993.

is aware of suffering, as guilt and “nothing else,” says Adorno, “is what compels us to philosophise.”<sup>41</sup>

What is concealed in this ambiguous account, which simultaneously blames thought for its crimes and praises its feeling of guilt, is the way in which thought depends on suffering, since it is this shock which gives birth to the feeling of guilt and, consequently, to thought itself. From what has been said above, it follows that it is not the case that thought can only testify to the victimisation, to the wrong done to the victim, by converting itself into a passive spectator; rather, it is the “impotent”, powerless thought which, by impotently gazing at the suffering, turns the subject into a mute remainder, a human animal that can only express its suffering by feeling, a sentimental mute - more precisely, it is reduced to nothing but a reminder of the wrong inflicted upon it. The victimisation of the subject hence appears to be a direct consequence of the “saving of the honour of thinking”.

Adorno and Lyotard could then be blamed for disregarding the complicity of the powerlessness of thought with victimisation. Put another way, if the theorists of resistance seem to be all too ready to incriminate thought for crimes it did not commit, this is only to exculpate it for the crime it did commit. In its modesty, which, in fact, is immodest, contemporary thought burdens itself with all sorts of horrible, unspeakable crimes, only to conceal the real one: its unwillingness to abandon its posture of a powerless gazer, which, paradoxically, proves to be yet another disguise of mastery, another figure of mastery. This might seem to be surprising, since it is the position of all-powerful thought, as evidenced by Deleuze’s remark, that has been categorically rejected by contemporary thought precisely because of its pretensions to mastery. Where, then, does the mastery of thought lie? Insofar as testifying to the victim’s misery is considered to be thought’s *raison d’être*, it could be said that thought not only reduces the subject to a victim; in addition, by fixing the subject in the role of the eternal victim, thought also prevents the victim from overcoming this state, thus preventing her/him precisely from becoming the subject.

This implies that thought’s guilt lies not where Adorno or Lyotard locate it; rather, it lies in the very position that the thinkers of resistance propose as the “saving of the honour of thinking”. While thought, in its urge to humiliate itself, is ready to sacrifice all its privileges, it is unwilling to sacrifice this position as the mute, compassionate witness of suffering. The problem with this position lies in the way in which thought, by adopting the passive role, comes to constitute and to sustain the victimisation. Put another way,

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<sup>41</sup> *Negative Dialectics*, p. 364.

fascinated by the horrors of victimisation, thought misconceives its own role in victimisation, and therefore its responsibility for that situation. And conversely, it is only by renouncing such a position of a passive witness, which would, no doubt, strike a fatal blow to the “saving of the honour of thinking”, that thought could engage in a practice of resistance whose goal is not to testify to the suffering but, on the contrary, to put an end to it.

The first attempt to account for the shift from emancipation to resistance can thus be conceived in terms of a double defeat: defeated politics is in retreat, while thought, on the other hand, is reduced to being a paralysed witness to victimisation and/or the resistance of the unthought. At this point we might raise a naive, yet obvious question: does the present dissociation preclude all subversiveness of thought, its efficacy in the domain of politics? Could thought still be considered subversive once the site of resistance is located in the unthought? From what has been said so far, it follows that an answer to these questions requires a rethinking of the relationship between thought and resistance, while taking into account the actual state of their dis-unity. Put this way, it appears that both solutions - modernist emancipation and postmodernist resistance - must be discarded from the start. The modernist solution must be rejected because, by insisting on a fidelity to politics, conceived in terms of the conjunction of thought and resistance, politics seems to be converted into a precious treasure, an *agalma*; it ultimately suggests that, in the final analysis, “nothing has happened”. As a result of this denial of the breakdown of the link between thought and resistance, the actual “defeat” of politics is left unthought, unthematized. The postmodernist idolisation of resistance, on the other hand, seems to be no less debatable: though it marks the dissolution of thought and resistance, in the end it simply turns resistance against thought and, as a result, values the moment of the real for its intrinsic capacity for resistance, irrespective of the context in which it operates.

What, then, would count as a solution to the problem once both alternatives are rejected? Does this not leave us in an uncomfortable position of the one “going against the flow”? To this end, i.e. towards the goal of sketching our solution, we shall begin with a brief examination of the last figure of resistance, namely that of the remainder that has no proper place.

“The Jews” and/or “The Saints”: Reminder – Remainder

One of the paradoxes of the ascetic ethics in which the “saving of thought’s honour” is supposed to be grounded lies in the fact that such an ethics is far from immune to enjoyment; rather, the contrary is true. Enjoyment, or more precisely surplus-enjoyment, is paradoxically produced by the programmed failure of the phrasing of the wrong. In what follows, we propose to tie this extraction of surplus-enjoyment to Lyotard’s radical misconception of the affect. This requires a closer look at the knot which links the subject, the Other and the affect, since it is precisely along these lines that Lyotard tries to account for the relationship between “the jews”, as he puts it, and the Law.

Crucial in this respect is his reinterpretation of the Law. In contrast to his earlier writings - where the instance of the Law is conceived as a restriction which limits the free-floating libidinal intensities, the One which strives to subjugate to itself the Multiple - from *Just Gaming* onwards, Lyotard theorises the Law as the place-holder of the Other, i.e. the Law that imposes an obligation which is identified with the call of justice. According to Lyotard, this Law is always already there, yet we do not know what it says, not even from where it comes to us. Yet in spite of that the Law plays the role of the Other that has to be always presupposed and/or invented by our doing and saying. In these terms, one is always in a position of an addressee, of being obliged. One is obliged to act in accordance with the Law, even though the Law does not state what or what not to do. Ultimately, it is up to the subject to decide what the Law demands. The paradox of this enigmatic Law, as Lyotard convincingly argues, resides in the fact that the place of the sender, of the subject of the enunciation of the Law, is left vacant.<sup>42</sup> Where, then, does this obligation come from?

Using Freud’s idea of *Nachträglichkeit*, Lyotard offers an account of how this obligation before the Law may have struck us originally with excessive, overwhelming power, and how it continues to have a hold over us. This implies that the obligation must be considered as a fact, suggesting that the source of this obligation calls to us from a “past” that has never been present. In short, the source of obligation remains unconscious. This original encounter with the Law is unique among events in that it can never be known

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<sup>42</sup> “Only if /the position of the sender/ is neutralised will one become sensitive, not to what is, not even to the reason why it says what it says, not even to what it says, but to the fact that it prescribes or obliges.” See Jean-François Lyotard, *Just Gaming*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1985, p. 71. (Translated by Wald Godzich.)

directly; we only know it from its effects-affects. It is a traumatic experience, of which the subject shattered by it has no memory. Although the original encounter with the Law remains forgotten, the feeling of being obliged points to it nevertheless.<sup>43</sup> As a result, Lyotard urges us to mark repeatedly the memory of that which cannot be remembered, to incessantly record the traces of this traumatic encounter with the Law. This testifying to that which cannot be integrated into our memory, i.e. this preservation of the traumatic experience in its very “impossibility”, is only possible by converting the subject herself/himself into a living monument of the Forgotten. According to Lyotard, this is precisely the destiny of the “chosen” people, “the jews”.

The tradition of Western thought continually tried to deny this obligation before the Law, to forget the Forgotten. This is done by trying to convert, expel, integrate and finally exterminate those to whom that obligation is due. These others are “the jews”, the forgotten, marginalised people of the world. “They are what cannot be domesticated in the procession to dominate, in the compulsion to control domain, in the passion for empire.”<sup>44</sup>

That is to say, “The jews”, as elaborated by Lyotard, play the role of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the representative of the lacking, “originally repressed” representation of “the Law”. By filling out the empty place of the missing representation, the signifier (“the jews”) evokes this void and, at the same time, points beyond it to that which is supposed to fill it out and which Lyotard calls the “Unforgotten”. It is precisely this double role of the evocation of the void and its concealment that converts “the jews” into a remainder which does not find its place within a given community and its symbolic universe. Strictly speaking, their role is to bear witness to the original shock, a traumatic experience of the encounter with the Law. In this sense, “the jews” are that instance which embodies the void of reference of this traumatic experience. They are the reminder of the “first blow” and, at the same time, the place-holder of the lacking representation of this blow. As such, “the jews” occupy the place of an instance whose very instance produces disruptive effects in a given community. “The jews” could then be called the impossible community within a community - more precisely, the real of the community or, quite simply, the real community.

Lyotard is right in trying to tie the quantum of the affect which results from the first, “forgotten” blow to some instance whose role is to embody,

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<sup>43</sup> Thus, “the Forgotten is not to be remembered for what it has been and what it is, because it has not been anything and is nothing, but must be remembered as something that never ceases to be forgotten.” *Heidegger and “the jews”*, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Heidegger and “the jews”*, p. 22.

to positivize, the vacuousness of reference of the affect. What Lyotard fails to see is the fact that “the jews” are not disturbing in themselves, for they are a structural effect of specific, singular constellation. Thus, it could be said that “the jews” become “the jews” in Lyotard’s sense because they occupy the place of a remainder that disturbs the coherence of a given situational regime. For Lyotard, on the contrary, “the jews” seem to play this role irrespective of the situation, since that which constitutes their identity of a reminder-remainder is their specific relationship with the Law: to be the reminder of the call of justice, the keeper of the most precious treasure, the *agalma*. Thus, in the same way in which Lyotard chains the subject-victim to the wrong done to him/her, he also rivets “the jews” to the Law: as a living monument, “the jews” are compelled to testify to the shattering encounter with the Law. With respect to the unforgotten Forgotten, they play the same role as the affects with respect to the wrong.

It is at this point that we can show a distinction between the psychoanalytical elaboration of the affect and that provided by the theory of resistance. Lacan as well as Lyotard are interested in affects only to the extent that they “touch the real”.<sup>45</sup> The point of departure of both approaches is the supposition in which the subject is affected by something indefinite, unanalysable, in short, by something that does not work. However, in opposition to the theories of resistance for whom the affect constitutes the beginning and the end of the process, thus ending up in passage to act, in the conversion of the subject herself/himself in the reminder of that which has affected her/him, Lacan requires that the passage of the affect to the saying, in short, to the signifier. Rather than taking the affect as a criterion of veracity, as we have seen with Lyotard, psychoanalysis puts it into question. That is to say, we are dealing here with what we may call the “imperative of saying”, the injunction to grasp that which, by definition, eludes it, i.e. the traumatic experience of the the “blow” (traumatic in the sense that it radically affects, shatters the subject, thus making it possible for the emergence of a new subject). Yet Lacan’s imperative of “well-saying”, in opposition to the contemporary theorists of resistance who strive to preserve the unsayable, the unrepresentable, at all costs, invites the subject to seize on and say that which cannot be said.

This “well-saying” definitely cannot be conceived in terms of a speculative dialectics, a procedure which “digests” everything that comes its way. What

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<sup>45</sup> Exemplary in this sense is Lyotard’s elaboration of the feeling of the sublime, since it evokes the failure of the power of thought. What is at stake here is the failure, the impasse, to the extent that it evokes the real, that it points to that which forever eludes thought, as Lyotard says, or the symbolic, in Lacan’s terms.

is at stake here is not all-powerful thought; rather, it is thought that passes from impotence and powerlessness to the impossible. And it is precisely by this impossibility that thought “touches the real”, since the real is that mode which manifests itself only through impasse and failures. How, then, are we to account for a “reconciliation” of the real and the symbolic, enjoyment and the signifier? Only by opening space for the real within the symbolic itself. This means that the relationship between the symbolic and the real can only be conceived in terms of extimacy: the real (enjoyment for Lacan) is not wholly “outside”; rather, it is the exterior situated in the very interiority of the symbolic. Thus, instead of saying, as Lyotard does, that the impossibility of representation points to the unrepresentable or, which amounts to the same, that the phrasing of the wrong is structurally impossible, Lacan incites us to say the unsayable, even though the Other of the Other, the guarantor of such a phrasing, does not exist. On the contrary, according to Lacan, the “well-saying” is possible precisely because the Other does not exist, since to express the unsayable involves an invention, a creation of a new idiom which does not exist in the field of the Other. Two conditions must be satisfied in order to invent a new idiom: to evacuate, to empty the substance of the suffering, of the pain; and second, to assume the inexistence of the Other.

Yet it is precisely this inexistence of the Other that Lyotard’s conception of the affect precludes from the very start. At the root of Lyotard’s error lies his conception of the affect as that which does not deceive thus signalling towards the Other. For Lyotard’s subject is wholly dependent on the Other which, although unnameable and enigmatic, is present nevertheless. Thus, it cannot be said that the subject confronts the lack of the Other, for an enigma is not the lack of the Other. In the final analysis, no “well-saying” is possible, for in order to be possible the Other must be suspended, hollowed out. Though Lyotard starts with an unnameable, enigmatic, almost empty Other, he ends up by giving this Other a body, a substance, by riveting the subject to her/his pain, by turning it into a living reminder of the obligation to the call of justice, a living monument of the traumatic encounter with the Law of the Other. This means that, for Lyotard as well as for Lévinas, the subject, insofar as s/he assumes the role of the reminder-reminder, of the witness, remains forever a hostage of the Other.

In what sense can it be said that Lacan, contrary to Lyotard who assigned to “the jews” the role of guardians of the *agalma*, is not duped by the paradoxical functioning of the “objet a”? What makes the saint into that object which is stuck in the “gullet” of the rule of capital, the drive for growth, of incessant production? What makes it possible for the saint to evade the deranged machine of production? It is only the fact that s/he occupies the

position of “useless” trash, a remainder. What this means is that the subject is invited to occupy the position of the object, a position where neither the dialectics of the recognition nor the feeling of compassion with a victim operate or apply, for both of these logics presuppose the existence of the Other, whereas the position of the saint is possible, on condition that the existence of the Other is put into question. By occupying the position of the remainder, of the trash, the subject makes it impossible for the two logics - that of the symbolic and that of the real or, to borrow terms from Rancière’s political theory, that of the police and that of the presupposition of equality - coincide. But the price to be paid for occupying the position of the excessive leftover of that which does not count and which, for that reason, finds no place in the given order, is her/his subjective destitution. Thus, it could be said that the subjectivisation of a given structure or a situation is “paid for” by the conversion of the subject into an object.

Although it might seem that Lyotard also urges “the jews” to assume the position of the remainder and therefore of “subjective destitution”, this is only to remind all the others, not of the inexistence of the Other but of the call of justice, as has been imposed on the subject by the Other. What is at stake in Lyotard’s endeavour is the re-establishment of the reign of the Other, i.e. the Law, rather than its annulment. As a result, “the jews” can never recognise themselves in the “objet a”. That is, no “jew” can identify with the remainder that would evoke both the inexistence of the Other and the vacuous reference of the subject’s desire. Insofar as “the jews” are the guardians of the *agalma*, although the “grave is empty”, there can be no occasion when the “jew”, in opposition to the saint, would say of herself/himself: “Thus, I am that”, namely, useless trash.

How, then, are we to account for the possibility of a way out in the present constellation, characterised by the reign of the domination of capitalist discourse and its drive for growth? Although it is tempting to assign to psychoanalysis the task of opening up the space for resistance, we are reluctant to espouse this solution, especially since Lacan himself predicted the surrender of psychoanalysis to the growing impasses of civilisation. The saint, on which Lacan models the analyst’s refusal to be useful, to surrender to the demands of capitalism, is a singular structural apparatus/effect of the structure rather than a vocation.

Though it might seem that there is a structural homology between the contemporary saint, i.e. the analyst who resists by “doing nothing”, by refusing to satisfy the demand of capitalist discourse to produce and be useful, and the hysterics who resist the existing symbolic order by refusing to assume the role assigned to them by this order, we believe that it would be a serious



error to conflate the resistance offered by the saint with the hysterical “No!” The problem with such a solution, which is premised on hysterical refusal, lies in the very treasuring of refusal for its own sake. What is misconceived by this approach, and this has been clearly pointed out by Lacan, is the fact that the refusal, instead of impeding the drive for growth, sets it in motion. That is to say, the mere refusal of the given order, of the roles and places that have been distributed and fixed by the “police”, to use Ranciere’s term, in itself does not bring about a change in the situation. On the contrary, such an answer may well be expected, if not “orchestrated”, by the “police” itself.

No less contestable is the path of anamnesis, i.e. the approach which strives to keep alive the memory of the intractable, of the Forgotten, be it the Law or Revolution, by converting the subject into a remainder-reminder of the traumatic “blow”, a mute, sublime witness to that which has shattered him/her. Not only is the path of anamnesis illusory, as the cause of the traumatic shattering is, by structural necessity, irretrievable, it also has serious consequences for the subject: the appointed “treasurer”, the keeper of the lost treasure, the subject, remains forever chained to the enigmatic Other, desperately trying to guess what the Other wants from her/him.

Insofar as the two above-mentioned solutions seem to be two sides of the same problem (i.e. the imperative of the continuation of resistance at all costs), we might ask, then, what the “proper” solution would be to the problem of the way out. Since no instance, not even that of the analyst, is predestined to play the role of the privileged site of resistance, the emergence of resistance wholly depends on an incalculable, hazardous, chancy, precarious encounter, on the intervention of some incalculable supplement which Badiou calls the event. It is only in terms of such an unheard-of event that the working-out of a situation in terms of a way out is conceivable. This has radical implications for our understanding of resistance: neither a destiny nor a duty, neither a task nor a right, resistance is “what happens”, i.e. that which is entirely at the mercy, as it were, of the precarious, wholly chancy encounter with the real, or, to use another term, is dependent on the emergence of the event. It could happen, but nothing indicates that it would or should happen, for instance, to this particular subject, or in this particular situation.

Second, this also has consequences for the position of the subject. Insofar as the “blow, the encounter, precedes the subject, and insofar as the subject is not there before the “blow” strikes, it could not be said that resistance is something which “happens” to the subject, since there is no transcendental support, no matter of resistance, to be moulded by the “blow”.

Rather, far from being identified with a “treasurer” of the *agalma*, a keeper of the secret forever chained to the Other, the subject is nothing but the moment in which a given situation is seen in a different light, i.e. from the point of view of the contaminating supplement, a surplus which does not count but which turns everything into a miscount, thus rendering a given situation inconsistent, untotalisable.

At the level of the subject, the only way out should, then, be accounted for in terms of a paradoxical combination of resistance and fidelity, a combination which also calls for a “new” alliance between thought and rebellion. The fidelity at stake here is not to be confused with a fidelity to “the intractable”, to borrow Lyotard’s term, as a place-holder of the *agalma*. Rather, the imperative of the fidelity, which might be spelled out in terms of the ethics of desire (“Do not give in!”) or in terms of the ethics of truth, such as has been elaborated by Badiou and whose fundamental maxim is “Continue!”, aims at that which embodies “nothingness”, the remainder, the place-holder of that which finds no place within a given situation. Although the imperative which demands continuation at all costs is “eternal” and universal, it can only be enacted once the event “happens”, which as such cannot be calculated or prescribed. Hence, it could be said that resistance, insofar as it is combined with fidelity, requires patience.