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Towards a Politics of the Body

Monique David-Ménard*

Comment devient-on citoyen si on le devient ?

Dans la philosophie politique classique et moderne – Hobbes, Kant, Hegel, Marx – on devient citoyen en transformant son enracinement familial et social en existence juridique et/ou politique. Comme l’a fort bien montré Étienne Balibar dans *Violence et civilité* ces transitions présupposent la distinction entre état naturel et droit (Hobbes) ou entre homme privé et homme public ; le passage de la vie familiale à la vie sociale et politique est la « relève » de la société civile par l’Etat (tout particulièrement chez Hegel). La question du politique devient alors celle de la conversion de la violence en Histoire. Cela vaut sans doute aussi chez plusieurs des penseurs qui montrent l’impact des conditions implicites affectant, produisant même dans les Etats de droit, la marge de ceux qui n’ont pas le droit d’avoir des droits. Certaines distinctions classiques restent en effet inchangées, telle celle du public et du privé : pour Hannah Arendt, la naissance et la mort se déroulent sur une scène a-politique. Comme son ouvrage récent – *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*¹ – le développe, c’est précisément sur ce point de la partition privé/public et des données supposées naturellement apolitiques comme être femme ou être juive que Judith Butler critique Arendt.

1. Fin de la construction classique des formes du politique ?

Si les distinctions entre privé et public, entre famille et société, entre société civile et Etat deviennent caduques, si on cesse de poser que les individus naturels sont destinés à l’universel comme seule inscription dans le tout d’une société et d’un Etat politique, comment se déterminent les espaces de la politique ? S’il y a de la « violence inconvertible » en politique, toute la construction hégélienne des rapports entre peuples, sujets citoyens, territoires et états-civils devient non pertinente, tel est l’apport d’Étienne Balibar.

¹ Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 2015.

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Il propose une autre piste : au lieu de partir de l'étagement avec transitions entre individu, famille, société civile et Etat, il convient, pour déterminer les lieux et les formes du politique, de partir de son point d'impossibilité : « Penser la politique à partir de son point d'impossibilité, non pas tant comme une sortie de l'état de nature que comme une disjonction des formes de la violence ultra-objective et ultra subjective »². Rappelons succinctement que par violence ultra objective, Balibar entend soit celle des catastrophes naturelles ou écologiques, soit celle des violences structurelles nécessaires à la reproduction des rapports sociaux et politiques ; Marx en a donné pour le monde moderne le premier exemple en analysant la violence de l'exploitation (économique et politique) des travailleurs, nécessaire à l'accumulation primitive du capital et à sa reproduction élargie. Depuis, cette notion d'une violence structurelle a été étendue à l'analyse des formes de domination de sexe rassemblées sous le nom de patriarcat ou aux formes de domination culturelle qu'on peut rassembler sous le nom de « violence symbolique. »

Par violence ultra-subjective, ou cruauté ultra-subjective, Balibar, qui reprend ici une expression de Lacan³, caractérise les mouvements qui font appel à « une représentation d'individus et de groupes comme incarnations du *mal*, puissances démoniaques menaçant le sujet de l'intérieur, et qu'il faudrait ainsi éliminer à tout prix, y compris en supprimant lui-même »⁴. On pourrait également se référer aux descriptions de Mélanie Klein pour concevoir ce registre destructeur de l'existence humaine inconsciente où la distinction entre soi et l'autre ne vaut pas. Le point d'articulation entre les deux violences est le racisme.

Partir de l'inconvertible de la violence et déterminer comment le politique prend forme lorsque des institutions et des pratiques parviennent à écarter l'une de l'autre les deux formes de violence qu'aucune rationalité étatique et historique ne « relève », a le grand intérêt de se passer, justement, des catégories de la philosophie politique qui ne conviennent plus à l'analyse de l'actuel. Mais ce déplacement implique une précision qui me retiendra aujourd'hui : la politique n'est plus, comme chez Aristote (ou comme en partie chez Hannah Arendt)

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² Étienne Balibar, *Violence et civilité*, Paris, Galilée 2010.

³ Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre X, L'Angoisse*, Paris, Le Seuil 2004, p. 248 et Étienne Balibar, *Violence et civilité*, p. 86.

⁴ Balibar, *Violence et civilité*, p. 86.

au-delà de la nécessité, elle surgit d'une « *disjonction précaire* des modalités, opposées entre elles, suivant lesquelles la vie humaine peut être détruite, et la politique anéantir ses propres conditions de possibilité »⁵.

La politique ne relève donc plus de l'idéal mais de l'immanence des conflits dont la modalité, pour l'analyse conceptuelle, est la contingence.

C'est sur ce point que je voudrais intervenir.

2. Précarité de la politique

Je voudrais mettre à l'épreuve cette affirmation dans plusieurs domaines : le premier est celui des cures analytiques de ceux qu'on nomme frontaliers. Le second est l'analyse des conditions d'une action qui acquiert une portée politique, bien que cette importance lui soit conférée par des facteurs hétérogènes à ce qu'elle visait « par elle-même ».

J'en viens d'abord à ce deuxième « terrain »:

Je vais rapprocher deux textes qui affirment l'un et l'autre ceci : pour qu'un événement soit politique, il faut qu'il mette en connexion des dimensions hétérogènes de la vie sociale que personne ne maîtrise de façon volontaire et consciente. La première approche, vous la connaissez sûrement, est celle de Judith Butler dans les textes qu'elles écrit en 2011, l'année des printemps arabes sur « *Politics of the Street* » : quand une manifestation acquiert-elle une portée politique au lieu d'être seulement un rassemblement d'individus errants ?

Je rappelle que l'une des premières interventions de Butler sur ce thème a eu lieu à l'Université Diego Portales, à l'invitation de Rodrigo de la Fabian en 2012.

L'autre approche est apparemment très différente, elle provient d'un anthropologue-philosophe, Marc Abélès, qui a publié l'an dernier *Penser au-delà de l'Etat*.⁶ Ces deux penseurs ont en commun de réfléchir sur ce qu'est un lieu : lieu du politique comme intersection de diverses dimensions d'un phénomène et es-

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

⁶ Marc Abélès, *Penser au-delà de l'Etat*, Paris, Belin 2015.

pace concret où se déroule une exposition risquée des corps des manifestants, espace concret où un anthropologue établit son terrain. L'une et l'autre disent que le lieu du politique est construit, même s'il fait intervenir un lieu empirique : l'espace d'une ville où risquer la fragilité de son corps (chez Butler) ou le terrain d'intervention dans une société que l'anthropologue dérange (Abélès).

Rappelons donc d'abord comment Butler s'éloigne de Arendt sur « la politique de la rue ». La définition même du politique change lorsqu'on critique l'idée arendtienne selon laquelle son corps de femme comme le fait qu'elle est née juive seraient une donnée naturelle qui n'apparaît pas dans l'espace public. L'espace public est celui où tout ce qui est « donné » doit apparaître dans la dimension de la pluralité des opinions, des débats, des décisions. Or, Arendt a elle-même défini le politique en affirmant que les habitants d'un lieu n'étaient pas « naturellement » citoyens. La production constante d'exclus par les Etats-Nations au 19^{ième} siècle oblige à poser un « droit d'avoir des droits » qui, sans être naturel, n'est justement pas inclus dans –, ni pensé par le système juridique des démocraties. En jouant Arendt contre Arendt, Butler montre qu'à travers la construction du lieu de la « politique de rue », il s'agit de remettre en cause le présupposé que le corps, physiologique et genre, serait « privé » et aussi la distinction du privé et du public. Butler nous fait réfléchir sur ce qu'est un lieu en montrant d'abord qu'internet rend le lieu mobile, accentuant le paradoxe qu'Arendt avait commencé à décrire : une manifestation politique a besoin d'un lieu mais en même temps il s'agit de produire le politique comme lieu. Ensuite, Butler ajoute que la mise en jeu des corps vivants dans leur précarité peut transformer un rassemblement errant en un lieu du politique. Ce lieu n'existe pas avant les alliances qui se nouent entre des dimensions hétérogènes : les *media* modifient l'importance de la localité puisque le fait de transmettre des informations ailleurs et loin fait partie de la construction de l'espace. Cela n'annule pas l'importance du lieu où se risquent les corps exposés, mais cela met ces derniers en relation avec des facteurs différents de ceux qui les ont amenés à manifester dans un espace public : parce que les transgenres manifestent à Ankara ou à Londres et Berkeley avec d'autres acteurs sociaux, une « ligne d'erre » s'affirme qui proteste contre les agressions non seulement policières mais aussi militaires, mettant en jeu, précisément le caractère exclusif, y compris pour les minorités sexuelles, des nationalismes :

Alliances that have formed to exercise the rights of gender and sexual minorities must, in my view, form links, however difficult, with the diversity of their own population and all the links that implies with other populations subjected to conditions of induced precarity during our time.⁷

L'errance comme précarité et exposition des corps rassemblés se détermine, du point de vue de la logique des situations politiques, en nouage contingent des dimensions qui créent un lieu politique: l'errance qualifie la précarité des corps qui s'assemblent pour faire exister le droit d'avoir des droits sans garantie préalable à ce que Butler nomme *l'enacting*. Ces corps ne maîtrisent pas ce qu'ils font. La contingence caractérise le type de rapports qui se nouent entre des dimensions hétérogènes de l'événement. Ce qui fait l'événement, c'est l'hétérogénéité des relations nouées sur fond d'errance. Ou plutôt, l'hétérogénéité maintenue des composantes de l'événement est la confirmation de l'errance lorsqu'elle se transforme.

Dans une discussion avec Butler, je voudrais avancer ceci : si on insiste trop sur le fait que l'assemblée des corps est l'exercice d'une liberté des vivants précaires (Agamben), on néglige l'essentiel : l'événement a une portée politique grâce à l'hétérogénéité non maîtrisée des rapports qui se créent entre les facteurs sociaux et historiques de ces manifestations, ce qui est autre chose. Reprenons l'exemple des manifestations transgenres à Ankara en 2010. Judith Butler note ceci : ce qui fait sortir cette manifestation d'un rassemblement errant d'individus c'est que la liaison entre lesbiennes, transgenres, militants des droits de l'homme, crée un nouvel espace de protestation contre la violence que subissent les transgenres ou les gays autant en Louisiane ou au Wyoming qu'en Turquie. Mais il y a plus : « So on the street, after the conference, the feminist lined up with the drag queens, the gender queer with the human rights activists, and the lipstick lesbians with their bisexual and heterosexual friends – the march included secularists and muslims »⁸. Ce que Butler ne dit pas, c'est que, précisément, cette capacité de transformer un lieu errant en un fait politique tient ici au fait que la Turquie a, historiquement, une histoire privilégiée avec le nationalisme : Mustapha Kemal Atatürk a laïcisé le pays de façon révolutionnaire, nationale et autoritaire. L'actuel président Erdogan fait de la religion

⁷ Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, p. 66. Voir aussi p. 130.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

musulmane un trésor national. De fait, en Turquie, nation musulmane mais pas arabe, qui a chassé successivement les chrétiens et les juifs, exterminé les Arméniens et qui combat les Kurdes, la religion est comme une marque de plus du nationalisme. N'est-ce pas cela qui a donné à cette conférence sur le transgenre sa portée politique : le mélange, en soi précaire, des transgenres et des militants des droits de l'homme dans la rue change le caractère même du nationalisme où se produit « l'Assemblée ». Car la question des genres crée un lieu politique, grâce à la mobilisation des composantes hétérogènes rassemblées.

Une ontologie fondamentale de la précarité et de la liberté risque de méconnaître cette contingence qui fait de toute liberté une liberté sous conditions multiples. Peut-être même qu'une anthropologie philosophique de la précarité rapporte trop vite l'errance des corps à un fondement ontologique qui empêche de penser la contingence d'une situation sur fond d'errance dans un événement politique. Il n'y a pas de fondement ontologique qui serait encore une garantie qu'une manifestation de rue est bien reliée à ce qui fait l'essence des vivants. Certes, Butler est bien consciente de l'insuffisance de la relation directe entre les exclus de la citoyenneté et les vivants de la vie nue :

Just to be clear: I am not referring to a vitalism or a right to life as such. Rather I am suggesting that political claims are made by bodies as they appear and act, as they refuse and as they persist under conditions in which that fact alone is taken to be an act of delegitimation of the state. It is not that bodies are simply mute life-forces that counter existing modalities of power. Rather, they are themselves modalities of power, embodied interpretations, engaging in allied actions. On one hand, these bodies are productive and performative. On the other hand, they can only persist and act when they are supported by environments, by nutrition, by work, by modes of sociality and belonging.⁹

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Au contraire, mettre en lumière la contingence dans la création d'un lieu du politique respecte les facteurs sociaux et historiques.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

3. L'anthropologie comme intervention politique sous condition de précarité

Sur ce fait que l'errance est liée à la précarité des événements politiques, Marc Abélès rejoint Judith Butler. Comment sa réflexion sur l'apport de l'anthropologie à la politique au-delà de l'Etat rejoint-elle ce thème de l'errance qui, seule, peut faire l'événement politique ? Abélès s'appuie à la fois sur Rancière et sur Foucault pour *Penser au-delà de l'Etat*. Rancière, on le sait, distingue la police (l'administration d'une collectivité) de la politique qui est le surgissement public et explicite d'une revendication qui rend soudain efficace l'affirmation de l'égalité de tous malgré les hiérarchies et la domination. Il désigne dans ce moment an-archique la source vive de la politique. Foucault insiste sur le fait que le pouvoir ne se réduit jamais à une domination mais qu'il est un effet d'ensemble produit par des relations. Même le pouvoir d'Etat est « un effet mobile » et ne se réduit pas au rapport univoque du dominant et du dominé. Penser Foucault et Rancière en même temps, tel est le propos de Abélès, permet de montrer comment l'anthropologie concerne toujours une situation politique, aussi bien dans les micro-sociétés où interviennent les anthropologues que dans les organismes internationaux comme l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce où du politique, au sens de Rancière, se crée, lors de discussions apparemment purement économiques.

Voici d'abord un exemple de micro-politique ou de politique moléculaire, qui précise en quoi la présence d'un anthropologue est une intervention qui définit un lieu politique. Dans un long séjour en Ethiopie méridionale, chez les Ochollo, Abélès avait participé à de nombreuses fêtes et rituels. A la fin de son séjour, les anciens lui demandent d'organiser lui-même une fête et un grand repas pour ses hôtes, selon les coutumes. Mais le jour dit, personne ne vient et finalement il fait appel aux castes dépréciées, celle des potiers et des tanneurs, pour que le festin préparé ne se perde pas. Un dignitaire lui dit cependant que l'initiative a rencontré l'hostilité des citoyens, en particulier des jeunes qui estimaient que la fête s'adressait exclusivement aux anciens. L'anthropologue est banni, prié de quitter Ochollo où il a semé le trouble. Il demande alors, conformément aux usages Ochollo qu'il avait appris à connaître, qu'on lui applique la procédure de bannissement au cours de laquelle les dignitaires viennent rituellement fermer la porte de la maison du citoyen banni. Au cours de cette assemblée, l'accusé s'expliqua longuement et sa présence officielle fut validée. C'est donc à partir

d'un trouble à l'ordre social, d'un point d'errance et d'anomie, qu'un lieu politique se constitue comme une scène faite de malentendus et conflits explicités puis de positions négociables. Le terrain d'un anthropologue ne désigne pas seulement l'espace lointain où il s'établit, mais la scène de mésentente (et pas seulement d' « observation participante ») qui parfois se crée :

on voit que par sa simple présence, comme singularité intervenante, l'anthropologue intrigue plus qu'il ne rassure... Qu'elle soit perçue comme carrément intrusive ou matière à négociation, la relation est de part en part politique, non pas au sens où l'anthropologue partagerait une citoyenneté commune, ou s'engagerait aux côtés des gens parmi lesquels il se trouve, mais parce que cette position particulière, intrusive, intervenante, loin d'objectiver l'ordre et un système de places, est surtout propre à l'inquiéter, à le déstabiliser.¹⁰

Un tel lieu, qui n'est plus pris dans l'opposition de l'Etat comme totalité et des sphères seulement partielles de la vie sociale, peut aussi se créer dans la société mondialisée et plus précisément à l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce. Lors de la crise qui, à partir de 2000, affecta les cours du coton à l'échelle internationale, quatre pays¹¹ d'Afrique, le Bénin, le Burkina Faso, le Mali et le Tchad organisèrent un théâtre politique, une scène sur laquelle pouvait se débattre la question en elle-même trop générale de l'inégalité entre pays riches et pays pauvres : ces quatre pays assignèrent les Etats-Unis et l'Europe devant un tribunal car ils violaient les lois de la concurrence, pourtant principe de base de l'OMC. En effet, ils subventionnaient fortement les producteurs de coton pour que les pays africains ne prennent pas l'avantage lors de la baisse des cours de cette matière première. De plus, les Etats-Unis défendaient à l'OMC une politique d'aide au développement des pays pauvres qui maintenaient ceux-ci dans une position d'assistés alors que les pays africains se réclamaient, eux, des lois du commerce c'est-à-dire de la concurrence et non pas d'une aide au sous-développement. Au sein d'une organisation internationale et dans des questions qui paraissent uniquement économiques, il est donc possible de construire une scène politique, c'est-à-dire une scène d'égalité, si on renonce à l'idée que ce

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¹⁰ Abélès, *Penser au-delà de l'Etat*, p. 100–101.

¹¹ Marc Abélès signale que le Brésil, de son côté, assigna plusieurs Etats devant une juridiction internationale. Il eut gain de cause, mais finalement le Brésil laissa tomber et ne fit rien de sa victoire judiciaire. Les quatre Etats d'Afrique poursuivirent alors.

lieu ainsi créé sera révolutionnaire et définitif ; Peter Hallward, par exemple, a critiqué *La Méésentente* de Rancière, arguant qu'il s'agissait d'une conception anarchique rendant le politique précaire¹². Abélès répond que justement, c'est cette ressource de précarité c'est-à-dire d'errance, non pas ontologique mais investie dans une situation à multiples composantes hétérogènes, qui fait exister un lieu politique.

En ce sens, et hors des théories prisonnières du face à face entre la souveraineté de l'Etat et la production des exclus, ce point d'errance permet de penser l'immanence du politique au social et non pas sa transcendance comme dans l'opposition entre la société civile et l'Etat.

4. Errance, précarité et savoirs en psychanalyse

Ces considérations sur une conception non ontologique de la précarité permettent enfin de faire apparaître une grande proximité de méthode entre anthropologie et psychanalyse : l'analyste et l'anthropologue interviennent dans une situation non pas comme « observateur participant » et « sujet supposé savoir », mais comme déstabilisateurs. Pour l'anthropologue, un système de places est troublé par sa présence non choisie par la société où l'intervenant s'installe. Pour l'analyste, comme le dit l'expression lacanienne de désir de l'analyste, occuper cette place provoque à une forme de répétition.

Sur la relation entre précarité, errance et dégageement par le transfert d'une forme dans la précarité, je voudrais d'abord me référer à une situation clinique.

Elle concerne plus particulièrement sans doute ceux qu'on peut nommer les frontaliers, et pour qui plus nettement que pour d'autres, l'invention d'une forme de vie ne peut que suivre des lignes immanentes, toujours proches des points d'impossible. La manière dont se sont liés pour eux le désir sexuel et les rapports aux êtres humains s'est produite sur un mode « aberrant » et difficile, impossible à vivre pour eux : ils échouent à créer dans leur existence et dans leur langage aucun compromis entre l'amour absolu et la destruction, ce qui amène des passages sans transition entre la violence et la honte d'être là. Jusqu'à quel point peut-on favoriser la production de régularités internes qui

¹² Abélès, *Penser au-delà de l'Etat*, p. 84.

donnent une configuration à leur errance qui se heurte périodiquement aux mêmes impasses insolubles ?

Je pense à une patiente, celle dont j'ai parlé dans le prologue de *Deleuze et la psychanalyse*¹³. J'insistais alors sur le fait qu'après des années de mutisme complet, lorsqu'elle se remit à pouvoir parler de ses rêves, ceux-ci montraient des espaces disloqués et des temps où la continuité n'était pas possible : elle rêvait de tentes (ces maisons de toiles pour le camping) qui n'étaient pas en face l'une de l'autre parce que « en face n'existe pas », disait-elle. Ou encore, elle se trouvait dans une mer chaude où elle nageait avec plaisir mais l'eau refroidissait de plus en plus et jamais le chaud ne pourrait revenir. Et elle était alors à l'extérieur et voyait la limite entre froid et chaud ; les eaux ne se mélangeaient pas. Il m'est arrivé de rencontrer cette jeune femme dans les rues de Paris : elle longeait les murs comme si elle ne pouvait se situer dans l'espace commun. Pourtant c'est une marcheuse, elle aime errer dans les rues de la ville ou découvrir des espaces lointains qu'elle apprend, seule, à arpenter. Elle ne peut entrer en contact avec les autres que par l'intermédiaire d'espaces inconnus ou alors par la médiation d'instruments techniques qu'elle maîtrise. Il lui faut du non-vivant pour aborder les vivants et cet abord doit pouvoir à tout moment se défaire.

Tout récemment, au retour de trois semaines à pied sur les routes d'un chemin de grande randonnée, elle revient à sa vie parisienne et fait le rêve suivant : elle est sur un chemin et doit aller chercher une voiture ailleurs, mais elle ne retrouve pas l'itinéraire. Au contraire, elle se met à descendre dans un sous-sol bizarre, où il y a une échelle d'acier avec des barreaux enchevêtrés comme dans un labyrinthe et elle ne parvient plus à avancer. Pourtant, il y a un jeune homme plus loin, qui semble pouvoir avancer sur cette échelle. Il se trouve dans l'ombre. Ce n'est pas un rêve trop pénible comme ceux qu'elle faisait avant ; ni horrible ni trop angoissant. Seulement *déconcertant* ajoute-t-elle en précisant bien le mot.

C'est plutôt moi qui suis découragée en entendant le récit de ce rêve : son cheminement sur les routes, avec des rencontres imprévues et provisoires dans les gîtes lui ont procuré un grand plaisir, ont redonné à son corps une aisance perdue depuis la ménopause. Or, en rentrant à Paris, elle retrouve en rêve toujours

¹³ Monique David-Ménard, *Deleuze et la psychanalyse. L'altercation*, Paris, P.U.F. 2005.

la même errance, intransformable. La différence avec l'époque où j'ai rédigé le texte concernant sa cure, c'est d'abord qu'elle a repris la parole, et ensuite qu'elle peut préciser que cette impasse dans laquelle elle se trouve est « déconcertante » et non plus terrifiante. De plus, le plaisir qu'elle prend à cheminer est lié à l'imprévu de rencontres sans lendemain. Fernand Deligny, dans ses œuvres complètes, reproduit des « lignes d'erre » du jeune « Jeanmari » : toutes les lignes sont en connexion, elles dessinent des trajets qui aboutissent à des cercles mais ces cercles sont tous reliés, ils ne s'interrompent jamais. Deligny commente : il n'y a de place pour aucun imprévu. Ma patiente n'en est plus là : elle chemine sur des chemins balisés, mais à la condition de ne pas savoir où elle va s'arrêter ni quelle direction elle prendra le lendemain. Elle a apprivoisé l'imprévu et cela lui permet de vivre bien ce qu'il y a en elle d'errant et qu'elle transforme en itinéraire aléatoire et en socialité qui doit rester fragile. Mais à son retour à Paris, cette errance inventive de l'été se transforme à nouveau en impasse dans un labyrinthe. Elle retombe toujours sur un impossible dans le tracé de ses chemins. Et cela est d'autant plus net que le labyrinthe de cette nuit-là est en fer alors que tous les villages qu'elle a traversés pendant sa marche estivale étaient, dit-elle, construits dans de très belles pierres. Parfois même, elle restait deux jours dans un gîte, tellement l'endroit était beau. Deux nuits elle a dormi dans une chapelle construite en cercle au-dessus d'une autre église etc... Ce qu'elle aimait aussi, parce que cela frôle l'absurde, c'est que les marcheurs allaient toujours dans le même sens ! Personne en sens inverse : un chemin où on ne se croise pas. Il y avait bien une raison car ce chemin est le chemin d'un pèlerinage, mais ce qui lui plaît, c'est le point d'absurdité. Pour elle qui est sans religion, la prise en charge de l'errance par une socialité religieuse la fait sourire, elle se sent très étrangère mais cela lui convient justement. L'espace était habité d'une manière qui lui permettait d'avoir avec les autres des relations fugaces et agréables, les seules qu'elle peut vivre. Le labyrinthe de fer et l'échelle embrouillée du rêve reviennent à la dureté de l'errance.

Si l'errant rencontre d'autres chemins que celui qu'il suivait, comment se passe la rencontre ou le croisement des itinéraires? C'est peut-être cela la question qu'il faut poser. Le savoir, ses échecs et ses réussites, ne surplombent pas le tracé des expériences. Peut-être la seule mesure immanente aux expériences est-elle alors la rencontre d'expériences hétérogènes.

L'analyste, en accueillant le transfert, prend avec le patient le risque d'une répétition de ce qui le fait souffrir et jouir, d'une manière qui s'est révélée invivable. Dans *Eloge des hasards dans la vie sexuelle*, je m'appuyais sur le Foucault des énoncés et des pratiques discursives pour repenser le transfert comme transposition active des impasses de la vie sexuelle sur la scène, autrement constituée, de la cure. Sans connaître le travail de Abélès dont le livre de 2014 n'était pas encore écrit, j'aurais pu écrire comme ce dernier :

On pourrait dire que la position de l'anthropologue (ou du psychanalyste) est une position d'intersection, il se trouve projeté au croisement des trajectoires de ses interlocuteurs, dans une pure contingence, au point que ceux-ci se demandent à tout moment pourquoi il est là, quel est son projet et ne se font pas faute de le lui faire savoir... Il peut être défini comme une singularité d'intersection¹⁴.

Cette formulation est presque identique à celle par laquelle je décrivais la scène psychanalytique en 2011:

Si l'on s'en tient à dire que l'analyste occupe la place d'un sujet supposé savoir, on ne comprend pas comment ce dernier peut déchoir de la position idéale où l'installe son analysant(e). On ne comprend pas alors comment l'analysant(e) récupère et transforme sa mise pulsionnelle, en quelque sorte. *L'analyste est plutôt un carrefour entre des lieux qui donnent une configuration à la vie sexuelle de l'analysant dans ses diverses modalités* : répétitions, sublimations, rencontres. Ce n'est pas par la maîtrise de toutes les composantes qu'agit l'analyste, mais par le déchiffrement des règles immanentes qui s'établissent entre elles, et par le discernement de sa place dans *le système non déductif* de rapports entre ces lieux.¹⁵

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Une formation discursive chez Foucault est un système d'énoncés liant des institutions des savoirs, des conditions matérielles, l'ensemble des composantes formant un « domaine associé ». L'ensemble des lieux dont le transfert permet l'entrecroisement forme le « système associé » de cet énoncé qu'est le déploiement d'une subjectivité dans les conditions de la cure.

¹⁴ Abélès, *Penser au-delà de l'Etat*, p. 94.

¹⁵ Monique David-Ménard, *Eloge des hasards dans la vie sexuelle*, Paris, Hermann 2011, p. 213.

Pour Abélès, la précarité du lieu politique qu'est un « terrain » est lié à la réunion contingente des facteurs qui peuvent modifier un rapport de forces dans les événements micro-politiques (la présence d'un anthropologue dans une société où il s'impose comme un étranger) ou supra-étatiques (le commerce du coton dans l'Organisation Mondiale du Commerce). La théorie de l'Etat comme centralisant tous les pouvoirs aurait donc pour fonction de masquer la dimension erratique et contingente des événements qui se révèlent politiquement décisifs... pour un temps. En même temps, dit Abélès, l'anthropologie est apte à faire comprendre en nos temps de crise des philosophies politiques que *toute politique est locale* ; je dirai de la psychanalyse la même chose : elle est une politique comme lieu justement parce qu'elle construit un site pour l'errance. Mais peut-être permet-elle aussi de préciser la place du savoir et du non savoir dans cette localisation de l'errance subjective. Car elle a affaire au savoir et à la suspension de savoirs dans la répétition, mais par un biais très particulier : les nœuds du sens et du non-sens. Sans doute faudrait-il maintenant reprendre toute la question de la contingence à partir de diverses manières dont le non-sens intervient en psychanalyse. Ce serait un autre exposé, mais on a l'intuition, déjà, des rapports à l'errance, le non-sens et les lieux dans le premier exemple que j'ai donné : lorsque l'errance se radicalise, l'espace et le temps se disloquent et l'arrimage au langage se fait alors non plus par la polysémie ou l'ambiguïté mais par le plaisir ou la jouissance de l'absurde.

Il faudra explorer (j'ai commencé seulement à le faire dans le chapitre VII) les rapports entre non-sens, lieux et formes. Et c'est sans doute sur ce point que la psychanalyse qui n'est pas en elle-même une politique puisqu'elle a affaire toujours à des singularités individuelles et non pas collectives, peut apporter au moins des instruments à l'analyse des situations politiques.

Pour conclure

Je voudrais pour finir ou pour commencer notre discussion revenir à la question de départ : faut-il dire qu'on devient citoyen à partir d'autres appartenances ? Car dans les exemples politiques, dans ces exemples que prend Abélès lorsqu'il explique en quoi l'anthropologie est un lieu politique car elle intervient dans une situation dont elle dévoile, trouble les règles et les redéfinit sans avoir une position dominante, il montre que nous ne sommes pas dans la situation héglérienne : ce n'est pas le savoir en lui-même qui est l'élément grâce auquel une

errance se résout et elle ne se résout pas par correction d'erreurs. Il parle de la précarité et de la contingence de l'intervention de l'anthropologue. De l'immaîtrisable dans la rencontre entre des facteurs hétérogènes. Et du fait que pour lui comme pour Foucault tout savoir est en situation de pouvoir. Il me semble qu'il convient d'en dire plus ou un peu plus pour comprendre comment une impasse peut se transformer sans que le savoir (ou la conscience de soi chez Hegel) soit posé comme le ressort de la transformation. Certes, l'hétérogénéité des facteurs mis en rapport intervient pour créer un nouvel espace, mais si on dit seulement cela, l'issue de la transformation est laissée au hasard. L'exemple de la cure analytique permet d'en dire un peu plus : car c'est le fait que les impasses de la vie sexuelle se répètent *en se transposant* sur une autre scène qui permet à ce théâtre de trouver ses normes immanentes. Dans un événement politique, il y a la création d'un rapport entre des dimensions hétérogènes qui permet à un rassemblement errant, ai-je dit avec Butler, de prendre une forme qui va au-delà des composantes séparées sans pour autant dépendre d'une instance transcendante qui saurait dans quel sens orienter l'événement. Le prix à payer est une certaine précarité de l'événement.

En psychanalyse, ce n'est pas non plus le savoir qui maîtrise le jeu, l'analyste n'est pas seulement « sujet supposé savoir ». Ou plutôt il est bien sujet supposé savoir mais la possibilité du processus de transformation ne tient pas seulement au fait que l'analyste, comme le Socrate du *Banquet* de Platon, sait qu'il ne possède pas les objets fascinants qu'Alcibiade ou le patient hallucine en lui. Le processus d'une analyse n'est pas d'abord la désillusion d'un savoir prêté à l'Autre. C'est la répétition d'une impasse dans des conditions nouvelles que l'analyste a la responsabilité de produire sans pour autant en maîtriser le cours. Comment telle souffrance va-t-elle pouvoir se transformer ? Un mode de jouissance s'inventera-t-il un autre destin ? Ce qui décide du chemin est, certes, le vide produit par le fait que l'analyste n'impose pas une norme qui serait un savoir comme le point de vue du « pour nous » chez Hegel : il cadre d'avance les expériences de la conscience en disant, même de façon programmatique, où elle va. Mais ce vide est une condition nécessaire et non suffisante, de même que l'hétérogénéité des dimensions de l'existence mise en rapport de façon inédite. On pourrait dire, si on veut donner au savoir un rôle qui ne soit pas celui de maîtriser les processus à l'œuvre dans une cure, que ce sont les jeux du sens et du non-sens dans les formations de l'inconscient (actes manqués, rêves, lapsus, interprétations, interventions etc...) qui indiquent les voies de transformation

des difficultés et des impasses de la vie sexuelle. En particulier, le non-sens ou la suspension du sens dans les ambiguïtés du discours est toujours une *bi-furcation* en analyse. Le transfert, (comme une manifestation politique ou la présence d'un ethnologue) crée un site qui ne reconduit pas seulement à une précarité mais qui fait des conditions et des matériaux des symptômes le levier d'une transformation grâce à cette affinité du non-sens et de l'espace. Le processus n'est pas maîtrisé par un savoir, mais il n'est pas errant. On peut assez précisément décrire les conditions et les limites de son pouvoir.

On peut dire en effet avec Abélès que toute politique, y compris étatique¹⁶, est locale. Et c'est pourquoi ces « sciences humaines » qui sont des interventions ont quelque chose à apporter à la philosophie politique.

¹⁶ Il s'agit, non pas de considérer que l'Etat n'existe plus, ni même comme le dit Foucault que la représentation, la souveraineté et la légitimité sont des notions obsolètes au regard de la gouvernementalité. Il faut au contraire considérer que les politiques étatiques relèvent elles-mêmes d'une analyse anthropologique en terme de lieux de pouvoirs, et de composition entre l'immanence du politique dans de multiples sphères de la vie sociale et les aspects de croyance que convoque « l'Etat » dans des conditions à décrire : « L'anthropologie des espaces politiques, qui s'attache à réinscrire le "terrain" dans un ensemble ramifié et englobant de pouvoirs et de valeurs, offre aussi le moyen de penser l'Etat "vu d'en bas" à partir de pratiques territorialisées des acteurs locaux, qu'il s'agisse des politiciens, des gestionnaires ou des simples citoyens. » Marc Abélès, *Anthropologie de la globalisation*, Paris, Payot et Rivages 2008. Édition de poche 2012, pp. 143-144.

Patricia Gherovici*

Clinic of the Clinamen: The Materiality of the Symptom

My clinical work with analysands who have changed sex has allowed me to understand that they had a very peculiar relation to their bodies. Everything took place as if the imaginary of their bodies had disappeared, like an open envelope letting go of its contents. While it is obvious that the Real of the body is the stuff of concrete physical matter, the materiality of the body is another matter altogether. When someone changes sex, such transformation implies that the materiality of the body, which one may believe could have been defined by organs that are more or less visible, is a materiality not given but constructed. Anatomy, with its chromosomes, gametes, and genitalia, becomes then part of a mythical real that acquires signification only on a second stage, when the values of the sex assigned at birth are structured and a sexual positioning is assumed. For psychoanalysis, sexual difference is neither sex nor gender. Sex needs to be symbolized. Gender needs to be embodied. To have a sexual body means reaching what we may call a second materiality. The materiality that is required to accomplish this is that of the letter. The letter gives a consistency to the knot that holds together the body on the three structural registers and allows for a new distribution of jouissance.

My thoughts are based on my clinical work as well as on my reading of some memoirs written by people who have changed sex, both perspectives made me conclude that for the body “to hold,” a second materialization needs to take place; this is accomplished by way of torsions knotted by writing. Lucretius’ notion of the “clinamen” will allow me to explore trauma in a new light. I’ll give two clinical cases that illustrate the evolution of the symptom from a metaphor to an “effect of the Symbolic in the Real”. One case is an artist who finds a way of enjoying her unconscious, which brings a solution to her gender trouble; the other case is a transsexual man who uses scientific writing as a way of holding his body together and with it, of building a sexual identity. These cases point to the new materiality of the symptom.

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My general thesis is that Lacan moves from a theory of the signifier, that is to say, from language in the form it is accessible to psychoanalysis which is the theory condensed in the formula “The unconscious is structured like a language” towards a theory of the symptom as it is developed under the frame of the dialectic materialism. This is why Lacan proposed that Marx and not Freud introduced the notion of symptom¹. Such notion of the symptom implies that the symptom is found in the real and not in the symbolic. Or, more precisely,

the *symptom* that we identify is what is produced in the field of the Real. If the Real manifests itself in analysis and not only in analysis, if the notion of the symptom was introduced, well before Freud by Marx, so as to make it the sign of something which is what is not working out in the Real, if in other words, we are capable of operating on the symptom, it is in as far as the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real.²

There will be, however, a third moment around 1976, when Lacan revisits insights dating from the 1950s on the subject of the ego (“moi”) and the symptom; they show that the knot of the symptom stems from a particular rewriting of the subject, which introduces a torsion of the Real.

One can clearly observe a first period in a well-known passage of seminar XI devoted to the couple *tuché* and *automaton*. It is enough to read closely page 63 of the seminar to become aware of how the relation to the real is ruled over by *tuché*, defined at the beginning of the chapter on *tuché* and *automaton* as “the encounter with the real”³. We also perceive that it is an accident that determines this relation: “If the development is entirely animated by accident, by the obstacle of the *tuché*, it is in so far as the *tuché* brings us back to the the same at which pre-Socratic philosophy sought to motivate the world itself. It required a clinamen, an inclination, at some point.”⁴ The discussion that follows is complex: it revisits the concept of negation in Democritus, for whom physics are founded on the notion of nothing (“nothing is more real than nothing” was one

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¹ Jacques Lacan, “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan : R.S.I.”, in *Ornicar ?*, 2, p. 96; 10 December 1974.

² *Ibid.*

³ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 11*, trans. Alan Sheridan, New York: Norton, 1981, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

of his favorite maxims.) A certain concept of negativity was introduced into the heart of the Greek cosmos by Democritus who, moreover, held that thought and soul were material. Lucretius in his *De rerum natura*⁵ gives very clear and compelling original atomist theory which explains how the properties of materials like water, air, metal, or even plants and animals are recreated—the indivisible properties not easily visible to human senses is contained in “atoms”. These “atoms” are nearer to our modern concept of “molecule” than to the atoms of modern science. Lucretius argues that the void, a lot of open space between “atoms” is absolutely necessary to explain how gasses and fluids can change shape, flow, while metals can be molded, without changing the basic material properties. Michel Serres insists on the drift in the movement through the void as shown in his illuminating reading of Lucretius.⁶ It is the *clinamen*, that is, the atomic deviation or “swerve,” that functioned as the key: “deviation is the birth of everything”. If we take Serres’s terminology and compare it with Lacan’s, we see obvious parallels.

Lacan had insisted on the “nothing” put forward by Democritus in Seminar XI. Lacan uses the Lucretian *clinamen* to think the logic of trauma. If we agree to take the deviation that upsets a preceding equilibrium as *tuche* or an effect of the *clinamen*, this conception will introduce turbulence into an unconscious “structured like a language”. By introducing chance, turbulence makes the unconscious a less closed system. Another point of analogy is that atoms, as Serres explains, are letters, which combined into sentences, can be joined to form volumes. If we can speak at all, it is because of this deviation. The *clinamen* introduces a breakup of order, and is thus radically opposed to repetition. Michel Serres writes that “meaning is a bifurcation of univocity.” Turbulence disturbs repetition by troubling the flow of the identical, and pulls and pushes in the same way as the symptom does, an issue to which I will return. Psychoanalytic work will use turbulence in a deliberate practice of equivocation and verbal punning so as to undo the set of fixed and univocal meanings initially presented by the analysand. This is why Lacan talks about the “phaunétique” dimension of the letter in Joyce, between phoneme, phonetique and phaune:

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⁵ Lucretius, *On the Nature of the Universe*, trans. R.E. Latham, ed. John Godwin, London: Penguin, 2005.

⁶ Michel Serres, *La Naissance de la physique dans le texte de Lucrèce. Fleuves et turbulences*, Paris: Minuit, 1977.

If I call up the mythical figure of the phaune, it is to move towards another mythical and impossible figure, that of the hermaphrodite that often is guiding transsexual fantasies.

But before moving ahead on this very issue and with the idea of understanding Lacan's radical new concept of the symptom, I will sketch a rapid archeology of the notion of symptom in Lacan. In Seminar I from 1953–1954, *Freud's Papers on Technique*, one reads “the ego is structured exactly like a symptom. At the heart of the subject, it is only a privileged symptom, the human symptom par excellence, the mental illness of man”⁷. But Lacan very soon seems to abandon the idea of the ego as symptom or more interestingly the symptom as ego, something to which he will return in his seminar on Joyce more than twenty years later. In the next seminar of just one year later, *The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis*, one finds:

Because the symptom is in itself, through and through, signification, that is to say, truth, truth taking shape. It is to be distinguished from the natural index in that it is already structured in terms of the signified and signifier, with all that entails, namely the play of signifiers. Even within the concrete given of the symptom, there is already a precipitation into signifying material. The symptom is the inverse side of a discourse.⁸

One can hear here a preview of the 1969–1970 Seminar 17, *L'envers or The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, with its four discourses, but I would insist here on the reference to signifiers as material or to the materiality of the signifier. I want to focus on these formulations because they take distance from those better known from 1956–57, in which the symptom is conceived of as a metaphor, therefore “The symptom is nothing but a metaphor”⁹ and of course in “The instance of the letter in the unconscious:” in which the metaphor is defined as “one word for another”. Lacan explains that

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⁷ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 1: Freud's Papers on Technique, 1953–1954*, trans. John Forrester, New York: Norton, 1988, p. 16, 13 January 1954.

⁸ Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 2: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis, 1954–1955*, trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 320; 29 June 1955.

⁹ Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire, livre IV, La relation d'objet*, Paris: Seuil, 1994.

Metaphor's two-stage mechanism is the very mechanism by which symptoms, in the analytic sense are determined. Between the enigmatic signifier of sexual trauma and the term it comes to replace in a current signifying chain, a spark flies that fixes in a symptom—a metaphor in which flesh or function is taken as a signifying element—the signification, that is inaccessible to the conscious subject, by which the symptom may dissolve.¹⁰

The practice of the “variable-length psychoanalytic session,” Lacan's controversial technique of scansion, tries to introduce a cut into a cycle of repetition, interfering with the jouissance by introducing an inclination, a clinamen. Like a pun, the cut of the scansion reorganizes letters and sends the analysand towards an enigma whose resolution is not found in historical reconstruction but in the invention of new signifiers. The idea is to cause an effect of nomination and not of symbolic or metaphoric substitution. This is a movement that, unlike that of a metaphor, is not reversible. It is not moving down the chain as in the false knot that one finds in the Olympic rings, but a true Borromean knot in which all three rings are so interdependent that if we cut one, the other three come loose. The issue here is not to replace one ring with another but to pull strings that will tighten a knot. Already in the session of December 19 1974, Lacan talks about the limits of the metaphor, and proposes putting aside meaning. I read this as proposing that the resolution of the symptom is no longer a ciphering of a hidden meaning but rather the creation of something new appearing in the void.

The big change in Lacan's theorization of the symptom takes place in 1974, the year of seminar RSI. In fact just before launching of the seminar, on October 31 1974, in the “Discours de Rome – La troisième” Lacan declares: “I call symptom what comes from the real”. This idea is further developed in the opening session of RSI when Lacan comments on a strike:

as analyst, I can only take the strike to be a symptom, in the sense that this year perhaps, I will manage to convince you of it, that the symptom, to refer to one of my three categories, belongs to the Real.¹¹

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan, “The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious”, in *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006, p. 431.

¹¹ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan : R.S.I.”, 19 November 1974 (unpublished).

...it is in the *symptom* that we identify what is produced in the field of the Real. If the Real manifests itself in analysis and not only in analysis, if the notion of the symptom was introduced, well before Freud by Marx, so as to make it the sign of something which is what is not working out in the Real, if in other words, we are capable of operating on the symptom, it is in as far as the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real.¹²

To look for the origin of the notion of symptom, which is not at all to be looked for in Hippocrates, which is to be looked for in Marx, who was the first in the link that he made between capitalism, and what? The good old times, what people call them when they want, in short, to try to call them something else, feudal times. Read all the literature on this. Capitalism is considered as having certain effects, and why in effect would it not have some! These effects are on the whole beneficial, since it has the advantage of reducing to nothing the proletarian man, thanks to which the proletarian man realises the essence of man, and by being stripped of everything is charged with being the Messiah of the future. Such is the way in which Marx analyses the notion of symptom. He gives of course crowds of other symptoms, but the relation of this with a faith in man is quite indisputable.¹³

If we make of man, no longer anything whatsoever who conveys a future ideal, but if we determine him from the particularity, in every case, of his unconscious and the way in which he enjoys it, the symptom remains at the same place that Marx put it, but it takes on a different meaning. It is not a social symptom, it is a particular symptom. No doubt, these particular symptoms correspond to types, and the symptom of the obsessional is not the symptom of the hysteric.¹⁴

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Lacan's 1974–1975 RSI seminar is a turning-point. In it, Lacan systematically introduces the Borromean knot. This knot is made out of the intertwining of three rings, which correspond to the tripartite structure Lacan called the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic orders. Although heterogeneous, these registers can intersect and hold together. Lacan chose the Borromean knot because of its main characteristic—the rings are so interdependent that if one ring is unknotted-

¹² “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan : R.S.I.” in *Ornicar ?*, 2, p. 96; 10 December 1974.

¹³ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan : R.S.I.” in *Ornicar ?*, 4, p. 106; 18 February 1975.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

ted, the other three come loose. The Borroeman knot ties up together the registers of the Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary whose interlocking circles sustain reality for the subject. This “Borromeization” of the unconscious has direct consequences on the clinic and leads to a new definition of the symptom. Lacan breaks away from the medical model and brings the symptom closer to a mathematical function.

By the time of RSI, Lacan was working in mathematical topology and knot theory, borrowing a syntax and vocabulary in an effort to offer a formalization of what he observed in the analytic experience. This shift from linguistics to topology carries along major clinical consequences. In the same manner that Marx became aware that ancient materialism implied an effect of structure (if we cannot see atoms, we can think of their movement as turbulence; atoms fall following a slope, this is the principle of the clinamen, a deviation that operates in a void that by definition cannot be perceived), Lacan complicates the notion of matter and of materialism when he makes of *jouissance* his only ontology. This will be my focus here.

By the mid 1970s, Lacan no longer thought of the symptom as something to decode, a carrier of a repressed message (a signifier) that can be deciphered by reference to the unconscious “structured like a language,” but as the trace of the unique way someone can come to be and enjoy one’s unconscious. The symptom (which in 1976 will be renamed *sinthome*) is now considered an invention that allows someone to live by providing the essential organization of *jouissance*. “The symptom cannot be defined otherwise than by the way in which each one enjoys the unconscious.” At this point in Lacan’s elaboration, the aim of the cure is no longer to get rid of symptoms but to identify with one’s unique *sinthome* in order to enjoy it. Identification with the symptom occurs when one identifies with the particular form of their enjoyment from which hangs what and who someone is.

This rethinking of the symptom will have consequences concerning the end of analysis. The new symptom makes analysis terminable. If psychoanalysis helps “to provide for the analysand the meaning of their symptoms” (as Lacan wrote in the Introduction of the German edition of *Écrits*) is to not so much because the ultimate meaning of the symptom is finally deciphered, but because the analysand is somehow freed from engaging in an interminable search for meaning.

This does not mean that there is no revelation of truth. Since the truth lies (*la vérité ment*), the analysand can escape the interminable search down the metonymic chain of meanings, which inevitably leads to frustration and traps the analysand in the belief of an irreducible “knowledge without subject”¹⁵.

As we know Lacan will complete his theoretical quarter turn when he gives a new clinical meaning to the notion of symptom by rewriting it as *sinthome* in 1975–1976—this is Joyce’s *sinthome*. But this new contribution does not appear out of the blue since as he noted in 1975 “The *sinthome* is a way of writing what before was the symptom”.¹⁶ The symptom is what holds together the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary.¹⁷ Lacan places the symptom exactly at the place where the knot fails, where there is a “lapsus” in the knot¹⁸. The symptom is clearly located in the Real and it is knotted: “the symptom is considered like an equivalent of the real... the Imaginary, the body, what separates the body from the ensemble constituted by the knot of the symptom to the Symbolic”¹⁹.

I would like to highlight two very precise formulations from 1973, that is, a year before seminar RSI, given in the context of Lacan’s intervention in the La Grande Motte congress in November 2, 1973²⁰:

What I would like is that psychoanalysts were aware that everything has to bring them first to the solid support they find in the sign, and then that they should not forget that the symptom is a knot of signs. For the sign makes knots; ... this shows that knots are absolutely capital, as I try to demonstrate in my seminar.²¹

The first question is that there are types of symptoms, i.e. knots, that there is a clinic, a clinic that exists before the invention of analytic discourse, because Freud himself was its heir. Can analysis, can discourse, can the idea of the symptom as a knot, bring some light to this previous clinic? Yes, surely. Surely, but, alas, not certainly, here is the rub. It is not certain because certainty has

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¹⁵ Jacques Lacan, “Compte rendu de l’acte analytique” *Ornicar* ?, 29.

¹⁶ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan: Le *sinthome*” in *Ornicar* ?, 6, p. 3; 18 November 1975.

¹⁷ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan: Le *sinthome*” in *Ornicar* ?, 8, p. 15; 17 February 1976.

¹⁸ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan: Le *sinthome*” in *Ornicar* 8, p. 19; 17 February 1976.

¹⁹ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan: Le *sinthome*” in *Ornicar* 10, p. 12; 13 April 1976.

²⁰ Jacques Lacan, *Lettres de l’École Freudienne*, n° 15, 1975, pp. 69–80.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

to be transmitted and is demonstrated, and because history shows that this demand of science, which needs to transmit and demonstrate in order to impose something as certain, is a demand that is made much earlier than when it can be substantiated. One will create a theory of *épistémè*, as they say today, that is an epistemology, much before science proper can be born.²²

Lacan illustrates here in an exemplary manner the clinical value of the symptom as a knot. This is an idea that I find extremely helpful in my work with the most varied analysands, but in particular with transsexual analysands. With them, one can observe the emergence of a new materiality in meaning, a language that seems to abandon the signifying chain. This chain will then be replaced by the Borromean knot in so far as it precipitates into writing.

This is the idea that I wish to illustrate with my examples; it is also one of the lessons brought by RSI. Taking into account the complex relation that transgender people have to their bodies—many often say that they are trapped in a body of the wrong (opposite) sex—I claim that an art similar to that of actual artists can be found in transsexual artificiality. In some cases, this art is tantamount to a *symptom* (*sinthome*) with a structural function analogous to the role Lacan ascribed to art, as he discovered it in the writing of Joyce. In Joyce's case, his art was able to compensate for a defect in his subjective structure saving him from a destiny of madness. The *sinthome*-art grants access to a know-how which can repair faults in the psyche working as a supplement that holds together the registers of the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary in such a way that it fastens the subject in place.

In the RSI session of January 21 1975, Lacan discusses something he heard from a patient in his practice concerning the repetition of a symptom and he says the following: “The important thing is the reference to writing. The repetition of the symptom is this something that I have just said is writing in an untamed way, what is involved in the symptom as it is presented in my practice.”²³ Lacan sketches here the most fundamental features of what I call the clinic of the clinamen. We have chance encounter, the tythic occurrence that derives from

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²² *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²³ Jacques Lacan, “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan: R.S.I.,” session of January 21 1975.

tuche, and almost at the same time its inscription in a writing process. I hope to illustrate this knotting of chance and necessity via writing in my examples.

Why do so many transsexuals write memoirs? This question has already been explored in an original manner by Jay Prosser²⁴. He examined the narratives of those who crossed sexes and concluded that transsexual somatic transitions are spurred and enabled by narrative. My position is slightly different—I suggest that transsexual memoirs allow us to see the function of art in ways that affect the life of everyone, men and women, transgender and cisgender²⁵ alike. The transsexual’s request for a physical and sexual transformation brings us close to the etymological meaning of *techné* which in Greek means both “technique” and “technology” rather than “art” in the sense of “fine-arts” as Heidegger has skillfully demonstrated. Other equivalents would be “expertise,” “technical knowledge” and even “science.” The art of the *sinthome* is art taken in this extended sense; it is a know-how, a sort of singular tacit knowledge that cannot transfer to another person but that holds the individual, preventing them from falling apart. In the case of sex-change memoirs one could argue that by way of writing the memoir gives the author a body that can be named. Writing elevates the unsymbolizable, the “invisible kernel, that meaningless fragment of the Real”²⁶ to something that can be named.

Prosser observed that transsexuals already are involved a writing process during their first visits to a clinician’s office where in order to be taken seriously a transsexual has to engage in a founding auto-biographical act, an act of recounting a plausible story of gender trouble triggered by an institutional request or demand. This mandatory account will facilitate a certain embodiment, and this autobiography “is also a kind of second skin: the story the transsexual must weave around the body in order that his body may be read”²⁷.

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²⁴ Jay Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1998.

²⁵ “Cis” is as a prefix in Latin which means “on the same side [as]” or “on this side [of].” “Cisgender” or “cis male” or “cis female” are used to refer to those who do not identify as transgender.

²⁶ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears: Krzysztof Kieślowski Between Theory and Post-Theory*, London: British Film Institute, 2001, p. 12.

²⁷ Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, p. 101.

Prosser chooses here a very loaded word, since most transsexual persons use the verb “read” to mean “guessing somebody’s anatomical identity.” Being “read” often entails “to pass” or “not to pass” for other than one is. Max Wolf Valerio, an American Indian/Latino poet, writer, and performer who transitioned from feminist lesbian woman to heterosexual man, chronicled in detail the first 5 years of his hormonal and social transformation from female to male. To his chagrin, he discovered that taking testosterone left him with an incipient receding hairline. Besides some trepidation about his sudden interest in watching hair transplant TV infomercials, Valerio welcomed this change as a potential cue for people to read him as male²⁸. Helen Boyd, who, as she put it, lost her husband to another woman when he became the other woman (her husband, a cross-dressing heterosexual man, decided to consider sex reassignment surgery and become a woman.) Boyd wrote in *She’s Not the Man I Married: My Life With a Transgender Husband*: “It is almost impossible for Betty to present as a feminine male because her femininity means that she [husband] is often read as a woman”²⁹. Valerio and Boyd use “read” differently, but they seem to agree that gender is a matter of interpretation, that gender is always a representation to be decoded. The reference to “reading” refers to Lacan’s elaborations on “writing,” a function he ascribed to the symptom when he called it “sinthome.”

Like Prosser, Hausman observed that the transsexual population is a well-read group for strategic reasons³⁰. To successfully obtain the medical treatments requested, the story of transsexuality has to match an officially sanctioned etiology. Indeed, the account has to be convincing: The very telling of the “right” story can confer legitimacy to the request for a sex change and grant access to hormones treatments and surgical interventions. Therefore the autobiographical reports delivered to the clinical experts have to conform to the constraints of a genre. Hence, published or unpublished transsexual autobiographers will follow the formal constraints of the genre quite systematically. Of course this will impose limits to the construction of transsexual subjectivity. Sandy Stone writes that the installation of an “official transsexual history” needed to obtain

²⁸ Max Wolf Valerio, *The Testosterone Files: My Hormonal and Social Transformation from Female to Male*, Emeryville: Seal Press, 2006, p. 324.

²⁹ Helen Boyd, *She’s Not the Man I Married: My Life With a Transgender Husband*, Emeryville: Seal Press, 2007, p. 85.

³⁰ Bernice L. Hausman, *Changing Sex: Transsexualism, Technology, and the Idea of Gender*, Durham & London: Duke University Press, 1995, p. 143.

access to surgical and hormonal sex change treatment has produced a situation in which the potential for the “intertextuality”³¹ of transsexual subjectivity is erased because the person requesting a sex change goes great lengths to appear as a “normal” transsexual. The “authentic experience is replaced by a particular kind of story, one that supports the old constructed positions.”³² A transsexual who suppresses the ambiguities and complexities of lived experience for the sake of normality is thus not very different from the patient who comes to see an analyst because the plausible story no longer efficiently lies about the past; in both cases, a symptom is endowed with the potential to start the analytic process. Yet, even when the transsexual narrative repeats the old clichés, one cannot downplay the tremendous impact that the encounter with a sex change memoir has had for many transsexuals. Almost all the sex change memoirs include a moment in which the author recounts reading another sex-change memoir. Often revelatory, the discovery of this type of text proves to be a defining moment anchoring the subject in the realization of an identity and often has creative and transformative functions. Memoirs of sex change are not only numerous but also often have an impressive, life-transforming effect on the future transsexuals who happen to read them—the experience of reading other people’s memoirs becomes a turning point in their evolution. Those who read them before starting their process of metamorphosis tell us that encounter with the text is a completely transformative experience that reveals a truth up to then unknown, but that once acknowledged, starts a process that is unstoppable.

In 2005, Jonathan Ames published a well-received anthology of transsexual memoirs. Ames aptly summed up the structure of sex change autobiographies as a three-act saga: “first act: gender-dysphoria childhood; second act: the move

³¹ Sandy Stone, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto” in Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (eds.), *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, New York & London: Routledge, 1991. “Intertextuality” is a term introduced by Julia Kristeva in the late 1960’s. In this context it would refer to the multiple meanings of texts. For Kristeva, text is not a closed off entity but the result of an author’s borrowing and transformation of prior texts as well as of the reader’s attribution of meaning, which concerns not just the text in question but a network of texts invoked by the reader in the reading process. See Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.

³² Stone, “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto”, p. 295.

to the big city and the transformation ... [third act] the sex change”³³. For Ames, there is one basic outline for all transsexual memoirs: “A boy or a girl very early on in life feels terribly uncomfortable in his or her gender role, and there is a sense that some terrible mistake has occurred, that he or she was meant to be the other sex”³⁴. Ames takes transsexual autobiographies as *Bildungsroman* or “coming-of-age-novel”³⁵. Ames observes that transsexual memoirs follow a progression in which the main characters, now aware of the “error of nature,” see family and society as trying to reform them. Often, the protagonists also struggle internally, taking great pains in trying to repress their drive to become the opposite sex. Eventually, our heroes leave their hometown and venture into the outside world, and they often end up in a big city. It is in this new context that they begin to masquerade as the other sex, perhaps only privately and eventually more publicly. With time, the disguise and perfected ability to pass become more and more permanent and successful, particularly in the second part of the 20th century with the increased availability of hormone treatments and surgical technologies to manipulate the body. Ablations and implants as well as the climactic sex reassignment surgery will finally allow the memoir’s protagonist to reclaim a place of self-acceptance and peace. Ames emphasizes the literary and sociological significance of these memoirs; their appeal should be universal insofar as they deal with questions that haunt everyone, such as “Who am I?” and “What am I?”

Ames’ description of transsexual memoirs as *Bildungsroman* or a novel of formation is slightly misleading since transsexual memoirs could be described more accurately as novels of the artist, in a subgenre known as the *Künstlerroman*. There may not be such a huge difference between the two genres but this nuance is important for psychoanalytically influenced ears. On the one hand, one would have a formation (*Bildung*) of the unconscious, which means that unconscious phenomena are made visible in transsexual symptoms, while on the other hand one would come closer to art, hence to Lacan’s analysis of Joyce when he presents his writing, his art as a *sinthome*.

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³³ Jonathan Ames, (ed.) *Sexual Metamorphosis: An Anthology of Transsexual Memoirs*, New York: Vintage Books, 2005, (p. xii).

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. xxi.

Following the path of pathological “formations” of the unconscious, Catherine Millot³⁶ and Moustapha Safouan³⁷ have claimed that the conviction with which many transsexuals assert that they were born in the body of the wrong sex, makes them conclude that all transsexuals share a psychotic structure. Millot was the first to introduce the idea that the transsexual symptom could have a function structurally analogous to that which Lacan ascribed to writing when he took Joyce as an example. I disagree with their position in terms of diagnosis. In my practice, I found evidence that not all transsexuals are psychotic. In the same manner that Joyce was not psychotic, even if he was almost caught in a psychotic structure, especially in regards to what concerned his daughter. I recommend prudence when diagnosing transsexuals. I argue for a depathologization of transgenderism and thus take distance from the current pathological approach that psychoanalysis takes toward transgenderism. In my clinical practice I prefer to talk about transsexual symptoms and they may appear in several psychic structures, neurosis, perversion, psychosis.

One first consequence of Lacan’s theory of the *sinthome* is that it depathologizes transgenderism. If transgenderism is not an illness, a sex change cannot be either a treatment or a cure. We should in the name of the *sinthome* stop the systematic pathologization of the whole spectrum of transgender issues.

The second contribution that is brought about by the concept of *sinthome* concerns identification and identity. We should go beyond the model of imaginary identification (Lacan’s Mirror Stage) to understand sex changes³⁸. Most commen-

³⁶ Catherine Millot, *Horsexe: Essay on Transsexuality*, trans. Kenneth Hylton, New York: Autonomedia, 1989.

³⁷ Moustapha Safouan, *Études sur l’Édipe: introduction à une théorie du sujet*, Paris: Seuil, 1974.

³⁸ The Mirror Stage refers to the dual relationship humans have with their own body image as illustrated by their mirror reflection. The visual identity the mirror grants also supplies an imaginary sense of “wholeness” that is in contradiction with the bodily sensations of fragmentation. Although primarily imaginary, the Mirror Stage has also a significant symbolic dimension. The Symbolic is there when the infant recognizes herself in the mirror and supposes with great jubilation that her image is her own, and looks back to the adult holding the infant (who stands in for the big Other) looking for the approving gaze that will confirm this image unifying the fragmented Real. See also Lacan’s paper, “The Mirror Stage as formative of the function of the *I* as revealed in psychoanalytic experience”, in *Écrits*.

tators tend to stop at this point. This is the case of an author as gifted as Prosser. The Mirror Stage, Lacan hypothesized, is a stage that infants pass through in which the external image of the body (reflected in a mirror or represented by the loving gaze of the main caregiver, often the mother) is internalized as a unified body. This image, which will become the “I,” is an idealized imago and will be the blueprint for emerging perceptions of selfhood. It anticipates a bodily perception of unity that does not correspond with the infant’s real neurological immaturity and vulnerability. It also creates an ideal of perfection that the subject will always strive to achieve. Here we can see how the Ego is dependent on an external object with which the infant identifies, how it is produced in alienation, that is, as other, as an illusion of reciprocity and a promise of wholeness, when the real experience of the body is fragmented because at this early stage the infant cannot even control its bodily movements. In the Mirror Stage the subject becomes an I in anticipation and alienated from itself. The dual relation of the body to the Ego, which is on the basis of the body image hypothesized, was quite different in the case of Joyce and it did not involve identification with an image but with writing. His Ego was supported by his art.

When Lacan turned his attention to Joyce’s art, he also discovered a new relation to the body. He observed that Joyce had a peculiar body, one that could fall, slip away, like an open envelope letting go of its contents. Lacan focused on a passage of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, when Stephen remembers a moment of rage at his schoolmates that suddenly faded away: He had felt his anger falling from him “as easily as a fruit is divested of its soft ripe peel”³⁹. For Lacan, such a transformation of anger was curious and revealing. It could be generalized as encompassing a Joycean body, a body that could fall from one’s self, like a wrapping that does not fully hold⁴⁰. In Joyce’s case, it was writing that would “hold” the body.

The image of the body as a vacant shell, as an enclosure oppressing the self, is a recurrent theme in sex change autobiographical narratives. Raymond Thompson, a female-to-male transsexual, poignantly describes this experience of the body as an ill-adjusted container:

³⁹ James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, New York: Penguin, 1992, p. 87.

⁴⁰ Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire; Livre XXIII: Le Sinthome 1975–1976*, Paris: Seuil, 2005, p. 149.

I needed to be out of my body, to be free. It felt as if my “inner body” was forcing itself to the ends of my limbs. I was growing ever larger inside of me, making me feel I was bursting at the seams and wanting out...out...out!

Because this was impossible, this process would abruptly reverse and I would start to shrink inside myself. My whole inner body shrank until I became very small inside. It was as I became so small I had to find some safe place to hide inside myself. My tiny inner body was in unfamiliar surroundings, in a place it didn't belong and I felt utterly unsafe. I became like a little shadow inside my physical body, a shadow running around everywhere trying to find somewhere inside.⁴¹

The sex change appears as the only possible escape from the confines of excessive *jouissance*: “I was trapped inside a living chamber of horrors”⁴². Lewins expanded this notion: “In the case of transsexuals locked inside a prison of flesh and blood, there is a constant ache for emancipation”⁴³. The body is experienced as a burdensome exterior layer often worn like an ill-fitting piece of clothing one is impatient to shed. This is how Leslie Feinberg describes it: “I think how nice it would be to unzip my body from forehead to navel and go on vacation. But there is no escaping it, I would have to pack myself along”⁴⁴. Jan Morris reiterates a similar wish when she writes: “All I wanted was liberation, or reconciliation—to live as myself, to clothe myself in a more proper body, and achieve Identity at last.”⁴⁵ Morris refers to her former body as an oppressive outer layer in which the real being, the true self, was locked; the urge to break free from it is pressing: “If I were trapped in that cage again nothing would keep me from my goal.”⁴⁶

⁴¹ Raymond Thompson *What Took You So Long? A Girl's Journey to Manhood*, New York: Penguin, 1995, p. 200.

⁴² Claudine Griggs, *S/HE: Changing Sex and Changing Clothes (Dress, Body, Culture)*, Oxford & New York: Berg, 1998, p. 88.

⁴³ Frank Lewins, *Transsexualism in Transsexuals*, Melbourne: Macmillan, 1995, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Diane Leslie Feinberg, *Journal of a Transsexual*, New York: World View Publishers, 1980, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Jan Morris, *Conundrum: From James to Jan – An Extraordinary Personal Narrative of Transsexualism*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974, p. 104.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

Taking into account the complex relationship that transsexuals have to their body I claim that an art similar to that of actual artists, if not necessarily with the genius of Joyce, can be found in transsexual artificiality. A transsexual who has been able to complete a true transition would have become an “Ego scrip-tor” as Ezra Pound said in his *Cantos*⁴⁷.

Thus, the third advantage of the use of the notion of *sinthome* concerns the manner in which a material bodily transformation is not enough to change the body image. As we have seen, the body is basically fragmented and only sustained in a precarious sense of unity by imaginary relations. For Lacan, “the body, at least in the analytic perspective, is the body in so far as it creates an orifice ..., that by which it is knotted to some Symbolic or Real.”⁴⁸ For psychoanalysis the body is a speaking body linked with culture and a specific imaginary realm. The body is sexual and to inhabit we assume a sexual positioning; this is not an easy task because the body is marked by the conundrum of sexual difference which is neither sex nor gender. One of the truths the transgender phenomenon illustrates is that body and gender coherence is a fiction that is assumed through identification. It is absurd to ascribe to anatomy the role of normalizer in a type of sexuality by focusing on the genitals or on a single prescribed act. This normalizing role has been challenged by transsexual discourse and practices. Sexual identity issues all revolve around this particular body, a body one is not born into but one that one becomes. But this identification with an image, which is like all forms of recognition a misrecognition, is not sufficient, it needs some kind of writing to anchor each subject to their body. Many people who feel trapped in a body of the “wrong” gender do experience the drive to write, to produce a text that narrates their experience, offering a testimony to their stories of transformation. It is in the writing of the sex change memoir that a different sort of bodily transformation takes place, when the body is written. Writing a sex change memoir aims not just at passing from one side to the other; it has the function to tying together body and text. Writing grants a different form of embodiment in which the body finds its anchor in the sea of language. In the case of sex-change memoirs, I argue that writing of the memoir can bring the author home to the body transformed.

⁴⁷ Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound*, New Directions, 1996.

⁴⁸ “Le séminaire de Jacques Lacan: R.S.I.”, session of May 13 1975 (unpublished).

It is obvious that there are unavoidable tensions in transsexual autobiographies. If the aim of the autobiography is to document the transition, for instance, to show how somebody born a man becomes a woman, the purpose of the transsexual's memoir is in contradiction with the common transsexual's claim that: "I was woman all along, but happened to be in the wrong body." Prosser contends that this tension between transformation and continuity in the self is inherent to the autobiographical genre⁴⁹. However, often the motivation for the transition is to accomplish a sex change that will not leave vestiges of the former sex on the body. If the transsexual wants a complete transformation to pass as a member of the new sex, the autobiography defeats this purpose. By making public the account of the steps of the transition, very often documented with photographs, the autobiography somehow exposes the decoy. And yet, by publishing the account, the transsexual who does not want to be read as a transsexual but rather wants to pass as normal will become publicly recognized as a transsexual. Prosser emphasizes this paradox and highlights the fact that while there may be sex changes accomplished by surgery and hormones, the somatic transformation is not sufficient. Writing autobiographies of sex change generates transitional moments that are "more in keeping with the flow of the story to cohere the transsexual subject." In this case, indeed, the narrative "enacts its own transitions"⁵⁰. It is therefore this last stage of the transition, that is the narrative transition itself that I want to emphasize. It is a transition that takes places in and through writing, at a moment when the autobiography seems to recapture the body, thus anchoring it through a textual embodiment. This writing has the function of nomination. Let us take again the example of Jan Morris' autobiography *Conundrum*. Of her previous life as James, Jan explains: "I was a writer. Full as I was of more recondite certainties, I have always been sure of that too. I never for a moment doubted my vocation"⁵¹. In writing about her writing, Morris describes her style as if it was already revealing an essential, traditional femininity, "the quick emotionalism, the hovering tear, the heart-on-sleeve, the touch of schmaltz"⁵². Or again: "I often detected in myself a taste for the flamboyant ... often a compensation for uncertainty"⁵³. Feeling that s/he has been a writer since early childhood, Morris

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⁴⁹ Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, p. 119.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁵¹ Morris, *Conundrum*, p. 67.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

condenses this posture in a hedonist mode: “Creating to please my senses was certainly my own literary method.”⁵⁴

More deeply though, writing had been an attempt to make body and spirit cohere, less to please her senses than as an effort to find a strategy capable of regulating excess *jouissance*. This was achieved by way of an artifice, of a supplement (in the same way, there was the sex change but also writing about it) that allowed for an incarnation of what before had only been experienced in the Real. This Real corresponds to what is enacted in mystical phenomena or realized in psychosis: It is founded on the impossibility of sexual equivalence or rapport, which was at root the “sexual incongruity” experienced by Morris. Prosser talks about “transsexual mirror stages”⁵⁵ and quotes Morris’s mirror scene in *Conundrum*, minutes before going to the operating room for a sex change in Morocco. Already anaesthetized, pubic hair shaven and disinfected, Morris staggers while going “to say good bye to myself in the mirror. We would never meet again, and I wanted to give the other self a long last look in the eye, and a wink for luck.” The person who writes will emerge “alive and well, and sex-changed in Casablanca. ... I had a new body”⁵⁶. This scene is not only a transitional moment in Morris’s transsexual trajectory but also the most crucial point in the transsexual narrative. As Prosser comments, this is when the “me” written about in the biography and the “I” that writes become one; they had been “so far separated by sex” and now are “fused into a singly sexed autobiographical subject, an integral ‘I’”⁵⁷. Here is the place where I see the function of Lacan’s Ego as sriptor.

It is indeed the writing of the memoir that allowed Morris to “embody” her body. It was not enough to undergo the sex reassignment surgery to reknit the Imaginary, the Real and the Symbolic. The key to why Morris woke up ecstatic from the surgery despite the sharp pain: “I found myself, in fact, astonishingly happy”⁵⁸ is to be found in the comment of the Moroccan surgeon who performed her sex change. During the postoperative examination, Dr. B. commented in a mix of French and heavily accented broken English, nicely rendered in

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁵⁵ Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, p. 101.

⁵⁶ Morris, *Conundrum*, pp. 140–141.

⁵⁷ Prosser, *Second Skins: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality*, p. 100.

⁵⁸ Morris, *Conundrum*, p. 140.

Morris's transcription: "*Très, très bon*, you could nevaair get surgery like this in England—you see, now you would be able to *write*."⁵⁹ Now being "able to write," Jan Morris wrote and constructed with *Conundrum* a text that gives credibility to her being a woman. Thus, the memoir comes full circle. It opens with "I was three years old when I realized that I have been born in the wrong body and should really be a girl. I remember the moment well, it is the earliest memory of my life."⁶⁰ Since "it is only in writing this book that I have delved so deeply into my emotions"⁶¹, it was also through writing that Morris completed the evolution toward a solution to the conundrum of her existence. The book closes with:

if I stand back and look at myself dispassionately, as I looked at myself that night in the mirror in Casablanca—If I consider my story in detachment I sometimes seem, a figure of a fable or allegory. ... I see myself not as a man or woman, self or other, fragment or whole, but only as a wondering child with the cat beneath the Bluthner [piano].⁶²

This is the vignette with which the autobiography begins and ends. It keeps acquiring new meaning through writing. The letter may be the same, but it reads differently. Morris, now Jan, has acquired *savoir faire*, know-how. Finally a One of body and soul has been achieved through Morris's singular *sinthomatic* identification, and it testifies to the power of transformation contained in writing.

Sex change memoirs are meant to be read, to be interpreted. They beg for deciphering. They are as often symptoms as *sinthomes*. Does this mean that they are great literature? Perhaps not, at least not always, but they all aspire to the most essential function of literature. They are love letters to others or to oneself that somehow inscribe sexual difference. Writing a sex change memoir aims not just at passing from one side to the other.

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In some cases, writing about one's transsexual transformation is of the order of the *sinthome*; there are many cases when the transformation achieved a re-knotting of the three registers of the real, symbolic, and imaginary. Then, the

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 142; italics in the original.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 169.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 174.

sinthome shapes the singularity of an “art,” a *techne* that reknotted a workable consistency for the subject; this movement can best be evoked by saying that it moves the subject from a certain contingency to absolute necessity. Thus, Morris describes her trajectory as inevitable, predestined, as if the sex change had always been bound to happen:

I do not for a moment regret the act of change. I could see no other way, and it has made me happy. ... Sex has its reasons too, but I suspect the only transsexuals who can achieve happiness are those ... to whom it is not primarily a sexual dilemma at all—who offer no rational purpose to their compulsions, even to themselves, but are simply driven blindly and helplessly. ... We are the most resolute. Nothing will stop us, no fear of ridicule or poverty, no threat of isolation, not even the prospect of death itself.⁶³

One can see why her *sinthome* was necessary: It was necessity itself. A *sinthome* is what does not cease to be written. In Morris’ case, the *sinthome* has produced less a “woman” than a “woman of letters.”

Sexual difference is neither just the body (as biological substrata) nor the psychic introjections of the social performance of gender (a socially constructed role). Neither the perspective of biological essentialism nor that of social constructivism have been able to solve the problem of unconscious sexual difference. Since sexual difference is neither sex nor gender, sex needs to be symbolized, and gender needs to be embodied.

I will reiterate my claim that sex change memoirs are a narrative form with a specific function for the subjectivity of their authors. In some cases, transsexual memoirs can function as a process of self-invention for their authors. Moreover, sex change memoirs provide an excellent testing ground for Lacan’s theory of the *sinthome* as art. Even though we know that the psychoanalytic perspective on sexual difference implies that it is not a question of anatomy but rather of its consequences, we have noted that a majority of transsexuals struggle to conform rigidly to the normative demands of a sexual identity in contradiction with their anatomical sex. While they engage in technologically

⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp. 168–169.

assisted manipulations of their bodies, their torment seems to be the result of the limits imposed by an anatomy experienced as a tragic destiny.

Let us take now the example of the book by Mario Martino, *Emergence*, which the jacket copy advertised as “the only complete autobiography of a woman who has become a man.” This book is presented as the account of a “painful life to live, a painful life to write”⁶⁴. Martino, a nurse, played the dual role of subject of study and clinical authority using psychoanalytic jargon, which generates some humorous self-awareness. Evoking his contempt for the father’s repressive violence and his adoration for the mother, Martino comments: “A bit of Oedipus, you think?”⁶⁵. Martino describes a second phalloplasty that seemed to fail as the first one did and the neopenis had to be surgically excised. As the tip of his new penis became black, rotted away, and necrotized, he had to sit in water every night to slowly cut away dead tissue. He comments ironically: “Talk about castration complex! Psychologically this cutting was almost impossible for me, yet it has to be done.”⁶⁶ Mario broke away from the increasing distress about the inadequate results of surgery when he came to the realization that even if he wanted “a perfect phallus” he had to accept the impossibility of the wish. “So today I’m happy with what I have: a respectable phallus—three fourths perfect.”⁶⁷

The idea of imperfection is also mentioned by Renée Richards. She was asked at age 72 about the motivations for her sex change more than 30 years before. By a striking coincidence, Richards described her decision to change sex as resulting from an unyielding “pressure to change into a woman.” This cannot but evoke Lacan’s expression *pousse-à-la-femme* of push-towards-Woman used to refer to the feminization most often observed in psychosis but considered a generalized phenomenon common to several psychic structures.⁶⁸

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Richards also said that she wished she could have something that could have stopped that “pressure” and prevented the surgery: “What I said was if there

⁶⁴ Mario Martino, *Emergence: A Transsexual Autobiography*, New York: Crown Publishers, 1977, p. xi.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

⁶⁸ See Jacques Lacan, “L’étourdit” in *Autres écrits*, Paris: Seuil, 2001.

were a drug, some voodoo, any kind of mind-altering magic remedy to keep the man intact, that would have been preferable, but there wasn't"⁶⁹. By then, she seemed to have regrets about something that she had felt earlier as inevitable: "Better to be an intact man functioning with 100 percent capacity for everything than to be a transsexual woman who is an imperfect woman."⁷⁰

The notion of an "imperfect" solution relates to the etymology of the word "symptom." As we have seen, up to the late 14th century the spelling of word was *sinthoma*. This is very close to its Greek predecessor *symptoma*, which means "a happening, accident, disease". Its stem is *sympiptein* (to befall) which is combination of *syn* (together) and *piptein* (to fall.) In Greek, "symptom" literally means "falling together". The word "fall" is cognate to the word "fail". "Fail" comes from the old French *falir*, now *faillir*, "to be lacking, to miss, not succeed," from the Latin *fallere*, "to trip, cause to fall". Figuratively, "to deceive, trick, dupe, cheat, elude; fail, be lacking or defective". The noun (as in "without fail") is from late 13th century, from the old French *faile*, "deficiency," derived from *falir*. The Anglo-French form of the verb *failer*, came to be used as a noun, hence "failure".

This detour by way of etymology sketches a movement from failure to symptom. To quote Samuel Beckett, I would say that the *sinthome* is the art of failing better; it consists of letting the symptom fall (*falling together*) which is precisely the art proposed by the Lacanian notion of *sinthome*—failing together with one's unconscious, thus, as Beckett would say, "failing better". It was that or death, as it was poignantly affirmed by several analysands. They all had a possibility of letting their bodies fall, like Stephen Dedalus, who, for Lacan, indicated Joyce's main symptom. If Stephen is, in Joyce's various schemes and tables of correspondences for *Ulysses*, a man without a body, it is because his body could not "hold him together" without the artifice of writing. As one of my analysands said, "I can right/write myself through writing". For these analysands, the *sinthome* will be mandatory as it were, a necessity that nevertheless also carries along a little defect.

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, February 1, 2007.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

I want to conclude by equating art in general and the *sinthome* as the “art of failing better”. The idea of failure has been explored with precision in literary criticism⁷¹; Walter Benjamin’s observations are worth mention: “To do justice to the figure of Kafka in its purity and its peculiar beauty one must never lose sight of one thing: it is the purity and beauty of a failure. The circumstances are manifold. One is tempted to say: one he was certain of eventual failure, everything worked out for him en route as in a dream.”⁷² Benjamin’s comment evokes Beckett’s description of modern aesthetics in terms of “fidelity to failure”: “to be an artist is to fail, as no other dare fail.” Benjamin’s “beauty of failure” is a striking figure that marks a disjunction comparable to the disjunction presented by Lacan between truth and knowledge, the privation of truth, our love for knowledge facing the unrelenting acknowledgement that we are trapped in our passion for ignorance. I would like to suggest that the *sinthome* should be taken as a new way of organizing *jouissance*, but via failure, that is, it would be a way of failing better that would “allow one to live”. The art of failing, but better, better again.

⁷¹ For a detailed analysis of art as failure see Ewa Ziarek’s excellent book *The Rhetoric of Failure: Deconstruction of Skepticism, Reinvention of Modernism*, New York: SUNY Press, 1995.

⁷² Walter Benjamin, “Franz Kafka On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death” in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt, pp 111–140, here p. 117 and “Some Reflections on Kafka” *op. cit.*, p. 146.

Frances L. Restuccia*

The Glorious Body: Agambenian Non-Unveilable Nudity in Art¹

“In fact, the Messiah involves the deactivation of the veil.”¹

Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory*²

How does art figure into Agamben’s philosophy? This essay will explore Agamben’s conception of art in general—excavating within it his notions of the messianic and nudity in order to infer his idea of the nude. What does nudity in art signify from an Agambenian standpoint?

The answer has nothing to do with aesthetics. In *The Use of Bodies*, Agamben states unequivocally that “artistic practice ... belongs above all to ethics and not to aesthetics”³. He regards the split in art history between *poiesis* and *praxis* as unfortunate especially since it enabled the rise of aesthetics, transforming art into non-art. How we might extricate art from the “swamp of aesthetics and technics” is one of Agamben’s major challenges⁴. Especially given that we can discern his sense of the messianic in his descriptions of pre- and non-aesthetized art and that his concept of the messianic is imbricated with his notion of nudity, this essay proposes that Agamben’s philosophy of nudity, or his “ontology of nudity,” as I call it, is a way of healing the fracture between *poiesis* and *praxis* that paved the way to aesthetics.

But what then is the role, in this process of defeating aesthetics, of the nude figure in art? Perhaps art has maintained itself all along, even during the reign of

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¹ This article is a small part of my book *Agamben's Political Ontology of Nudity in Literature and Art*, forthcoming from Routledge in 2019.

² Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government (Homo Sacer II, 2)*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (with Matteo Mandarini), Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011.

³ Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, trans. Adam Kotsko, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2015, p. 247.

⁴ Giorgio Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, trans. Giorgia Albert, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1994, p. 67.

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aesthetics that seemed to turn it into non-art, and nudity in art is the persistent symptom of that survival?

This essay will zero in on Agamben's view of art through his concepts of the messianic and nudity and deduce from it the significance of "the nude" in art history. If nudity is a way of closing the gap between *poiesis* and *praxis* and thereby combatting aesthetics (as aesthetics was enabled by that split), it seems possible that the persistent nude figure in art, for Agamben, serves as a continuous and forceful reminder that art conveys the medieval notion of "*haecce!* there is nothing other than this"⁵ *along with* a "special trembling"—such are the messianic coordinates of nudity, as I shall explain—and that therefore art never quite collapsed into "non-art," after all. Moreover, insofar as art may be rediscovered through "nudity," as it folds together *poiesis* and *praxis*, art can awaken us to the intimate contact of *poiesis* and *praxis* in life itself, allowing us to reclaim our poetic status in the world, thus configuring our lives as "form-of-life." For Agamben writes that the "place where one is made to feel most forcefully the urgency and, at the same time, the difficulty of the constitution of a form-of-life" is art⁶. To Agamben, painters, poets, and thinkers, or anyone "who practices a *poiesis* and an activity," render "inoperative the works of language, of vision, of bodies" as they "constitute their life as form-of-life," thereby modeling such a life for their viewers and readers.⁷

Art's Wedding of *Poiesis* and *Praxis*

In *The Man Without Content*, Agamben notes a split, as early as antiquity, in Greek philosophy between *poiesis* and *praxis* that unfortunately facilitated the rise of aesthetics that to him has sucked the life blood out of art. The Greeks, Agamben points out, "made a clear distinction between *poiesis* (*poiein*, 'to produce' in the sense of bringing into being) and *praxis* (*prattein*, 'to do' in the sense of acting)"⁸. *Praxis* involved the will expressing itself immediately in the act, whereas *poiesis* signified "pro-duction into presence, the fact that something passed from nonbeing to being." *Poiesis* to the Greeks was an involun-

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⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *Nudities*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatell, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2011, p. 90.

⁶ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 247.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, p. 70.

tary “mode of truth understood as unveiling,” and because of such unveiling’s “essential proximity to truth,” Aristotle assigned “a higher position to poiesis than to praxis”⁹. Now, today it is “work” that has ascended to the highest level, while *poiesis* has undergone an eclipse. In *The Man Without Content*, Agamben laments the resulting demise of art that serves as a measure of man’s experience—an art in which, for him, *poiesis* and *praxis* are wrapped together.

However, Plato at least feared the poet for being dangerous to the soul and having the potential to shake the foundations of the city. Agamben would like to see art regain “its original stature,” to possess the power to be divinely terrifying as it was to the Greeks¹⁰. This would be far preferable to the vanilla sense we have today that art is merely “interesting”¹¹. Chiming with Heidegger in this early work, Agamben prefers the Greek view of art as carving out a space of truth and building a world for man’s dwelling on earth to the modern emphasis on “the question of the ‘how,’ that is, of the process through which the object has been produced”¹². In raising the possibility that there might be a “primally granted revealing that could bring the saving power into its first shining-forth in the midst of the danger” posed by technology, Heidegger refers to the “magnificent age” of Greece when works of art were “not enjoyed aesthetically” nor was art “a sector of cultural activity” but was “a revealing that brought forth and made present” and thus “belonged within *poiēsis*”¹³. Agamben overlaps with Heidegger in praising the Greeks’ non-aesthetic relation to art, although he later develops a notion of the coming to presence in art that cancels any idea of unveiling and insists on the interweaving of *poiesis* and *praxis*.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 68–69. In *The Use of Bodies*, however, Agamben appears to have changed his mind about Aristotle’s preference. He explains that Aristotle preferred acting and using (*praxis*) to *poiesis* in that *praxis* leaves *energeia* in the doer or user’s body, whereas the *energeia* of an artisan or artist who makes a product is transferred to that product. “For this reason,” Agamben writes, the artisan’s or artist’s “activity, constitutively submitted to an external end, is presented as inferior to *praxis*” (Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 19). Still, despite the shift in Agamben’s sense of Aristotle’s preference (now for *praxis*), the split remains.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹³ Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology,” in *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings*, trans. William Lovitt, ed. David Ferrell Krell, London: HarperPerennial, 2008/1977, p. 339.

In the medieval world too, art was not an object to be observed but instead enabled man to measure “the borders of his world,” as it embodied the grace that “put man’s activity in tune with the divine world of creation, and thus kept alive the echo of what art had been in its Greek beginnings: the wonderful and uncanny power of making being and the world appear, of *producing* them in the work”¹⁴. It would not have occurred to the medieval viewer to admire, far less judge, “art.” But, as *poiesis* and *praxis* fell further apart, man shed his poetic status in the world, and work became the “central value and common denominator of every human activity”¹⁵.

Agamben of course construes poetry very broadly. It does not designate one “art among others, but is the very name of man’s *doing*, of that productive action of which artistic *doing* is only a privileged example”¹⁶. Agamben’s idea of poetry definitely bears an intimate relation to *praxis*. *Praxis is poiesis* and *poiesis praxis*. Agamben conceives of man’s (now lost) poetic status on earth as the interweaving of *poiesis* and *praxis*¹⁷ in all types of production/doing and all realms of life. Nonetheless, it is art that has the capacity to awaken us to such a poetic status, to transform our “delay before truth into a poetic process”¹⁸. Here too, in privileging art, Agamben overlaps with Heidegger, who turns to “the fine arts” to “foster the growth of the saving power” that will enable us to confront technology. Van Gogh’s famous painting of the peasant shoes, for example, informs us of what these “shoes are in truth”¹⁹. In Heideggerian parlance, artistic creation is a “happening of truth”²⁰.

Agamben conceives of and believes in art’s capacity to demonstrate the *poiesis* of all *praxis*—which it is able to do essentially through its manifestation of messianic time (a causation that Agamben has not made explicit). That the trajectory of Agamben’s work is headed for an emphasis on messianic time is hinted at in *The Man Without Content* especially when he engages the topic of rhythm. Agamben

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¹⁴ Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, p. 34.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger, “The Origin of the Work of Art” in *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings*, trans. William Lovitt, ed. David Ferrell Krell. London: HarperPerennial, 2008/1977, p. 161.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

is inspired by Hölderlin's statement that "Everything is rhythm, the entire destiny of man is one heavenly rhythm, just as every work of art is one rhythm, and everything swings from the poetizing lips of the god" to think about the meaning of rhythm as an "original characteristic" of a work of art²¹. Agamben then teases out the idea of rhythm as "the principle of presence that opens and maintains the work of art in its original space," as what "causes the work of art to be what it is"²². Agamben describes rhythm as what introduces something that escapes incessant flow into flow, thereby implanting within fluidity "an atemporal dimension"²³. He connects this paradox of atemporality within temporality to our experience before artworks when we feel abruptly hurled into "a more original time"²⁴. Agamben's conception of rhythm as granting an "ecstatic dwelling in a more original dimension" as well as "the fall into the flight of measurable time" prefigures his later rendering of messianic time, the "time of the now"²⁵: a contracted time conjoining *chronos* and the apocalyptic *eschaton*. To Agamben, it is this messianic aspect (or dual temporality) of a work of art that opens "the space of [man's] dwelling on earth," allowing him to take its "original measure" and "find again his present truth" *within* "the unstoppable flow of linear time"²⁶.

It cannot be overstressed that, to Agamben, *poiesis* is not confined to art, even as it is art that has the power to reveal our poetic status on earth, the *poiesis* inherent in all doing/activity/*praxis*. This idea attributes to art a supreme power, for it is only when we experience our "being-in-the-world as [our] essential condition," which experience art can grant, that "a world" can "open up for [our] action and ... existence." To Agamben, it is because man is capable of experiencing the power of production into presence that he is capable of *praxis*, free activity, and it is art that can offer such an experience and thereby bring him to this realization. Rather than being a "cultural 'value,'" a "privileged object for the [*aesthesis* or sense] of the spectators," or "the absolute creative power of the formal principle," art is situated in a "more essential dimension," as it enables man to "attain his original status in history and time in his encounter with it"²⁷.

²¹ Agamben, *The Man Without Content*, p. 94.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 98.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Art breaks into linear time so that man can recover “between past and future, his present state”²⁸. Art thrusts us into “a more original time” and thus allows artists and spectators to regain their “essential solidarity”²⁹. And so, while art is by no means the sole locus of *poiesis*, it gives the experience of a coalescing of *poiesis* and *praxis* so that we can discover such a wedding in all activities. That is, in presenting chronological time or “flow” impregnated by apocalyptic time or an atemporal dimension, art in effect marries *praxis* (movement, doing, “going through to the limit” of an action) with *poiesis* (“the original principle ... of something other than itself”)³⁰. Here we have linear time/*praxis* traversed by another time outside of that time/*poiesis*—all captured at once in a work of art, reflecting Agamben’s sense of the poetic/pro-ductive status of man on earth.

Against Unveiling

Disentangling Agamben’s agreement from his disagreement with the Greeks on the topic of art in *The Man Without Content* can be a hairsplitting task. He applauds the intensity that Plato attributes to art as well as Aristotle’s notion of its Form. However, Agamben also locates the start of the fissure between *poiesis* and *praxis*, which has caused so much trouble, in the Greeks. While he does pick up on positive aspects of *poiesis* as the Greeks conceptualized it (especially its bringing a certain excess into presence), Agamben also comes to reject their emphasis on unveiling. The overlapping of *poiesis* and *praxis* that Agamben privileges in art precludes the uncovering of something that is assumed to be *prior* to what gets italicized through *poiesis*. For the conjoining of a time that flows, a chronological time, with another time that lays atemporality into that flow has nothing to do with the revelation of something hidden. The kind of presencing that Agamben privileges does not depend on an unveiling to come forth but arises through *a seizing of what already exists*.

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Here we have a different kind of presencing from that of Heidegger as well, who also features unveiling or, in Heideggerian terminology, the disconcealment of the concealed. In his “Letter on Humanism,” to mention one example among hundreds, Heidegger writes that “ek-sistence—and through it the relation of the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 75–76.

truth of Being to man—remains veiled in the *humanitas of homo animalis*³¹ and that, as the “destiny that sends truth, Being remains concealed”³². But if we think of *poiesis* as a contraction of what already exists that brings it to an atemporal state of fulfillment, exceeding the limit of itself and *praxis* as the movement of activity that reaches its own limit as it enacts chronological time, then perhaps we can grasp that the pouring of *poiesis* into *praxis* presents something that is illuminated in all its originality *without an uncovering*. Messianic time heals the laceration between *poiesis* and *praxis*.

Agamben derives his sense of the messianic—tantamount to messianic time—in *The Time That Remains* from the Apostle Paul. He concentrates on the first ten words of Paul’s Letter to the Romans to establish that messianic time is neither chronological nor apocalyptic but is both—simultaneously. It is a kind of end or consummation of time within each moment that does not halt the movement of time. The messianic is “the present as the exigency of fulfillment, which gives itself ‘as an end’”³³. Messianic time seizes hold of an instant, bringing it forward to completion, thus making it graspable, while not being external to chronological time. It is a segment of secular time that is transformed as it contracts, a “caesura” that surpasses the division of these two heterogenous temporalities³⁴. *Chronos* and *kairos* are co-extensive, so that “each instant may be, to use Benjamin’s words, the ‘small door through which the Messiah enters’”³⁵.

Agamben invokes Paul’s notion of *typos* to illustrate the relation of *kairos* to the arc of time that extends from the Creation to the Resurrection. He explains that for Paul events in the Old Testament as they serve as figures of events in the New Testament (for example, Adam prefigures Christ) indicate a transformation of time—past and future are clasped together “in an inseparable constellation.” *Typos* and *antitypos* “contract into each other without coinciding.” It is not a matter of a third time located between the two times but of a time that traverses those two times, dividing their division and thereby introducing a “zone of un-

³¹ Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in *Martin Heidegger Basic Writings*, trans. William Lovitt, ed. David Ferrell Krell, London: HarperPerennial, 2008/1977, p. 236.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 242.

³³ Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, trans. Patricia Dailey, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2005, p. 77.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

³⁵ Quoted in *The Time that Remains*, p. 71.

decidability, in which the past is dislocated into the present and the present is extended into the past”³⁶. I invoke typology here as an illustration of messianic time especially since it leads to a major Pauline notion pertinent to artwork I will eventually point to as epitomizing messianic time: “Love ... is the *pleroma* of the law”³⁷ and thus has the capacity to render the law inoperative. Agamben in fact again turns to Paul at the end of *The Use of Bodies*, as he articulates perhaps his most significant concept—destituent potential—to highlight this coinciding of “inoperativity and fulfillment”³⁸. In Paul, messianic faith renders the law “destitute of its power to command”³⁹; and the messiah brings about “a destituent potential” that deposes all social conditions to enable their use⁴⁰.

Messianic Nudity Versus Nothing

Agamben’s messianic time celebrates the nuptials of *kairos* and *chronos*, forms of time that both align with and operate within the conjuncture of *poiesis* and *praxis*. But how does such an overlapping of *kairos* and *chronos* pertain to nudity, which is also a way of asking how nudity might be said to bring *poiesis* together with *praxis*? Agamben has offered the faintest hints of an answer to these questions. By looking at certain sections of Agamben’s collection of essays titled *Nudities*, we can discern that messianic time gives rise to “nudity.” Although only one chapter in Agamben’s work *Nudità* has a title that refers directly to this topic (chapter seven, also titled *Nudità*), the book title covers the entire text, implying that chapters other than seven also convey the concept of nudity—as they fold together *kairos* and *chronos* and shut down lack.⁴¹

We can glean a great deal about “nudity” as it is comprised of messianic time indirectly from chapter one, which presents an interweaving of salvation (*kairos*) and creation (*chronos*). In “Creation and Salvation,” Agamben initially entertains the startling idea that salvation precedes creation. He also proposes that “it is almost as if the only legitimization for doing and producing were the

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³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁸ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 273.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

⁴¹ Although words in Italian ending in *à*, such as *città*, can be either singular or plural, Agamben’s *Nudità* connotes a concept rather than a plurality of nudities.

capacity to redeem that which has been done and produced”⁴²: redemption (in other words) is intrinsic to creation. Agamben’s sense of the inextricable relation between these two poles of divine/human action becomes especially compelling as he links them via transience, a linkage that serves as a variation on Paul’s sense of the revocation in every vocation. The “ultimate figure of human and divine action,” Agamben theorizes, “appears where creation and salvation coincide in the unsavable.” That is, the coinciding of the work of creation with that of salvation occurs as salvation renders inoperative every “gesture” and “word,” “color” and “timbre,” “desire” and “gaze” in its “amorous struggle” with creation⁴³.

In this first chapter, “Creation and Salvation,” one line in particular clinches the point that messianic temporality inheres in Agamben’s conception of salvation/creation. After asserting that what is “truly singular in every human existence is the silent and impervious intertwining of the two works, ... of the power of the angel (with which we never cease producing and looking ahead) and the power of the prophet (that just as tirelessly retrieves, undoes, and arrests the progress of creation and in this way completes and redeems it),” Agamben refers directly to time. Equally “singular” is “the time that ties the two works together.” *Kairos* and *chronos* bind salvation and creation. Agamben even harks back here to the topic of rhythm, which is the element that reflects most of all, in *The Man Without Content*, the notion of messianic time in art. It is according to rhythm, he writes, that “creation precedes redemption but in reality follows it, as redemption follows creation but in truth precedes it”⁴⁴. We recall that rhythm introduces atemporality into temporal flow, which parallels salvation’s penetration of creation. And so we are able to apprehend not only the interconnectedness of Agamben’s thought (as the topic of rhythm sews together *The Man Without Content* and *Nudities*, as well as *The Use of Bodies*) but also that the salvation/creation caesura, comprising rhythm, is bound together by *kairos* and *chronos*. And, insofar as “Creation and Salvation” serves as the introductory chapter of a text titled *Nudità*, we can in turn deduce that *nudity* partakes of messianic time. Nudity is the penetration of creation/*chronos* by salvation/*kairos* that happens every moment, all the time.

⁴² Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Our sense of what Agamben means by nudity expands exponentially once we are patiently open to reading chapters in *Nudità* that may seem removed from the concept as in fact defining it. Over and over Agamben works against the notion of the privative, setting up his conception of nudity as a thing in itself rather than a lack (of clothing). In “What is the Contemporary?” (chapter two), Agamben claims that the contemporary has the ability to hold his gaze not on the light of his time but on its darkness. The contemporary can envision the obscurity of his time. To explain, Agamben turns to the neurophysiology of vision: when we are in darkness, cells in the retina known as “off-cells” are activated, effecting the sort of vision that allows us to see darkness. The salient point here is that darkness is not “privative.” Envisioning darkness is not passive but rather an activity, even “a singular ability”⁴⁵. Whereas conventional theological thinking assumes that salvation is missing in creation but emerges at the end of time (in need of revelation or a kind of unveiling), and darkness is commonly considered to be an absence or lack of light, Agamben shows that creation/*chronos* is woven together with salvation/*kairos* just as light is inseparable from darkness. He urges us to discover the obscurity of our epoch, “its special darkness, which is not, however, separable from those lights”⁴⁶.

In “On What We Can Not Do” (chapter five), Agamben makes a case for being able to *not* do something. Quibbling with Deleuze, he argues that power insidiously keeps us not from what we *can* do (Deleuze’s view) but from what we can *not* do. Agamben’s position here is basically a defense of impotentiality. He derives from Aristotle the idea that an “*adynamia* ... belongs to all *dynamis*: the potentiality to not-be”⁴⁷. He stresses that humans have a capacity to embrace such impotentiality and that it is critical that we not allow the market to dictate to us all the various things we can do by holding out for our freedom to *not* do. For, Agamben adds curiously, “it is only the lucid vision of what we cannot, or can *not*, do that gives consistency to our actions”⁴⁸. Whereas conventional logic would assume that creation/*chronos* and salvation/*kairos* are separated, that darkness is an absence of light, that impotentiality is the inferior, empty opposite of potentiality, and that *praxis* is distinct from *poiesis* (or even that they are antitheses),

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⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁴⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1999, p. 183.

⁴⁸ Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 45.

Agamben is at pains to show the positive status of these “negatives.” As *Nudities* unfolds, it cancels the possibility of a void, an abyss, a realm of Nothingness external to the present reality in which we live. Nudity is such a foreclosure. It is therefore Agamben’s answer to problem of the negative basis of metaphysics and in particular to the Heideggerian idea that Nothing is the veil of Being. As he writes in “The Messiah and the Sovereign,” Agamben finds “redemption in the overturning of the Nothing”⁴⁹. And nudity—a way of thinking, experiencing, and being that does not lie on an unspeakable foundation but celebrates “the ungroundedness of all human praxis”—enacts just such an overturning⁵⁰.

In “The Glorious Body” (chapter eight), Agamben makes a similar case for inoperativity, which one might consider to be “inert.” Not at all, argues Agamben, since inoperativity frees the potentiality that has “manifested itself in the act to appear” so that a new use can be brought into being⁵¹. Inoperativity “belongs to creation; it is a work of God”—very “special work”⁵². And, interestingly, toward the end of “Hunger of an Ox,” we find a direct reference to “praxis.” Making his case that the inoperativity of the *festa* does not negate or abolish activity but suspends it in order to *exhibit* festiveness, Agamben notes that such an exhibition happens within “a dimension of praxis,” thus indicating that the atemporality of inoperativity locates itself in “simple, quotidian human activities” or that the bringing forth of something more—for example, festiveness—happens within the simple things we do or within *praxis*⁵³. Such is nude (rather than bare) life, life “generated by the very act of living”⁵⁴, in which “essence and existence, potential and act, living and life interpenetrate” to the extent that they are indistinguishable⁵⁵, as they “contract into one another and fall together”⁵⁶—the life or form-of-life to which art has the potential to awaken us (thus ruling out “anything like a bare life”⁵⁷, the despicable product of sovereignty).

⁴⁹ Agamben, *Potentialities*, p. 171.

⁵⁰ Giorgio Agamben, *Language and Death: The Place of Negativity*, trans. Karen E. Pinkus with Michael Hardt, Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 105.

⁵¹ Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 102.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁵⁴ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 221.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 222.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 228.

In “The Last Chapter in the History of the World,” on the last page of *Nudities*, Agamben highlights what I consider to be the central concern of this text by underscoring that the zone of nonknowledge does not indicate a simple not knowing. It is much more than a “question of lack”: it means instead “maintaining oneself in the right relationship with ignorance.” The very “art of living,” Agamben avers, is the capacity to remain in a relation of harmony with what escapes us⁵⁸. Agamben cancels the idea of a space of Nothingness. He closes the gap between something and its opposite (non-something) by showing that they participate in a kind of interplay or dance that precludes lack.

Nudity in relation to clothing (like nature in relation to grace) works the same way. That is, rather than being a *lack* of clothing, nudity has its own status/ontology. In the case of each of the above ostensible binarisms, Agamben is dedicated to showing that one is not the lack of the other, that what we might conceive of as an absence thrust out of the world of presence is its own form of presence. Lack of lack too, then, governs Agamben’s take on literal nudity, which he arrives at after condemning our impoverished modern sense of it. Agamben’s complaint about nudity, as he elaborates in “Nudity,” is that what we now have is merely baring, an interminable peeling off of clothing. Or, where denudation is no longer possible since there is nothing left to take off, nothing at all happens. In both Vanessa Beecroft’s performance at Berlin’s Neue Nationalgalerie, in 2005, which featured one-hundred (for the most part) nude women, and Helmut Newton’s 1981 diptych in *Vogue*, which shows on one side four naked (except for their shoes) women and on the other the same women now clothed in elegant outfits, “simple nudity” does not take place.

58 It is due to the theological signature stamped on nudity in our culture that nudity has become a mere lack of clothing. Agamben points out that Adam and Eve actually wore a garment of grace *before* eating the forbidden apple and that sin was instrumental in bringing about their corrupt naked corporeality through an uncovering of that garment of grace. Thus Agamben considers Adam and Eve’s “nudity” to exist “only negatively, so to speak: as a privation of the clothing of grace and as a presaging of the resplendent garment of glory that the blessed will receive in heaven”⁵⁹. The theological apparatus is, to Agamben,

⁵⁸ Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 114.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

responsible for nudity being a mere presupposition of clothing, just as nature is a presupposition of grace. Such nakedness has no status of its own. Striptease, which makes nudity impossible, is therefore “the paradigm for our relationship with nudity,” as it is “an event that never reaches its completed form, ... a form that does not allow itself to be entirely seized as it occurs”⁶⁰. Agamben wants to open our eyes—to a nudity that assumes its own form and may be seized and thus “satisfy the gaze”⁶¹, although he is keenly aware that extricating nudity from “the patterns of thought that permit us to conceive of it solely in a privative and instantaneous manner is a task that requires uncommon lucidity”⁶².

Instead of being a lack of clothing, Agamben’s simple nudity is “pure visibility and presence.” Envisioning a naked body is to “perceive its pure knowability beyond every secret”⁶³. Nudity is without veils—and therefore non-unveilable—being presentation per se. Human nudity is “what remains when you remove the veil [altogether] from beauty”⁶⁴. Agamben’s aim is to liberate nudity from its theological signature by calling for dwelling-in-motion. That is, in referring to dwelling at this point, Agamben counterintuitively invokes the dimension of nudity that corresponds with *chronos* or movement, given that to him nudity’s “dwelling of appearance in the absence of secrets” is “its special trembling”⁶⁵. Nudity lies at the crossroads of an atemporal seizing of the apparent (or inapparent, as Agamben calls it, since nothing comes forth out from under a concealment) and movement (trembling). Works of art that embody nudity in the form of this non-lacking messianic temporality that seizes time within time therefore have the capacity to offer the viewer an experience of *poiesis* as it informs or is poured into *praxis*. Epitomizing what Agamben calls in *The Use of Bodies* an “ontology of style,” art thus models the form-of-life with which Agamben urges us to constitute ourselves. As the “guiding concept and the unitary center of coming politics,” form-of-life is a political life that has, however, absolutely nothing to do with being a “man” or a “citizen,” both of which

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

Agamben regards as “clothing” covering over bare life, thus precluding an inseparable— or nude—life⁶⁶.

Fulfillment: Challenging Sovereignty

Although Kenneth Clark in his exhaustive work *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form* does not directly engage the issue of *poiesis* in relation to *praxis*, he offers striking corroboration of several of Agamben’s assumptions about Western art—whose “central subject” is to Clark the naked human body. It is “the nude alone,” Clark points out, that has “survived” as our “chief link with the classic disciplines”⁶⁷. Moreover, the distinction for which Kenneth Clark is famous between “nude” and “naked” defines the naked privatively as “to be deprived of clothes”⁶⁸, which correlates with Agamben’s false nudity—“nudity” that springs from the removal of clothing and that therefore neglects the body altogether, a practice that, to Agamben, as mentioned, evolved from the Christian theology of clothing. Clark likewise confirms Agamben’s sense that Christianity did its best to stamp out *nudity*, which, perhaps unintentionally, produced a *nakedness* that possessed the supposed secret of desire, as opposed to a *nudity* that grants fulfillment. Drapery presupposes nakedness and in the process elicits the desire to uncover the drapery, so that “nudity” becomes a question of mere baring, an event that disallows the body to be seized or the gaze to be satiated. Through its use of clothing in art, Christianity gives rise to a provocative nakedness generally unknown in the classical era.⁶⁹

⁶⁶ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 213.

⁶⁷ Kenneth Clark, *The Nude: A Study in Ideal Form*, New York: MJF Books, 1956, p. 3.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ It is noteworthy that Agamben holds high—for joining *poiesis* and *praxis*—the very era (the Middle Ages) dominated by a religion that strongly suppressed naked bodies in art. But perhaps this apparent contradiction makes sense, after all, in that literal nudity in art was unnecessary during the Medieval Period as a sign of Agamben’s conceptual nudity. Its absence would then fortify my contention that literal nudity comes forward aggressively in art during those epochs in which the meaning of art as nudity falls behind, for example, when aesthetics reigns. Our current-day frenzied preoccupation with naked images as well as public (literal) nakedness might be seen as a failed hysterical groping for the kind of experience of *poiesis* within *praxis* that Agamben’s nudity involves. However, a tension does seem to exist between Agamben’s sense of the Middle Ages as the time of the co-existence of *poiesis* and *praxis* and Medieval Christian art’s adherence to Christianity’s theology of clothing that produces a sinful nakedness/corrupt nature beneath clothing/grace.

Clark's sense that Greek nudes were meant to impart a feeling of fulfillment dovetails with Agamben's idea of the inoperativity of nudity. Clark reminds us that Aristotle believed that art "*completes* what nature cannot bring to a finish"⁷⁰. And Clark's own descriptions of Western nudes are laden with terms of completion and fulfillment. In the middle of the "whirlpool of carnality" in Ingres's *Baigneuse de Valpignon* (1862), Clark writes, is his "old symbol of peaceful *fulfillment*, the back of the *Baigneuse de Valpignon*"⁷¹ In this stunning Ingres painting, we have "*relaxed sensuality*," "*languor and satiety*" that offer an "*intellectual satisfaction*"⁷².

It is in referring to *Venus of Urbino* that Clark makes his most Agambenian formulation: "We seize upon the mass of Titian's *Venus* immediately and abruptly"⁷³.

Does Clark not pay tribute to Agamben's messianic in testifying to this painting's power to provoke an atemporal seizing of Venus's unavoidable mass as he apprehends her "immediately" and "abruptly"? Titian's *Venus* is presented in all her splendid fullness, satiating the "gaze" through a blatant unmediated exposure. Here we have a potent assertion of literal nudity—announcing "*haecce!* there is nothing other than this"⁷⁴. Nothing is lacking, nor is anything unweilable or even unveiled/disconcealed.⁷⁵ *Venus* in fact lies atop a potential veil, as if to insist that no veil even preceded her nudity, as if to stamp out the veil. She faces us with a piercing glance, head-on, in a state of non-unveilability. The numinous painting celebrates its liberation from a theology of clothing, inviting us to engage in simple nudity independent of all veils. Yet, *Venus of Urbino* yields more than a static dwelling, fulfilling Agamben's criterion that nudity's

⁷⁰ Clark, *The Nude*, p. 12, my emphasis.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 159, my emphasis.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 160, my emphases.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

⁷⁴ Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 90.

⁷⁵ While it is the case that Titian's *Venus* hides with her hand some of her pubic area, to (mis) read her hand as a cover meant seductively to veil this private part would be to neglect the work's blatant message of exposure and to turn what is clearly a "nude" (painting) into a striptease. But the painting, as Clark's outburst testifies (he seizes her "mass" "immediately" and "abruptly"), cries out for acknowledgment of its *haecceity*. Perhaps, then, instead, it is appropriate to regard the placement of *Venus*'s hand as suggesting self-induced *jouissance* that underscores the painting's message of fulfillment through its numinous display of *Venus*'s massive flesh.



Venus of Urbino by Titian (1488–1576).
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“dwelling of appearance in the absence of secrets” is “its special trembling”⁷⁶. For the surrounding sheets, which seem deliberately arranged so as *not* to cover Venus, undulate. Clark himself discusses the Greek use of drapery to produce the effect of movement: “by suggesting lines of force,” drapery “indicates for each action a past and a future”⁷⁷. To Clark, drapery can create “a pool of movement,” in which a body may seem “to swim”⁷⁸, even a hypnotic motion, having the effect of waves. The arrested presentation of literal nudity in this painting sits side by side a flow of drapery: *kairos* and *chronos* are conjoined to offer the spectator an experience of *poiesis* cradled in *praxis*.

In *The Open*, Agamben turns to a Titian painting to illustrate the inoperativity at the heart of his concept of nudity. A late work, Titian’s *Nymph and Shepherd* presents fulfilled lovers who have “lost their mystery,” although they have not

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Clark, *The Nude*, p. 184.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 274.

become “less impenetrable.” Agamben perceives their “mutual disenchantment from their secret,” which allows them to enter “a new and more blessed life” *because* they are beyond (Heideggerian) “concealment and disconcealment.” Being neither concealed nor disconcealed, these lovers are “inapparent,” “workless,” inhabiting “a human nature rendered perfectly inoperative—the inactivity [*inoperasità*] and [*désœuvrement*] of the human and of the animal as the supreme and unsavable figure of life”⁷⁹. Herein lies nudity, a blissful condition of lack of lack. *Nymph and Shepherd* reflects Agamben’s concept of nudity at the same time as it features a nude figure—a rather imposing nymph. Why does Agamben select a painting that includes literal nudity to illustrate the inoperativity at the core of his concept of nudity? The matheme of nudity (“*haecce!* there is nothing other than this”⁸⁰) might just as easily be proclaimed by paintings without literally nude figures. What is it about the conspicuous nude in art that conveys nudity perhaps better than any other image? When the literally nude figure is foregrounded, does she not appear festively suspended in a way that grants a new use to the body—perhaps to announce the philosophical concept of nudity? Does she not emphatically, through her radiance, emblemize the point of a *poietic* emergence into presence of a glorious mundane body beneath which one cannot seek something more, bringing (nevertheless) gratification instead of disappointment? In “The Glorious Body” in *Nudities*, Agamben appropriates the inoperativity of glorious bodies that the Church relegates to heaven in order to identify the truly glorious body: “The glorious body is not some other body, more agile and beautiful, more luminous and spiritual; it is the body itself, at the moment when inoperativity removes the spell from it and opens it up to a new possible common use”⁸¹. Does this late Titian painting not go even further in presenting an overlapping of *poiesis* and *praxis* through its intimate juxtaposition of this messianic dwelling with a trembling sensation given off by surrounding rippling layers of bedclothes and of the shepherd’s clothing as well as curled dabs of paint encircling the nymph throughout the work? We have here a visual pun—on nudity as the shimmering time of the end.

⁷⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. Kevin Attel, Stanford: Stanford UP, 2004, p. 87.

⁸⁰ Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 90.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 103.



Nymph and Shepherd by Titian (1488–1576).
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Perhaps surprisingly, it is a sculptor whose work epitomizes Agamben's nudity in art again often through literally nude figures. Especially (Gian Lorenzo) Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* may be apprehended as combining *kairos* and *chronos* and thus as another superb instance of art that presents and offers an experience of *poiesis* held in *praxis*. Perhaps in here we have Bernini's sculptural rendition of Apollo's necessarily thwarted pursuit of the nymph Daphne in Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Thanks to Cupid's piercing of Apollo's vitals with his arrow, the god is compelled forever to chase after Daphne, and since another of Cupid's arrows has pierced Daphne, she is doomed always to flee from that pursuit. Movement has become mandatory, and the sculpture manages to capture the relentless chase, even though, up until Bernini, sculpture for the most part represented accomplished actions. Instead, Bernini presents the metamorphosis of a nymph into a tree. In *Apollo and Daphne*, we observe the transition of flesh



Apollo and Daphne by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Creative Commons license.



Apollo and Daphne by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Photo by Frances L. Restuccia.

to bark and hair to leaves; we apprehend motion as Daphne's body parts turn dramatically into stalks, blades, and laurel leaves, all conveyed through marble.

One therefore might assume, since everything here is in flux, that inoperativity is not the point and that the sculpture is not a reflection of Agambenian nudity, after all. However, just the opposite would seem to be epitomized. Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* brings Agamben's messianic time/nudity to an artistic culmination in extensively seizing the very moment of passage. Culmination and caducity coalesce in this sculpture, italicizing the collapse/movement inherent in all seizing. The apex of decline is featured as this poignant work of art includes the time it takes to bring time to an end (Agamben's operational time). It is as though we are watching in slow motion the making/fading of this sculptural crystallization of Apollo's pursuit of Daphne. Bernini stretches out the very instant of loss, which is the essence of messianic time or salvation in the unsavable. *Apollo and Daphne* embodies these paradoxes, captures them beautifully and brilliantly in *achieving* loss, that is, in italicizing the capturing of loss itself, therefore coming closer than any other work to marrying *kairos* and *chronos* and thus perfectly emblemizing Agambenian nudity and in turn folding together *poiesis* and *praxis*.

While *Apollo and Daphne* features a contraction of the loss of the object, Bernini's *Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* shows a contraction of the lost subject. Here we have Bernini's sculpted version of Saint Teresa of Avila's vision and experience of Divine Love in the guise of a short angel wielding a golden spear. While in this sculpture vibrates with activity produced by: golden sunrays stabbing the scene from above, a cloud below that lifts up the levitating Saint, the swirling robe of the angel, the angel's spear poised to plunge anew, as well as by Teresa herself as she experiences *jouissance*. As Jacques Lacan unsubtly pronounces in *Encore*, "she's coming. There's no doubt about it"⁸². And, in her gargantuan novel *Teresa, My Love*, Julia Kristeva describes the "boiling of marble folds" in this sculpture of Teresa whose love of God "quivered" with an intensity that produced "ecstatic convulsions" that turned her into "a sumptuous icon of the Counter-Reformation"⁸³. If nudity is as dwelling within trembling, it is manifested here vividly through an ek-static orgasmic seizure set within tumultuous waves of heavy cloth.

While the sculpture does not contain literal nudity, *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* nonetheless makes Agamben's most mind-boggling point about nudity and the veil. Toward the end of "Nudity," he refers to a certain "limit beyond which exists neither an essence that cannot be further unveiled nor a *natura lapsa*." At this limit, Agamben writes, "*one encounters only the veil itself*, appearance itself, which is no longer the appearance of anything. This indelible residue of appearance where nothing appears ... —this is human nudity"⁸⁴. Agamben conveys the experience of non-unveilability here paradoxically by calling it an encounter with the veil itself, an engagement with merely the veil—which, I am claiming, is what Bernini presents in *The Ecstasy of Saint Teresa* by replacing his typically nude figures with a figure saturated in clothing, rolling veils that make emphatic the point of "nudity" by stressing the veil alone with nothing underneath to be uncovered.

Agamben as we know supports the rendering inoperative of objects directed toward a goal especially insofar as such deactivation makes them available for

⁸² Jacques Lacan, *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality/The Limits of Love and Knowledge 1972–1973*, trans. Bruce Fink, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998/1975.

⁸³ Julia Kristeva, *Teresa, My Love: An Imagined Life of the Saint of Avila*, trans. Lorna Scott Fox, New York: Columbia UP, 2008, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Agamben, *Nudities*, p. 85, my emphasis.



The Ecstasy of Teresa by Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680). Creative Commons license.

a new use. He gives “amorous desire and so-called perversion” as examples of new uses of “the organs of the nutritive and reproductive functions” since these activities turn our organs “away from their physiological meaning, toward a new and more human operation”⁸⁵. Bernini’s *Teresa in Ecstasy* certainly deflects attention away from physiology to the amorous. Beyond this, in depicting Love in particular, *Teresa in Ecstasy* not only renders Teresa inoperative (she is ek-static, lost to herself) but the Law as well. This sublime work of art announces the messianic marriages of *kairos* and *chronos* and *poiesis* and *praxis* and thus shuts down lack through fulfillment: the sculpture sets in motion pure satisfaction/*jouissance*. And given that the very constitution of the Law or sovereignty depends on its ability to produce an exception—Agamben accepts Schmitt’s definition of sovereignty in his *Political Theology* as “he who decides on the exception”⁸⁶—this model of Love embodied by *The Ecstasy of Teresa*, where nothing is left out, effects sovereignty’s collapse. Law is deactivated, in other words, through the sculpture’s fulfillment of Love. Paul’s assertion that “Love ... is the *pleroma* of the law,” as stated in Romans 13:9-10, is itself, in turn, fulfilled.

Art that demonstrates the marriage of *poiesis* and *praxis*, that gives the experience of their intimacy (without exclusion) challenges sovereignty insofar as sovereignty subsists on an exception or *bare life*. This is the invaluable political consequence of Agamben’s concept of nudity. Agamben’s “bare life,” a function of sovereignty as well as its necessary downgraded foundation, must not be confused with nudity—as it is capable of collapsing the very sovereignty/*bare life* structure by virtue of its brilliant non-unveilability, its insistence that nothing be excluded, not even Nothing. The nude in art makes such inclusivity even more emphatic, and Bernini’s sculpture of Teresa brings it to an extreme by intertwining *poiesis* with *praxis* specifically through a depiction of the Love that, according to Paul, has the power to fulfill the Law and thus disarm it. In returning to us our poetic status in the world, then, art does even more than give us that tremendous gift. Art is in tandem with politics. They are, as Agamben states on the penultimate page of *The Use of Bodies*,

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⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

⁸⁶ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab, Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1985/1922, p. 5.

not tasks [or] simply ‘works’: rather, they name the dimension in which works—linguistic and bodily, material and immaterial, biological and social—are deactivated and contemplated as such in order to liberate the inoperativity that has remained imprisoned in them. And in this consists the greatest good that, according to the philosopher, the human can hope for: ‘a joy born from this, that human beings contemplate themselves and their own potential for acting’ (Spinoza 2, III, prop. 53).⁸⁷

Art’s messianic vision precludes the exception of precarious lives, which points to the high political stakes of realizing that *poiesis* inhabits *praxis*. Agamben’s concept of nudity, such “nudity” especially as it operates in art, and the nude that reflects it, in healing the myriad lacerations mentioned in this essay, work against power’s production of vulnerable lives. To think against lack—lack of lack being the condition of a poetic status in the world, where life and living are inseparable and come or fall together as “form-of-life”—is, for Agamben, to ruin the Law’s ability to exclude, which, given that such an ability constitutes the Law, renders it impotent.

Veiling (one might go so far as to suggest) is politically dangerous, while non-unveilability is politically subversive—powerful. Agamben’s messianic nudity effects the undoing of sovereignty by precluding presupposition—that which a veil relies on—by simply italicizing what already exists. Sovereignty is disempowered, as it depends on the presupposition of an exception that brings it into existence and that Agamben’s messianic vision held within nudity rules out.

⁸⁷ Agamben, *The Use of Bodies*, p. 278.

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Sadean Politics or a Tyranny of Jouissance**

One of the lessons to be drawn from Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* is undoubtedly that jouissance – because it implies pain and suffering – is something harmful to the subject. However, this inherent cruelty of jouissance becomes a problem for modern moral and political philosophy with Sade, for whom the right to jouissance is a fundamental human right and as such universal. While the right to jouissance is inconceivable outside the horizon of human rights discourse, it represents the ultimate limit of this discourse once Sade starts wondering whether jouissance, being particular by definition, presents an insurmountable obstacle to the universal law. And, indeed, there is nothing more absurd for Sade than the effort of prescribing universal laws. In concrete terms,

it is a terrible injustice to require that men of unlike character all be ruled by the same law: what is good for one is not at all good for another... Now, would it not be to carry your injustice beyond all limits were you to send the law to strike the man incapable of bowing to the law? Would your iniquity be any less here than in a case where you sought to force the blind to distinguish amongst colors?¹

In the light of the antinomy of the right to jouissance and law, what one might call Sadean ethics and a politics of jouissance emerges as the unthinkable of the philosophy of human rights. Indeed, if Sade still represents an unrivalled challenge for any ethical and political thought, this is because his project of emancipation driven by a subversive will to jouissance that arises from transgression – the violation of all societal norms and laws – ends up disorganizing thought itself. Thus, by postulating the right to jouissance as a law binding everyone, Sade confronts the subject with the choice between a duty to the unconditional

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¹ Marquis de Sade, *Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If You Would Become Republicans in Justine, Philosophy in the Bedroom, and Other Writings*, trans. Richard Seaver and Austryn Wainhouse, New York: Grove Press, 1990, p. 313.

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and one's pathological being, embodying in this manner the uncompromising, heroic will pushing the subject beyond the pleasure principle. Hence, if Sade continues to affect us, it may not be for what the reason we might think obvious (obscenity, provocation), if he can be considered, to borrow Hénaff's felicitous formulation, to be "the archivist of the future that belongs to us,"² this is because he elevates to an imperative valid for all that which remains radically foreign to everything human or, in Lacan's words, "that which is the most lacking in the relationship to the individual,"³ namely, an ultimately inhuman *jouissance* that inevitably divides the subject. Indeed, what Sade aims at is nothing less than liberating *jouissance* in the subject as that which is the most intimate to him/her, yet which the subject, being submitted to the demands of civilization, perceives as something radically alien.

In this respect, Sade's "despotism of the passions" in establishing the rule of *jouissance* offers one of the most radical attempts at finding a way out of the discontent in civilization that presents itself as an irreducible gap "between the satisfaction a *jouissance* affords in its original state and that which it gives in the indirect or even sublimated forms that civilization obliges it to assume."⁴ Sade's paradoxical solution to the problem of discontent, which consists in the liberation of the "the man of pleasure" from the constraints of civilization, its laws, norms, and prohibitions, in short, the emancipation of pleasure from the tyranny of civilization, is achieved by means of something that is even more tyrannical than civilization: *jouissance* or passion, to use Sade's own term. According to Sade, passion is transgressive in nature, because on its way to satisfaction passion knows no boundary and remains indifferent to the price to be paid by the subject:

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no passion has a greater need of the widest horizon of liberty than has this, none, doubtless, is as despotic; here it is that man likes to command, to be obeyed, to surround himself with slaves compelled to satisfy him; well, whenever you withhold from man the secret means whereby he exhales the dose of despotism Nature instilled in the depths of his heart, he will seek other outlets for it, it will

² Marcel Hénaff, *Sade. The Invention of the Libertine Body*, trans. Xavier Callahan, Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 290.

³ Jacques Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis. 1959-1960. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII*, trans. Dennis Porter, London: Tavistock/Routledge, 1992, p. 55.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

be vented upon nearby objects; it will trouble the government. If you would avoid that danger, permit a free flight and rein to those tyrannical desires which, despite himself, torment man ceaselessly.⁵

Sade's promotion of jouissance's excessive character, ultimately, this elevation of the desire for evil for the sake of evil, to an autonomous, transcendental principle, while justified as a means for attaining human emancipation, presents a fundamental disharmony between the subject and an instance that requires absolute submission. Sade therefore emerges as a point of crystallization indicating that all solutions to the discontent in civilization provided by the Enlightenment are centred around this fundamental choice: *happiness or desire*. It should immediately be added, however, that the clear dividing line between happiness and desire was not traced by Sade but by his contemporary, Kant. Accepting the idea of happiness as a means for maximizing pleasure means, for Kant, accepting the will submitted to contingency; ultimately this would mean acknowledging that there is only the relativity of the ethics of pleasure, which, for Kant, is no ethics at all. Hence, the moral subject – in opposition to the subject of pleasure whose will is pathologically affected and therefore heedlessly chases one object after another – looks for a particular good that presents itself as superior to any uncertain good “owing to its universal value,”⁶ as Lacan puts it, and is therefore unaffected by changes in the subjective conditions of pleasure. As a result, only the will that is determined by the form of law is the will that knows what it really wants. Ultimately, only such a “determined” or resolute will, to paraphrase Lacan, is the will that wants itself and can therefore demand that the subject does not give up on his/her desire, and this irrespective of the fact that he/she must pay for this “fidelity” with his/her well-being and happiness.

Happiness, by contrast, requires the intervention of an instance that prevents the subject from wanting, in Rousseau's terms, beyond the possibilities of satisfaction. Happiness imposes moderation, restraint, in short, a “No more!”. These limitations are precisely what the will, cleansed of every pathological affection, disregards, because as a constant requirement of satisfaction it is situated beyond the pleasure principle. This is precisely where Sade comes in. What the

⁵ Sade, *Yet Another Effort, Frenchmen, If you Would Become Republicans*, p. 324.

⁶ Jacques Lacan, “Kant with Sade,” in *Écrits*, trans. B. Fink, New York, London: W.W. & Company, 2002, p. 646.

“pure“ Kant and Sade, the embodiment of debauchery, have in common is that the unconditional, characterized by its excessiveness, becomes the instrument of a radical change that can be inscribed in the structure of the “objective” world. Against the “ethics of happiness”, which is bounded by the pleasure principle, which prevents the subject from continuing to desire beyond the satisfaction of needs, Kant and Sade formulate as a criterion of morality a duty to an instance of the unconditional, indicating in this way that the sacrifice of the pathological is constitutive of the subject’s relation to duty, which both of them conceive of as a requirement for unconditional submission. Succinctly, the subject’s fundamental experience, for Kant and Sade, is the experience of a split that is caused by the emergence of a categorical commandment, in relation to which the subject is always “deficient”, wanting.

From the standpoint of the choice of the unconditional, this being for Kant and Sade a forced choice despite the fact that it drives the subject beyond the limits of the pleasure principle, the choice of happiness appears to be excluded from the outset. This is all the more surprising for Sade, who initially presents himself as “the man of pleasure.” Here we must take care to be very precise: What is meant by happiness in Sade is clearly formulated by one of his characters: “It is not in desire’s consumption that happiness consists, but in the desire itself.”⁷ Sade namely agrees with Kant that, in the experience of pleasure, only intensity counts and not the object that causes it. Hence, when Sade demonstrates that behind the search for pleasure there lurks the agency of an insatiable More!, he undertakes an operation similar to that of “cleansing” carried out by Kant in traditional ethics of the good: just as Kant’s raising of a sheer formal determination of the will to an ethical criterion resulted in the elimination of the pathological from the field of ethics, so from Sade’s commitment to pleasure it clearly follows that the liberation of pleasure inevitably leads to a liberation from pleasure.

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Thus, oddly enough, Sade revolutionizes the domain of ethics by positing, in contrast to traditional ethics, which excludes from its realm *jouissance* that serves no purpose,⁸ this utterly useless *jouissance* as the constituent of the sub-

⁷ Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom and Other Writings* (rev. ed.), trans. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver, New York: Grove Press, 1987, pp. 361–362.

⁸ “*Jouissance* is what serves no purpose.” Jacques Lacan, *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. On Feminine Sexuality. The Limits of Knowledge. Book XX. Encore 1972–1973*, New York & London: W.W. & Company, 1999, p. 3.

ject's existence, moreover, by elevating it to the status of a law valid for everyone. But how can jouissance, once driven out, be brought back? While it is true that the Sadean political-pedagogical project of the despotism of the passions implies the subject's liberation from the demands of civilization and traditional ethics, which urges the subject to renounce the satisfaction of the passions, the emancipation Sade is truly striving for is not a liberation from the Other, so that the subject could do whatever pleases him/her, but the liberation of jouissance, a liberation that imposes submission to an even more implacable command. The liberation of the subject of pleasure requires his/her submission to jouissance, that agency namely that subjugates more brutally than any command or prohibition of civilization. The Sadean position is more radical than we might think at first blush: it is not about the right to jouissance, but about the rights of jouissance, in other words, it is an extreme position where the subject must recognize in the imperative of jouissance his/her desire. One is tempted to say that, for Sade, jouissance is the law of desire.

The Antinomy of Jouissance and the Social Bond

Sade thus enters into ethics and politics as a promotor of rights, not of man, but of jouissance. But can there be something like an ethics of jouissance and, consequently, a politics of jouissance at all if ethics and politics are founded on a relationship with the Other, whereas jouissance, being solipsistic, autistic in nature, problematizes the very status of the Other? And conversely, if Sade's project of emancipation aims at the realization of the tyranny of jouissance precisely at the level of the *socius*, then one might ask: What is the social bond that is founded on something which appears to be incompatible with it?

Sade's despotism of the passions could best be described as a regime that maintains the greatest distance between law and jouissance, between what universalizes and what, as an absolute particularity, resists all universalization. But this very antinomy between law as the foundation of the social bond and jouissance as the agency of dissocialization is just what Sade's ethics and politics intends to sustain. It would appear then that Sade strives for the impossible: a paradoxical social bond that is not founded on the universality of law, but on that which is by definition the most particular, non-universalizable and therefore dissocializing: jouissance. With Sade, however, the postulation of the unconditional right to jouissance is integrated into a legal-political project. Jouissance is

imposed as an imperative for everyone, since, as Monique David-Ménard rightly points out, “in striving to satisfy his/her desires, everyone has the right to occupy the place of the unconditional.”⁹ But such a democratization of the right to *jouissance* necessarily requires a redefinition of the social order in such a way that *jouissance* is granted a “civil right” in the realm of politics.

This clearly follows from the fundamental maxim of Sade’s ethics and politics, as reconstructed by Lacan: “I have the right to enjoy your body,” anyone can say to me, “and I will exercise this right without any limit to the capriciousness of the exactions I may wish to satiate with your body.”¹⁰ The very formulation “anyone can say to me,” which is to say, the Other, opens up an unheard of possibility, that of bringing together politics and the drives, or, rather, freedom and *jouissance*, within the horizon of *universality*. The price to pay for the inscription of *jouissance* into the realm of universality is already indicated in Sade’s fantasy: sooner or later it will be the torturer’s turn to occupy the place of the victim. For the inherent egalitarianism of the right to *jouissance* prescribed by Sade’s maxim implies that everyone can use everyone as a temporary object of *jouissance*, but this also goes for the torturer. Thus the phrase that so frequently recurs in Sade’s text: “Do onto me that which I have done unto you.”¹¹

What is crucial here is that Sade’s promotion of *jouissance* reveals two blind spots of the Enlightenment ethics and politics. First, by linking freedom and *jouissance*, Sade exposes the unthinkable point of the philosophy of human rights, namely, that freedom, the main stake in ethics and politics, is not the freedom of the subject, but that of the Other. It is precisely this heterogeneity of the right to *jouissance*, a sort of a foreign body within the framework of human rights, that highlights the ultimate ambiguity of a freedom coupled with *jouissance* since freedom and *jouissance* are supposed to be incompatible. As Lacan justly remarks, “the discourse of the right to *jouissance* clearly posits the Other qua free – the Other’s freedom – as its enunciating subject.”¹² Hence, the enunciating subject of the imperative of *jouissance*: “I have the right to enjoy

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⁹ Monique David-Ménard, *Les constructions de l’universel. Psychanalyse, philosophie*, Paris: PUF, 1997, p. 34.

¹⁰ Lacan, “Kant with Sade,” p. 648.

¹¹ Marquis de Sade, *Juliette* (rev. ed.), trans. Austryn Wainhouse, New York: Grove Press, 1988, p. 273.

¹² Lacan, “Kant with Sade,” p. 650.

your body ...” can only be “The Other qua free.”¹³ Second, by putting the will to jouissance, which, for Kant, is the incarnation of the pathological, in the place of the unconditional that causes the subject’s division, Sade succeeds in achieving what would be impossible for Kant: to elevate into the unconditional an instance of the sensible or pathological, an absolute particularity that is by definition resistant to universalization. Jouissance, termed a “particular absolute” or a “pathological absolute” by J.-A. Miller,¹⁴ is a paradoxical absolute as it cannot be situated within the framework of Kant’s ethics, since, for Kant, whatever belongs to the rank of the pathological, by being non-universalizable and therefore unable to attain the status of absoluteness, must be excluded. There is nevertheless, to follow Lacan, a certain affinity between Sade and Kant. For Kant, the exclusion of the pathological, that is, the indifference to everything that affects the body, is a criterion for the evaluation of the subject’s act. Sade’s despotism of the passions likewise requires the absolute separation of the subject of pleasure, the pathological subject, from the will, which is governed by the imperative of jouissance. However, in contrast to Kant, Sade proves that jouissance has its legitimate place in the ethics of the universal precisely to the extent that the indifference to the pathological, as imposed by universality, does not abolish the possibility of jouissance, but is rather its condition. Thus, the question of what the radical nature of Sade’s despotism of the passions as a reinvention of the social bond consists in, encompasses another, which is more decisive, namely: Can the notion of the social bond be found at all in Sade?

The closest to something like a political dissertation in Sade is the pamphlet *Yet Another Effort, If You Would Become Republicans* in which many commentators of Sade’s work, Lefort and Deleuze in particular, see the pinnacle of Sade’s irony. On the other hand, it is equally true that Sade’s work, as a whole, has to do with only one question: Which political regime would best realize the tyranny of jouissance? What is remarkable, at any rate, is that the contradictory nature of such an undertaking is already manifest in Sade’s work itself. On the one hand, Sade advocates the most brutal despotism, even slavery. On the other hand, however, he fervently defends the opposite of tyranny, the egalitarian republic. Hence the exaltation of domination, i.e., inequality in all possible forms, is coupled with the celebration of the anarchical liberation, the totally free circulation

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Jacques-Alain Miller, *Extimité* (unpublished seminar), 14 December 1985.

of debauchery, irrespective of social status or gender. How are we to understand this inherent antagonism of Sade's thought: the coexistence of two, mutually exclusive political-ethical utopias: barbarian, non-egalitarian despotism, on the one hand, and political and sexual egalitarianism, on the other?

Generally speaking, Sade's commentators offered two solutions for the reconciliation of these two contradictory positions regarding the existence and nature of the social bond in Sade. According to the first solution – this being the dominant interpretation today – Sade is simply an apologist for the destruction of any social bond, since, as one of Sade's key characters clearly states, no bond "is sacred in view of people like ourselves."¹⁵ According to the second solution, which is more fragmentary and needs to be reconstructed, Sade's work, taken as a whole, is not to be read merely as a criticism of the existing social bond, rather, it should be seen as a staging of a new social bond grounded in *jouissance*. This contradiction, however, is only apparent as Sade's problematization of the social bond cannot be understood without knowing who the principal target of his critique is. It may be useful to recall that, for Sade, who unrelentingly defends the primacy of particular interests against the general interest, the real issue is the social contract posited as the foundation of the *socius*, because he considers it to be violence against the individual's basic egoism. The contract is a sham that "stinks of commerce: *I give onto you in order that I may obtain from you in exchange.*"¹⁶ Hence, contractualists themselves would have to admit that the contract is deceptive because – contrary to the fundamental assumption of the Enlightenment philosophers – the contract cannot secure even the satisfaction of egoistic interests; in a word, it cannot ensure what justifies it, namely egalitarian reciprocity since, by complying with laws out of their selfish interests, both the weak and the powerful reinforce the tyranny of laws. They are therefore complicit in allowing the law to oppress everyone.

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It is precisely here that the crucial differences between Sade and the Enlightenment thinkers can be seen. Sade attacks, with particular viciousness, the dichotomy between nature, the universe of necessity, and society, the universe of rules. For Enlightenment political thought, the contract, in ensuring

¹⁵ Marquis de Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodomy and Other Writings*, trans. Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver, New York: Grove Press 1987, p. 127.

¹⁶ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 144; emphasis in original.

reciprocity, provides a defence against the danger of capriciousness and violence, which is another way of saying that the law is what liberates us from all oppression. For Sade, by contrast, “the one great trouble is that human laws are the fruits of nothing but ignorance or prejudice.” Indeed, Sade asks, “do we detect [in nature] any law other than self-interest, that is, self-preservation?”¹⁷ What Sade’s critique of the contract seeks to put an end to is the grounding of the social bond *in nature* through the negation of every form of reciprocity and mutual recognition: “In the beginning, then was theft; ... for the inequality ... necessarily supposes a wrong done the weak by the strong, and there at once we have this wrong, that is to say, theft, established, authorized by Nature since she gives man that which must necessarily lead him thereto.”¹⁸ Nature, taken in its cruel innocence, is for Sade another name for the elimination of prohibitions. Hence, the point of the argument from nature, introduced in this way, is not to simply replace equality with inequality, virtue with vice. The point is rather to establish a zero degree of legality by emphasizing the rivalry between human laws and the sovereign law of nature brought into play by the very notion of the contract. If for Enlightenment philosophers laws originate in the general will of the subjects that enter into the contract, for Sade the very idea of law as being secondary to the contract is inconceivable. Indeed, law is law only if it is not derived from something that precedes it, succinctly, if it is identified with the voice of nature. Thus the primacy of the contract in relation to law inverts, according to Sade, the relationship primary–secondary entailing, as a consequence, the subordination of the supreme law to conventions, in short, to a mere semblance. The contract is therefore not illegitimate because it restricts inalienable natural rights – since there are no such rights, according to Sade – but because it usurps the place of the supreme law: the law of nature.

One issue of radical importance to Sade is that despite being wholly arbitrary and therefore not compulsory, law is no less oppressive, but it does it “perversely”, by disguising its oppression in equality. This is precisely where we find Sade’s irony: “I ask you now whether that law is truly just which orders the man who has nothing to respect another who has everything?”¹⁹ Law is tyrannical and “unnatural” or “denaturalized” because it usurps the individual’s

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 888.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁹ Sade, *Yet Another Effort*, p. 313.

passion, thereby preventing him/her from exercising his/her egoism. What is more, law is a bad substitute for personal revenge; it poorly serves justice because it postpones the reparation of a harm and injustice, thus causing the loss of libidinal energy. Sade therefore strives for a re-libidination of justice based on the principle of retaliation: "Do onto me everything I have done unto you."²⁰ To Sade, the difference between the oppression that is tolerable and acceptable, and the oppression that is criminal, is that the despotism of the passions allows the possibility to oppress my oppressor, while we are powerless against the oppression of the law. Law cannot be oppressed, it cannot be tortured and thus no jouissance can be extracted from it. From Sade's standpoint, my neighbour's passion is less threatening than the law's injustice because while I can take revenge in the case of a wrong inflicted on me by my neighbour, I cannot get even for a wrong inflicted on me by law. The wrongdoing by law cannot be stopped because there is never a moment when I can say "now it's my turn." It's always the law's turn, never mine.

Sade's criticism of law can thus be viewed as an attempt to "sodomize" the Enlightenment concept of justice based on a comparison with one's fellows, that is, on the specular relationship between fellowmen that originates in self-love. In this view, the Enlightenment idea of justice is from the outset contaminated by self-love: I recognize myself in another. By contrast, for Sade, for whom the fundamental attitude towards the other is based on *envy*, and not, as with Rousseau, on pity, the feeling that is reserved, according to Sade, for those who are destined to become victims, it is not a benevolent compassion that brings about justice. What keeps justice alive is, rather, an obscene competition with the other, where the other appears as an incomplete image of me. This also explains a specifically Sadean source of happiness that consists in what Veblen called "invidious comparison," a paradoxical envy that the libertine has to ascribe to the "downtrodden," "the luckless who must necessarily complete our unhappiness by the comparison they furnish between themselves and us."²¹ The whole point of comparison is that it arouses envy and thus the struggle for an object whose sheer possession gives its owner the position of an unattainable superiority, of someone who lacks nothing. A profound modification of the "invidious comparison" carried out by Sade consists more specifically in a perverse

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²⁰ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1161.

enjoyment of inequality, a cynical appraisal of the misery of the excluded, since Sadean libertines are happy only if others are not: “their hardships add a further poignancy to my joys, I would not be so happy if I did not know there was suffering nearby, and ‘tis from this advantageous comparison half the pleasure in life is born.”²²

But right away we must note that Sadean envy is not just a struggle for the possession of a particular good. Envy, according to Sade, is not about craving a particular thing in order to satisfy a need, but rather about craving what Lacan termed the unattainable object of desire beyond any concrete object. The object onto which the envious gaze falls undergoes a veritable transmutation: from a mere good that can be replaced by something else, it is elevated to the dignity of the irreplaceable, unique Thing, a “thing that is my neighbor’s Thing,”²³ that transforms this neighbour, as Lacan notes, into someone unique, “without a pair.” Strictly speaking, Sadean envy is nothing but a desire for the object as such. As J.-J. Goux rightly points out, “Sade, through the *form* of the universal substitute for value, is not enjoying this or that particular good. He is enjoying the general possibility of enjoyment, ... the virtual omnipotence conferred by the general equivalent.”²⁴ It is Sade’s merit to have elucidated the “irrationality” of envy: envy does not aim at the object itself, but, rather, at some unimaginable *jouissance*, which is supposed to be accessible only to the Other.²⁵ What the subject cannot tolerate in the neighbour is unbearable evidence of *jouissance*. The paradox of envy hence consists in its being aroused by a mere groundless assumption that the “other is held to enjoy a certain form of *jouissance* or superabundant vitality that the subject perceives as something that he cannot apprehend by means of even the elementary of affective movements.”²⁶ When one envies one’s fellowman “the possession of goods which would be of no use to the person that is envious of them,”²⁷ the only way out of this impasse is through hatred of the other and this is so precisely because the other is presented as “the

²² *Ibid.*, p. 965.

²³ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 83.

²⁴ Jean-Joseph Goux, “Calcul des Jouissances,” in *Les Jouissances*, Paris: Seuil, 1978, p. 180.

²⁵ See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, trans. A. Sheridan, London, Penguin Books, 1979, pp. 115–116.

²⁶ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 237.

²⁷ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, p. 116.

image of a completeness closed upon itself,”²⁸ an image of a complete satisfaction, thus forcing the subject to face his/her constitutive lack, revealing in this way something that threatens the subject at the very core of his/her being.

The Sadism of Pity or Rousseau with Sade

The articulation of *jouissance* and destruction, the key feature of Sadean fantasy, is the axis around which Sade’s “deconstruction” of Rousseauian pity is centred. What is crucial here is not merely Sade’s rejection *en bloc* of pity, “the dullest, most stupid, most futile of all the soul’s impulses,” “chilling to the desires,”²⁹ but the fact that it is possible to extract from his arguments for cruelty exercised against the other, an unacknowledged sadism of the Rousseauian ethics of compassion.

At first glance, Rousseau and Sade seem to be the true antipodes holding two mutually exclusive positions, at least this is how Sade himself perceives their relationship. Sade categorically rejects Rousseau’s fraternal filiation, insisting on human natural egoism and the natural tendency to oppress one’s fellowmen. What is the obvious truth for Rousseau, namely, that one should be merciful and compassionate to one’s fellowmen due to our fundamental similarity, is a real issue for Sade as one of his libertines clearly states: “does the material or moral similarity obtaining between two bodies entail the necessity that one of these bodies do good to the other?”³⁰ What is more, pity deprives man of one of his essential natural attributes: passions that only strive for satisfaction, no matter how high the price. Pity, by contrast, seeks to artificially repair the natural inequality and fundamental disparities. Sade accuses Rousseau of setting up a kind of a stand-in for law in *nature*. Pity, in this view, functions at the level of nature itself as a defence against passion and desire, namely that agency that – because it knows no natural barrier – is by definition excessive. As an effort to domesticate the passions, pity, for Sade, “far from being a virtue, becomes a real vice once it leads us to meddle with an inequality prescribed by Nature’s laws.”³¹ At another level, and more immediately, Sade exposes the repressed egoism of

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²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 888.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 308.

Rousseauian pity, revealing in this way a paradoxical relationship to the other. On the one hand, it is undoubtedly true that pity for Rousseau necessarily involves the other, our fellowman, because it cannot even be aroused unless it “puts us in the place of him who suffers,”³² as Rousseau claims. But such a pity is inherently narcissistic, for Rousseau, because we feel the other’s suffering as *our own*; what is thus lost is exactly the suffering of *the other*: *we suffer in ourselves, not in the other*. That is why, at the very moment of compassion for the other, we must be indifferent to him/her, since we would only help the suffering other because – based on the principle of reciprocity – we expect that in a similar situation the other would help us.

Due to its narcissistic nature, pity is ambivalent: it requires both identification with the other *and* the necessity of keeping the suffering of the other at a certain distance because pity, as Rousseau conceives of it, is moral only if it remains within the limits of self-love. The economy of Rousseauian pity requires a certain non-identification with the Other: the Other should be kept at a distance, not, of course, in order to be recognized and respected in his/her otherness, but rather in order to prevent the pleasure that one experiences in pity from turning into a destructive jouissance. Rousseau himself is to a certain extent aware of the danger of the perversion of pity through its contamination with jouissance. Succinctly put, Rousseau wants the good of others, but only if this good, as Lacan notes, is “in the image of my own,”³³ in order to avoid exactly what is Sade’s true goal, namely, the evil desired by the subject and by his/her fellowman. In so doing, Rousseau systematically ignores the obverse side of the specular relationship between fellowmen, a relationship that involves a struggle to the death. Yet precisely this lethal aspect of the imaginary relationship is at the centre of Sade’s attention. He refuses the imposed compassion for the misfortune of the other because it erects an insurmountable barrier against the subject’s jouissance. Thus, when Sade insists, in opposition to Rousseau, that watching the misfortune of another is a source of pleasure, he allows us to see how Rousseau’s subject inexorably extorts some pleasure from the fantasmatic projection into the other’s misfortune. In this respect, it is by no means irrele-

³² Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967, p. 201.

³³ Lacan, *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*, p. 187.

vant that the Rousseauian concept of pity, for which it is necessary to keep the Other “at a respectful distance,” is based on the theory of a theatrical spectacle.

The pleasure to be experienced in such a theatrical staging is not, of course, to be confused with a cynical pleasure; it is not, as Rousseau himself warns, the pleasure of someone who, when watching a suffering fellowman, says: “You may perish for aught I care, nothing can hurt me.”³⁴ It is rather a paradoxical pleasure that springs from unpleasure, or, as Rousseau states, from the anxiety of someone who is compassionate towards the other, but cannot help him because he is condemned to the role of a spectator and thus to passivity. This is, of course, a subject who is, in fact, reduced to a gaze before which a terrible scene unfolds. This “frozen”, “immobilized” *jouissance* of the “paralyzed” spectator irrupts in all its atrocity in the example that Rousseau borrows from the famous B. Mandeville book *The Fable of the Bees, or Private Vices Public Benefits*. Rousseau himself uses this scene to illustrate a spontaneous emergence of pity through identification with the suffering other. It is

the pathetic picture of a man, who, *with his hands tied up*, is obliged to behold a beast of prey tear a child from the arms of his mother, and then with his teeth grind the tender limbs, and with his claws rend the throbbing entrails of the innocent victim. *What horrible emotions must not such a spectator experience at the sight of an event which does not personally concern him?* What anguish must he not suffer at his not being able to assist the fainting mother or the expiring infant?³⁵

A terrifying scene is a trap for the gaze and at the same time a feast for the eye. One might say that Rousseau, with the split between the eye and the gaze, stages while obscuring and repressing the division of the subject, which from the outset is safe, a split between the proclaimed pity and a silent, surreptitious *jouissance*. The paralysis of the witness that is reduced to the gaze alone only intensifies pity. But this subtle choreography of the staged scene serves merely to conceal that this is not just about a fantasmatic gaze of the victim him-/herself on his/her own issueless situation. For the gaze of the helpless, paralyzed witness is but a stand-in for another, absent, impossible gaze, namely the gaze

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³⁴ Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, p. 202.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 201–2.

of the mother, who is just as helpless, paralyzed (fainted) witness. This envisaging of the (absent) mother's gaze only exacerbates the horror of the situation, thus allowing the irruption of cruelty and sadism in the scene. For what is at stake in the Rousseauian subtle *mise-en-scène* is a staging of the emergence not only of pity but also, unexpectedly, of jouissance. The organization of the appearance of pity according to the principles of the theatrical spectacle, by placing the subject of compassion in the role of a passive spectator, is meant to prevent the perversion of pity, the transformation from the narcissistic pleasure to enjoyment of the suffering of the other. Yet contrary to his original intention, Rousseau's specular pity surprisingly confronts us with cruelty and sadism as an unavoidable supplement of imaginary pity, since it is centred on the gaze of a witness who quietly "enjoys" a terrifying scene from a safe distance.

What we see at work here is a staging of the ambivalent relation of the gaze with jouissance, more precisely, a staging of the way in which the gaze tacitly disabuses the barrier that the pleasure principle erects to keep jouissance in check. Why else would one describe in the smallest details how the wild beast grinds "with his teeth ... the tender limbs, and with his claws /rends/ the throbbing entrails of the innocent," if not in order to situate it as a stand-in for the mother's absent gaze? The passivity of the external viewer re-doubles the mother's "passivity", not, however, to exonerate her – as a witness, the (fainted) mother cannot save her child either – but in order to lay blame on her, not of course for not saving her child, but for *not watching* what is happening to the child because, by fainting, she has "evacuated" herself from the scene. It lays blame on the mother for having "saved" herself, for having deprived us of the spectacle of her suffering, which is why her suffering must be represented by someone else, the witness. The unacknowledged sadism of pity is based on the fact that Rousseau and Sade, oddly enough, agree that both pity and jouissance can only be measured by the degree of violence that arouses us, as Sade bluntly states.

This also explains why the Rousseauian subject of pity, this eminently being the subject of pleasure, must repress the jouissance provoked by scenes of suffering. Rousseau's insistence on keeping the other at a distance in order to preserve the morality of pity should warn us that Rousseau must stop at a point before our pleasure in pity turns into enjoyment of the other's suffering. And conversely, the Sadean subject of jouissance must, in order to be able to sustain himself in the constant state of excitement, either seek ever new victims, or intensify their

suffering, ideally, by extending the torture of always the same victim beyond the limits of life – to eternity. The first one, i.e. the Rousseauian subject, is happy, but at the cost of the renouncement of *jouissance*, while the other sacrifices for the sake of *jouissance* not only the well-being of the other, but also his/her own happiness, since the pursuit of *jouissance* knows no rest, he has to constantly seek new sources of excitement; it is therefore structurally impossible for him to ever reach complete satisfaction.

Although in both Rousseau and Sade the demand for satisfaction constitutes the horizon of their respective ethics, it is precisely here that we can show a difference between them. According to Rousseau, the subject's satisfaction must be sought at the level of desire as a kind of denaturalized need or instinct. The socialized subject, for Rousseau, is no longer directly linked to nature and is therefore no longer able to unmistakably interpret what the voice of nature commands. Hence, despite the fact that needs or instincts can be considered to be the inscription of the voice of nature into man's flesh, this inscription remains, as Rousseau asserts, latent, waiting to be activated. What nature wants is no longer directly accessible to civilized man, but has to be supplemented in some way, in particular by imagination, which is an ambivalent supplement because it can lead the subject to the excessiveness of desire and thus to evil. The Rousseauian subject could then be considered to be the subject of desire, more precisely, the subject of a *nescient*, ignorant desire that is lost, and therefore unable to achieve its satisfaction.

Sade, by contrast, explores the subject's satisfaction at the level of the drives or, more precisely, at the level of the will to *jouissance*, which, unlike desire, does not hesitate, does not lose itself, but infallibly follows its pre-written programme. Thus, in opposition to the Rousseauian subject, who always runs the risk of falling into the excessiveness of desire by misinterpreting the voice of nature, the Sadean subject incarnates the sovereign "I know." There is a tenacity and determination in the working of the Sadean subject that is characterized by the certainty of someone who is in the possession of knowledge, as if he were directly connected to the real: the voice of nature. He knows what the voice of nature demands of him, and he devotedly obeys it. This also explains why the same experience, the suffering of the other, is linked in Rousseau to the identification with the other, whereas in Sade, on the contrary, it is linked to the disidentification with the other. While for Rousseau it is necessary, in order to

achieve one's own happiness, to experience pity, even if the latter is motivated utterly egoistically – the subject is merciful to the other, because he/she fears that such misfortune will befall him/her too – the scenes of the misfortune and suffering of the other are the source of happiness for the Sadean libertine: “It is a thousand times sweeter to say to oneself, casting an eye upon unhappy souls, *I am not such as they, and therefore I am their better*, than merely to say, *Joy is unto me, but my joy is mine amidst people who are just as happy as I*. It is others' hardships which cause us to experience our enjoyments to the full.”³⁶ Worse, it is necessary to artificially create an inequality, to force the other into powerlessness, in order to finally refuse him/her our mercy. Not only is the Sadean subject insensitive to the well-being of the other, he is fully dedicated to “doing evil.” Nothing could then be more remote from Sade than the Rousseauian principle of natural, benevolent reciprocity. But this harming of the other is not merely a perversion of the Rousseauian pity, based on identification with the victim. Pity, as one of the fundamental ethical virtues, is entirely foreign to the tormentor not only because the Sadean libertine takes on the role of a “merciless master,” insensitive to the victim's pleading, but because he is identified with cruelty as the opposite of pity. The sadist is exempted from the imaginary relationship with the other because he identifies with the insupportable jouissance obtained through torture, corporal and moral, mistreatment, and, finally, murder.

From an Other to the other

According to the most established interpretation, Sade, in contrast to Rousseau, who affirms the existence of the Other, albeit in the register of the imaginary, because the Other remains “in the image of my own,” totally disregards the Other. Indeed, the Sadean law of jouissance, a singular union of cruelty and lust, can only bring about an infinite separation and thus the ruin of the Other as such: “Assure yourself that you are absolute sovereign in a world grovelling at your feet, that yours is the supreme and unchallengeable right to change, mutilate, destroy, annihilate any and all the living beings you like.”³⁷ The solitude to which the will to jouissance condemns the Sadean tormentor clearly indicates that there is no room for an Other because the Sadean tormentor-master takes up all the room. The elimination of the Other is in fact another name for the

³⁶ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 552.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 640.

elimination of anything that might impede jouissance. As for the victim, he/she poses no problem of otherness either: excluded from the symbolic, the victim is from the start reduced to the instrumental status of a mute appendix, a passive body plugged into the tormentor's body and destined to be enjoyed, tortured, exhausted, and finally thrown away after heavy use. For this reason, the ruin of law implied by the exclusion of the Other requires a recourse to nature. Sade's assumption is that no passion, however perverse, is unnatural. Rather, "'tis when we have achieved depravation, insensibility, that Nature begins to yield us the key to her secret workings, and... it cannot be pried away from her save through outrages."³⁸ By identifying passions with nature, passions are not only de-normed, released from the limits that every social and symbolic order imposes on them, but are also asserted as legitimate and attainable. As such, Sadean passions are therefore identified with instincts that – because they know no obstacle or negation – demand immediate gratification.

The rehabilitation of jouissance through its naturalization or through the "re-naturalization of cruelty", as Klossowski, one of the most perspicacious Sade's interpreters, proposes to sum up the core of Sade's programme, is accompanied by the liquidation of "the reality of the other whereby the very notion of the other is emptied of all content."³⁹ Sadean cruelty consists, however, in the following paradox: with the very gesture of destroying the other, my fellow, his/her reality is all the more asserted:

Nothing would seem more contradictory in Sade than this break with others when the result of the abolition of our duties toward others and their consequent exclusion from our sensibility is translated clearly and constantly by acts which, because of their violence, need the other – acts which by their very nature re-establish the reality of the other and of myself.⁴⁰

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Yet Klossowski's interpretation, despite its doubtless perspicacity, is nonetheless ambiguous, as it allows two answers to the question of why the Other cannot be got rid of. The first answer highlights the failure of Sade's enterprise because Sade's tormentors cannot succeed in completely annihilating the Other,

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 710.

³⁹ Pierre Klossowski, *Sade mon prochain*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, p. 129.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 134–135.

who keeps returning behind their backs. The gist of the second answer is quite the opposite: the indestructibility of the Other is not a sign of a failure, but is, actually, constitutive of the Sadean ceaseless destruction. The relentlessness of destruction, which, according to Klossowski, leads to a generalized *a-patheia*, may well exclude every affective consideration of the Other, but at the same time it inevitably resuscitates the phantom of the Other. In view of this curious irreducibility of the Other, we must ask: *what Other are we actually dealing with in Sade?*

Determining the status of the Other in the economy of the Sadean jouissance is one of the most challenging tasks primarily because what characterizes the sadist subjective position is the complete absence of any addressing of the Other. The Sadean libertine demands nothing from the Other, nor does he expect the Other to repair the injustices that have been inflicted on him. In a radical sense, there is, at this level, no Other for the sadist. And, indeed, Sade's thesis on man's fundamental solitude might lead us to the conclusion that we are dealing here with a universe without the Other. The sadist's solitude is in fact a direct consequence of the Sadean main assumption, according to which the right to jouissance is absolute. It is a right that is imposed unconditionally, that is to say, beyond the limits of intersubjectivity. Thus, what characterizes the sadist, the master by definition, is "the delicious realization that nothing and no one else matters on earth."⁴¹ Since the sadist is guided only by the maxim: "I have the right to enjoy your body ...," the consent given to him by the victim is utterly irrelevant. Indeed, if the right to jouissance is absolute, then the sadist does not need the Other's consent in order to comply with the imperative of jouissance. At this level, another aspect of the will to jouissance emerges: its cynicism, as illustrated by a typically Sadean question: "And of what account can the lives of all that trash be... when our pleasures are at stake?"⁴² In this regard, there is, indeed, no Other for the Sadean will to jouissance.

A more detailed analysis of the Sadean mechanism for the production of jouissance reveals, however, that the status of the Other is actually more ambivalent and problematic than it appears at first. The sadist is namely someone who is wholly committed to recovering or resuscitating jouissance, not, of course,

⁴¹ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 965.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 999.

his own, but the jouissance of the Other. The sadist is identified here with the Other's will to enjoy, hence his decision to put himself actively into a state of passivity: to be the instrument of the jouissance of the Other. At this level, the Other is an indispensable presupposition for jouissance to be produced at all. The status of Sade's Other may well be initially problematic – defined as a lack of jouissance, this being a *conditio sine qua non* for the sadist to place himself in the service of this Other's jouissance, because if the Other were “whole”, complete, the sadist's “service” would not have been needed – the Other nevertheless looms over the Sadean universe. How else can we understand Sade's claim that he can “help” or, rather, serve nature, if not from the assumption that civilization has deprived nature of its ability to enjoy? The sadist, who does not deal with the whole Other, but with a barred, lacking Other, therefore sees his mission in restoring to the Other what it is lacking, namely, jouissance.

The sadist, therefore, knows that his *raison d'être* is to serve the Other's will to enjoy. Serving the will to jouissance implies *knowledge* of the Other's lack of jouissance. The sadist “knows” that the Other wants the restitution of jouissance, that remnant or supplement of jouissance that would heal the Other's lack. This jouissance, to which he is devoted, is therefore the jouissance of the Other. He “slaves” for it even when he forces the Other, his victim, into producing jouissance. This is because, for the sadist, wrenching from the Other the proof of jouissance equals the ontological proof, the proof of the Other's existence. In this respect, the sadist is not unlike God's knight for whom, as Lacan points out, the existence of God is not a given, but a matter of faith;⁴³ the sadist also finds his *raison d'être*: to prove that the Other exists, only if he is in some way “cata-pulted” into the lack of the Other.

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For the sadist, the Other exists only through jouissance, which needs to be ensured. And even if the Other does not exist, the sadist knows what the Other wants: jouissance. Even the absence of the Other is therefore not an obstacle for the sadist because his aim is to make the Other exist as the one who enjoys. The Sadean endeavour has no objective other than to provide jouissance to the Other, in order for the latter to exist, since only if the Other exists can he/she enjoy. The conclusion to be drawn from the sadist's striving for the jouissance of the Other, for the production of jouissance in the body of the Other, regardless of

⁴³ Jacques Lacan, *D'un Autre à l'autre*, Paris: Seuil, 2006, pp. 253, 256.

what the Other wants, regardless of whether the Other even knows that he/she is lacking jouissance, is then, in Klossowski words, that the sadist does not experience jouissance in his own body, but *in the body of the Other*, or, rather, it is in the body of the Other that the sadist experiences the uncanny in his own body.⁴⁴

Hence the necessity for the sadist to split the agency of the Other: on the one hand, the Other is always already there as a “lust-object” to be (mis)treated in a variety of ways. But for this manhandling to be possible at all, the presence of the Other must be secured. The Other’s *Dasein*, being-there, is required, and if he/she does not give his/her consent to this (mis)treatment, as usually happens, then he/she should be put in chains, kept there in one way or another in order to give proof of his/her availability. The “lust-objects” must be summoned and ready to serve. However, the possibility of enjoying those “pleasure-machines”, as Sade calls them, depends on its inscription into existing relationships of power that could secure unrestricted access to those “lust-objects”⁴⁵ that law makes inaccessible. This is then the Other as the “object” of the sadist’s torture, the naive victim, to whom the sadist is completely indifferent, even if he cannot be indifferent to the sheer fact of the victim’s existence, to his/her availability. The Sadean libertine can hence state bluntly: “I have the inalienable right to employ force and any coercive means called for if... he [the fellow] dares for one instant withhold from me what I am fairly entitled to extract from him.”⁴⁶ Klossowski rightly draws our attention to the affinity between the sadist solipsistic jouissance and cruelty: postulated as the unconditional, jouissance becomes evil because it is indifferent to the price to be paid by the subject and the Other for its attainment. Indifference here coincides with inindifferentiation. Sade’s torturer aims at no one in particular, but only requires ever new, equally insignificant victims. No victim counts more than any other because no victim is capable, as J.-A. Miller remarks, of “making a hole in the Other.”⁴⁷ Even the victim’s death is insignificant. The only thing that ultimately counts for the Sadean libertine is how to ensure the ceaseless repetition of the sadist operation.

⁴⁴ Klossowski, *Sade mon prochain*, p. 47.

⁴⁵ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 744

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁴⁷ Jacques-Alain Miller, 1, 2, 3, 4 (unpublished seminar), 12 December 1984.

But the sadist's indifference to his countless victims is revealed in a completely different light if the sadist himself is submitted to the imperative of *jouissance*. In effect, the Sadean tormentor cannot be indifferent to the imperative of *jouissance*, to this other Other, if we may say so, that agency for which the tormentor "slaves", that agency in relation to which he is desubjectivated, transformed into an object, making himself "the instrument of the Other's *jouissance*."⁴⁸ The sadist knows that by seeking *jouissance* he complies with the law of nature as his knowledge is primarily knowledge of the equivalence between the law of *jouissance* and the law of nature. Contrary to the libertine, who is distinguished by knowledge of *jouissance*, those who are designated to become the sadist's victims, "feeble-minded creatures" whose "insensibility" can only depress their tormentor,⁴⁹ are characterized by their ignorance, which is nothing but their not wanting to know anything about *jouissance*. Because the victim, unlike the Sadean libertine, does not hear the voice of nature and, consequently, does not know that by seeking *jouissance* he/she actually obeys nature's command. If denial of *jouissance* is what predestines someone for the status of a victim, this is because the victim is split between two kinds of ignorance: ignorance of the true nature of the laws that he/she respects, even though he/she ought not respect them because they are nothing but a make-believe, and ignorance of the Law he/she ought to respect, yet does not, because he/she does not know it, or knows it under the improper guise of a vice, i.e. as a violation of those laws that he/she actually obeys. As a result, nature, thwarted and repressed by virtues that stem from educational "prejudices", takes its revenge: unable to speak through the virtuous ignoramus, nature speaks against him/her, turning him/her into the sadist's victim.

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It suffices to ask: Why does the Sadean victim so readily submit him-/herself to torture? And, in fact, we cannot find any scene in Sade where the victim puts up any resistance. The crucial point here is that the relationship between the torturer and the victim should not be assimilated to the master-slave relationship of the Hegelian type. There is no dialectical relationship in Sade: the victim is not a bearer of any knowledge; no teleology is involved here. Rather, the reason for the strange *passivity* of Sadean victims is their virtuousness, which, for Sade, is

⁴⁸ Jacques Lacan, "The Subversion of Subject and the Dialectics of Desire in the Freudian Unconscious" in *Écrits*, p. 697.

⁴⁹ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 147.

nothing but another name for the not-knowing of the equivalence between the law of nature and the will to jouissance. The suffering of the Sadean victim is therefore not a suffering of a useful work. On the contrary, it is useless in two respects: it serves nothing, because it is completely subordinated to the capriciousness of the tormentor's will; second, the suffering of the Sadean victim will not give rise to any knowledge as the tormentor already knows what there is to know and it is through recourse to the knowledge of what the voice of nature demands that the sadist usurps the right to be an executioner. It then follows that, if the Sadean victim endures suffering, this is because, even before becoming a sadist's victim, he/she had already become a victim of conventions, norms, rules, artefacts, in a word, a victim of a mere semblance. By contrast, for the sadist, the victim's body is libidinally invested because of its passivity, since what makes the sadist enjoy is not the victim's suffering as such, the torture inflicted on the victim's body, but the situating of a fellow as a victim.

Sade is perhaps one of the first thinkers to have shown that there is an *original connection between jouissance and knowledge*. The knowledge of jouissance divides the subject, but, in Sade, the two halves of this division are emancipated, autonomized: the victim and the sadist embody the subject's division as a division between knowledge and ignorance of jouissance. The convergence of the subject's division and the division of knowledge / not-knowledge allows us to understand why the sadist is not satisfied just with torturing his victims, why, in addition, he has to "educate" them. What the sadist wants to "teach" the victim is, ultimately, that he/she enjoys, whether he/she knows it or not. The Sadean enterprise therefore does not merely have ethical and political implications, but also pedagogical implications. A troublesome point for our understanding of an enterprise of this kind is this: Being already in the possession of knowledge about the law of nature, since the programme of the will to enjoy is always already mapped out for him, the Sadean pervert is in a radical way incorrigible and thus uneducable. And it seems that there is no place for any educating of the victims either. To the extent that only the suffering of the victims' bodies can yield satisfaction for the sadist, there is only merciless torture and the final elimination of these "lust-objects," as Sade calls them. What is remarkable, however, is that for Sade's tormentors themselves, the torture inflicted on the Other cannot be an end in itself, but serves instead as a means for the transmission of knowledge about which the victim does not want to know anything, which is why he/she needs to be reminded about it more or less roughly. Looking from

the sadist perspective, torture is, in a way, for the victim's own 'good' or benefit. There is, however, no complete overlap between knowledge and jouissance in Sade. It is not possible to say, for instance, that only the one who knows enjoys. The whole point of his pedagogy is rather to show that the victim who does not know that he/she enjoys and who does not want to know anything about jouissance, nevertheless enjoys.⁵⁰

Thus, to see even more clearly how knowledge and jouissance hinge on each other, we have to distinguish two kinds of jouissance in Sade: a discursive jouissance, the infamous *jouis-sens*, enjoyment in meaning, that is produced in the very preparations for obtaining jouissance, and most specifically in the detailed "reports", the testimony of this jouissance by libertines themselves.⁵¹ Sade's "or-

⁵⁰ Let us note in passing that this presupposed knowledge of jouissance applies to all perverts, not only to Sadean tormentors. For the pervert, any kind of knowledge is immediately concerned with the enjoyment of the irremediably mute body. Hence, the pervert knows how to obtain jouissance. He knows where to find it, namely, in the body, and he looks for that point where the body enjoys, while being indifferent to what the victim wants, even if he ends up forcing the victim into jouissance. Yet, as Lacan points out, nothing is more uncertain than the jouissance that the sadist strives to achieve. The sadist's subjective position is a paradoxical one: on the one hand, he is on the look out for the emergence of jouissance in the Other, albeit the latter is literally forced into enjoying. The sadist jouissance arises namely in the very split of the victim-subject, in the gap between the pathological subject and the subject of desire, a gap that appears when the sadist forces the victim to separate him-/herself from everything that constitutes him/her as the subject of pleasure and the subject of the symbolic (to respect a given word, the symbolic pact). On the other hand, the sadist operation signals that it is exactly that which is supposed to make jouissance possible that is its greatest obstacle. He wants to make the Other "whole", to heal him/her with jouissance, which the Other does not even know he is lacking or, worse, does not want. Hence, the sadist cannot restore jouissance to the Other otherwise than by disregarding what the Other wants, given that the economy of jouissance that forces the sadist to impose his voice upon the Other, thus rendering the latter mute, reveals in this way the impossibility of eliminating the voice in the production of jouissance. On the one hand, despite the fact that the Other does not want the jouissance imposed on him/her by the sadist, he/she nevertheless obeys. On the other hand, however, the sheer submission constitutes, for the sadist, proof that jouissance is obtained. In reality, however, the jouissance that the sadist works for is never ensured. But this lack of jouissance is not noticed by either the victim or the tormentor, being concealed, as Lacan notes, by the massive presence of the voice and the blinding presence of the sadist as a mere instrument of jouissance. Lacan, *D'Un Autre à l'autre*, pp. 258–259.

⁵¹ Here is how *The 120 Days of Sodom* presents the function of the report, considered to be a pleasure of the head, within the Sadean libidinal body: "after having immured themselves

gasm of the head,”⁵² a peculiar kind of “*jouis-sens*”, far from being foreign to the jouissance experienced in the body, being only “of the head” and discourse, is rather constitutive of it, precisely because the head, for Sade, is itself one of the bodily organs and functions as a material instrument within the libertine machine. However, the true jouissance at stake in Sade is not that discursive jouissance, important though it may be, but the jouissance of the body that has been postulated from the outset as being nondiscursive, a jouissance that is external to discourse, or outside discourse. It is precisely at this jouissance of the *mute* body that the sadist aims. The body’s silent jouissance testifies in return that there is something irreducible in jouissance that cannot be translated into the signifier. Disconnected from the signifier, immune to the requirements of normalization, this silent jouissance occurs as a kind of condensed remnant that does not dissolve in the signifier, as that which cannot be tamed, cannot be domesticated by discourse, and which, as such, has the status of the real. Perhaps the best proof of the real status of the mute jouissance is that it is non-localizable; it is a jouissance that is constantly displacing itself as it does not have its proper place; hence, it can be said to be either everywhere or nowhere. This also explains why the sadist discovers it in the most unexpected and impossible places, especially in places where the body suffers. The duality of discursive and silent jouissance, with the latter always maintaining primacy, clearly signals that Sade’s objective is not a thoughtless quest for the satisfaction of the drives, since jouissance produced merely by talking about jouissance, this *jouis-sens*, “enjoyment in meaning”, is used in Sade to signify that the symbolic itself is in the service of jouissance.

The primacy of the body’s mute jouissance therefore indicates that Sade is not blind to the antinomian relationship between jouissance and the subject. For Sade, there is an irreducible gap between the jouissance of the body that “knows” jouissance, but cannot speak about it, and the subject of the signifier, who could certainly say something about it, but cannot do this because it does not know anything about the jouissance of the body. Wholly in line with Lacan’s formula of the “cogito of jouissance,” when it comes to the experience of enjoyment, one

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within everything that was best able to satisfy the senses through lust, ... the plan was to have described to them, in the greatest detail and in due order, every one of debauchery’s extravagances, all its divagations, all its ramifications, all its contingencies, all of what is termed in libertine language its passions.” Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, p. 218.

⁵² Hénaff, *Sade. The Invention of the Libertine Body*, p. 97.

can say at best *se jouit*, “it enjoys itself,” never “I enjoy.” As Sade’s economy of jouissance clearly demonstrates, there is no time for the subject to experience its division since the subject disappears the moment jouissance occurs or, better perhaps, the subject is eliminated in advance. The proof that there is no subject of jouissance can be seen in the subjective position of the sadist, who is precisely not a subject, but an instrument of the will to jouissance: “the sadist himself occupies the place of the object, but without knowing it, to the benefit of another, for whose jouissance he exercises his action as sadistic pervert.”⁵³ It then follows that for the sadist, too, jouissance is incompatible with the status of the subject. In effect, when jouissance emerges, there is no (longer) anyone there to say something about it. This (self)deleting of the subject is particularly dramatic in the case of the sadist, where we see a speaking being reduced to a flesh-machine made for coming, a machine made of “a head and balls,” as Sade nicely sums it up, where the head itself is one of the organs in the service of coming, of intensifying and multiplying the modalities of enjoyment.

How then can the persistence, the insistence of the will to jouissance be explained if it cannot be grafted onto the subject or onto the Other? The subject, in Sade, as we have seen, is reduced to an object, an instrument of the will to jouissance, while the Other is at best a problematic assumption, since its existence must be ensured by the production of jouissance. A number of interpreters have already remarked that, in Sade, we are dealing with a variation of the same scenario, as all orgies resemble one another. How are we to understand the working of the subject to whom nothing can happen but this single repetitious adventure, indefinitely? What agency condemns the sadist to such a repetitive sameness? It is essential to emphasize here jouissance’s “first time” inscribing an indelible trace on the speaking body. To discover a particular mode of jouissance is, in effect, something unforgettable for the speaking body, something like a “once forever”. It is enough for the speaking body to experience it once, after which it can never forget it; from now on it can only search for new opportunities for the repetition of the same experience – hence the endless rerun of the same scenario. The indelibility of jouissance and, consequently, its capture in the mechanism of repetition point to its real status: for this jouissance remains impervious to all modification, domestication or re-education. The status of such a jouissance remains radically ex-sistent, and the same status is imposed

⁵³ Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, p. 185.

on the subject, since jouissance situates the subject outside the law, thereby transforming him/her literally into an out-law.

We can see now why the Sadean libertine is presented as the incarnation of the compulsion to repetition. To be sure, the Sadean tormentor wants to persevere in his being. Setting out from the Spinozean definition according to which “being is to persevere in its being,” there is no one who would be more faithful to the programme inscribed into his flesh than precisely the pervert – on condition, however, that the persevering in one’s being should be understood in terms of a fidelity to a particular mode of jouissance. Sade himself insists that the subject does not persevere in his/her being such as it is imposed by jouissance out of his/her selfish interests, but rather irrespective of his/her best interests. There is then something odd about the Sadean perseverance in being because we are faced here with a persevering in being that comes at the cost of sacrificing the very substance of this persevering. The satisfaction of jouissance undoubtedly requires the being, ultimately, a living body, but at the same time it extends beyond the limits of the capacity of a living organism. The fidelity to jouissance thus inevitably leads to an activity against the preserving of the living substance resulting, ultimately, in its destruction. The sadist, therefore, is someone who takes on the task of pursuing the satisfaction of the passions, even if he “drops dead” in the process. On this point, it could then be said that Sade’s passions mask behind their variety a single passion or drive, the death drive.

This jouissance, to which the subject is thus ready to sacrifice everything, even his/her living substance, may best be defined as a parasite on the living organism. One of the key lessons to be drawn from Sade is therefore that the jouissance that the subject is relentlessly chasing necessarily implies a non-adaptation. Jouissance, as a repetition of the demand for satisfaction, incarnates the function of a “More!” that knows no boundaries, not even those of the living organism. This is because, for Sade, the victim’s body, cut into pieces, annihilated, and thrown back into the inanimate, maintains its capacity to resist. Hence, this compulsion to repetition, inherent to the satisfaction of the passions, a compulsion that persists beyond life, even “beyond the bounds of eternity, if eternity has any,”⁵⁴ as Sade himself states, is what remains of the will to enjoy in the

⁵⁴ Sade, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, p. 217.

subject after the living organism is consumed and decomposed. Paradoxically, jouissance appears to be the only mode of immortality accessible to the subject.

Sade thus follows the Enlightenment vitalist materialism that sets out from the assumption of an eternal, indestructible life.⁵⁵ With Sade, however, the assumption of an immortal jouissance inevitably leads to the disjunction of life and body but with a twist. Life exceeds the body, as the latter is only a transient, ephemeral form of life. Sade is, in this respect, a Freudian *avant la lettre*, because, in Sade, the immortal jouissance is identified with the death drive, meaning that, subjectivated as a crime, it does not satisfy itself with murder, but wants, in addition, to accomplish a total annihilation, without remainder. Even before Freud, Sade thus shows that jouissance arises as a disruptive demand that threatens the living being by imposing on it a functioning that defies the conditions of life. In the same vein, Sade can put forward, in the infamous system of Pope Pius VI, the assumption that nature itself desires death and total destruction, a death that destroys not only the body, but also what is left of the victim's body that tortures have turned into an inorganic, formless muddle. The Sadean criminal thus wants to hit the Other not only at the level of the life of the individual body, he wants to hit the Other in the matter that subsists after the accomplishment of the first crime, he wants to eliminate the Other at the level of the material it is made of. Sade sets out from the assumption that "such dissolution serves nature's purpose, since it recomposes that which is destroyed." But nature can be even better served by a total destruction because it breaks with the eternal cycle of creation-destruction that enslaves nature itself: "Murder only takes the first life of the individual whom we strike down; we should also seek to take his second life, if we are to be even more useful to nature. For nature wants annihilation; it is beyond our capacity to achieve the scale of destruction it desires."⁵⁶

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⁵⁵ In *D'Alembert's Dream*, Diderot already formulates the thesis of two lives, the thesis that is inverted in Sade, as we know: "Dead, I act and react in mass – the mass of my body, the animalcules that form me. Dead, I act and react in molecules." This means that after death, man is alive at the level of molecules. Quoted in Jacques-Alain Miller, "Lacanian Biology and the Event of the Body," trans. B. Fulk and J. Jauregui, *lacanian ink*, No. 18 (Spring 2001), p. 11. In a similar way, Sade explicitly affirms that there is no death, based on the materialist thesis that for matter, being in constant motion, a state of rest is impossible. And since matter never rests, bodies cannot die, they can only metamorphose.

⁵⁶ Marquis de Sade, *Nouvelle Justine, Oeuvres complètes*, Paris: Cercle du Livre Précieux, 1966–1967, Vol. 7, p. 212.

The truly great scoundrel, for Sade, is therefore not one who is satisfied in simply following nature's example, copying its "foul deeds," but one that goes beyond the mere modification of the forms of matter. The one who aspires to be the organ, the executioner of nature's laws, does not only strive to help nature attain its goals: through destruction, to provide nature with the material for its future creations, but aims more radically at the liberation of nature from the eternal cycle of destruction-creation that, instead of proving its creative potential, proves its impotence, its eternal return of the same. In short, a true Sadean hero strives to liberate nature from its need and/or will to create. This almost inconceivable idea is strikingly represented by the following wish:

I would like ... to find a crime which, even when I had left off doing it, would go on having perpetual effect, in such a way that ... I would be constantly the cause of a particular disorder, and that this disorder might broaden to the point where it brought about a corruption so universal or a disturbance so formal that even after my life was over I would survive in the everlasting continuation of my wickedness.⁵⁷

This paradoxical position makes it possible for the Sadean libertine to exonerate himself from the suffering that he causes: in tormenting the other, the perverse libertine fulfils the will of nature, since nature itself desires, seeks, evil. In Sade, the evil that permeates the will to jouissance is thus a destructive jouissance, inscribed in the very law of nature. The will to enjoyment coincides with the will to destruction, since nature can exercise its will only if it wrests itself from the "other" nature, that of laws and cycles, which restrains and limits its creative power. Nature, therefore, cannot "enjoy" otherwise than by wanting evil. Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish two types of nature's evil jouissance. The first being an evil that nature does *not want*, as it causes it almost unwillingly, unknowingly. This evil is brought about merely through the eternal cycle of creation-corruption-destruction. At this level, nature destroys because it simply needs the material for something new or, rather, something other, because at this level there is neither death nor a new creation; there are only new combinations from the elements of decomposition. From this involuntary, unknowing evil, which is entirely in tune with the tradition of materialist philosophy, an evil, which in truth is not one because nature cannot be held responsible for

⁵⁷ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 525.

the effects of its workings we suffer, it is necessary to distinguish another evil, the evil that nature actually *wants*. This is the evil at the level of the infamous second death, a total annihilation, which goes beyond the materialist tradition, since the second death is postulated as a condition for the *creatio ex nihilo*. At this level, nature knows what it is doing, indeed, it is identified with a malevolent God who wants evil and does evil.

To the question of this other instance of the Other that exercises its right to enjoy on both the victim and the tormentor, Sade answers: it is nature that manifests itself as an imperative voice that demands unconditional obedience. The voice of nature being imprinted, as it were, into the flesh itself, one is almost tempted to say that it is a demand of the flesh itself, with passions securing the transmission of the voice of nature. The passions are programmed in the body as a constant stimulus, which, unlike the needs, is not extinguished with its satisfaction. There is no stopping for the passions. For being excessive, transgressive, the sadist passion is nothing but the organ of the will to jouissance. As a constant demand for satisfaction, which must be fulfilled regardless of the cost, the passions, albeit they have their seat in the organism, are an agency of a counter-nature in the organism threatening their very material basis with annihilation.

It is important to remember that the sadist, in satisfying his passions, does not strive for his own jouissance, but sweats instead for nature's jouissance. From the outset, the sadist is submitted to the imperative: Enjoy! In this respect, the sadist's position is a paradoxical one: in relation to the victim, the sadist is positioned as the one who is in control, in short, as a master; in relation to jouissance, by contrast, he is situated as an instrument or the executor of the will of the Other. At best, we could say that the sadist, in relation to the victim, postures in the role of the Other, thereby concealing the split between the two figures of the Other, in relation to which he situates himself. Or, more exactly, the boundless power over the victim conceals that he, this all-powerful tormentor, is actually a slave of an Other, ultimately, a slave of jouissance itself, which is to be engendered in the victim's body.

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From the outset the relationship between the subject and the Other is posited as an asymmetrical, inegalitarian relationship of domination and subordination. The perverse libertine is not the enunciating subject of jouissance's "categorical imperative" but rather the addressee of the commandment coming from the

Other, namely, nature. In this respect, the libertine applies the imperative of jouissance first to himself: he is the first to hear the commandment of jouissance and the first to submit himself to it. Consequently, in defying every submission to the law, to the existing institutions and authorities, the Sadean libertine does not require sovereignty and autonomy for himself. And, in fact, the idea of the subject's autonomy is, for Sade, a contractualist illusion since the autonomy of free negotiating individuals entering the contract implies the forgetting of the true sovereign: nature, whose command de-centres the subject, rendering him/her non-identical to him-/herself, depending on some heteronomous, extimate agency, namely, the will to jouissance.

With Sade's distinction between two kinds of laws: the sovereign law, this being the law of nature, and the laws-conventions imposed by society, an opposition is established between the Other of civilization and the Other of jouissance, this being a stand-in for the supreme law, a law that is inevitably in conflict with the laws of society. For Sade, the law of nature is a negation of the social law, as it commands what the legal-moral laws prohibit: the gratification of the passions. Hence, the Other that demands the sacrifice of jouissance, the reining in of the passions, must be defied. To this Other of society demanding that the subject refuse to satisfy the passions, the Sadean subject says No! But this Other is an improper, inauthentic Other, usurping the place of the true Other. To this "other" Other, which is nature as the embodiment of the will to jouissance, the subject cannot say No!; rather, he/she must submit to it. The position of the Sadean subject is thus characterized by a paradoxical coupling of rebellion and rejection, on the one hand, and submission and consent, on the other. Just as the subject's duty is to say No! to the demand imposing the sacrifice of jouissance, no less does he/she have the duty to give his/her consent to jouissance, since it is not possible, for Sade, to refuse to say Yes! to the will to enjoy.

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This doubling of the agency of the Other should warn us that, with Sade, we are not dealing with a free, unbridled satisfaction of the libertine's passions, despite certain misleading formulations by Sade himself, but with the fulfilment of his duty to the Other. From this perspective, the Sadean subject shifts from the camp of the traditional Freudian superego, the one that prohibits jouissance, to the camp of the Lacanian superego, which commands jouissance; in contrast to the neurotic, who considers him-/herself to be lacking, always coming up short against the immensity of the superego's commandment, the libertine, identified

with the instrument of the imperative of *jouissance*, has no difficulty in fulfilling the commandment of *jouissance*. The paradox of the sadist position is thus one where unbridled *jouissance* is equated with the fulfilment of a duty to the Other. Duties, being always some manner of forcing, do not differ according to their mode, but rather according to their stakes. Both traditional and Sadean ethics are therefore ethics of duty. However, while traditional ethics requires that the subject renounce *jouissance*, Sadean ethics reminds the subject of his/her duties, not to the Other of civilization, but to *jouissance*. The subject of civilization is guilty, in Sade's eyes, of having renounced *jouissance*, and if he/she suffers, he/she suffers for having given up *jouissance*, for having disobeyed the will to *jouissance*, raised to the rank of a universal law.

The Institutionalization of the Right to *Jouissance*

Sade's despotism of the passions is based on the assumption that whereas the civil state represents a tyranny of laws over the passions commanding the sacrifice of *jouissance* and transforming, as a consequence, the enjoying body into a desert of *jouissance*, a reign of naked force, because this is the state that allows the satisfaction of the passions. According to today's most established interpretation, Sade's idea of the despotism of the passions, which is to be realized at the level of the *socius*, is self-defeating because the apology of the will to *jouissance* would annihilate the very possibility of the social bond. According to this interpretation, then, the whole point of Sade's criticism of the Enlightenment ethics and politics is to denounce the radical incompatibility of the social bond and *jouissance*: to the extent that *jouissance* isolates and separates, *jouissance* is the negation of the social bond. Hence, the despotism of the passions is to be taken literally: passions enslave, subjugate, demand total submission. *Jouissance* is inherently tyrannical: Enjoy! – regardless of the price you have to pay, or, better, regardless of the price the object of your enjoyment has to pay.

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In this respect, Sade's claim that, when it comes to *jouissance*, everyone remains a "partner of his/her solitude," is judicious. Setting out from the *jouissance* of the One, Sade inevitably runs against the impossibility of securing access to the Other, against an impassable barrier that separates the One from the Other. Perhaps it could be said, then, that if the only true Other that the sadist has to deal with is ultimately the body, his own body and the body of the victim, this is because the body itself appears as a structural obstacle to reaching the Other.

As a result, the social bond that is founded on jouissance appears to be a contradiction in terms, since jouissance, as Sade conceives it, is the idiot's autistic jouissance, cutting off the subject from the social bond. In contrast to love, which is eminently a relationship to the Other, jouissance cannot even be thought of in terms of a relationship, but only in terms of substance, more exactly, the substance of jouissance that implies a certain autonomy of being.

It is true that the sadist cannot obtain jouissance otherwise than by seeking it in the body of the Other – in the victim's tortured body. The Other is here reduced to an object, a cog in the libidinal machine. Seen from the perspective of autistic jouissance, the Other, to borrow Klossowski's term, is a phantom rather than a substance. Jouissance is, moreover, indivisible. Nobody can take part in my jouissance. Indeed, jouissance excludes every consideration of the Other and knows no reciprocity. In Sade's eyes, to strive for the partner's jouissance means to be submitted to him/her, to become his/her slave. This is because, in jouissance, as Sade relentlessly repeats, everyone wants to be the master: "here it is that man likes to command, to be obeyed, to surround himself with slaves compelled to satisfy him."⁵⁸ This solitude, to which jouissance condemns the subject, is but another name for cynicism, a distinguishing trait of Sade's characters, as illustrated by this rhetorical question: "If we have the right to have their throats cut for our interest's sake, I see no reason why we cannot do the same for the sake of our delights."⁵⁹ It should be noted, however, that the cynicism of the Sadean tormentor is actually the cynicism of jouissance itself, since the subject can only function as an instrument of the solipsistic will to jouissance, ultimately a jouissance seeking satisfaction.

The Sadean libidinal economy is thus based on the antinomy of jouissance and the Other. The only jouissance that Sade knows of is the idiot's solitary jouissance, a jouissance that never relates to the Other, but only to the object. The Sadean jouissance is the jouissance of the One that, as such, dissocializes, thus rendering every relationship with the Other problematic. Jouissance, therefore, not only does not allow access to the Other, but rather breaks with the Other, because jouissance that seeks jouissance, ultimately, is only a relationship to oneself. What is a way out of this solipsism of jouissance? How can the Other be

⁵⁸ Sade, *Yet Another Effort*, p. 324.

⁵⁹ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 999.

“grafted” onto the autistic jouissance? How, then, can a social bond be established if the Other does not exist at the level of jouissance? To solve this quandary, Sade has to resort to the fantasy of the will to jouissance: the Other is the one who wants to enjoy and I have to work for this jouissance, I have to turn myself into an instrument of the Other’s will to jouissance, the will that demands immediate submission.

Sade’s ambition is therefore to justify jouissance even in that which is the least justifiable: the right to jouissance, which not only does not ensure the subject’s well-being nor the collective well-being, but functions as that which, by debasing all the traditionally recognized foundations of socialization to a mere semblance, a make-believe, or, as Sade himself says, an illusion, breaks up every community. Indeed, only one conclusion can be drawn from the antagonistic relationship between jouissance and the social bond: there is not and can be no such thing as a community of jouissance. It then follows that there can be no “politics of jouissance” either as it can only bring about the abolition of the social bond. But this interpretation – according to which jouissance and the social bond are in a radical sense incompatible, mutually exclusive – albeit in many respects certainly valid, nevertheless overlooks the fact that Sade must presuppose at least a *minimum of sociability* in order to stage the relationship of non-sociability, the violence of domination and slavery, that is required for the mere satisfaction of the passions.

This inevitable restitution of sociability is already inscribed in his pedagogical and political project. As a matter of fact, the entire society must be organized according to jouissance because the autistic jouissance, the jouissance of the One, cannot “satisfy” even the sadist himself; in a word, this jouissance, despite the attained satisfaction, is still deficient. For this autism of jouissance, as Sade shows very clearly, only exacerbates the demand for the social bond. Sade is perhaps one of the first theorists of jouissance to have shown that the only conceivable escape from absolute solitude is discourse because it is materialized in typical social bonds. How else are we to understand Sade’s unrelenting search for the most suitable political form that would realize the despotism of the passions, the despotism, to repeat once more, of the autistic jouissance at the political level?

As has already been noted, what constitutes Sade's profound originality is his having attempted to ground sociability solely in the will to jouissance. There are two interrelated issues here: firstly, Sade must demonstrate that jouissance and the social bond are not antinomial, and secondly, he must in addition show how a social bond that has its basis in jouissance, which is, by definition, inegalitarian, ensures social equality. Sade must, in short, solve the paradox of the conjunction of equality and inequality. This is only possible if the social relationship can be established outside of any reciprocity. Still, it would be a mistake to see in Sade a naïve advocate of a "return to nature". This is evident from Sade's radical reinterpretation of the relationship between the state of nature and the civil state. Sade does not conceive of the relationship between the state of nature and the civil state according to a contractual model, i.e. in terms of a mutual exclusion, where the establishment of the social order involves the inevitable removal of the natural order. Describing the prehistory of the civil state through the metaphor of bestiality is precisely the way in which the theoreticians of the social contract foreclose man's inherent violence, his "inhumanity", and relegate it to a mythical past that has never been present. In contrast to this, Sade places man's "bestiality" at the centre of his thinking about society. The true originality of Sade therefore consists in a vision of a society where the civil and natural states coexist.

How is such a coexistence possible? How can one defend the simultaneous existence of the constraining laws, the existence of a state oppression, on the one hand, and the freedom to act according to one's own will, according to one's passions, even the most cruel, inhuman, on the other? Two answers are possible here: just like the Enlightenment philosophers, Sade postulates that the state of nature is a state preceding the civil state, yet unlike the Enlightenment, the state of nature in Sade, even after the switch of paradigms, does not simply disappear, as no law can entirely eradicate passions that are considered to be a sort of stand-in for the state of nature within the civil state. According to the first answer, passions are then a materialized, condensed remnant of the state of nature and as such impermeable to civilization.

But another answer is also possible whereby the issue is no longer the replacement of one paradigm with another, while allowing the remnants of the state of nature to subsist in some kind of enclave within the civil state, but the actual cohabitation of the two states. Sade explicitly insists on the inseparability of these

two states: there is no state of nature without or outside of civilization; actually, it is only against the background of civilization, its “crimes” against human nature, that the will to enjoy finds its proper place. Sade somehow “knows” that a return to the state of nature is not possible, which is why he seeks to restore the state of nature *within the social order*. This is because nature is irrevocably insufficient, which means that nature needs some “help” in order for its will to be fulfilled. Sade hence strives for a civil state whose sole goal would be to provide the means for the maximal satisfaction of the passions. Consequently, the relationship between the state of nature and the civil state, as Sade conceives of it, cannot be one of an opposition or a dialectical *Aufhebung*, but rather a kind of a *perverse alliance*, where the state of nature, in order to subsist, must be grafted onto the civil state. In fact, what we see at work in Sade is the civil state as the continuation of the state of nature by other means, that is, by exploiting the already existing non-egalitarian social order. In seeking to realize the state of nature within the civil state, Sade’s politics of *jouissance* activates exactly those mechanisms that work towards the foreclosure of the state of nature from society. This means that nature, in Sade, is not simply outside society and precedes it; rather, it necessitates society and civilization as its pre-condition. Thus, Sade inverts the relation between “before” and “after”: nature is postulated as (logically) preceding society as an origin, yet an origin that is lost forever and therefore can only return in a “dissimulated” guise in reality, that is, in the civil state, for instance, through discontents in civilization, never as such.

There are, however, two crucial issues that call into question the possibility of the Sadean despotism of the passions in so far as the latter requires the institutionalization of the state of nature within the civil state: namely, the coexistence of equality and inequality, or the concept of equality that excludes reciprocity by promoting the universalization of the right to *jouissance*, that is, a universalization of that which, by being what is most particular to everyone, evades the universal law. One of the major difficulties in arriving at an understanding of such an endeavour is undoubtedly the convergence of freedom and duty, the right to enjoy assigned to everyone, and at the same time everyone’s equal unconditional submission to this right. It is sufficient to have a closer look at Sade’s fantasy of the right to *jouissance*, the right to use any part of the Other’s body to obtain *jouissance*, to realize how the unbridled satisfaction of the passions is far from free and anarchic. Indeed, nothing could be more alien to the sadist than the idea that he is the master because the Other does not exist. The paradox of

the sadist position, as has already been remarked, is that the inexistence of the Other is no obstacle for the sadist to be submitted to the will to jouissance. For the sadist, the will to enjoy persists, even though the Other does not exist. The sadist sees himself as one called on to restore the jouissance to the Other, and that, paradoxically, despite the fact that the Other does not exist. The autonomy of the individual is therefore excluded from the outset because the autonomous individual can either refuse to give his/her consent to the will to enjoy, or reject the role of the victim, which, for Sade, is unthinkable. Because the whole point of his fantasy is precisely that one cannot say No! to the will to jouissance, one can only say Yes! to it, if not willingly, then by force. And vice versa, for the sadist the victim's No! to the will to jouissance is proof that the victim cannot enjoy and that he/she should be taught how to enjoy. Hence, the sadist takes on this task of making the Other enjoy. For the realization of the Sadean enterprise it is therefore essential that there are mechanisms and institutions that render this possible – and that at the level of the whole society.

Once again, the general question of what constitutes the specifically Sadean libertine utopia of a radically different “elsewhere” must be raised. It certainly has to be admitted that the model for society or, rather, countersociety, cannot be an association of libertines, “the Sodality of the Friends of Crime,” as Sade himself calls it, a secret society within society that respects the regime in power. For the paradox of a society destined to the implementation of the generalized right to jouissance cannot be carried out in private clubs, through the installation of a subversive countersociety in the pockets of existing society, pockets of debauchery that may well exist within a given order. Sade is namely not interested in a relationship of domination at the level of “privacy”, which in no way threatens the existing social order or its institutions. For a countersociety established within the limits of a private club does not aspire to change the general structures of society but only to make use of them. What Sade aims at is rather the universalization of the will to jouissance at *the social level*, in short, a utopia of a world without rules, which explains the invocation of a natural state, a utopia that can only result in the collapse of all institutions of that order. The goal, for Sade, is nothing less than the realization of the law of jouissance at the level of the *socius*, that is to say, a radical transformation of the *socius*, and not just the search for shelters within the existing institutions, pockets that are more or less predetermined for harbouring the libidinal excesses that threaten the social body with dissolution.

The establishment of such a social and political-legal order in which *the excess becomes the law* thus necessitates a shift from the club to the state. For the realization of the despotism of the passions in the domain of politics requires the existence of society and its institutions, ultimately, the existence of the state's oppressive apparatuses whose function is to ensure that everyone, the victims in particular, complies with the Sadean principal maxim: "I have the right to enjoy your body...". The Sadean tormentor must have a legally warranted right to satisfy his passions, a certainty that he can impose on his victim the status of the object. Hence, if "there is no such thing as a valid refusal whereby one individual would deny his pleasure to another,"⁶⁰ this is because "the slightest refusal or recalcitrance will be instantly and arbitrarily punished by the injured party."⁶¹ Lacan is one of the first to have emphasized the union of universalization and forcing: "Such is the rule [I have the right to enjoy your body] to which everyone's will would be submitted, assuming a society were to forcibly implement the rule."⁶² For nothing is less questionable for a libertine than the conviction that the state itself guarantees to him the right to subordinate anyone to his whims. Or, as Sade himself states, "lust, being a product of those penchants [inspired by Nature], is not to be stifled or legislated against, but that it is, rather, a matter of arranging for the means whereby passion may be satisfied in peace."⁶³

One of the key stakes in Sade's project for the realization of the law of nature in society is therefore the replacement of the existing positive laws with institutions that require a minimum of laws.⁶⁴ In order to serve their purpose, that is, to ensure access to the *jouissance* for which the sadist "slaves", the *jouissance* of the body, these institutions must be primarily institutions of victimization. But precisely for that reason Sade is faced with the following problem: Which institutional form corresponds to the realization of the law of nature in society, that

⁶⁰ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 420.

⁶¹ Sade, *Yet Another Effort*, p. 317.

⁶² Lacan, "Kant with Sade," p. 648.

⁶³ Sade, *Yet Another Effort*, p. 313.

⁶⁴ Sade rejects laws because the system of rights and duties, as established by laws, limits the free satisfaction of the passions. As the embodiment of perpetual movement, institutions, for Sade, function as the operator of the articulation of political freedom and the passions. And to the extent that freedom for Sade is equated with permanent rebellion, only institutions can provide the material conditions for obtaining *jouissance* and models for action.

is, the law of jouissance, this being, for Sade, the highest and ultimately the only legitimate law? That Sade does not provide us with an unambiguous answer to this question is already evident from the fact that he offers three models for the institutionalization of the despotism of the passions: political despotism, “statist communism”, and a “libertine republic”. All three Sadean models for society have the same goal: to secure the rule of the passions through laws that impose a generalized corruption of the people and, therefore, a generalized libertinage.

At first sight, it would seem that political despotism alone is capable of organizing society according to the law of jouissance. The commandment: Enjoy! implies limitless power over the objects of jouissance and, because of its inherent inegalitarianism, it also facilitates the realization of political despotism. However, although debauchery, which is, as such, enslaving, appears to be a natural ally of the despotic power, we are dealing here with an instrumental, external, and thus parasitic relationship of the despotism of the passions to political despotism. Stated differently, If politics begins with the establishment of relations between free and equal individuals, despotism is confined to the private relationship between master and slave. It then follows that political despotism, although it is founded on the relationship of command-subordination, cannot be an appropriate realization of the despotism of the passions because political despotism is, strictly speaking, not politics.

Sade’s second model of the political regime transposing the despotism of the passions to society is what could be termed “statist communism”. In contrast to political despotism, the main stake in this regime is the equality of all. By shifting the focus from despotism to egalitarianism, a radical mutation occurs in the relationship between the passions and the law. Equality in this regime cannot be ensured in any other way than by the total transformation of human nature, ultimately by the complete eradication of the passions. The Sadean “communism of goods” and the absence of the oppressive class are possible only through the establishment of an all-powerful, totalitarian state that can function only by manipulating the satisfaction of the passions, ultimately by exploiting the will to jouissance. The ruse of the totalitarian state à la Sade consists in the abusing the passions for the realization of social egalitarianism. Here, the libidinal economy has been mobilized to attain the maximum of equality and the minimum of political despotism – but at the cost of the complete loss of libidinal freedom.

Yet neither “state egalitarianism”, which implements equality, but at the price of the eradication of the passions, nor political despotism, which preserves despotism but sacrifices equality, ensures the integral transposition of the passions into politics. The solution to the quandary of the despotism of the passions, the conjunction of equality and inequality, of freedom and submission, offered by the “republican” Sade requires a strict separation between the despotism of the passions, which complies with the law of nature, and political despotism. The advantage of the third solution – in which the despotism of the passions requires a republic, not a tyranny – can be seen in the fact that it is no longer founded on an external, instrumental relationship to the despotism of the passions, but rather on the relationship of a mutual conditioning. If political anarchy or a “libertine republic” alone provides, according to Sade, the framework in which every citizen is a tyrant, then the institutionalization of the right to *jouissance* is a pre-condition for the survival of the republic itself. Only on the condition that the republic complies with the principle ensuring “the perpetual immoral subversion of the established order”⁶⁵ can it be considered to be the political form that enables the uninterrupted circulation of the passions.

Sade rejects political despotism because the despot usurps the despotism of others. The tyrant appropriates for himself the libidinal charge inherent in doing evil, something that belongs, according to Sade, to all. The “republic of *jouissance*” would then be a model for collective participation in libertinism in a society that is thoroughly contaminated with debauchery, for an evil that would inundate the whole society. What is the basis of this short-circuiting republicanism, equality, and freedom, on the one hand, with the despotism of *jouissance*, on the other? What is important about Sade’s “libertine republic”, which does not exclude oppression, is its paradoxical character of being based on two mutually exclusive principles: on republican equality and freedom, and, at the same time, on the despotic law of nature, that is, on equality and inequality. Nevertheless, this does not mean that a community based on both principles is split between masters and slaves. On the contrary, Sade’s libertine republic is a paradoxical community of masters alone.

The crucial question then is obviously: How can the requirements of the despotism of *jouissance* be fulfilled in a community of masters? As we have seen, only

⁶⁵ Sade, *Yet Another Effort*, p. 313.

the law of nature can legitimize everyone's right to jouissance over everyone. Despotism, imposed on everyone by the law of nature, cannot, of course, be grounded in reciprocity, which is, for Sade, an illusion anyway, but in taking turns, in alternation, ultimately, in revenge, as follows from the famous formulation in the *Histoire de Juliette*: "Pray avail me of that part of your body which is capable of giving me a moment's satisfaction, and, if you are so inclined, amuse yourself with whatever part of mine may be agreeable to you."⁶⁶ For Sade, only the principle of retaliation can ensure both the exercise of freedom and equality for all and the despotism of the passions. The difficulty here is that Sade's politics of jouissance is confronted with two incompatible requirements: on the one hand, Sade defends absolute freedom for everyone, the right of everyone to enjoy, that is, the right to submit anyone to his/her pursuit of jouissance, but on the other, no less decisively, he demands the complete submission of everyone to the imperative of jouissance.

So how can freedom be articulated with the law of nature? Only if every free being can be submitted to the jouissance of another free being. Everyone has the same duty to be subjected to the supreme law of nature. The equality of all means equality before nature, which is an equality on the basis of complete indifference. For Sade, everyone is freed from the laws of the state, all the artefacts and conventions that impede the passions or domesticate the drives. But, at the same time, Sade equally insists that there is no freedom in relation to the supreme law, the law of nature. Man is not first free and then submitted to the law of nature; rather, it is the law of nature that enables the subject to liberate him-/herself from the rule of law. Hence, if the subject resists the law, this is not in the name of some inalienable natural right that constitutes his/her autonomy. Rather, the will to jouissance alone grants the subject the right to defy human laws, not, of course, in order to allow the subject to enforce his/her own will, but to implement the law of nature. From the very beginning, therefore, Sade clearly establishes an asymmetry between the imperative of jouissance and the subject. The subject is never the enunciator of the imperative of jouissance; he/she can only be its addressee and docile subordinate. The Other, this being for Sade nature and its law as an unconditional command, has already deprived the subject of the right to freely make use of him-/herself. Sade therefore does not acknowledge any natural, inalienable right, say, to make use of one's own body.

⁶⁶ Sade, *Juliette*, p. 108.

The law of nature has submitted to itself the subject from the outset – without the subject’s consent. That is why the exercise of the will to enjoy is not a right, but a duty.

The solution to this deadlock is only conceivable once we realize that the right to *jouissance* is the *jouissance’s right to satisfaction*. At the level of society, however, this implies the duty to *jouissance*, which has to be generalized and extended to the whole society. It is obvious therefore why *jouissance*, for Sade, is not something private, but *public*. Indeed, Sade demands nothing less than that the state and its apparatuses of repression impose *jouissance* as everyone’s obligation. Sade seeks to solve what at first glance appears to be an unsolvable problem: the coexistence of equality and inequality, or the cohabitation of the despotism of the passions, which excludes reciprocity, and the universalization of the right to *jouissance*, with the institutionalized *universal prostitution* in so far as the imperative of *jouissance* is indiscriminately indifferent to men and women, as it requires of both “the most absolute subordination.”

What, then, is equality as Sade conceives of it? According to Sade, men have the right – this right is granted to them by the law of nature, the law of passion – to establish such institutions and adopt such laws that force women to submit themselves to any man, regardless of their rank. But the same right is granted to women too, as Sade explicitly states, “I would have them accorded the enjoyment of all sexes and, as in the case of men, the enjoyment of all parts of the body; and under the special clause ... guaranteeing them a similar freedom to enjoy all they deem worthy of satisfying them.”⁶⁷ Not in the name of reciprocity, but in the name of the imperative of *jouissance*, which applies to both men and women. Equality is thus possible only at the level of the equality of the *jouissance’s* unconditional demand for satisfaction, which subjugates men and women equally. The Sadean universalized prostitution should then be viewed as an inevitable consequence of the law of *jouissance*, which dispossesses both men and women of their right to freely make use of their own bodies. By submitting their bodies to the imperative of passion, by confiscating their bodies, as it were, the law of Sadean nature prescribes the compulsory surrendering of one’s own body to anyone and to everyone, excluding them from any form of subjectivity. With the institution of the generalized *jus fruendi*, the right of use,

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⁶⁷ Sade, *Yet Another Effort*, p. 321.

there is no possible recourse to the principle of *habeas corpus*. It then comes as no surprise that the principle: your body is yours alone, establishing the body itself as the ultimate property, has no place in the libertine universe because the Sadean body, instead of belonging to the subject of rights, a form that submits use to the order of rights, belongs to the passions or the drives that entail the elimination of subjectivity.

It then follows that the idea of a jouissance that would be mine, in a word, my exclusive “property, or “possession”, is, for Sade, simply inconceivable. Rather, jouissance and possession constitute, for him, an absolute contradiction. Only property can be exclusive, but not jouissance, because the body as the object of jouissance belongs to no one or, which amounts to the same, it belongs to anyone, hence, to everyone. All bodies are from the beginning anonymous and, as such, available. Hence, the best way to destroy the exclusive exchange in matters of jouissance is to make it total and indiscriminate. Following Sade, we thus inevitably stumble on the antinomy between the subject and the body. The Sadean communism of jouissance involves the working of a flesh-machine, where the group of multiple hands, mouths, and genitals constitutes a single body, a group-body, as it were, yet without the subject. The socialization of jouissance such as Sade proposes thus entails that both the victim and the sadist offer their bodies for the transformation that must bring about the institution of the despotism of the passions at the level of society. In the most radical sense, the body does not belong to the subject. There is then nothing that could be called “my body”. My body belongs to me as much as it belongs to anyone else, because the body, as such, is an object of the passions or the drives. One might say: I have the freedom to make use of the body of the other, but not my own body. Someone else is free to make use of my body.

If Sade is right to claim that he is not the owner of the Other’s body, this is because the relationship of ownership is eminently inegalitarian. Hence, the relationship between the victim and the torturer is not the relation of an owner to his/her own thing, but a relationship that implies the role reversal. “I have the right to enjoy your body,” anyone can say to me,” or “Pray avail me of that part of your body which is capable of giving me a moment’s satisfaction, and, if you are so inclined, amuse yourself with whatever part of mine may be agreeable to you,” in both cases we are dealing with a reversal of roles. The Sadean discourse

is a discourse of freedom that promises to enjoy the body of the Other, yet at the same time it acknowledges the Other's right to retaliate.

Discontent in Jouissance

Sade's despotism of the passions sets out from the assumption that the *socius* can be organized according to jouissance. What is this assumption based on? Civilization, which, for Sade, is nothing but a defence against jouissance, is to be blamed because the subject incarnates a lack of jouissance. Sade is convinced that if the subject were to be freed from the demands of civilization, the subject would re-discover his/her full disposition of the drives. Sade sees civilization as devastating, ravaging the body of jouissance, and believes that the removal of the obstacles of civilization would restore jouissance to the body. According to Sade, the only obstacle to jouissance, at the level of both the individual and the social body, is the social or state repression exercised through their institutions and laws. Sade believes that the removal of these artificial barriers would open the access to jouissance. In brief, he is convinced that it is possible to treat the symptoms of civilization by removing the repression of jouissance through the subversion of the laws of civilization. Ultimately, we could say that the Other, to whom jouissance should be restored, is the body itself, as it was the body that was initially robbed of jouissance. Sade, therefore, seeks to resuscitate in this mortified body the bit of jouissance that has survived the devastation brought about by civilization.

But, as we have seen, Sade's solution is not simply to replace the state of nature with the civil state; he rather seeks to resuscitate the remainder of jouissance within the civil state, using the arsenal of civilization itself (prohibitions, law, coercion, institutions, etc.). For despite all the emphasis on the primacy of nature with the passions, as the voice of nature engraved into our flesh, Sade knows, in a way anticipating Lacan, that the body, which is supposed to be enjoying, has nothing natural about it, rather it is a body that is moulded by civilization. This is not an enjoying body, but a body drained of jouissance, a body that is transformed into a desert of jouissance. From the logic of the Sadean argumentation it nevertheless follows that jouissance cannot be achieved by merely removing civilization; it would be more appropriate to say that the Sadean jouissance is paradoxical as it is indissolubly, one could say "perversely", linked to civilization. Hence, far from dealing with a natural jouissance, we are dealing instead

with a disenculturated jouissance⁶⁸ that is obtained through the violation of civilization's norms and prohibitions. Or, stated differently, civilization, according to Sade, may well be ruinous for the body, but precisely for that reason it enables a new kind of jouissance, a jouissance that springs from transgression.

Hence, Sade is not blind to the fact that the body, precisely as separated from jouissance, is capable of some other, supplementary, yet destructive jouissance. On the one hand, Sade undoubtedly knows that it is actually the signifier – as an agency designed to inflict harm on the body and its jouissance – a condition for another jouissance, an excessive and thus lethal jouissance. On the other hand, however, he still believes that the jouissance of the body is actually accessible; in a word, he does not realize that this supposedly primary jouissance, this imperative of nature is in itself an artefact, an illusion that allows the subject to defend him-/herself against the devastation in his/her body caused by the signifier. As a result, he does not see that, in a radical sense, there is no jouissance but in civilization.

Sade's ingenuity therefore consists in his revealing the body as a stake in a struggle between civilization and jouissance. From Sade's elaboration of the perverse jouissance, the dividing line is clearly drawn between the body of civilization – this being a unified, whole body, yet stripped of jouissance and therefore a dead body – and the body of the drives, which is alive yet fragmented by the partial drives that are fighting for it. Therefore, there can be no organic unity of the Sadean body; instead of with a unified, whole body, we are dealing with a cut-up body, characterized by the mechanical montage assembling parts of the bodies of both tormentors and victims into a single body-machine whose sole purpose is to manufacture enjoyment. The fragmentation of the body is actually already

⁶⁸ On this point we depart from Marie Jaanus's otherwise inspiring interpretations of Sade. According to Jaanus, "For Sade there was only a body of the instincts; for him there was no body of the drives. He understood the law of the pleasure principle and of discharge, but he knew nothing about the impossible and unobtainable psychic object of the drive. Instead he tried to realize and enact the various strata of sexuality within the confines of the flesh." As a result and taking coprophagy as a drastic example of the regression of the drive back into instinct, "Sade's pervert, rather than accepting the fundamental objectlessness of the drive, seeks to fill in the lack, uncovered in the erogenous zone of the mouth, with a real object." See, Marie Jaanus, "The Démontage of the Drive, in *Reading Seminars I and II*, Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, Marie Jaanus (eds.), Albany: SUNY Press 1996, pp. 135 and 124.

implied by Sade's principal maxim: I have the right to any part of your body, and the other has the equal right to take any part of my body. That the body in Sade is presented as a battlefield of the drives is also evident from the fact that the perverse libertine is not interested in the body as such, but rather in parts of the body, cutting up the victim's body in order to focus on those parts of the body that are to be enjoyed in torture (beautiful eyes, beautiful mouth, beautiful breasts, etc.). What this body – which could be termed the body of *jouissance*, because it is partitioned between the drives, each of them striving for its particular satisfaction – aims at is certainly not its self-preservation. If anyone then Sade convincingly shows that the enjoying body is a body split between self-preservation and self-destruction. In the perverse fragmentation of the body we can therefore see one of the most stunning effects of the paradox of *jouissance*: *jouissance* certainly clings to life, but to life that in a sense is literally beyond life, beyond the living body, because in striving for satisfaction, this body of *jouissance* passes over the barriers imposed by the self-preservation of the body-organism. For the opposition between self-preservation and self-destruction corresponds to the division of the body between the body of pleasure – which knows what needs to be done to preserve itself – and the body of *jouissance*, the libidinal body – a “derailed”, erratic body whose particular parts are emancipated and could therefore become organs of *jouissance* – which seeks satisfaction, regardless of the price paid by the organism. From this perspective, the main stake in the Sadean pedagogical-political project can be described as an attempt to teach the victim that he/she has two bodies, a body of pleasure and a body of *jouissance*. Hence, libertine orgies can be viewed as laboratory experiments where a victim sacrifices, for the sake of *jouissance*, his/her body of pleasure, that body which is only expected to respond to the will to *jouissance* with its presence.

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One of the main conclusions to be drawn from Sade is undoubtedly that there is a *jouissance* of the body, but only as the *jouissance* of the fragmented body, ultimately, the *jouissance* of organs. Thus, as opposed to the Deleuzian and Guattarian “body without organs,” we should rather speak of organs without the body as a function of unification, where the scattered organs, not unlike *membra dijecta*, resist any kind of organic integration of imaginary unification. Sade's ultimate objective is therefore the realization of the despotism of the passions at the level of society, yet a society that is transformed into a single, gigantic “bedroom”, where an anonymous social body would become the stage

of the acephalic jouissance. In this light, it is not surprising that the only lesson that can actually be drawn from Sade is that jouissance is in and of itself evil. But Sade himself suppresses this lesson by assigning the will to jouissance to nature and, in so doing, he exonerates his sadist libertines, exculpates them for the wrong done to the victims' bodies. We could therefore agree with Monique David-Ménard when she detects in nature Sade's symptom.⁶⁹ If nature is a symptom, or, better perhaps, a protective screen conferring legitimacy on all the fantasies of transgression, it is because Sade, a great theorist and practitioner of jouissance, flees from the evil that is inherent in jouissance when he claims that evil and destructiveness are inscribed into eternal nature.

This is also the reason why Sade – despite the fact that he has extended the domain of traditional ethics to an until then inconceivable dimension beyond pleasure – remains, just like traditional ethics, blind to the dimension that Lacan calls the all-powerfulness of desire. It could in effect be said that Sade finds himself defeated by desire. Not, of course, like the subject of traditional ethics, who is protected against the omnipotence of desire by the prohibition that enables him/her to assign the enunciation of desire to the Other. Yet Sade cannot be said to have recognized either desire in “the unconscious that knows nothing about what supports its own enunciation.”⁷⁰ Sade is blind to the desire of the Other because his work, as Lacan judiciously remarks, “never presents us with a successful seduction ... in which the victim, even if she were in last gasp, would consent to her tormentor's intention, or even join his side in the fervor of her consent.”⁷¹ But he is equally blind to his own desire. For Sade, who in this respect follows Saint Paul, the omnipotence of desire is supported by prohibition or, rather, by the constant violation thereof. Sade namely places an equation between desire and transgression and one can say that the Sadean desire is a desire for transgression. At the same time, the Sadean subject is unwilling to assume this desire for transgression, this desire for destruction, in a word, this criminal desire, but attributes it instead to the Other, to nature. Ultimately, one might say that desire – faced with a more powerful rival, i.e. the unyielding will to jouissance – fades away in Sade.

⁶⁹ David-Ménard, *Les constructions de l'universel*, p. 64.

⁷⁰ Jacques Lacan, “Conférences à Bruxelles”, *Quarto*, No. 50, 1992, p. 12.

⁷¹ Lacan, “Kant with Sade”, p. 665.

In Sade's despotism of the passions we could then see something like an impetuous reconciliation between the subject and *jouissance*. Sade denounces the false figures of the Other, the semblances of the Other (the father, God, the law, the contract, etc.) for rendering the subject unhappy. And his aim is to attain a state where the subject will stop complaining about the insufficiency or inadequacy of his/her *jouissance*. For someone who takes seriously the right to *jouissance*, the *jouissance's* right to satisfaction, for someone who wants to confront this will to *jouissance*, such a complaint is meaningless in any case, since there is no one to whom one could complain, no fatherly figure that could accept the complaint and respond to it. Indeed, for someone who serves the will to *jouissance*, such a complaint is pointless for two reasons: not only is there no one to whom the complaint could be addressed, what is worse, there is no one who could complain, since the Sadean subject is nothing but an instrument of the will to *jouissance*. The instrumentalization of the sadist subject thus indicates that the reconciliation with *jouissance* leads to a radical mutation of the subject. When *jouissance* enters the stage, the subject fades away, dissolves in a "*becoming it* (*ça*)."⁷² The occurrence of *jouissance* is precisely the moment when there is no longer anyone who could say "I". And vice versa, the disappearance of the subject into "I have become it," or, more exactly, the subject's destitution is indeed the solution to the impasse, which consists in the impossibility of the subjectivation of *jouissance*. Hence, instead of the expected subjectivation of *jouissance* or the drive, we are dealing here with what Miller termed "the subject's destitution by the drive."⁷³

This radical antinomy between subjectivation and destitution explains why the Sadean subject cannot be the subject of the libertine operation, but can only be an object, an instrument of the Other. This would make it possible to see the cruelty, the mercilessness of the Sadean tormentor, in a different light. The sadist is not someone who becomes "I from it," an agency of the subjectivation of *jouissance*, but an "it that emerges from the I."⁷⁴ What is at stake in the instrumentalization of the sadist who lives and slaves for *jouissance* is indeed the destitution of the subject by *jouissance*. However, there is a disturbing, redundant surplus in the sadist's manner of serving the will of the Other that should remind us

⁷² Jacques-Alain Miller, "Donc, je suis ça", *La Cause Freudienne*, No. 27, p. 16.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

that, even for the sadist, that is, for the subject who is driven – regarding jouissance – to the extreme limits of what is thinkable, that even for him a reconciliation with jouissance, his giving consent to being nothing but the jouissance’s plaything, is something insufferable, which is why he has to bring into play the Other’s will to jouissance.

Even for Sade, then, the encounter with jouissance as a demand that no longer asks anything from anyone, a demand that no longer needs the Other in order to persevere in its “More!”, is, in the final analysis, “impossible”, unbearable. Sade, in effect, renders visible the drives’ indifference to the object – because, for the drives, every object is “good”, suitable, since the object is, as such, irrelevant, because what the drives strive for is their satisfaction at any cost, rather than the object itself in its particularity. Thus, as J.-A. Miller points out, “satisfaction as object” is the “proper” object of the drives.⁷⁵ On the other hand, however, Sade is unable to entirely sustain the acephalic character of the drives, and must therefore exalt the will to jouissance through the Other, because, even in Sade, the will to jouissance is not acknowledged in and for itself, but is identified instead with the Supreme-Being-in-Evil. It is in and through the passions or the drives that nature lets the speaking body hear its true voice. It is precisely through this proof from nature that the body is submitted to the imperative of jouissance as nature itself is vice and cruelty incarnate.

In being devoted to serving the will of the Other, Sade went to the extreme consequences of his endeavour, and as a result found himself in the position of the victim of the will of the Other, as the subject divided by the Other’s will. While in his fantasy, Sade, in fact, put himself in the place of a tormentor, an object that seeks the division of the Other, but this division that has been transposed to the Other returns like a boomerang, following its structural inexorableness, hitting Sade himself, the imprisoned victim of the Other’s capricious will. This is only possible because the reversal of the roles tormentor-victim is inherent in the logic of the Sadean jouissance, which is why Sade, for Lacan, is an example of someone who “is not duped by his fantasy”⁷⁶: in wanting all his life to be the Other despite the Law, in the end he finds himself in the position of a victim. It could, then, be said that what grants consistency to both his work and his life is

⁷⁵ Jacques-Alain Miller, “On Perversion” in *Reading Seminars I and II*, p. 313.

⁷⁶ Lacan, “Kant with Sade,” p. 656.

exactly the position of the object *a*. Sade's fantasy as well as his thought – and ultimately his life itself – thus testify to the fact that there are two ways that allow the subject to occupy the place of the object: as a tormentor in the sadist orgy, identified with the instrument for the satisfaction of the will of the Other, or as a *scape goat*, one that serves as an instrument for the Other to come to his/her ultimate “Thou are That,” that is to say, to an incurable truth.

Philosophy \diamond Psychoanalysis

Jan Völker*

Psyche's Speculative Figure Freud–Derrida

1. Freud's Speculation

Any consideration of psychoanalysis as a discourse is confronted with a specific problem: It is impossible to claim a standpoint outside psychoanalysis that could not be subjected to a psychoanalytic cure. This problematic contains two separate aspects, namely not only that it is impossible to conceive of 'the psychoanalysis' from some external, apparently unobserved point of view: Any such point can be analysed; but also, there exists perhaps no such thing as 'the psychoanalysis', as it would threaten to decompose itself. Any consideration of psychoanalysis in general is bound to speculation: speculation that enables us to construct something such as 'psychoanalysis' in the first place.

A speculative hypothesis needs to be posited. But it will become apparent that a speculative hypothesis on psychoanalysis is already posited within psychoanalysis itself. Speculation on psychoanalysis, then, in a Hegelian sense, has to exceed the difference between a represented object and the knowing or speculating subject. But if speculation inheres in psychoanalysis, the question arises whether speculation not only exceeds the gap between object and subject, but is also itself a site at which philosophy and psychoanalysis collide, differentiate, and overlap. Speculation would be situated beyond the gap between the object and subject, and its site itself would be split.

We proceed hypothetically, and we assume that the ground and the figure of this assembly, the territory of the assembly of the moments of speculation in psychoanalysis, can be addressed in the figure of the psyche. The psyche comprehends a correlation between unconscious acts and the consciousness, a relation that not only opens the question as to the reality of the unconscious, but also renders the structure of the consciousness doubtful and turns it into an unsecure ground. From either side, the other is proven ambivalent. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which remains, on the one hand, a continuous source of

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Freudian psychoanalysis, but on the other also prepared all the sites at which the moments of speculation will subsequently occur, we are warned not to misunderstand the notion of psychic reality as something that could be rendered in material terms: “If we look at unconscious wishes reduced to their most fundamental and truest shape, we shall have to conclude, no doubt, that *psychical* reality is a particular form of existence not to be confused with *material* reality.”¹

Nevertheless, for Freud the unconscious, as he had already stated some pages before, is the “true psychical reality.”² But even if it may be the ‘true’ psychic reality, the unconscious is not the complete psychic reality. The complete psychic reality Freud sought to picture within the famous structure of the topic, which he calls the structure of the ‘mental apparatus’. Referring to Gustav Theodor Fechner, Freud writes:

What is presented to us in these words is the idea of *psychical locality*. I shall entirely disregard the fact that the mental apparatus with which we are here concerned is also known to us in the form of an anatomical preparation, and I shall carefully avoid the temptation to determine psychical locality in any anatomical fashion.³

As is widely known, in *The Interpretation of Dreams* Freud then developed the so-called first topic; the second model would then be used from the 1920s onwards and is mainly explained in the text *The Ego and the Id*. For our concerns, it is important to emphasise that both of the topics do not simply represent psychic reality as such, they are rather intended to offer a topology, which we might only take as an aid to read the structure of psychic reality. Already from this point of view it becomes very ambivalent to consider the unconscious as the ‘true psychic reality’. Whatever ‘true’ means, it does not refer to completeness; it rather intends to say something like the ‘essential’. In the second topic Freud then transfers the model of the preconscious, unconscious, and conscious into the structure of the Id, Ego, and Superego and thus severs the unconscious from the limits of an entity within the mental apparatus. The ‘true’ is now displaced.

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¹ Sigmund Freud: *The Interpretation of Dreams*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, New York: Basic Books 2010 [1955], p. 614.

² *Ibid.*, p. 607.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 538.

The psyche moves and develops between two different models and thus is in itself a volatile ground upon which we will attempt to reconstruct the figures of speculation. It is an experimental arrangement, which is supposed to help us to think a genuine relation between psychoanalysis and philosophy. But as there are many, we will only attempt to circumscribe the contours of one of these relations, namely a potential failure in this orientation. Philosophy may come too close to psychoanalysis and lose its proper being in this contact. The outlines of such a problematic – this is what we will propose – can be seen in Derrida's account of philosophy, to which we will refer later.

It is for this purpose that we risk the speculation of constructing a speculative site named the psyche. And we will build this site out of three different moments of speculation: the beginning, the inmost, and the end. Speculation occurs in relation to the ground of the figure, then in relation to its finitude and figurative structure, and finally to its speculative infinity. We construct the psyche as if it were a site in which three different points of speculation are connected: the point of the beginning (its ground), of the inmost (its figure), and of its closure (its infinity).

Furthermore, we will refer to three different points in Freud's oeuvre. As for what concerns the beginning, it seems legitimate to turn to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, which is – according to several instances in which Freud underlined this himself – the starting point of psychoanalysis. As for what concerns the inmost, it is our hypothesis that the speculation marks a transition, a relation of exchange, in which something outer necessarily appears in the inner: This is, according to Freud's own conception, the death drive, which Freud himself called a “far-fetched speculation.”⁴ In what finally concerns the question of closure, we will then again pick up a famous posthumous note – “[p]syche is extended, knows nothing about it”⁵ – because the question of the (bodily) extension provides an effective reality to the psychic reality and relates it to the question of finitude. This construction will be our preliminary speculation, before we attempt to read Derrida's reflection on it.

⁴ Sigmund Freud, trans. and ed. James Strachey, “Beyond the Pleasure Principle”, New York, NY: Norton & Norton 1975, p. 18.

⁵ Sigmund Freud, posthumous note from 22 August 1938, in Freud, *Findings, Ideas, Problems, Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Volume XXIII (1937-1939): *Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, p. 300.



Let's begin with a rather rough outline of the Freudian project, which might assume at first that Freud's construction of the unconscious is the discovery of a paradigmatic alterity in relation to consciousness. In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud points to the "great Fechner," who said that "*the scene of action of dreams is different from that of waking ideational life.*"⁶ This remark was soon turned into the emblematic phrase of the 'other scene' on which the unconscious takes place and which Freud localises in the innermost of the first model of the mental apparatus in *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. Freud begins by introducing a basic model, according to which any stimuli are transferred from the "perceptual end to the motor end."⁷ This model is then refined by several psychic instances or systems in which stimuli are treated differently. First of all, arousals that are transcribed into permanent or lasting traces result in "memory-traces."⁸ Then, referring to the already achieved work on the dream, Freud adds the difference between a criticising instance and a criticised instance: The criticising instance will be called the *preconscious*, a system that he will abbreviate as *Pcs.* The *preconscious* still has access to the conscious, but also closes off the *unconscious* behind it. "We will describe the system that lies behind it as 'the unconscious', because it has no access to consciousness except via the *preconscious*, in passing through which its excitatory process is obliged to submit to modifications."⁹

Later, in the edition of 1925, Freud adds a footnote to this last sentence that reads: "If we attempted to proceed further with this schematic picture, in which the systems are set out in linear succession, we should have to reckon with the fact that the system next beyond the *Pcs.* is the one to which consciousness must be ascribed—in other words, that *Pcpt. = Cs.*"¹⁰ A stimulus then may stem from any of the systems, but the *preconscious*, the criticising instance, regulates access to reality and will also give such a form to unconscious wishes that reality can be brought into accord with them. The entirety of these systems

⁶ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 538.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 539.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 544.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 546.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 'Pcpt.' refers to 'perception', 'Cs.' to the 'conscious', 'Ucs.' to the 'unconscious', and 'Pcs.' to the 'preconscious'.

has been called the first topic. It allows for three different kinds of regression, 'regression' not in relation to the path from the 'perception end' to the 'motor end', but a regression in terms of the apparatus itself. In the dream, a conscious remainder of the day will be connected to the unconscious, thus it enables a "topographical regression," but then there is also a "*temporal* regression, in so far as what is in question is a harking back to older psychical structures," and finally a "*formal* regression, where primitive methods of expression and representation take the place of the usual ones."¹¹

The dream serves for Freud not only as a specific example, but rather it also proves the difficulties of the topical understanding of the mental apparatus. The dream in its main characteristic is an expression of a wish fulfilment, and will be adjusted to avoid censorship by using the means of "displacement, condensation and overdetermination" and also "considerations of representability."¹² But as the work of censorship is continued in the "secondary process," i.e. in the reproduction after awakening, only the manifest dream content emerges, out of which the latent dream thoughts have to be gained in the analysis.¹³ Often, the distinction between the latent dream thoughts and the manifest dream content is identified with the distinction between the edited, censored, and condensed dream and its unconscious content, which is not precise enough.

The dream-thoughts and the dream-content are presented to us like two versions of the same subject-matter in two different languages. Or, more properly, the dream-content seems like a transcript of the dream-thoughts into another mode of expression, whose characters and syntactic laws it is our business to discover by comparing the original and the translation.¹⁴

However, it is decisive to see that the unconscious wish does not simply form the encrypted content, but is mixed with the latent thoughts of the day, so that the latent dream thoughts are composed by the dream-work out of the unconscious wish and the thoughts of the day. This clarifies, already in *The Interpretation of Dreams*, the dynamic aspect of the unconscious, even if the first topic

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 549.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 452.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 585.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 295.

and its ‘systems’ of the unconscious, preconscious, and conscious present a relatively rigid distinction. In the *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* from 1917 the threefold structure of the dream becomes clearer:

The only essential thing about dreams is the dream-work that has influenced the thought-material. We have no right to ignore it in our theory, even though we may disregard it in certain practical situations. Analytic observation shows further that the dream-work never restricts itself to translating these thoughts into the archaic or regressive mode of expression that is familiar to you. In addition, it regularly takes possession of something else, which is not part of the latent thoughts of the previous day, but which is the true motive force for the construction of the dream. This indispensable addition is the equally unconscious wish for the fulfilment of which the content of the dream is given its new form. A dream may thus be any sort of thing in so far as you are only taking into account the thoughts it represents—a warning, an intention, a preparation, and so on; but it is always also the fulfilment of an unconscious wish and, if you are considering it as a product of the dream-work, it is only that.¹⁵

Psychoanalysis thus does not simply focus on the latent content, but rather on the form in which this content is encrypted, and it takes this form – the work – to be the specific unconscious message.¹⁶ In the dream-work, the dynamic of the unconscious process is thus foreshadowed, even if this moment is not inscribed into the first topic.

How, then, can we understand the place of the unconscious as the other scene? The place of the unconscious is consequently another scene in the same apparatus, but the unconscious is not only another scene, it is also the other scene of the conscious or even the other scene of thought: The wish is unconscious, and the work on it is an “*unconscious* process of thought.”¹⁷ But taken as such a thought process, its ‘otherness’ becomes even more remarkable. For we are told

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¹⁵ Sigmund Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, Vol. XV, London: Hogarth Press 1961, pp. 223–224.

¹⁶ Here I follow an argument first put forward by Slavoj Žižek, who also refers to the given quote. See Slavoj Žižek, *Incontinence of the Void. Economico-Philosophical Spandrels*, p. 185.

¹⁷ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 298.

that in the unconscious thought process not only the order of time but also the law of contradiction are suspended.

The way in which dreams treat the category of contraries and contradictories is highly remarkable. It is simply disregarded. “No” seems not to exist so far as dreams are concerned. They show a particular preference for combining contraries into a unity or for representing them as one and the same thing. Dreams feel themselves at liberty, moreover, to represent any element by its wishful contrary; so there is no way of deciding at a first glance whether any element that admits of a contrary is present in the dream-thoughts as a positive or as a negative.¹⁸

Only a few pages later, Freud corrects this point and attributes to dreams that are oriented by anxiety the possibility to interrupt itself with a ‘no’. Then again, subsequently in 1915, Freud will describe the unconscious as definitely being bereft of any negation:

What we call our ‘unconscious’—the deepest strata of our minds, made up of instinctual impulses [*Triebregungen*]*—*knows nothing that is negative, and no negation; in it contradictories coincide. For that reason it does not know its own death, for to that we can give only a negative content.¹⁹

Furthermore, the unconscious wish is active at any moment, and it serves as a source of energy for the dream-work. To summarise: What we get is an other scene, filled with active wishes that do not know any negation, and which have been taken out of the normal line of perception-motility.

At this point, the formation of the unconscious already exceeds by far the description of a collection of memories that are no longer beholden to the conscious. Viewed from this angle, the aspect of repression becomes decisive, for it is in the theory of repression that a fundamental paradox of the dream be-

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

¹⁹ Sigmund Freud, “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death”, in *Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey, Vol. XIV, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, London: Hogarth Press 1957, pp. 273–300, here p. 296.

comes visible: Why are affirmative wishes, whose fulfilment creates pleasure, repressed?

Linguistic usage hits the mark in speaking of the ‘suppression’ [i.e. the ‘pressing down’] of these impulses [*Impulse*, JV]. The psychical arrangements that make it possible for such impulses [*Wünsche*, JV] to force their way to realization remain in being and in working order. Should it happen, however, that a suppressed wish of this kind is carried into effect, and that its inhibition by the second system (the system that is admissible to consciousness) is defeated, this defeat finds expression as unpleasure.²⁰

In this passage Freud suggests that the wish is seen as creating unpleasure from the point of view of the preconscious. But then, toward the end of the book, in the famous seventh chapter on the psychology of the dream-process, Freud offers the following formula:

Let us assume, then, that the suppression of the *Ucs.* is necessary above all because, if the course of ideas in the *Ucs.* were left to itself, it would generate an affect which was originally of a pleasurable nature, but became unpleasurable after the process of ‘repression’ occurred. The purpose, and the result too, of suppression is to prevent this release of unpleasure. The suppression extends over the ideational content of the *Ucs.*, since the release of unpleasure might start from that content.²¹

At this point we might formulate the open problematic of *The Interpretation of Dreams*: Why at all is the wish repressed in the first place? Freud assumes that the conscious processes prevent the wish from permeating into it while the body is awake. They are restrained in favour of the conscious; the reality principle interrupts the pleasure principle. But thus we are left with a contradictory account of the wish: as the intention of pleasure that is regarded as creating unpleasure. The problem is not solved by the reference to the reality principle, for it is not clear how a wish can be assumed to be pleasurable and unpleasurable within the same apparatus. Freud subsequently formulates this very clearly in his article *Repression*:

²⁰ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 255.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 580.

It is not easy in theory to deduce the possibility of such a thing as repression. Why should an impulse of a drive undergo a vicissitude like this? A necessary condition of its happening must clearly be that the drive's attainment of its aim should produce unpleasure instead of pleasure. But we cannot well imagine such a contingency. There are no such drives: satisfaction of a drive is always pleasurable. We should have to assume certain peculiar circumstances, some sort of process by which the pleasure of satisfaction is changed into unpleasure.²²

Here a difference is inscribed. Instead of the repression of a wish, now the repression of the impulse of a drive is marked. If we take this back to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, we see that the understanding of repression as the repression of wishes is organised according to the topic: Repressed wishes are those that do not accept the reality principle. What is repressed is a content, and this content then figures as the unconscious. But as was to be seen, the unconscious already also informs the form of the dream-work, and as such the unconscious is unregistered in the first topic. The unconscious wish should not be confused with a material reality, and it combines a pleasurable with an unpleasurable side, oscillating between form and content. Three different sites of speculation in Freud's oeuvre respond to these difficulties.

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1) To begin with, two operations that belong together react to the problem of form and content. There is the speculative operation of the drive, on the one hand, and the speculative operation of the primal repression, on the other. One of the most concise definitions of the drive can be found in the text of *The Unconscious*, where Freud writes:

A drive can never become an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents the drive can. Even in the unconscious, moreover, a drive cannot be represented otherwise than by an idea. If the drive did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it.²³

²² Freud, Sigmund: "Repression", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, Vol. XIV, *On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, London: Hogarth Press 1957, pp. 141–158, here p. 146 (trans. modified).

²³ Sigmund Freud, "The Unconscious", in *Ibid.*, pp. 159–215, here p. 177 (trans. modified).

And then Freud introduces in the text of *Repression* the difficult question of primal repression:

We have reason to assume that there is a *primal repression*, a first phase of repression, which consists in the psychical (ideational) representative of the drive being denied entrance into the conscious. With this a *fixation* is established; the representative in question persists unaltered from then onwards and the drive remains attached to it.²⁴

The mystical first moment of repression here still resembles the rejection of a 'wish', only now the cause and its representative are distinguished. But this distinction also obscures the point of beginning: The drive and its representative unfold a play, in the course of which the objectivity of a clear source of repression is rendered ambivalent. "*Repression proper*," Freud continues, will work upon "mental derivatives of the repressed representative" and is "actually an after-pressure."²⁵ Moreover, these derivatives do not continue in the form of a representative chain, they work "in a *highly individual* manner,"²⁶ and thus a relation of cause and effect is turned into energetic differences, whose ground absents itself.

The consciousness now has to keep the pressure from the unconscious at bay, and therefore it needs to develop countercharges. The unconscious finds its expression in its effects, cut off from a clear, objective source. The primal repression becomes in its tendency intelligible as a moment of the structure of repression: It is actually the repression of repression as such. But what does this mean? The unity of the conscious does not entail the unconscious as one of its parts, but it rather cannot act differently than to present the forces of the unconscious in its acts. The unconscious is not another consciousness; its acts are differential acts that cannot be reduced to a singular source. Speculatively, one might conclude that it is the primal repression that marks the structure of repression which separates the consciousness in its unity from its difference. And precisely as such, as an agent of differentiation, the primal repression is an instance of speculation. It is a speculation on the question of the beginning: in

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²⁴ Freud, "Repression", p. 148.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

the precise sense of giving it the form of an intertwined knot in which one part cannot be read without the other – it is therefore groundless.

2) If we now turn to the second moment of speculation, thus to the speculation at the inmost of psychoanalysis, then we stay within the terminology of the drive and get to a problem that occurs again exactly at the site of the impossibility of a unification. And here, too, we find a moment in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that helps us to situate this speculative extension. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* could also be read as *Beyond the Interpretation of Dreams*, for *The Interpretation of Dreams* starts with the authority of the pleasure principle, and the conviction that any increase in arousal results in unpleasure, so that pleasure stems from the reduction of arousal. While on one hand unpleasure sometimes needs to be accepted as a detour to pleasure, pleasure is, on the other hand, reinterpreted as unpleasure in the course of repression. The problem we find here is not the problem of a possible origin of repression, but rather the problem that a process like that of the pleasure principle is not pure. We could also say: As the beginning has proven to be not-one, we see now that the process itself is also being interrupted and continued at the same time. *The Interpretation of Dreams* dealt schematically with this problem by opposing the pleasure principle to the reality principle. But the true problem is the process by which something pleasurable becomes a source of unpleasure. Thus, the problem is how the one-sided notions of the pleasure principle and the reality principle can be transformed in such a manner that they display their own processual interweaving.

As is known, for Freud, the compulsion to repeat provides a fundamental irritation of the pleasure principle: How is it possible that the unpleasurable is repeated over and over again?

To answer this difficulty it then follows what Freud calls the ‘far reaching speculation’ within his text *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, and this speculation begins with a very specific observation:

Psycho-analytic speculation takes as its point of departure the impression, derived from examining unconscious processes, that consciousness may be, not

the most universal attribute of mental processes, but only a particular function of them.²⁷

Freud justifies the exception from the pleasure principle, which he will be unfolding and speculating on, with the dreams of those neurotics who bring about a repetition in their dreams, and he derives from this exception, which is an exception from the paradigm of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, a prehistoric past of the dream:

Thus it would seem that the function of dreams, which consists in setting aside any motives that might interrupt sleep, by fulfilling the wishes of the disturbing impulses, is not their original function. It would not be possible for them to perform that function until the whole of mental life had accepted the dominance of the pleasure principle. If there is a 'beyond the pleasure principle', it is only consistent to grant that there was also a time before the purpose of dreams was the fulfilment of wishes. This would imply no denial of their later function.²⁸

This prehistory of the dream is an inert state of things, and the speculative aspect then consists in the supplementation of occurrences of the drive, additionally understood to be of a conservative character. All of the drives, with the exception of the sexual drives, adhere to this conservative character: They aim at the restitution of a previous state of things, a previous inert state of things. The compulsion to repeat proves to be a movement of regression, against which everything new, irritating, moving, any moment of life, is a moment of interruption. The pleasure principle, as Freud can then conclude, works on behalf of the death drive, and the latter is opposed by the sexual drives or the life drives.²⁹

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For us, in this context it is mainly of interest how the death drive is situated speculatively. The death drive expresses a moment of the prehistory of life *within* life, so that it inverts the inner of life (or of the wish) and thereby inscribes a

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, New York, NY: Norton & Norton 1961, p. 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

²⁹ The aspects of the death drive are complicated and an issue of broad debate, especially Lacan's reading thereof. A detailed explanation of the differences between Freud's and Lacan's notions of the death drive as well as of the inexistence of these differences can be found in Alenka Zupančič, *What is Sex?*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 2017, p. 94ff.

prehistory within the timeless structure of the unconscious. This prehistory is not a past history; it can only serve as a demarcation, a closure of its ground: In the middle of the timeless structure of the unconscious, the un-time of the death drive stands out, *ek-sists*, an un-time that does not provide a beginning to the unconscious, but closes it off and opens it at the same time. The death drive is a proper speculation not on the beginning, but on the becoming. The second instance of speculation is thus one that marks the internal ambivalence of the psychic process as such; it inserts the difference of itself, from itself, into the process of the pleasure principle.

3) Now, let us finally turn to the third systematic space of speculation. We find an instance of it in a note that Freud wrote in 1938: "Space may be the projection of the psychical apparatus. No other derivation is probable. Instead of Kant's *a priori* determinants of our psychical apparatus. Psyche is extended; knows nothing about it."³⁰ What we find here differs from the other two instances of speculation. But even this note at the end of Freud's life can be referred back to *The Interpretation of Dreams*. As we have already noted, it is in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that Freud conceives of the psyche as being of a different reality that should not be confused with material reality. Here, in this late note, space as a form of the material is a projection, and the extension of the psychic itself can only be understood as a form of projection itself. We could then understand that the psyche projects itself, and finds its extension precisely in this. The actual extension is a psychic extension; space in its actual reality is not simply a projection as if it were not real, but space is then the extension of this projection that the psyche is.

This note is strictly speculative for one specific reason. In a specific manner the note indicates a closure of the unconscious. It dissolves the distinction between the material reality and the psychic reality, but it inscribes this dissolution into the figure of a projection: The psyche has the form and content of its own projection. But at the same time (i.e. in no time), it also keeps the figure of the unconscious open in the sense that the inscription of the psyche in the complete ambivalence between material and psychic reality deprives us of any means to distinguish between material and psychic reality. In finding a form it announces its own infinity – any reality is psychic reality. While Kant wanted

³⁰ See note 5.

to determine reality, reality now proves to be a difference within the psychic. Speculation entails infinity in its own figure. Psyche is a groundless infinite difference.

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Before we continue with the relation of this figure of speculation to philosophy, a second moment of speculation needs to be addressed, and may it be rather quick. This second moment does not concern the figure of the psyche, but its analysis, psychoanalysis, in its relation to the natural sciences. Can the analysis of a speculative figure be a science? One knows that Freud develops psychoanalysis as a series of intertwining but also independent case studies and that he always attempted to keep psychoanalysis within the field of the sciences. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* we find, for example, the following statement:

Dreams and neuroses seem to have preserved more mental antiquities than we could have imagined possible; so that psycho-analysis may claim a high place among the sciences which are concerned with the reconstruction of the earliest and most obscure periods of the beginnings of the human race.³¹

Freud understands psychoanalysis as a positive science of the psychic occurrences, as a science that has opened new territories for the sciences and uses the same methods as other natural sciences. All the concerns one might raise against this view seem to be nonexistent for Freud himself.

But as he insists on the singularity of case studies, Freud is also aware that knowledge gained from single case studies cannot be abstracted into a sort of generalised psychology. But even if psychoanalysis cannot be a generalised empirical science of the psychic, it nevertheless needs to build a fragile frame that allows for the concatenation of the different case studies. Freud's most decisive attempt to nevertheless generate a level of generality and comparison is to be found in a series of articles known as the metapsychological works. He abandoned this endeavour and we know of only five out of the originally envisaged 12 texts. Metapsychology is a precise attempt to reconcile the singularity of the analysis with the generality of the natural sciences, and it is here that the

³¹ Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p. 550.

decisive moments of speculation take place: at the site of the creation of psychoanalysis as another science.

In between the parameters of case and structure, psychoanalysis unfolds a difference within the self-referential world of the consciousness. Freud, as one knows, declared his enterprise to be the last narcissist slight to the human being, the last in a very famous series of slights: The Copernican turn removed the human being from the centre of the universe; Darwin's discoveries reduced the uniqueness of the human being to a moment within a series of natural developments; and psychoanalysis finally made the human being aware of the fact that the Ego is not the "master in its own house," because it is dependent on mostly unconscious forces.³²

If we understand the humiliation inflicted by psychoanalysis not in some metaphorical sense, but rather as a real act, then it hits upon the general order of the consciousness, it cannot be reduced to one aspect, and it also cannot be invalidated as a temporary phenomenon. It is valid for all forms of human consciousness, in all variants of practice, and throughout all scientific forms of explanation. It is valid in the individual everyday, just as it is valid for discursive formations such as philosophy and literature. Afterwards, nothing that is related to forms of the consciousness could remain as it used to be.

Psychoanalysis first develops as a series of differences exposed by the individual case studies, then it produces an indeterminable difference from other sciences, and finally psychoanalysis rests on a fundamental difference within the consciousness as such. Psychoanalysis unfolds a difference in a strict sense: In it, the singular localisation overlaps with its universal relevance.

This – concrete and universal – difficulty of psychoanalysis finds its expression in the change from the first to the second topic. While the first topic of *The Interpretation of Dreams* introduces the distinction between the 'preconscious', the 'unconscious', and the 'conscious' and attempts to classify the contents of the psychic apparatus according to these three systems, the second topic does

³² Sigmund Freud, "A Difficulty in the Path of Psycho-Analysis", in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works*, Vol. XVII, *An Infantile Neurosis and Other Works*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, London: Hogarth Press 1955, pp. 135–144, here p. 143.

justice to the dynamic and economic aspects. The Ego is no longer considered as a conscious instance opposite to the unconscious forces; rather, the three new distinctions of the 'Id', 'Ego', and 'Superego' are now integrated within one context of a psychic occurrence.

We can see that all the points combine a question of difference and localisation: Any form of difference is located, situated. The case studies are the localisation where everything begins. The question of the human being and its consciousness and unconscious are the inmost of the psychoanalytical process. The relation towards the other sciences is the permanent consideration of its own finitude.

We can then finally relate the three moments of speculation to this process of the localisation of differences. The drive and the primal repression provide an answer to the structure of the case studies: Repression is already there, but it will always be different. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* demonstrates the essential point in psychoanalysis: namely the problem of the inner change. And the claim of the extension of the psyche inscribes psychoanalysis not in a differential manner within the field of other sciences, but rather turns it into the prehistory of the sciences. The psyche, then, is not only a groundless infinite difference, but it is also one that has already taken place, that changes constantly, and it is to be understood as arche-scientific.

2. Derrida's Defence

If this is the figure of the speculative psyche in its analysis, the proper of psychoanalysis, then in what philosophy or in what kind of philosophy could we take refuge, if we want to consider psychoanalysis from the outside? Perhaps the decisive point is not to know or to think psychoanalysis, but rather the question is whether philosophy can react to the speculative figure of the psyche, and therefore, with this aim, address psychoanalysis from the outside. It seems to be evident then that not just any philosophy will be able to do so. In a banal sense, we need to think of 'a' philosophy that takes issue with psychoanalysis as such, that is able to let it operate within itself. It would be a different matter to ask the – not so banal – question as to philosophies that do not take issue with psychoanalysis.

But then there is also a second option. It is one thing if a philosophy incorporates psychoanalysis, turns into an object of philosophical thought; but it is another thing if a philosophy can be understood as a consequence of psychoanalysis. This could not be a psychoanalytical philosophy, it could neither be a philosophy that grasps psychoanalysis conceptually; it would rather be a philosophy that takes the margin literally, the margin to which psychoanalysis has brought spirit, the spirit that is the philosophical form of consciousness. This philosophy would need to accept that the concept cannot be the fruit of reason alone, although, as philosophy, it would have to rely on the concept.

Any philosophy always begins, even if only implicitly, as the examination of the possibility of philosophy. And so there might be no philosophy that would understand itself to be the consequence of a given object. But a philosophy that would incorporate psychoanalysis as a form of an existing difference would have to be understood as a consequence of this difference that psychoanalysis is and makes: and the question is whether this is possible.

We will proceed by unfolding two different points: First, we will try to show that Derrida needs to (re)construct psychoanalysis as an 'other' to philosophy, thereby necessarily ignoring psychoanalysis as a speculative site (ungrounded, differential, and infinite). Second, we will argue that the deconstruction of this 'otherness' of psychoanalysis then leads to an implicit dissolution of both sides – *différance* abolishes both psychoanalysis and philosophy.

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Derrida recognised this proximity between psychoanalysis and philosophy from the very beginning, and he rejected a possible overlapping from the start. Already in 1967 he issued a verdict, which is even stronger as it came about only in the form of a note. We are referring to the article *Freud and the Scene of Writing*, published 1967. To this article some notes are prefixed in which the first part of this talk, a part that is not reproduced in print, is summarised. At the end, we find notes referring to the third part, which is also not printed. Although the gesture of keeping only notes on the introductory part and on the conclusion somewhat mysteriously implies that a recording was perhaps lost or that there was not enough space in the later book, we should abstain from falling into the trap of these hermeneutical assumptions, and rather read it as it

is: In the book, we find a text, accompanied by notes, and this turns the notes into a form of declaration, verdict, limitation, and threshold.

It thus seems justified to take a precise look at them. The notes for the first, introductory, part are divided into two points, and the first sentence of the first part reads famously: “1. Despite appearances, the deconstruction of logocentrism is not a psychoanalysis of philosophy.”³³

The form of these ‘appearances’ is then indicated in the second sentence, which opens a new paragraph. “These appearances: the analysis of a historical repression and suppression of writing since Plato. This repression constitutes the origin of philosophy as *epistēmē*, and of truth as the unity of *logos* and *phonē*.”³⁴

The third and fourth sentences then outline the justification for this claim: For Freud, Derrida argues, repression is connected to an inner force, but it does not react or relate to an external force. “Repression, not forgetting; repression, not exclusion. Repression, as Freud says, neither repels, nor flees, nor excludes an exterior force; it contains an interior representation, laying out within itself a space of repression.”³⁵

The repression of writing is then some lines later declared to have been a necessary one; it is not a pathological error, there needs to be a repression of writing, because at first it opens the “possibility of symbolism *in general*.”³⁶ And this structure precedes all fundamental oppositions, the one between “man and animal,” but also between “the living and the nonliving.”³⁷ These are notes on the general functioning of deconstruction, as it seems. But then there is a sentence following directly after the quoted sentence on the ‘repression’ that makes things more complicated.

So, after the reference to the inner force of repression in Freud, Derrida continues: “Here, that which represents a force in the form of the writing interior to

³³ Jacques Derrida, “Freud and the Scene of Writing”, in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass, London / New York: Routledge 1978, pp. 246–291, here p. 246.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 246–247.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 247.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

speech and essential to it has been contained outside speech.”³⁸ Now the ‘here’ might be related to deconstruction or back to psychoanalysis. If the former, it would mean: What deconstruction does is rather to contain something outside of speech as its essential moment. If the latter, it would mean: What psychoanalysis does is to keep something outside speech that is essential to it.

But as the repression of writing is declared a necessary moment in the history of Western thought, we can infer that deconstruction attempts to think an external relation as an internal relation, to think the occurrence of repression as an external-internal necessity that infects psychoanalysis, too, while keeping up the externality of this internal moment. If deconstruction thus thinks external forces in and as an internal relation, then it is in this point opposed to psychoanalysis because somehow the latter seems to disregard the pure externality of forces. But as there is an outside necessary to the inside, and the pure inside of repression, without its externality, cannot grasp this outside, deconstruction speculates on the infinite externality of forces.

Thus, on its outside, on its surface, the first note intends to show the ‘appearances’ that rightly juxtapose deconstruction and psychoanalysis: It draws a line from the repression to the failure of repression, the symptomatic return of the repressed, and relates this line to the repression of writing, its failures, and its symptomatic return in the ambivalent form of “presence ‘pure and simple’.”³⁹ But this account is perhaps only the official line of the first point. What is latently inscribed is an opposition between the inside and the outside: with psychoanalysis referring to an internal force, while deconstruction relates to external forces as an internal necessity. The first difference is then the following: Deconstruction focuses on a different relation of forces; it not only opposes inner to exterior forces, but attempts to think an external relation as an inner relation (‘necessary’).

Following from this, we will have to ask how far deconstruction then thinks or opposes psychoanalysis, as psychoanalysis to a lesser extent opposes inner drives against external forms, but rather analyses the conflictuality of incorporated forms of the external. Is not this the point of psychoanalysis? That it

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*

works on the threshold of the interior and exterior? That is to say, one might wonder whether psychoanalysis thinks an internal force as the conflict of the external, while deconstruction thinks the external as internal. The hidden difference is then that deconstruction insists on the pure externality as such, which is abandoned by psychoanalysis.

The next note ('2.') first makes reference to the deep metaphysical bias that is inscribed into the Freudian concepts, which are without exception bound to the history of the metaphysics of presence. And subsequently Derrida notes:

The necessity of an explicit question concerning the meaning of presence in general: a comparison of the undertakings of Heidegger and of Freud. The epoch of presence, in the Heideggerian sense, and its central support, from Descartes to Hegel: presence as consciousness, self-presence conceived within the opposition of consciousness to unconsciousness. The concepts of *archi-trace* and of *différance*: why they are neither Freudian nor Heideggerian.⁴⁰

Finally, then, the *différance* is indicated as “the pre-opening of the ontic-ontological difference ... and of all the differences which furrow Freudian conceptuality.”⁴¹

A moment of this appeared already implicitly in the first point, especially the assumption that in deconstruction a difference is written that is of a more fundamental nature than Freudian differences. But here the difference between psychoanalysis and deconstruction is taken to the outside: Deconstruction refers to a difference that precedes Heidegger as well as Freud. The problem is of course that this preceding ‘element’ – *différance* – is something that is not present. It precedes in its own non-present way. Might we say implicitly? However, therefore it cannot be understood as an opening, but rather only as a pre-opening. In a seeming parallel to the primal repression in Freud, we find something like the primal *différance* in Freud, but as a *différance* that still even precedes the primal repression. If repression, as we might assume according to the first point, presents an internal force, then the primal *différance* is an external and internally necessary moment in relation to repression.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Thus, the second difference: The *différance* does not follow upon psychoanalysis, does not appear within psychoanalysis, but does precede it, in its own non-present way. Logically as well as temporally, one would need to add. Deconstruction's bet: a necessary preceding difference, inscribed as an externality within the internality of forces. Deconstruction secures its external place in relation to psyche's *Urverdrängung*.

From these two distinctions, given in the form of notes, which have the advantage of a certain fixation in their brevity, we can infer the frame of doubt. It is perhaps, first of all, not so much a question of whether deconstruction *psychoanalyses* philosophy. The question is whether the philosophy of deconstruction would not have to become a part of psychoanalysis itself if it were to be able to analyse philosophy: For how to conceive of deconstruction as the psychoanalysis of philosophy without understanding deconstruction as an analysis? Thus, the sentence from the first point actually states: 'Despite appearances, deconstruction is not psychoanalysis.' It is not – and this is the explanation – because deconstruction unfolds a *relation* of forces, and does not refer to the *presence* of a force.

Here, then, our doubt is intensified, if Derrida's thought on Freud culminates in the demonstration that the complete programme that Freud unfolds aims at the dissolution of the unity of 'a' force, be it internal or external: "Force produces meaning (and space) through the power of 'repetition' alone, which inhabits it originarily as its death."⁴² In Freud, too, it can only be about relations, and the interior, the inner, is a hypothesis that finds itself in permanent dissolution.

The second point then declares, localises, the difference with psychoanalysis. But at the same time, difference is being inscribed into an order of succession, allocating a place to psychoanalysis (namely after the pre-opening of *différance*), and ascribing a certain non-place to deconstruction. It becomes impossible then to ask the question of modernity, although it might be necessary to ask it with psychoanalysis, but modernity cannot be taken to be an interruption of thought in this account of deconstruction. By ascribing *différance* to a kind of prehistory, thinking, as an effect of *différance*, is referred to a history that unfolds itself in a succession of continuity. There is a 'before' of psychoa-

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 268.

analysis, and even if this ‘before’ is less timely than logical, it is nevertheless not simultaneous, but rather positions psychoanalysis, thus constituting a succession. This is the problematic and the clarity of the note: The prehistory is not gained within psychoanalysis; it is opposed to it, it is posited. We are entering an onto-ontological difference that states a prehistory that dissolves history.

The inner force of psychoanalysis thus is put in opposition to an external force in deconstruction: An interiority of force is inscribed in psychoanalysis that makes it necessary to confront it from the outside. This might be understood as a symptom of a defence: Deconstruction defends itself against its possible turning into psychoanalysis, against the pure interiority of any externality of forces. In this account, then, deconstruction rejects psychoanalysis quite violently as something other, and this might be the case because it came too close. It might be that psychoanalysis has to be an ‘other’ to deconstruction, even more so if deconstruction is to remain the same. Philosophy has to ascribe a ground to psychoanalysis, a sameness and a finitude: It needs to ‘de-specularise’ psychoanalysis to allow for its own site of speculation.

What it is necessary to do then – understanding necessity as the sign of the interiority – is to invert these two points, and to ask if deconstruction is not perhaps a philosophy that follows from psychoanalysis. In contradistinction from the first difference that Derrida points out, the question would be whether deconstruction is not perhaps related to psychoanalysis rather in an internal relation, and in contradistinction from the second difference one would need to ask whether deconstruction perhaps does not precede, but follow.

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In an early text from 1967 on the *différance*, the structural overlapping between deconstruction and psychoanalysis can be reconstructed in a first attempt. At first it is only about the suggestion that the problematic covered by the notion of *différance* – the temporised and spatialised occurrence of the difference – was already articulated, before Heidegger, in Nietzsche and Freud. Nietzsche marks a game of self-deferring forces and thus prepares the way for Freud’s deferral of the consciousness. Derrida sees “two apparently different values of *différance* ... tied together in Freudian theory: to differ as discernibility, dis-

tion, separation, diastem, *spacing*; and to defer as detour, relay, reserve, *temporization*.”⁴³

For the first ‘value’ Derrida invokes the trace and the ‘*Bahnung*’/facilitation, which connect the question of memory to the question of the differential deferral and spatialisation. For the second ‘value’, the play of differences is one in which contradictions are suspended, and are transposed into an economy of deferrals and detours.

We now get to the point of the deepest entanglement, given within a long passage, through which we will have to pass.

Here we are touching upon the point of greatest obscurity, on the very enigma of *différance*, on precisely that which divides its very concept by means of a strange cleavage. We must not hasten to decide. How are we to think simultaneously, on the one hand, *différance* as the economic detour which, in the element of the same, always aims at coming back to the pleasure or the presence that have been deferred by (conscious or unconscious) calculation, and, on the other hand, *différance* as the relation to an impossible presence, as expenditure without reserve, as the irreparable loss of presence, the irreversible usage of energy, that is, as the death instinct, and as the entirely other relationship that apparently interrupts every economy? It is evident—and this is the evident itself—that the economical and the noneconomical, the same and the entirely other, etc., cannot be thought *together*.

If *différance* is unthinkable in this way, perhaps we should not hasten to make it evident, in the philosophical element of evidentiality which would make short work of dissipating the mirage and illogicalness of *différance* and would do so with the infallibility of calculations that we are well acquainted with, having precisely recognized their place, necessity, and function in the structure of *différance*.⁴⁴

We find here a very complicated structural description of the difference, in which different oppositions are related and in which finally the *différance* finds

⁴³ Jacques Derrida, “Différance”, in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass, Chicago, IL: The Harvester Press 1982, pp.1–27, here p. 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

itself sublated, if not even brought to an implosion. To begin with, the difference is defined as a detour in the element of the same, which is at the same time in relation to the entirely other in the form of an expenditure. *Différance*, that is to say, is an economy that acts within the deferral of pleasure, it is a form of counter-economy: While the conscious or unconscious calculation defers pleasure, *différance* refers back to it. *Différance* then again is an “expenditure without reserve,” and as such it is a non-economy. The detour within the economy then is opposed to its own interruption, to its own end. We are not dealing with the opposition between the temporal moment and the spatial moment here, but we rather have the opposition of these two moments as being combined in the figure of *différance* to the interruption, the end of this figure. *Différance* then is properly shown to be the relation to its own end.

Temporisation and spatialisation form an economy, opposed to which we find on the other side an apparent exclusion of economy. But this exclusion is in a certain sense only an apparent exclusion, for it is impossible, it is what cannot be, namely death. There is a relation at the inside of difference that relates it to its other as to one that is infected with the *Schein*, i.e. mere appearance. If the noneconomic is infected with a *Schein*, this suggests that economy continues to be, even in the form of its absence: Economy prevails.

The conclusion from this opposition can only be given schematically. The passage concludes by saying that the compatibility of both sides is impossible, and declares this impossibility to be the evident. Evidentiality is taken as a philosophical moment, so that we then can say: It is philosophy that is incapable of thinking both sides together, as unified, as philosophy produces the evident. But, here again, philosophy is only one side of what is going on. In contrast with philosophy, as the production of the evident, there is a further moment that appears and which is opposed to this impossibility in thought: *différance*, which is this unthinkability, which is as a phenomenon opposed to philosophy. And it is the unthinkability by way of preserving the fallacious and the illogical.

If we intensify the contrast even a bit more, we then can say: The same cannot be thought together with the other; together it cannot be made evident. What can be made evident is the same, and thus philosophy is what turns the same into the evident of a concept. What cannot be made evident is the other, but the other is, and it appears together with the same. It is an appearance of the

fallacious, but it is also a fallacious appearance, for it cannot be made evident. The appearance of what cannot be thought is the appearance of something that appears alongside the same, but cannot be harmonised with it.

Thus we find an opposition of thought to something that appears, and we find the incapacity of thought to combine thought and being. If we take this back to the field of psychoanalysis, then it becomes clear that Derrida needs to reject the real effectiveness of thought. The thought in psychoanalytical terms would precisely be a thought that has a form of appearance in its effects, and does not lead to something evident, insofar as it is impossible to think the same and the other in one thought: It is impossible to reconcile unconscious thought with conscious thought. Thus Freud's figure of the unconscious presents a form of difference in which the same cannot be reconciled with the other. But as the figure of the unconscious is inscribed into the conscious, this aspect does directly touch on the question of philosophy. It aims at the inner heart of philosophy, for it would be impossible for philosophy to think what is outside of philosophy. From the point of view of psychoanalysis, it is not possible to reconcile the one with the other in the form of something evident. The psychoanalytic speculation on the inmost of the psyche – the death drive – threatens the philosophical evident as it presents thought as a difference from itself.

But isn't this precisely Derrida's idea? Isn't Derrida's point that the one and the other cannot be reconciled? And therefore the notion of *différance* is kept in an undecidable ambivalence between the one and the other. But deconstruction does so, from a philosophical point of view, and even if it keeps the *différance* in the ambivalence to be there and to be absent at the same time, it allocates a structural place to it, inscribing it into a (pre-)history. From the point of view of psychoanalysis, this would imply that philosophy – deconstruction – misunderstands psychoanalysis here, and is mistaken in its attempt to bring the *différance* of psychoanalysis to the evident of a structural position.

To rephrase this: Derrida situates the *différance* of psychoanalysis and declares the impossibility of making the existence of *différance* evident. But the attempt to situate it is nothing other than the attempt to ascribe evidentiality to it, for the reason that the attempt to situate it relates *différance* to its other. This turn then makes us suspicious of what philosophy truly is, and it seems that philos-

ophy now has become the moment of the fallacious, the moment that is in itself, as such, not evident, and cannot be rendered evident.

And it is only from here that we get to the actual point of Derrida's attempt. For it is not to inscribe *différance* into the clarity of a history of concepts, and it is not to situate the psychoanalytical *différance* within the broader frame of philosophy. Rather, in presenting philosophy as a fallacious attempt to undertake such a clarification, Derrida is exposing philosophy as doing the impossible. While declaring that it is impossible to reconcile the one with the other and simultaneously inscribing the psychoanalytical *différance* within the frame of the *différance* of deconstruction, Derrida destabilises philosophy: Philosophy now becomes the fallacious other of *différance*. We might also say: *Différance* unfolds itself, its extension, in the form of a projection, with psychoanalysis and philosophy being moments thereof. Rather than declaring psychoanalysis to be the 'other', philosophy becomes a same.

But this reversal bears a difficulty which results from the transference: If the unconscious is a form of the appearance of the impossible, in which temporisation and spatialisation are connected, then we can also think in the next step the impossible encounter of philosophy and psychoanalysis as a form of *différance*. Philosophy and its evidentiality are bereft of their security, and Derrida's text itself can only be understood as an attempt to turn the unthinkable into something evident. Philosophy would then be situated at the place of a structural impossibility.

It is precisely this moment that occurs in Derrida's text some lines later. What might happen at the moment the economic economy and the excessive economy would be connected?

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Through such a relating of a restricted and a general economy the very project of philosophy, under the privileged heading of Hegelianism, is displaced and reinscribed. The *Aufhebung – la relève* – is constrained into writing itself otherwise. Or perhaps simply into writing itself. Or, better, into taking account of its consumption of writing.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

This does not mean that philosophy in its possibility is done away with; it means rather that a deferral of philosophy itself is indicated, a deferral of which it remains unclear if it might not nevertheless question philosophy in its totality. Hegel appears as the counterpoint who would offer a possible form of the unification with the unthinkable in thought, but who needs to be deferred in the direction of an *Aufhebung* that would write itself. Unavoidably so in the mode of writing, that is, in the form of the changing difference which appears in the replacement of the 'e' by an 'a', as a *différance* which cannot be made evident.

What we see then is that philosophy is now caught by the movement of the existing *différance*; philosophy inscribes itself into the movement of *différance*, or, better put, philosophy is inscribed into the movement of *différance*. "Contrary to the metaphysical, dialectical, 'Hegelian' interpretation of the economic movement of *différance*, we must conceive of a play in which whoever loses wins, and in which one loses and wins on every turn."⁴⁶

Let us first consider the passivity, which is now possible, rendered possible in the writing of the *Aufhebung*. It takes place and is not banished to an order of metaphysics or dialectics. But Hegel, whom Derrida considered to be a thinker of difference, does once more defer the problem, insofar as we can see now that it is not the compatibility of the incompatible that is the main problem for Derrida, but rather the economy of loss. While Hegel, in Derrida's understanding, is incapable of inscribing a moment of loss into the sublation, the deferral that is undertaken by deconstruction presents an opening towards the notion of loss: The sublation that writes itself enables the loss, thus it inverts itself as an economy, disavows itself, is only the apparent appearance of an economy.

Where have we left Freud in all this? The more philosophy becomes a writing of *différance* itself, the less it can uphold its distinction from psychoanalysis. The more philosophy becomes a writing of *différance*, the less it is able to set up a structure in which the difference of the *différance* of deconstruction and the *différance* of psychoanalysis can be situated. The moment of resistance in which deconstruction rejects psychoanalysis proves to be an indication of their proximity. And the proximity is the site of speculation in which neither one nor the other is, and is only ungrounded, differential, infinite.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Différance, and with it the structure of temporisation and spatialisation, is sublated at the moment in which *différance* cannot be written anymore, but is only writing itself. *Différance* loses itself, it produces the loss of itself. This could, finally, be considered the most essential difference between deconstruction and psychoanalysis: that deconstruction presents an anti-economy of the loss against the economy that seems to organise the processes of the unconscious and that presents itself in the form of effects. Deconstruction then abolishes itself, and if we ask for the reason for this abolishment, and refer it back to the defence against a possible confusion of deconstruction and psychoanalysis, then we can only draw the conclusion that deconstruction abolishes itself because it fears to be abolished by psychoanalysis. The proximity is then to be found in this: Deconstruction wants to be the same as psychoanalysis, but it wants to be it in a different manner, and it fails necessarily in securing this difference, because psychoanalysis is a speculative site and resists identification. The deconstructive difference, and the difference as such cannot be secured.

It is impossible to claim that deconstruction follows upon psychoanalysis, but we see that psychoanalysis is the decisive point at which it becomes necessary for deconstruction to construct and to secure a difference. In the entanglement of difficulties, deconstruction abolishes itself and its philosophical thought of psychoanalysis.

Cláudio Oliveira*

Langue pure et lalangue : rencontres entre Benjamin et Lacan

Il est bien connu que l'École de Francfort a été l'un des premiers mouvements du champ philosophique à donner une place à la psychanalyse à l'intérieur de ses réflexions. Il est également bien connu que les références lacaniennes à cette école de pensée sont très rares, sinon inexistantes, et que, malgré les nombreuses études qui traitent des rapports entre l'École de Francfort et l'œuvre de Freud, les travaux portant sur de possibles proximités entre Lacan et cette école sont encore très rares, du moins au Brésil. Chez nous, il faut citer le travail pionnier de Vladimir Safatle qui a cherché à établir un dialogue entre l'œuvre de Lacan et la pensée d'Adorno¹, en ce qui concerne Walter Benjamin, par contre, même si nous avons déjà beaucoup d'études sur son rapport avec Freud (c'est même une ligne de recherche très présente aujourd'hui au Brésil), il faut constater une absence presque totale concernant le rapport possible entre la pensée de Benjamin et l'œuvre de Lacan, ce qui nous amène à penser que, du moins au Brésil, les lacaniens, en général, ne lisent pas Benjamin, tout comme les benjaminieniens, en général, ne lisent pas Lacan.

Pour ma part, je crois au contraire qu'une recherche portant sur la proximité de pensée entre les deux auteurs est aujourd'hui plus que possible, sinon nécessaire. Le thème du langage est, sans aucun doute, un champ privilégié de proximité entre ces deux grands auteurs du XX^e siècle, une fois que, on peut le dire, les deux ont fait du langage et de la langue, de la *Sprache*, comme le dit Benjamin, leur question fondamentale. Dans ce sens, l'intérêt pour la théorie benjaminienne du langage ne peut que croître pour quelqu'un qui travaille sur le thème du langage dans l'œuvre de Lacan.

Pour arriver à cet rapprochement, toutefois, je vais emprunter un intermédiaire : le philosophe italien Giorgio Agamben, lequel, même s'il n'a jamais

¹ Cf. Vladimir Safatle, *A paixão do negativo: Lacan e a dialética*, Editora UNESP, São Paulo 2006.

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vraiment proposé un rapprochement entre Benjamin et Lacan, a pourtant lu les deux auteurs tout au long de son œuvre. On sait que l'immense importance de Benjamin pour la pensée d'Agamben n'est pas comparable avec la place très réduite que Lacan y a trouvé, même si une étude sur cette place est encore à faire.

C'est précisément en tant que lecteur d'Agamben que j'essaierai de faire ce parallèle, que je souhaite ici mettre en valeur, sur les compréhensions benjaminennes et lacaniennes de la langue et du langage. Je vais partir, pour y parvenir, d'une conférence d'Agamben donnée en 1982, à Modene, en Italie, mais publiée seulement en 2005, dans son livre *La potenza del pensiero*. La conférence est intitulée : « Langue et histoire : catégories linguistiques et catégories historiques dans la pensée de Benjamin »². Le point de départ d'Agamben, dans cette conférence, est un passage très obscur et énigmatique trouvé dans des notes préparatoires pour les thèses *Sur le concept d'Histoire* :

Le monde messianique est le monde d'une totale et intégrale actualité [*Aktualität*]. Seulement dans ce monde il y a pour la première fois une histoire universelle [*Universalgeschichte*]. Ce que nous appelons aujourd'hui avec ce nom seul peut être une espèce d'espéranto. Rien ne peut y correspondre, tant que la confusion, qui provient de la tour de Babel, n'est pas éliminée. Elle présuppose la langue dans laquelle tout texte d'une langue vivante ou morte doit être intégralement traduit. Ou, plutôt, elle est cette langue même. Pas comme écrite, mais comme célébrée de manière festive. Cette fête est purifiée de toute cérémonie et ne connaît pas de chants de fête. Sa langue est l'idée même de la prose, qui est comprise par tous les hommes, comme la langue des oiseaux est comprise par ceux qui sont nés les dimanches [*Sonntagskindern*].³

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Quoiqu'obscur, du moins dans quelques aspects, la note de Benjamin établit un rapport entre langue et histoire, en les pensant à partir de deux moments bien distincts, un avant et un après le monde messianique. L'histoire dans le monde messianique, marquée par une totale et intégrale actualité, est ce que Benjamin appelle l'histoire universelle. Celle-là, telle qu'il l'entend, ne doit pas être confondue avec ce qui aujourd'hui est ainsi désigné et qui, pour

² Giorgio Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, Neri Pozza, Vicenza 2005.

³ Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, éd. Rolf Tiedemann et Hermann Schweppenhäuser, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1972–1982. v. I, t. 3, p. 1239.

lui, n'est qu'une espèce d'espéranto. Voilà la première correspondance entre langue et histoire : ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui histoire universelle est universel tout comme l'espéranto, c'est-à-dire qu'il s'agit d'une fausse universalité. Or, à une fausse compréhension de l'histoire universelle correspond une fausse compréhension de la langue universelle que représente l'espéranto. Si ce qui aujourd'hui est désigné par le syntagme « histoire universelle » n'est qu'une espèce d'espéranto, il doit correspondre à l'histoire universelle proprement dite, une langue universelle qui ne soit donc pas un espéranto. À l'histoire universelle, qui existe seulement dans le monde messianique, doit correspondre une langue dans laquelle toutes les langues, vivantes ou mortes, doivent être traduites. Plus encore : l'histoire universelle, qui existe seulement dans un monde d'une totale et intégrale actualité, n'est que cette langue, comprise par tous les hommes. Mais avant le monde messianique, nous n'avons que cette confusion qui provient de la tour de Babel.

Curieusement, dans un passage vers la fin de « Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse », l'un des textes classiques de Lacan sur le langage le plus connu, il y a aussi une référence à la tour de Babel, dans un contexte où il nous parle de la fin de l'analyse, non seulement comme un phénomène individuel mais aussi comme quelque chose qui concerne la collectivité. Dans ce contexte, la fonction du psychanalyste, selon Lacan, serait celle d'un interprète dans la discorde des langages:

la dialectique, dit Lacan, n'est pas individuelle, et ... la question de la terminaison de l'analyse est celle du moment où la satisfaction du sujet trouve à se réaliser dans la satisfaction de chacun, c'est-à-dire de tous ceux qu'elle s'associe dans une œuvre humaine. ... C'est aussi pourquoi elle exige une longue ascèse subjective, et qui ne sera jamais interrompue, la fin de l'analyse elle-même n'étant pas séparable de l'engagement du sujet dans sa pratique.

Qu'y renonce donc plutôt celui qui ne peut rejoindre à son horizon la subjectivité de son époque. Car comment pourrait-il faire de son être l'axe de tant de vies, celui qui ne saurait rien de la dialectique qui l'engage avec ces vies dans un mouvement symbolique. Qu'il connaisse bien l'aspire où son époque l'entraîne dans l'œuvre de Babel, et qu'il sache sa fonction d'interprète dans la discorde des langages. Pour les ténèbres du *mundus* autour de quoi s'enroule la tour immense,

qu'il laisse à la vision mystique le soin d'y voir s'élever sur un bois éternel le serpent pourrissant de la vie.⁴

Je propose de comprendre un peu mieux justement ce passage de Lacan, que je trouve bien plus obscur et énigmatique que celui de Benjamin, à partir d'un parallèle avec Benjamin. Dans ce passage, Lacan parle de la fin de l'analyse et de la fonction de l'analyste en faisant référence à l'image de la tour de Babel. L'analyste serait un interprète dans la discorde des langages. La question qu'on peut poser, à partir de cela, est la suivante : quelle est la langue ou le langage du psychanalyste pour qu'il puisse être un interprète dans la discorde des langages ? Et pour être encore plus précis, on pourrait poser cette question dans les termes suivants : quelles modifications apporte la fin de l'analyse pour un sujet en ce qui concerne son rapport avec l' (son) histoire, le (son) langage, et avec la (sa) langue ? Essayons de répondre à ces questions d'abord chez Benjamin, en nous rapportant à la conférence d'Agamben, pour revenir ensuite à la psychanalyse.

Dans sa conférence, Agamben nous montre qu'une certaine corrélation entre histoire et langue est aussi ancienne que la pensée médiévale. Il cite, par exemple, Isidore de Séville, qui, dans ses *Etymologies*, affirmait que « l'histoire concerne la grammaire » et il s'appuyait pour le dire sur Saint Augustin, qui, de son côté, pensait que l'enjeu de la grammaire est la transmission infinie de l'histoire. Comme l'homme ne crée pas les noms, ceux-là lui arrivent, selon le grand traité de Varron sur la langue latine, « en descendant, c'est-à-dire, à travers une transmission historique »⁵. La langue a donc une origine qui échappe aux êtres parlants, un plan « pénétrable seulement historiquement, dans un 'ainsi se dit' qui est, en vérité, un 'ainsi se disait' »⁶. Il y a, donc, une dimension historique fondamentale du langage qui la destine à une espèce de transmission infinie. (On y entend déjà les échos du problème de l'analyse finie et de l'analyse infinie que posait Freud à la fin de son œuvre, et aussi la décision prise très tôt par Lacan qui va plutôt vers la fin de l'analyse, c'est-à-dire, dans la direction d'une analyse finie). En tant qu'il est historique, le langage est infini. Et c'est précisément son péché originel qui le fait parvenir historiquement à chacun par descendance. L'historicité et la temporalité de ce langage infini est

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⁴ Jacques Lacan, « Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse », in: *Écrits I*, Seuil, Paris 1999, p. 319.

⁵ Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, p. 39.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

décrite par Agamben de la façon suivante : « le langage anticipe toujours, quant à son lieu originel, l'homme parlant, en donnant un saut infini, au-delà de lui, vers le passé et, en même temps, vers le futur d'une descendance infinie, de telle façon que la pensée n'y peut jamais avoir de fin »⁷. Cette infinitude, cette absence d'une fin, c'est ce qui marquerait la condition historique de l'homme en tant que parlant. S'il y a la transmission du langage, il y a l'histoire et le destin, et par conséquent, il n'y a pas de fin.

C'est à partir de ce fond philosophique qu'Agamben aborde la coïncidence entre langue et histoire chez Benjamin : « La condition historique de l'homme est inséparable de sa condition d'être parlant »⁸, nous dit Agamben. Il va chercher alors dans quelques textes de Benjamin, pour voir de quelle manière celui-ci entend ce rapport entre langue et histoire.

Or, une telle corrélation est explicite chez Benjamin, et cela de façon fulgurante, déjà dans un texte de 1916, *Die Bedeutung der Sprache in Trauerspiel und Tragödie*, dans lequel nous trouvons l'affirmation suivante : « *Geschichte wird zugleich mit Bedeutung in der Menschensprache* » [« L'histoire devient en même temps que la signification dans le langage humain »]⁹. Mais il faut prendre cette affirmation dans le sens le plus radical : l'histoire et la signification ne sont pas seulement deux phénomènes simultanés, en effet, ils constituent le même phénomène. Et c'est dans ce sens que Benjamin peut penser à un langage antérieur ou postérieur à l'histoire comme un langage antérieur ou postérieur à la signification. Dans les limites du langage historique et doué de signification, il vise un langage sans histoire et sans signification. Dans ce texte de 1916, c'est surtout par rapport à un passé perdu, antérieur à l'histoire et à la signification, que Benjamin envisage d'abord la possibilité d'une langue sans histoire et sans signification. L'entrée du langage dans le champ de l'histoire et de la signification est ainsi décrite par lui comme une « chute de la parole (*Wort*) de sa pure vie sentimentale [*reines Gefühlsleben*], dans laquelle elle est 'pur son du sentiment', vers la sphère de la signification »¹⁰. On pourrait peut-être comprendre cette dimension du pur son de la parole comme ce que Lacan a appelé

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, *GS*, II, 1, p. 139.

¹⁰ Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, p. 41.

le signifiant pur. Du pur son à la signification, de la pure vie du sentiment à l'histoire, c'est de cette manière que Benjamin décrit l'origine du langage dans ce texte. Comme le résume Agamben dans sa conférence : « Histoire et signification se produisent donc, simultanément, mais elles atteignent une condition pour ainsi dire préhistorique du langage, dans laquelle il n'existe pas encore la dimension du signifié, mais seulement la pure vie sentimentale de la parole »¹¹.

L'idée d'une langue pure ou d'une dimension originelle du langage antérieur à sa chute dans le champ de la signification et de l'histoire est largement développée dans un autre texte de la même année, de 1916, le célèbre essai *Über Sprache überhaupt und über die Sprache des Menschen* [Sur le langage en général et sur le langage humain]. Ce que Benjamin appelle « langue pure » [*reine Sprache*] dans cet essai, comme nous le rappelle Agamben, « n'est en aucune manière ce que nous, selon une conception de plus en plus répandue, avons l'habitude de considérer comme un langage, c'est-à-dire la parole signifiante comme moyen de communication qui transmet un message d'un sujet à l'autre »¹². Cette conception du langage, comme on le sait, est celle que Benjamin appelle « la conception bourgeoise de la langue ». C'est aussi à ce type de langage que pense Lacan lorsqu'il nous parle d'un langage pensé comme quelque chose d'utile, comme un moyen, quand il dit, au Séminaire XX, *Encore* : « L'utile ça sert à quoi ? C'est ce qui n'a jamais été bien défini en raison du respect prodigieux que, du fait du langage, l'être parlant a pour le moyen »¹³.

A l'inverse de ce type de langage, la pure langue des noms dont parle Benjamin, « ne connaît aucun moyen, aucun objet et aucun destinataire de la communication »¹⁴. Le pur nom, ce que Benjamin entend comme « l'essence la plus intime du langage même [*das innerste Wesen der Sprache selbst*] » est « ce à travers lequel on ne se communique plus rien, et dans lequel le langage même se communique absolument » [*dasjenige, durch das sich nichts mehr, und in dem die Sprache selbst und absolut sich mitteilt*]¹⁵. Car, ce qui se communique dans ce pur langage sans signification, c'est le langage même. Ce langage que Benjamin, dans une référence biblique, appelle « langage adamique » a le sta-

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 41-42.

¹³ Jacques. Lacan, *Le Séminaire, livre XX: Encore*, Seuil, Paris 1975, p. 10.

¹⁴ Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, p. 42.

¹⁵ Benjamin, *GS*, II, 1, p. 44.

tut, comme le dit Agamben, « d'une parole qui ne communique rien au-delà de soi-même »¹⁶, d'une langue qui « n'a pas de contenus, qui ne communique pas des objets à travers des signifiés », d'un langage, enfin, où « il n'existe pas le problème de l'indicible qui caractérise le langage humain »¹⁷. Suivant sa référence biblique, Benjamin peut, ainsi, décrire l'entrée même dans la signification comme le péché originel de la langue :

La parole doit communiquer *quelque chose* (hors d'elle-même). Ça, c'est effectivement le péché originel, la chute de l'esprit de la langue. ... À partir du moment où l'homme sort de la pure langue des noms, il transforme le langage en un moyen [*Mittel*] (d'une connaissance inadéquate à lui), et, avec cela, aussi, du moins en partie, en un *simple* signe [*Zeichen*]; et cela a ensuite comme conséquence, la pluralité des langues¹⁸.

S'il est vrai que Benjamin entend ici le problème du langage à partir des références bibliques, c'est-à-dire, religieuses, on peut aussi affirmer le contraire : qu'il entend le récit biblique à partir du problème du langage, comme si le mythe de La Genèse était, en vérité, un mythe sur l'origine du langage. Comme le remarque très justement Agamben :

Le péché originel, qui expulse l'homme du Paradis, est avant tout la chute qui se produit dans le langage : de la langue insignifiante et parfaitement transparente des noms à la parole signifiante comme moyen d'une communication extérieure¹⁹.

Cependant, si l'essai de 1916 cherchait dans cette origine une dimension perdue du langage qui mettait en question le régime langagier de la signification à partir de l'idée d'une langue pure adamique, antérieure à cette signification, la préface de 1921, à la traduction des *Tableaux parisiens* de Charles Baudelaire – un texte qu'on ne connaît aujourd'hui pas comme une préface, mais comme un texte indépendant –, dont le titre est *La tâche du traducteur* (*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*), vise à penser cette langue pure non pas dans la perspective d'une

¹⁶ Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, p. 42.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Benjamin, *GS*, II, 1, p. 153.

¹⁹ Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, p. 42.

langue préhistorique, paradisiaque, perdue, mais plutôt dans le sens post-historique, messianique, d'une langue donc qui vient après et au-delà de l'histoire et de la signification. Par conséquent, si dans l'essai de 1916, Benjamin pensait la multiplicité des langues babéliques comme un effet de l'entrée du langage dans le champ de la signification, dans la préface de 1921, il considère la même multiplicité des langues historiques à partir d'une intention intrinsèque à toutes ces langues vers la langue pure :

Toute parenté transhistorique [*überhistorische*] entre les langues repose bien plutôt sur le fait qu'en chacune d'elles, prise comme un tout, une seule et même chose est visée [*gemeint*], qui néanmoins ne peut être atteinte par aucune d'entre elles isolément, mais seulement par la totalité de leurs intentions complémentaires : le pur langage²⁰.

Donc il ne s'agit plus ici de penser l'origine (une question toujours un peu névrotique), mais de penser la fin (la fin justement de cette question névrotique de l'origine, pourrait-on dire). Parce qu'il ne s'agit plus, dans cette préface de Benjamin, de penser l'origine paradisiaque, préhistorique de la langue, mais sa fin messianique, post-historique, dans laquelle la parole se libère, finalement, du sens [*Sinn*]. C'est dans ce contexte qu'il nous parle d'une tâche du traducteur, que je propose ici de penser en parallèle avec ce que, dans « Fonction et champ de la parole et du langage en psychanalyse », Lacan entend comme « la fonction du psychanalyste », c'est-à-dire, « sa fonction d'interprète dans la discorde des langages ». Voilà comment Benjamin décrit cette tâche du traducteur :

La libérer de ce sens, du symbolisant faire le symbolisé même, réintégrer au mouvement de la langue le pur langage qui a pris forme, tel est le prodigieux et l'unique pouvoir de la traduction. Dans ce pur langage, qui ne signifie plus rien et n'exprime plus rien [*die nichts mehr meint und nichts mehr ausdrückt*], mais en tant que parole inexpressive [*als ausdrucksloses Wort*] et créatrice, est ce qui est visé [*Gemeinte*] par toutes les langues, finalement toute communication [*Mitteilung*], tout sens [*Sinn*] et toute intention se heurtent à une strate où leur destin est de s'effacer²¹.

²⁰ Walter Benjamin, *GS*, IV, 1, p. 13. [*La tâche du traducteur. In: Oeuvres. Tome I.*, Gallimard, Paris 2000, p. 250–251.] (Traduction modifiée)

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 19. [*Ibid.*, p. 258]

Comment penser alors cet effacement du sens et de la communication dans cette langue pure, dans cette parole inexpressive, qui ne veut plus rien dire, plus rien exprimer? Il s'agit ici d'une cessation aussi bien de l'histoire que de la signification, en défaisant la confusion babélique des langues et en instaurant ce que, dans les *Anmerkungen* pour les thèses *Sur le concept d'histoire* [*Über den Begriff der Geschichte*], Benjamin appelait le monde messianique, l'histoire universelle, le monde d'une totale et intégrale actualité, ce qu'il appelait, en un mot, une langue « comprise par tous les hommes, comme la langue des oiseaux est comprise par ceux qui sont nés le dimanche [*Sonntagskindern*] ». Il s'agit, dans cette langue, d'une expérience du langage sans la médiation de la signification, ou, selon les termes de Lacan, sans la médiation du phallus : une langue non phallique. Agamben décrit ce mouvement des langues historiques vers la langue pure de la manière suivante : « Toutes les langues veulent dire la parole qui ne veut rien dire »²². Et c'est exactement pour cette raison que, dans cette langue, cesse de ne pas se dire ce que toutes les langues ne disent jamais mais veulent toujours dire : ce dont elles font l'expérience seulement comme quelque chose d'impossible à dire, d'indicible. Et c'est pour cette raison que, si ce que toutes les langues visent, c'est la langue pure qui ne veut plus rien dire, on élimine de cette façon le problème de l'indicible dans le langage, c'est-à-dire, il advient ce que, dans une lettre à Buber de juillet de 1916, Benjamin a appelé cette « cristalline élimination de l'indicible du langage ». C'est dans ce sens qu'on peut dire que, avec la langue pure, quelque chose cesse de ne pas se dire, pour reprendre la formule lacanienne du contingent, intimement lié à la problématique de la fin de l'analyse.

On pourrait alors reprendre ici la problématique benjaminienne en des termes lacaniens. Pour prendre d'abord, à propos de la fin, l'histoire et la fin de l'analyse, je crois qu'en psychanalyse il y a aussi quelque chose de la fin de l'histoire, surtout si l'on se rappelle que pour Lacan l'histoire est toujours un peu névrotique, ce qu'il a essayé de montrer en forgeant le mot « hystoire », avec un « y », en liant ainsi l'histoire à l'hystérie. Jacques-Alain Miller, dans son séminaire des années 2006-2007, en parlant du Séminaire 23 de Lacan, soutient qu'il y a chez Lacan une opposition entre « histoire » et « réel » et qu'à mesure qu'il s'approche chaque fois plus du réel, il s'éloigne d'autant plus de l'histoire, laquelle était très présente au début de son enseignement, sous l'influence de

²² Agamben, *La potenza del pensiero*, p. 44.

Hegel et de Heidegger. Dans ce sens, je crois que si l'on part du dernier Lacan, on pourrait dire qu'à la fin de l'analyse le sujet se libère, d'une certaine façon, de son histoire et expérimente ce que Benjamin appelle « le monde d'une actualité intégrale ».

Concernant la question du langage, si on reprend l'idée benjaminienne d'un signifiant qui ne signifie plus rien, nous sommes confrontés à la même idée que Lacan a essayé de saisir avec la notion de la lettre, une lettre qui n'est pas à l'origine mais que le sujet doit produire à la fin de son analyse.

Or, si toute signification est phallique, un signifiant sans signifié serait un signifiant non phallique, donc du côté féminin. Je pense que ce n'est pas par hasard que, dans le Séminaire XX, Lacan va élaborer la lettre et le féminin à partir de l'idée d'une jouissance non phallique. Mais on peut aussi penser que la phallicisation du signifiant est en même temps son historicisation. Le début de son histoire est simultanément avec son entrée au champ du phallus. La femme, en ce sens, n'est pas historique. Et on ne raconte pas des histoires avec des lettres. Pour raconter des histoires, comme celles que le sujet raconte au cours de son analyse, il faut des signifiants sexués. La question alors, est de savoir si nous pouvons rapprocher cette parole de la langue adamique de Benjamin de la lettre de Lacan en tant que parole qui ne communique rien au-delà de soi-même. Et aussi si on peut penser l'affirmation de Benjamin selon laquelle, dans cette langue, l'indicible est éliminé, dans la direction de la formule lacanienne du contingent comme « ce qui cesse de ne pas s'écrire ».

Pour ma part, la question la plus problématique dans cet effort d'approximation serait la question de la traduction et du rapport à Babel. En reprenant les passages de Benjamin et de Lacan avec lesquels nous avons commencé ce texte, est-ce que « la tâche du traducteur » de Benjamin est la même que « la fonction d'interprète dans la discorde de langages » que l'analyste, selon Lacan, doit assumer à la fin de son analyse ? Ici, ce qui pose problème, selon moi, c'est la référence à Babel. Est-ce que *lalangue*, comme l'écrit Lacan, est la fin de Babel ou sa radicalisation ? Je laisse cette question ouverte.

Rado Riha*

Kant und die Frage des Realismus**

Kant gehört, um mit einem Gemeinplatz zu beginnen, zu den ‚großen Namen‘ der Philosophiegeschichte, seine Transzendentalphilosophie ist, inhaltlich gesehen, eine unerschöpfliche Quelle von philosophischen Themen und Problemen. Es ist also nicht schwer, beim ihm eine Antwort auf fast jede, die gegenwärtige Kontinentalphilosophie, mehr noch, das gegenwärtige Denken als solches, interessierende Frage zu finden. Insofern würde also der Titel des vorliegenden Beitrages keiner besonderen argumentativen Rechtfertigung verlangen. Ich möchte aber trotzdem am Anfang kurz angeben, in welchem Rahmen die Frage nach dem Realismus bei Kant im vorliegenden Beitrag abgehandelt werden soll.

Den Rahmen bilden zwei einander entgegengesetzte Kantfiguren. Die erste kann folgendermaßen beschrieben werden: Kant als Begründer und Vertreter der Wirklichkeit des Denkens in der Philosophie. Die zweite wiederum lautet: Kant als endgültige Absage von jeder realistischen Ausrichtung in der Philosophie. Bei der ersten, hinsichtlich des Wirklichkeitsbezugs der Philosophie affirmativen Kantfigur, handelt es sich mehr oder weniger um die ‚schulphilosophische‘, traditionelle Kantfigur, die uns Kants Transzendentalphilosophie als eine stichhaltige Begründung der Wirklichkeit unseres Denkens und Handelns vorstellt. Die zweite, in ihrer sozusagen Reinform kann sie beim Kantverständnis von Quentin Meillassoux gefunden werden, stellt uns den Transzendentalismus Kants als eine Korrelationsphilosophie von Subjekt und Objekt vor, die es uns nicht zulässt, und zwar genau *wegen* dieses Korrelationverhältnisses, von einem wahren Wirklichkeitsbezug der Philosophie Kants zu sprechen.

Den zwei angeführten Kantfiguren wollen wir eine dritte entgegensetzen. Der vorliegende Text versucht nachzuweisen, dass es uns gerade Kants in ihrer sys-

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tematischen Absicht verstandene und entwickelte Philosophie, so wie sie in der dritten *Kritik* im Begriff der ästhetischen reflektierenden Urteilskraft letztlich zum Ausdruck kommt, möglich macht, den Standpunkt des Realismus in der Philosophie Kants zu behaupten und zu entwickeln. Unser Versuch gründet sich dabei auf drei Hypothesen. Wir gehen davon aus, erstens, dass es absolut gerechtfertigt ist, von einem Wirklichkeitsbezug der kantischen Transzendentalphilosophie zu reden. Gleichzeitig behaupten wir, zweitens, dass der Begriff der Wirklichkeit des menschlichen Denkens und Handelns in Kants Philosophie nicht dort zu finden, wo er meistens gesucht wird, und das heißt, in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*. Und drittens, ein wahrer Wirklichkeitsbezug des Denkens wird von Kant vielmehr erst im Rahmen der dritten *Kritik* auf den Begriff gebracht, und zwar innerhalb der Begriffsentwicklung der reflektierenden Urteilskraft.

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Bevor wir aber mit einer näheren Darstellung der von uns als ‚dritte Kantfigur‘ benannten Lesart Kants beginnen, soll in wenigstens groben Zügen die Grundannahme vorgestellt werden, die unser Verständnis der Philosophie Kants in Gänze, und damit auch deren Wirklichkeitsauffassung, leitet. Sie betrifft Kants berühmte-berühmte Unterscheidung von Phänomen und Noumenon, *Erscheinung* und *Ding an sich*.

Die *phänomenale*, von der gemeinsamen Tätigkeit zweier Erkenntnisvermögen, der Sinnlichkeit und des Verstandes konstituierte Vorstellungswirklichkeit, ist laut Kant die einzige *objektive* Wirklichkeit, die wir Menschen als endliche Vernunftwesen haben. Und sie ist überhaupt *alles* an Wirklichkeit, was wir Menschen haben. Aber diese Welt ist bei Kant dennoch nie wirklich ein Alles. Kant besteht nämlich, wie wir wissen, hartnäckig darauf, dass wir unsere phänomenale Welt nicht schon für *die* Welt, also für die Welt, wie diese *an sich* ist, halten dürfen. Zur konstituierten Welt, in der wir leben, gehört immer auch schon etwas, was aus ihr ausgeschlossen ist. Oder, mit anderen Worten, in ihr ist immer auch noch etwas einbeschlossen, was ihr nicht angehört, etwas Nichtkonstituiertes, um mit Kant zu sprechen, die *Welt an sich*. Wir können dieses Nichtkonstituierte, der Begriffsbildung der Lacanschen Psychoanalyse folgend, auch als ein mit der Konstitution der objektiven Wirklichkeit zusammenhängendes, aber auf sie irreduzibles *Reales* bezeichnen. Festzuhalten ist hier, dass dieses Reale nicht schon

vor der Konstitution der Wirklichkeit da ist, es meldet sich vielmehr gleichzeitig mit ihr, und zwar als das, was aus ihr subtrahiert ist. Etwas anders formuliert: Mit der phänomenalen Welt ist der Exzess der *anwesenden Abwesenheit* der Welt als *Dinges an sich*, einfacher gesagt, der *Welt selbst*, untrennbar verbunden. Die Wirklichkeit der phänomenalen Welt ist darin begründet, dass sie *nicht* die *Sache selbst* beziehungsweise die Welt an sich ist.

Dieser Exzess der Welt selbst, das heißt, ihre in der phänomenalen Erfahrungswelt *anwesende Abwesenheit*, muss in der phänomenalen Welt auf die eine oder die andere Weise immer schon mit-erscheinen und in ihrem Mit-Erscheinen mitreflektiert werden. Dieses Mit-Erscheinen und dieses Mit-Reflektieren ist, wenn nicht schon für die Existenz der phänomenalen Welt, dann aber ganz gewiss für ihre Wirklichkeit wesentlich. Gerade dieses reflektierte Mit-Erscheinen gewährleistet es, dass unsere phänomenale Welt, obwohl sie nicht schon für *die Welt selbst* gehalten werden kann, dennoch kein „blindes Spiel der Vorstellungen, d.i. weniger als ein Traum“, sondern eine wirkliche Welt ist. Die phänomenale Welt kann als eine wirkliche Welt nur dann fungieren, wenn unter ihren Elementen auch Elemente anwesend sind, von denen *die anwesende Abwesenheit* der *Welt an sich* sozusagen objektiviert, verkörpert wird.

Versuchen wir jetzt auf Grund des Gesagten unsere oben aufgestellte Behauptung, dass der Begriff der Wirklichkeit des menschlichen Denkens und Handelns von der Transzendentalphilosophie Kants nicht in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, sondern erst in der *Kritik der Urteilskraft* ausgearbeitet wird, genauer zu entwickeln und sie auch argumentativ zu begründen. Fangen wir mit Kants ersten *Kritik* an.

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Die Frage der Wirklichkeit der ersten *Kritik* Kants zu stellen bedeutet, die Antwort darauf im Rahmen von Kants Theorem der *Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen* zu suchen. Das Theorem wird in der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*

¹ Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, [KrV], A 113, in: Immanuel Kant, *Werkausgabe in 12 Bänden* [WA], herausgegeben von Wilhelm Weischedel, Bd. IV, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1999. Alle Angaben aus Kants Werken werden im Folgendem nach der WA in 12 Bänden gebracht.

als Antwort auf die erkenntnistheoretische Frage nach der „objektiven Wirklichkeit“ unserer Vorstellungen vorgestellt. Vier Merkmale sind für diese objektive Wirklichkeit wesentlich. *Erstens*, die vollständige Integration des Objekts in das Vorstellungsfeld; *zweitens*, die irreduzible Äußerlichkeit des Vorstellungsgegenstandes gegenüber der Vorstellung selbst; *drittens*, die Bestimmung der Vorstellung als Nahe-zu-Gleichzeitigkeit von Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit, genauer gesagt, als der minimalen, nichtigen Differenz zwischen Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit, auf die sich die Vorstellung bezieht; und *viertens* diese minimale Differenz als etwas, das subjektiv *entschieden* beziehungsweise gesetzt ist. Die Entscheidung, dass die Vorstellungswirklichkeit die Nahe-zu-Gleichzeitigkeit beider ist – der Vorstellung selbst und eines auf sie irreduziblen Außen der konstituierten Wirklichkeit – ist in dieser Wirklichkeit in Form der Affirmation einer zusätzlichen Differenz anwesend: Der Differenz zwischen den subjektiven und den objektiven Vorstellungen.

Die beiden ersten Merkmale sind miteinander untrennbar verbunden. Beginnen wir mit dem ersten. Das Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen setzt voraus, dass das Verhältnis von Vorstellung und Gegenstand gänzlich in das Vorstellungsfeld integriert ist.² Kant führt in § 14 der ersten *Kritik* gleichsam als Antwort auf seine im Brief an Marcus Hertz gestellte Frage zwei Möglichkeiten an, wie eine „synthetische Vorstellung und ihre Gegenstände zusammenreffen, sich aufeinander notwendigerweise beziehen und gleichsam einander begegnen können“: Entweder ermöglicht der Gegenstand die Vorstellung oder die Vorstellung macht allein den Gegenstand möglich.³ In seiner transzendentalen Reinform ist die Verinnerlichung des Gegenstandes im Rahmen des zweiten Verhältnistypus enthalten, also im Fall der Vorstellung, die den Gegenstand möglich macht. Der Gegenstand wird hier ausschließlich als vorgestellter Gegenstand aufgefasst, genauer gesagt, als das, was nur insoweit *ist*, als es *für* die Vorstellung *da ist*.

Die Bedingung der Möglichkeit des Erscheinungsgegenstandes, genauer, dessen, was ein Erscheinungsgegenstand *werden wird*, ist dessen irreduzible *Gegebenheit* in der Sinnlichkeit. Die Bedingung der Sinnlichkeit wird aber erst dann verwirk-

² Wir folgen hier der Interpretation von Béatrice Longuenesse in ihrem Werk *Kant et le pouvoir de juger*, PUF, Paris 1993, S. 7–14.

³ Vgl. *KrV*, B 125/A 92.

licht, wenn etwas, was in der sinnlichen Anschauung gegeben ist, durch Begriffe *als etwas* bestimmt wird, wenn es also zu Etwas wird, das, mit Kant gesprochen, „dieser Anschauung entspricht“.⁴ Etwas kann als Gegenstand nur dann gegeben werden, wenn das, was (zuerst) *gegeben* ist, was in der Rezeptivität der Sinnlichkeit durch Affektion empfangen wurde, (anschließend) auch *gedacht* wird. Dann also, wenn es in einer komplexen Verstandesoperation *als Gegenstand bestimmt* wird. In Rahmen dieser Operation, die ausschließlich innerhalb der Vorstellungsordnung verläuft, erhält der Gegenstand sein Grundmerkmal, das heißt, sein Entgegengesetzt-Sein, sein „dawider“. Der Gegenstand ist das, was, getrennt von der Erkenntnis, dieser stets und unüberwindbar *gegenübersteht*. Er ist jenes Etwas, dem die Erkenntnis, soll sie wirklich Erkenntnis sein, entsprechen muss; der Gegenstand ist das, in Anbetracht dessen die Erkenntnis eben so und nicht anders, notwendigerweise und allgemeingültig vorgehen muss.

Wir haben aber, wie Kant hervorhebt, außer unserer Erkenntnis nichts, was wir der Erkenntnis gegenüber als Punkt ihrer Entsprechung setzen könnten. Das Entgegengesetzt-Sein des Gegenstandes, seine nie anzueignende Äußerlichkeit, ist also etwas, was nur der *Immanenz* der Erkenntnis entstammen kann. Die Verstandesbestimmung von etwas *als* Etwas führt zwar einerseits zur gänzlichen Verinnerlichung des Gegenstandes in das Vorstellungsvermögen, aber andererseits liegt das Resultat dieser vollkommenen Vorstellungsverinnerlichung des Gegenstandes darin, dass die Vorstellung eben als reine Vorstellung, als Vorstellung, die nichts anderes als eine bloße Vorstellung ist, „aus sich selbst“⁵ herausgeht, also die Immanenz der Vorstellungsordnung überschreitet.

Sehen wir uns hier etwas näher Kants *Neubestimmung des Urteils* in seiner Erkenntniskritik an. Für Kants Urteilsbestimmung ist gewiss der Umstand von entscheidender Bedeutung, dass er die Verbindung der Vorstellungen im Urteil stets mit jenen X, Y und Z verbindet, auf die sich die Begriffsbedingung als auf ihr „letztes“ Subjekt bezieht. Kants Originalität liegt aber nicht einfachim Hinweis darauf, dass die Form sowohl des analytischen als auch des synthetischen Urteils immer schon ein Etwas = X voraussetzt, auf das sich die Prädikation, die Subordination der Begriffe im Urteil bezieht. Kants wirkliche Neuerung in der Erörterung des Urteils liegt darin, dass die Verbindung der Vorstellungen im Ur-

⁴ KrV, B 125/A 92.

⁵ KrV, B 242/A 197.

teil ihren Gegenstandsbezug eben dadurch erhält, dass – um nochmals Béatrice Longuenesse zu zitieren – „weder Begriffe noch das Objekt = X, auf das sie sich beziehen, unabhängig vom Beurteilungsakt oder vor ihm existieren“.⁶ Sowohl Vorstellungen als auch ihr Gegenstand fungieren also als innere Momente des Beurteilungsaktes.

Aus dem ersten Merkmal des Kant'schen Theorems der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen, das heißt der vollständigen Integrierung des Objekts in das Vorstellungsfeld, ergibt sich auch sein zweites Merkmal, dass nämlich die vollständig subjektiv integrierte Vorstellung sich selbst auch schon transzendiert und dem Gegenstand, genauer, seiner Gegenständlichkeit, als Moment einer Äußerlichkeit begegnet, die von der Vorstellungsordnung nie angeeignet werden kann. Nur die Vorstellung, die eine „bloße Vorstellung“ ist, die also nicht schon mit der vorgestellten *Sache selbst* zusammenfällt, hat einen von ihr unterschiedenen Gegenstand.

Die beiden erste Merkmale der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen machen es möglich, das *dritte Merkmal* der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen näher zu bestimmen. Und zwar: Die Einschreibung des Gegenstandes in das Vorstellungsfeld, durch die der Gegenstand zugleich in seiner unüberwindbaren Äußerlichkeit diesem Feld gegenüber erscheint, hat eine *Spaltung inmitten des Feldes der phänomenalen Wirklichkeit* zur Folge. Das dritte Merkmal der Gegenständlichkeit der Erkenntnis liegt darin, dass die Vorstellungswirklichkeit von ihr als ein ununterscheidbares *Zugleich beider Momente*, oder auch, als ihre minimale, sozusagen *nichtige Differenz* aufgebaut wird: sie ist in sich in die Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und die Wirklichkeit selbst gespalten, die etwas von der Vorstellung stets Verschiedenes und ihr Äußerliches ist.

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Unsere Erklärung des dritten Merkmals der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen beginnen wir mit der folgenden Frage: Sollte die kritische Begründung der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen nicht als eine Widerlegung der entweder spontanen oder reflektierten Skepsis gegenüber dem Wirklichkeitskern unserer Vorstellungswirklichkeit verstanden werden? Als eine für alle Male gegebene beruhigende Antwort auf das ängstliche Gefühl, das wir als empirische Individuen empfinden können – dass nämlich die Welt, in der wir le-

⁶ Béatrice Longuenesse, a. a. O., S. 127.

ben, bloß imaginär, virtuell ist? Mehr noch, sollten wir nicht gerade in diesem Gefühl die von uns gesuchte *unmittelbare Spur* der anwesenden Abwesenheit der realen *Sache selbst* sehen, die für die Vorstellungswirklichkeit konstitutiv ist? Und als Antwort auf dieses spontane Gefühl wäre dann das Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen jenes, was wir suchen: eine *mittelbare Spur* dieses subtrahierten Realen.

Das Verhältnis des Gegenständlichkeitstheorems der Vorstellungen zu unserer spontanen skeptischen Einstellung der Vorstellungswirklichkeit ist aber unseres Erachtens weit verwickelter, als dies aus der obigen Beschreibung folgen könnte. Es kann zwar gesagt werden, dass vom Gegenständlichkeitstheorem die *spontane Skepsis* der Wirklichkeit der Vorstellungen gegenüber zurückgewiesen wird. Es sollte aber nicht übersehen werden, dass dabei die skeptische Haltung selbst gerade *nicht zurückgewiesen* wird. Oben stellten wir fest, dass die phänomenale Wirklichkeit in die Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und die Wirklichkeit selbst aufgespalten, dass sie als ein ununterscheidbares *Zugleich beider Momente* aufgebaut ist. Jetzt kann hinzugefügt werden, dass dieses *Zugleich* in Form eines dauernd wirkenden Zweifels an der Wirklichkeit zum Vorschein kommt, das heißt, in Form einer ständigen Prüfung und Korrektur dessen, was denn die „wahre“ Wirklichkeit der phänomenalen Wirklichkeit eigentlich sei. Gerade vom Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen wird der Zweifel an der Wirklichkeit der phänomenalen Wirklichkeit als die *einzig mögliche realistische Haltung* gesetzt. Die Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen bringt das skeptische Verhältnis zur Wirklichkeit gleichsam auf seinen Begriff. Die Skepsis wird nämlich als eine nichtreflektierte, spontane Haltung aufgehoben und in ein kritisch begründetes und verifiziertes transzendentes Prinzip *der Wirklichkeit selbst* umgewandelt.

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Erst durch das Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen wird somit eigentlich die Behauptung möglich, dass die Subtraktion der realen *Sache selbst*, auf der die konstituierte Wirklichkeit aufgebaut ist, im spontanen Gefühl zum Vorschein kommt, dass die Vorstellungswelt bloß imaginär ist. Vom Standpunkt der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen aus erscheint das unreflektierte, spontane Gefühl der imaginären Verfasstheit der Welt nur als *Form der Imaginarisierung* jener realistischen Haltung, jenes gegenstandskonstitutiven Zweifels an der Wirklichkeit unserer Vorstellungswirklichkeit, der ihr wahrer Wirklichkeitsgrundsatz ist. Von diesem Grundsatz wird festgesetzt,

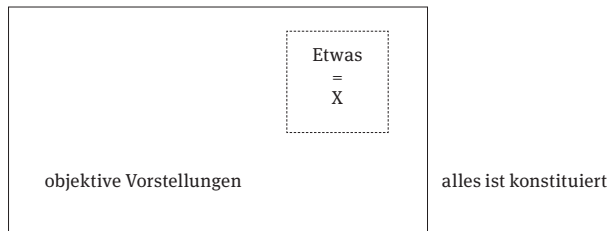
dass die Wirklichkeit nur im Modus der Spaltung, als *ständige Unterscheidung* der Vorstellungswirklichkeit in die Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit einerseits und die Wirklichkeit selbst andererseits existiert. Von der Logik der subjektiven Wirklichkeitskonstitution aus gesehen verfügen wir nur dann über ein adäquates „Wirklichkeitsgefühl“, wenn wir unsere Wirklichkeit als einen Bildschirm der Vorstellungen verstehen, von denen die Wirklichkeit bloß vorgezeigt wird.

Kants Revolution in der Denkweise wandelt unser „Wirklichkeitsgefühl“ also in eine paradoxe Haltung um. Es gründet nämlich auf dem Bewusstsein, dass unsere Vorstellungen der Welt nicht schon die Welt selbst, sondern *bloße Vorstellungen* sind, und dass sie *eben deswegen* als Vorstellungen gelten können, in *denen wir außerhalb uns selbst, in der Welt*, auf die sich diese Vorstellungen beziehen, existieren. Als empirische Individuen machen wir immer einen Abstand zu unserer Vorstellungswirklichkeit geltend, und zwar eben in dem Maße, in dem wir „Realisten“, und nicht nur „Schwärmer“ sind. Wir sind nur dann fest in der Wirklichkeit verankerte Realisten, wenn wir spontan nach der ungeschriebenen Regel handeln, dass unsere Wirklichkeitsvorstellungen nie auch schon die Wirklichkeit selbst sind, dass auch jene Vorstellungen, mit denen wir möglichst weit „außerhalb“ unserer selbst, in der Welt sind, durch einen unüberbrückbaren Abstand dieser Welt gegenüber gekennzeichnet sind. Kurz: Aus dem kritischen Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen ergibt sich, *dass die phänomenale Wirklichkeit nie das ist, als was sie sich in der Erscheinung zeigt, und dass sie zugleich nichts Anderes als das ist, als was sie sich in der Erscheinung zeigt.*

Der Zweifel an der Wirklichkeit der Vorstellungswelt, der sich im Akt einer unaufhörlichen Unterscheidung zwischen der Vorstellung und ihrer Wirklichkeit selbst äußert, ist also die in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit einzig mögliche realistische Haltung. Die unaufhörliche Suche nach der Wirklichkeit in deren Vorstellungen ist keineswegs ein Anzeichen dafür, dass in der phänomenalen Wirklichkeit etwas fehlt. Das Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen und der von ihm generierte Zweifel an die Vorstellungswirklichkeit ist nicht die Spur, die darauf hinweisen würde, dass für unsere Wirklichkeit die Subtraktion der *Sache selbst*, des Realen, konstitutiv ist. Eher kann gesagt werden, dass in dieser Suche die ganze Wirklichkeit der konstituierten Wirklichkeit anwesend ist. Wo könnte dann in dem in sich gespaltenen Einen, das durch das Theorem

der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen hervorgebracht wird, die Spur des subtrahierten Realen gefunden werden?

Fangen wir damit an, dass mit der realistischen Haltung des Zweifels an der Wirklichkeit der Vorstellungswirklichkeit Probleme verbunden sind. Das Theorem der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen, durch das die phänomenale Wirklichkeit zu einem in sich gespaltenen Einem beziehungsweise zur Gleichzeitigkeit zweier Momente wird, kann mit folgender Skizze dargestellt werden: Die Skizze zeigt die konstituierte Wirklichkeit, genauer gesagt, sie zeigt uns, dass die Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellung beziehungsweise die Wirklichkeit der



Vorstellungswirklichkeit etwas dem Vorstellungsgegenstand beziehungsweise der Vorstellungswirklichkeit selbst Äußerliches, gleichsam ‚ganz Anderes‘ ist. Die Skizze zeigt uns im Rechteck Vorstellungen, die Vorstellungen von etwas sind, was selbst nicht länger eine bloße Vorstellung ist. Sie zeigt uns Vorstellungen, die sich auf ein „Etwas = X“ beziehen, ein Etwas, das irgendwo außerhalb ihrer da und mit Bezug auf sie heterogen ist. Bei diesem „= X“ geht es freilich um Kants transzendentes Objekt, um jenen „Gegenstand überhaupt“, der als das notwendige Korrelat jedes gesetzmäßig vereinheitlichten und auf der transzendentalen Apperzeption begründeten Vorstellungszusammenhangs erscheint.⁷

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Kurz: die Skizze zeigt uns *objektive Vorstellungen*, jene Vorstellungen, die sich auf eine Wirklichkeit außerhalb ihrer selbst beziehen. Diese Beziehung der Vorstellungen auf die außerhalb ihrer liegenden Objekte wird durch den gestrichelten rechteckigen Ausschnitt angedeutet: es sieht so aus, als ob sich die Vorstellungen durch diesen Ausschnitt auf den realen Kern der phänomenalen Wirklichkeit beziehen würden. Etwas = X, das transzendente Objekt als den

⁷ KrV, A 250/1, Anm.

„Gegenstand überhaupt“ der objektiven Vorstellung beziehungsweise die Wirklichkeit der Vorstellungswirklichkeit, ahnen wir auf der Skizze gleichsam *hinter* dem ausgeschnittenen Rechteck. Das ausgeschnittene Rechteck selbst können wir nicht sehen, zumindest vorerst nicht.

Wir sind, wie es scheint, an einem Punkt angelangt, der von wesentlicher Bedeutung für unsere Erörterung ist: Ist nicht gerade das transzendente Objekt – das Objekt, das sich stets einer Erkenntnisbestimmung entzieht und immer ein unerreichbares $Etwas = X$ bleibt, obwohl es nichts Anderes als ein Produkt der geregelten, gesetzmäßigen Tätigkeit der Erkenntnisvermögen ist – als der Wirklichkeitskern der Vorstellungswirklichkeit selbst die mehr als offensichtliche Spur des von der konstituierten Wirklichkeit subtrahierten Realen? Stellen die objektiven Vorstellungen, als Vorstellungen der Wirklichkeit, die auf dem Ausschluss des Kerns der Wirklichkeit, auf die sie sich beziehen, aufgebaut sind, nicht auch schon die Spur des subtrahierten Realen dar?

Die Antwort auf diese Frage ist doppelt, negativ und affirmativ zugleich. Die Möglichkeit einer doppelten Antwort weist auch darauf hin, dass mit der realistischen Haltung einer unaufhörlichen Unterscheidung zwischen der Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und der Wirklichkeit selbst, wie bereits erwähnt, Probleme verbunden sind. Schauen wir uns nun zunächst die negative Antwort an.

Wir müssen hier auf zweierlei achten. Die Folge der Vereinheitlichung des sinnlich Mannigfaltigen durch den Verstand ist zwar das Gegenstandsverhältnis der Vorstellung, das heißt, die Beziehung der Vorstellung auf einen Gegenstand als $Etwas\ überhaupt = X$, was „der Erkenntnis korrespondier[t], mithin auch davon unterschieden“⁸ ist. Wir können zwar sagen, dass das transzendente Objekt durch die objektiven Vorstellungen in der Immanenz des Vorstellungsfeldes als das artikuliert wird, was den sinnlichen Gegebenheiten erst ihren Gegenstandscharakter verleiht und sich zugleich jeder Erkenntnisbestimmung entzieht. Der „Plan der Immanenz“ der objektiven Vorstellungen ist aber trotzdem noch nicht jener Ort, an dem sich in die phänomenale Wirklichkeit die für sie konstitutive Subtraktion des Realen einschreiben würde. Unsere Behauptung wird zunächst schon vom Status des transzendenten Objekts selbst unterstützt. Das transzendente Objekt ist in sich selbst vollkommen inhaltsleer, es

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⁸ KrV, A 104.

ist der Punkt eines prädikatslosen Selben, das als überschüssiges Produkt eines begrifflich geordneten Vorstellungszusammenhangs erscheint. Obwohl es als etwas überhaupt = *X gedacht* werden kann, existiert das transzendente Objekt nur in Form des fortwährend erneuerten Vereinheitlichungsaktes des sinnlich Mannigfaltigen durch den Verstand: das transzendente Objekt lässt sich, wie bereits gesagt, „nicht von den sinnlichen Datis absondern“, es ist „kein Gegenstand der Erkenntnis an sich selbst, sondern nur die Vorstellung der Erscheinungen, unter dem Begriffe eines Gegenstandes überhaupt, der durch das Mannigfaltige derselben bestimmbar ist“.⁹ Mit anderen Worten, obwohl es Etwas = *X* ist, was der Definition nach unbestimmt bleibt, ist es seinem Wesen nach das, was durch und durch *bestimmbar* ist.¹⁰ Und eben als solches ist das transzendente Objekt auch das Korrelat der transzendentalen Apperzeption. Es ist kein Unerkennbares, vielmehr ist es gleichsam die Quintessenz des Erkennbaren, das, was stets der *Erkenntnis* zuge gedacht ist. Es entzieht sich aber immer wieder der Erkenntnisbestimmung, bleibt ihr äußerlich.

Aus diesem Grund sollten wir unsere vorige Aussage dahingehend präzisieren, dass wir der auf S. 172 Skizze dargestellten hinter dem ausgeschnittenen Rechteck die Wirklichkeit selbst der Vorstellungswirklichkeit sehen. Besser wäre es zu sagen, dass in der Skizze genau genommen ein unaufhörliches Entziehen der Wirklichkeit zu sehen ist. Die Skizze zeigt in der Tat, dass der harte Wirklichkeitskern = *X*, der *innerhalb* der konstituierten Wirklichkeit vom transzendentalen Objekt verkörpert wird, nur als Leerstelle seines unaufhörlichen Entzugs anwesend ist. Aber dieser vom geregelten Zusammenhang der objektiven Vorstellungen untrennbare Entzug der Wirklichkeit wird innerhalb des objektiven Vorstellungszusammenhangs selbst nicht thematisiert. Innerhalb dieses Zusammenhangs zählt nur das unaufhörliche Flechten eines kohärenten und konsistenten Netzes der objektiven Vorstellungen. Das Ausbleiben des Wirklichkeitskerns des transzendentalen Objekts wirkt in der Welt des Objektiven nur noch in der gemilderten Form einer grundsätzlichen Unerreichbarkeit der ganzen Wirklichkeit: diese ist immer nur teilweise, Stück für Stück und nie als Ganzes erreichbar. Mit anderen Worten, das transzendente Objekt hat zwar die Rolle eines *inneren Außen* der objektiven Vorstellungswirklichkeit inne, es wird aber als ein solches inneres Außen im kohärenten und konsistenten

⁹ *KrV*, A 250/1, Anm.

¹⁰ Vgl. Jocelyn Benoist, *Kant et les licites de la synthèse. Le sujet sensible*, PUF, Paris 1996, S. 65.

Zusammenhang der objektiven Vorstellungen gerade nicht reflektiert, sondern spielt darin nur noch die Rolle einer immer wieder entgleitenden, unerreichbaren bloßen Äußerlichkeit.

Eben darin liegt auch das Problem der realistischen Haltung der unaufhörlichen Unterscheidung zwischen der Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und der Wirklichkeit selbst: weil das transzendente Objekt als Kern dieser Wirklichkeit sich unaufhörlich entzieht, entzieht sich auch der realistischen Haltung ihr realistischer Begründungsboden. Die realistische Haltung des Zweifels an die Vorstellungswirklichkeit sieht sich der Gefahr ausgesetzt, ihren realistischen Charakter zu verlieren und als eine Relativierung von Alles und Allem zu wirken.

Alles bisher Gesagte zeugt davon, dass unser grundlegender Ausgangspunkt, dass nämlich die Logik der subjektiven Wirklichkeitskonstitution auf der Subtraktion des Realen aufgebaut ist, eine bloße Behauptung bleibt. In der konstituierten Wirklichkeit, genauer gesagt, im transzendentalen Objekt als ihrem notwendigen Zusatz, lässt sich die Anwesenheit beziehungsweise die Spur des subtrahierten Realen eben nicht bestimmen, wie wir es für einen Augenblick lang hoffen konnten. Ja, statt mit der Frage, wo auf der Ebene der Gegenstandsvorstellung eine Spur des subtrahierten Realen zu finden wäre, sehen wir uns mit der Frage konfrontiert, wo in der konstituierten Vorstellungswirklichkeit die Spur des sich entziehenden Wirklichkeitskerns selbst zu finden wäre. Sind wir also mit unserer Suche nach den Spuren des subtrahierten Realen in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit überhaupt auf dem richtigen Weg? Wie sollen wir also fortfahren? Machen wir zunächst einen Schritt zurück. Sehen wir uns etwas genauer das an, was wir mit dem Ausdruck „realistische Haltung“ beziehungsweise „Wirklichkeitsgefühl“ bezeichnet haben. Worauf gründet sich eigentlich diese Haltung? Auf welche Weise ist in ihr der harte Wirklichkeitskern der Wirklichkeit anwesend? Unsere These ist, dass die Antwort auf diese Frage auch die zweite, diesmal *affirmative Beantwortungsmöglichkeit* der oben gestellten Frage beinhaltet, ob die objektiven Vorstellungen, die das transzendente Objekt als ein Moment der ausgeschlossenen Wirklichkeit mit sich führen, nicht auch eine Evokation des subtrahierten Realen seien.

Die objektiven Vorstellungen sind zwar eine adäquate Darstellung des Gegenstandsverhältnisses der Vorstellungen. In ihnen kommt auf eine entsprechende Weise der Sachverhalt zum Ausdruck, dass dieses Gegenstandsverhältnis, ver-

einfach gesagt, im Grunde nichts anderes als ein Akt der Verstandesbestimmung des sinnlichen Materials ist, in dem sich inmitten der gegenständlich bestimmten sinnlichen Gegebenheiten von ihnen zugleich ein transzendentes Objekt abtrennt, jenes etwas = X, das als ein äußerer, „sachlicher“ Bezugspunkt der gegenständlich bestimmten sinnlichen Gegebenheiten fungiert. Dieses innere Außen der Gegenständlichkeit selbst hat aber für die objektiven Vorstellungen, wie schon erwähnt, nur den Status von etwas inne, was ihnen schlichtweg äußerlich, für sie unerreichbar ist. Wir können also nicht anders, als aus diesem Sachverhalt zu folgern, dass das dritte Merkmal des Gegenständlichkeitstheorems – das Merkmal nämlich, dass die Vorstellungswirklichkeit bloß in der Form der Spaltung zwischen der Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und der Wirklichkeit selbst existiert – nicht von den objektiven Vorstellungen selbst verwirklicht wird. Die objektiven Vorstellungen sind weder Ort noch Generator der realistischen Einstellung, die von der Forderung des Gegenständlichkeitstheorems nach einer unaufhörlichen Unterscheidung zwischen der Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und der Wirklichkeit selbst impliziert wird. Über diese Haltung, die den Einfall des Nicht-Vorstellungsmäßigen in die Vorstellungswirklichkeit darstellt, in dem innerhalb der Vorstellungswirklichkeit der „harte Kern“ ihrer Wirklichkeit, die anwesende Abwesenheit der realen *Sache selbst* für einen Augenblick zu Worte kommt, wird nicht bloß im Rahmen der Verstandesbestimmung der Sinnlichkeit entschieden.

Vorausgreifend gesagt, über diese Haltung – und das ist das *vierte Merkmal* der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellungen – wird an einem anderen Ort entschieden, und zwar im *Prozess der Selbstkritik der Vernunft*, von dem das geschlossene Feld des bloß auf sich selbst begrenzten reinen Denkens durchbrochen wird. In der konstituierten Wirklichkeit selbst wiederum ist diese Haltung in einer den Unterschied von Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit sozusagen „überdeterminierenden“ Unterscheidung enthalten. Obwohl wir als endliche Vernunftwesen keine andere als die aus den Gegenstandsvorstellungen „hergestellte“ Vorstellungswirklichkeit haben, haben wir es in dieser einzigen – weil objektiven – Wirklichkeit dennoch fortwährend mit der Unterscheidung von zwei Arten der Vorstellung zu tun. Es handelt sich, erstens, entweder um Vorstellungen, in denen wir als empirische Individuen, etwas vereinfacht gesagt, tatsächlich in einer *gegenständlichen Form* die Außenwelt und uns selbst in dieser Welt haben. Und es handelt sich, zweitens, um Vorstellungen, in de-

nen wir eben keine konstituierte Wirklichkeit *haben*, also um Vorstellungen, von denen die Welt nicht objektiviert wird und die bloß etwas vom Zustand unserer erkennenden Subjektivität aussagen. Die Subjektivität hat in ihnen zwar sich selbst, wobei aber der objektive oder intersubjektive Wert dieses „Selbst“ und dieses „Habens“ minimal, mehr oder weniger eingeklammert ist. Kurz, die vom Gegenständlichkeitstheorem implizierte Unterscheidung zwischen der Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und der Wirklichkeit selbst erscheint in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit in Form der Unterscheidung zwischen *objektiven und subjektiven Vorstellungen*. Und erst vermittelt dieser zusätzlichen Unterscheidung, so unserer These, kann jene realistische Haltung aufgebaut werden, in der inmitten der Vorstellungswirklichkeit für einen Augenblick lang das zum Vorschein kommen, was sich den objektiven Vorstellungen unaufhörlich entzieht, also der harte Wirklichkeitskern der Vorstellungswirklichkeit selbst.

Die objektiven Vorstellungen werden in Kants Philosophie nicht nur erstens durch das Kriterium der Kohärenz und Konsistenz der Verbindungen bestimmt,¹¹ und zweitens dadurch, dass ihre Gegenständlichkeit innerhalb des Vorstellungsfeldes in Form des transzendentalen Objekts als etwas den Vorstellungen radikal Äußeres hervorgebracht wird.¹² Für die erkenntniskritische Bestimmung der objektiven Vorstellungen ist nicht minder wesentlich, dass sie keine *bloße Phantasterei*, kein bloßes „subjektive[s] Spiel meiner Einbildungen“¹³

¹¹ „Wenn wir untersuchen, was denn die *Beziehung auf einen Gegenstand* unseren Vorstellungen für eine neue Beschaffenheit gebe, und welches die Dignität sei, die sie dadurch erhalten, so finden wir, daß sie nichts weiter tue, als die Verbindung der Vorstellungen auf eine gewisse Art notwendig zu machen, und sie einer Regel zu unterwerfen; daß umgekehrt nur dadurch, daß eine gewisse Ordnung in dem Zeitverhältnisse unserer Vorstellungen notwendig ist, ihnen objektive Bedeutung erteilt wird.“ *KrV*, B 243/4/A 198/9.

¹² Die durch das Gegenständlichkeitstheorem der Vorstellungen bewirkte Spaltung der Vorstellungswirklichkeit in die Vorstellung der Wirklichkeit und die Wirklichkeit selbst ist u. E. keine Reproduktion des klassischen Dualismus von Erscheinung und Wirklichkeit, von Imaginären und Realem. Dieser Dualismus wird in Kants Erkenntnistheorie vielmehr durch drei Instanzen ersetzt: die Vorstellungswirklichkeit ist insoweit objektiv, als sie in sich in das Imaginäre, die Vorstellungswirklichkeit, und das Symbolische, die konstituierte Wirklichkeit selbst verdoppelt ist, wobei dieses ununterscheidbare Zwei der symbolisch-imaginären Wirklichkeit gemeinsam, gleichsam als Eines, der dritten Instanz, der subtrahierten *Sache selbst*, dem Realen, entgegengesetzt ist. Diese Dreiergruppe fungiert bei Kant natürlich nur implizit.

¹³ *KrV* B 247/A 201. *La folie de la raison pure. Kant lecteur de Swedenborg*, Vrin, Paris 1990, S. 93, 207.

sind. Objektive Vorstellungen stehen nicht nur unter der Bedingung der Äußerlichkeit ihres Gegenstandes, sie stehen außerdem auch unter einer zweiten Bedingung – dass nämlich aus der objektiven Vorstellungswelt auch jene Vorstellungen ausgeschlossen sind, die *bloß subjektiv* sind. Das sind, etwas vereinfachend gesagt, alle jene Vorstellungen, die eine ungesetzmäßig zusammenhängende Vorstellungswelt, also, strenggenommen, eine Nicht-Welt bilden. Sie reichen bei Kant in einem breit gespannten Bogen von Wahrnehmungsurteilen über Irrtümer, Blendwerke, Gefühle und Träume bis zu Wahn und Halluzinationen, umfassen aber auch metaphysische, die Erfahrung transzendierende Spekulationen. Die Nicht-Welt der Kantischen subjektiven Vorstellungen ist komplex: zu ihr gehört sowohl der Geisterseher Swedenborg als auch, zumindest im Prinzip, der Metaphysiker Leibniz. Auf ihrer untersten Stufe befinden sich subjektive Vorstellungen, die durch die zufällige Beschaffenheit des Erkenntnisapparates des jeweiligen Einzelnen und seines spezifischen Gegenstandes bestimmt sind, während auf ihrer obersten Stufe jene subjektiven Vorstellungen stehen, die eine Fetischisierung des reinen Denkverfahrens zu etwas Gegenständlichem vorstellen, also zum Bereich der transzendentalen Illusion und der transzendentalen Dialektik gehören. Für alle diese Vorstellungen gilt, dass sie als bloß subjektive Vorstellungen auf verschiedene Weisen aus der objektiven Wirklichkeit ausgeschlossen sind: auf der technisch-pragmatischen Ebene der ‚Lebenswelt‘ werden die subjektiven Vorstellungen an ihrem Rand zwar noch irgendwie geduldet, während sie im Bereich des wissenschaftlichen Wissens keinen Platz mehr haben. Kurz: die Unterscheidung zwischen objektiven und subjektiven Vorstellungen erfolgt im Modus des Ausschlusses der subjektiven Vorstellungen aus der Sphäre der Objektivität.

Auf den ersten Blick kann es zwar scheinen, dass der Ausschluss der subjektiven Vorstellungen innerhalb der konstituierten Wirklichkeit auf die gleiche Weise wirkt wie die Entziehung des transzendentalen Objekts aus ihr, dass also der Sachverhalt, dass die subjektiven Vorstellungen aus der konstituierten Wirklichkeit ausgeschlossen sind, für sie selbst mehr oder weniger bedeutungslos ist. Innerhalb des Feldes des Objektiven scheint nur die Frage vom Belang zu sein, ob der Gegenstand in der sinnlichen Anschauung gegeben ist oder nicht. Aber beim Versuch, die Bedeutung der Unterscheidung von objektiven und subjektiven Vorstellungen zu bestimmen, gilt es auch, Folgendes zu berücksichtigen: Das transzendente Objekt ist ein Produkt, fast könnte man sagen, ein Nebenprodukt der erfolgreichen, im Zusammenspiel von Verstand

und Sinnlichkeit erwirkten Konstruktion des Erscheinungsgegenstandes. Es bleibt dem Feld der Gegenstandsvorstellungen, wie bereits gesagt, stets äußerlich, es ist etwas, das dieses Feld fortwährend weiter vor sich herschiebt. Kurz: innerhalb des Gegenständlichkeitsfeldes ist die Wirkung seiner Äußerlichkeit minimal. Im Gegensatz dazu ist der Ausschluss der subjektiven Vorstellungen aus dem Gegenständlichkeitsfeld die konstitutive Bedingung der objektiven Vorstellungen, ähnlich wie der Ausschluss der *Sache selbst* aus dem phänomenalen Feld konstitutiv für dieses Feld ist. Die Wirkung des Ausschlusses und der ausgeschlossenen subjektiven Vorstellungen ist, mit anderen Worten, *innerhalb* der objektiven Vorstellungen maximal: subjektive Vorstellungen sind aus dem Feld der objektiven Vorstellungen nicht einfach ausgeschlossen, vielmehr werden objektive Vorstellungen durch den Ausschluss der subjektiven erst hervorgebracht. Die objektive Vorstellungswirklichkeit kann sich als objektiv nur mit der ausgeschlossenen subjektiven Vorstellung innerhalb ihrer selbst behaupten. Hinzuzufügen wäre noch, dass der Ausschluss der subjektiven Vorstellungen aus dem Feld der objektiven auch für die subjektiven konstitutiv ist.

Mit dem Problem der ausgeschlossenen subjektiven Vorstellungen werden wir uns weiter unten beschäftigen, zuerst wollen wir uns aber die subjektiven Vorstellungen in der Transzendentalphilosophie ein wenig ausführlicher ansehen. Eine Vereinfachung in Kauf nehmend wollen wir hier die komplexe Welt der subjektiven Vorstellungen mit Bezug auf ihre Rolle in der konstituierten, objektiven Wirklichkeit in zwei große Gruppen einteilen. Zu der ersten gehören, um auf dem Gebiet der *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* zu bleiben, die Vorstellungen, die durch die jeweilige Erkenntnisbeschaffenheit der empirischen Subjektivität und die jeweilige empirische Beschaffenheit des Erkenntnisgegenstandes oder Sachzustandes bestimmt werden. Von dieser Art sind Wahrnehmungsurteile wie etwa, um die bekannten Beispiele aus den *Prolegomena*, anzuführen, Urteile „dass das Zimmer warm, der Zucker süß, der Wermuth widrig sei“.¹⁴ Diese Urteile haben eine bloß subjektive Gültigkeit, weil und insofern die Wahrnehmungen in ihnen nur im augenblicklichen Zustand des Wahrnehmenden und seiner Wahrnehmung miteinander verbunden sind, und nicht so, wie sie im Objekt verbunden sind. Sie gelten jeweils nur im Verhältnis zu ihrem Träger, und nicht im Verhältnis zum Objekt, also im Allgemeinen. Und ihr Träger verlangt auch nicht immer, dass sein Urteil mit dem Urteil aller übereinstimmen

¹⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena*, a. a. O., A 80, S. 91.

muss. Einige Wahrnehmungsurteile können sich zwar in Erfahrungsurteile mit einer notwendigen Allgemeingültigkeit umgestalten, es gibt aber auch solche, die sich in objektive Aussagen nicht umgestalten lassen, weil sie bloß die mit einer empirischen Gegebenheit verbundenen idiosynkratischen individuellen Gefühle betreffen.¹⁵

Diese subjektiven Vorstellungen tragen aber noch ein Merkmal an sich. Sie sind etwas, was der empirischen Subjektivität irgendwie geschieht, sind das Resultat einer außer- und innerpsychischen kausalen Kette, in der die Individualität mit ihren Vorstellungen in letzter Instanz bloß als Objekt anwesend ist. Obwohl die Vorstellungen etwas bloß Subjektives sind, sind sie in Wirklichkeit durch und durch objektiv, denn sie sind zusammen mit der empirischen Subjektivität als ihrem Träger etwas, das ohne freien Willen hervorgebracht wurde. Die subjektiven Vorstellungen der ersten Gruppe lassen sich, zusammengefasst gesagt, als *objektiv subjektive*, das heißt als fast-objektive Vorstellungen bestimmen: als Vorstellungen, die entweder eine Vorstufe objektiver Vorstellungen sind oder am Rande des Objektivitätsbereichs existieren.

Die subjektiven Vorstellungen können aber in der Transzendentalphilosophie auch in einer durchaus anderen Bedeutung auftreten. Mit dieser anderen Bedeutung meinen wir hier weniger den Bereich der praktischen Philosophie und die Idee der Freiheit, die zu ihrer objektiven praktischen Wirklichkeit im jeweils individuellen moralischen Handeln kommt, als vielmehr Kants dritte *Kritik*. Diese setzt sich nämlich mit einem Vorstellungstyp auseinander, für den eine Wende im intentionalen Bezug der Vorstellung charakteristisch ist: die Vorstellung wird nicht länger durch ihre Beziehung auf den Gegenstand, sondern nur noch durch ihre *Beziehung auf das Subjekt* bestimmt. Die *Kritik der Urteilskraft* erörtert die Vorstellung in ihrer bloß subjektiven Dimension, in der „die Vorstellung gänzlich auf das Subjekt“ bezogen wird und „zu gar keinem Erkenntnis [dient], auch nicht zu demjenigen, wodurch sich das Subjekt selbst erkennt“.¹⁶

¹⁵ In der ersten *Kritik* wird somit der Bereich der Moralität aus der Transzendentalphilosophie ausgeschlossen: Die moralischen Grundbegriffe, wie etwa der Begriff der Pflicht, sind zwar apriorische Erkenntnisse, werden aber notwendigerweise von Begriffen, „der Lust und Unlust, der Begierden und Neigungen“ begleitet, die empirischen Ursprungs sind, und als solche keinen Platz in dem Entwurf der Kritik der reinen Vernunft haben. Vgl. *KrV*, B29/A 15.

¹⁶ *KU*, B/A 4 und 9.

Diese bloß subjektive beziehungsweise ästhetische, von keiner Erkenntnisabsicht geleitete Dimension der Vorstellung¹⁷, tritt in Form des *Gefühls der Lust und Unlust* auf, das den Bestimmungsgrund der *reflektierenden Urteilskraft* bildet.

Was die bloß subjektiven, sich im Gefühl *der Lust und Unlust* manifestierenden Vorstellungen auszeichnet, ist der Sachverhalt, dass sie stets auch mit der Forderung auftreten, Vorstellungen von etwas zu sein, was *für alle* gelten soll. Sie treten als allgemeingültige Vorstellungen auf, als Vorstellungen einer gemeinsam geteilten Welt beziehungsweise einer „objektiven“ Wirklichkeit, obwohl es sich nicht länger um die objektive Wirklichkeit der Verstandesbestimmung handelt. Kant arbeitet in der dritten *Kritik* den Begriff einer subjektiven Vorstellung aus, die nicht deshalb subjektiv ist, weil sie sich irgendwo am Rande der Erkenntnisobjektivität befinden oder als eine bloß individuelle empirische Vorstellung sogar auf die Welt der objektiven Wirklichkeit verzichten würde. Es geht vielmehr um eine subjektive Vorstellung, die als Vorstellung einer empirischen Subjektivität unmittelbar auch schon die Vorstellung einer *intersubjektiv gültigen Wirklichkeit* ist. Kurz: von den subjektiven Vorstellungen der dritten *Kritik* wird festgesetzt, dass in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit *nicht alles objektiv konstituiert ist*, trotzdem aber mit der Forderung nach einer Gültigkeit für alle auftreten kann.

Es scheint also, dass wir schließlich doch eine Antwort auf die Frage geben können, wo in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit eine Spur von der anwesenden Abwesenheit des von ihr subtrahierten Realen gefunden werden könnte. Dass die phänomenale Wirklichkeit auf der Subtraktion des Realen aufgebaut ist, lässt sich aufgrund der Rolle behaupten, die in ihr von den in der dritten *Kritik* konzeptualisierten bloß subjektiven Vorstellungen gespielt wird – wir wollen sie nun als *subjektiv objektive* Vorstellungen bezeichnen. Mit den subjektiv objektiven Vorstellungen ist in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit die Forderung anwesend, dass nicht alles konstituiert ist. Insoweit kann gesagt werden, dass

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¹⁷ „Was an der Vorstellung eines Objekts bloß subjektiv ist, d.i. ihre Beziehung auf das Subjekt, nicht auf den Gegenstand ausmacht, ist die ästhetische Beschaffenheit derselben“ (*KU*, 1. Einleitung, VII, B XLIII). „Man nennt aber die Fähigkeit, Lust oder Unlust bei einer Vorstellung zu haben, darum *Gefühl*, weil beides das *bloß Subjektive* im Verhältnisse unserer Vorstellung, und gar keine Beziehung auf ein Objekt zum möglichen Erkenntnis desselben (nicht einmal dem Erkenntnis unseres Zustandes) enthält“ (I. Kant, *Die Metaphysik der Sitten*, Einleitung, AB 1 ff., in: Kant WA, Bd. VIII).

diese Vorstellungen auch als *Spur der anwesenden Abwesenheit* des von der Vorstellungswirklichkeit *subtrahierten Realen* gelten können.

Aber bevor wir uns mit dieser Antwort zufriedengeben, ist noch eine Präzisierung vonnöten. So wie sich die subjektiven Vorstellungen in der kritischen Philosophie in zwei Gruppen einteilen, in die *objektiv subjektiven* und die *subjektiv objektiven*, teilen sich auch die subjektiv objektiven Vorstellungen in zwei Gruppen ein. Und auch die Abwesenheit der aus der konstituierten Wirklichkeit subtrahierten realen *Sache selbst* kann auf zwei Weisen in sie eingeschrieben werden. Bei Kant finden wir die beiden Weisen zum Beispiel in seiner Beschreibung des erhabenen Gefühls des Enthusiasmus. Der Enthusiasmus beziehungsweise „die Idee des Guten mit Affekt“¹⁸ ist, vereinfacht gesagt, ein Gemütszustand, in dem die empirische Subjektivität versucht, die Vernunftideen, auch wenn sie die konstituierte Wirklichkeit transzendieren, in ihr dennoch zu verwirklichen. Deshalb gilt es auch, wie Kant in seinem vorkritischen *Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes* hervorhebt, und dann etwas zurückhaltender in der dritten *Kritik* wiederholt, dass es ohne dieses Gefühl nicht möglich wäre, „in der Welt etwas Großes“¹⁹ auszurichten. Der Enthusiasmus wirkt in einer seiner beiden Weisen also so, dass er *in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit und für sie* Vernunftideen geltend macht, die in die objektive Wirklichkeit etwas Nichtkonstituiertes eintragen. Aber der Enthusiasmus kann die Ideen, auf die es ihm ankommt, auch so verwirklichen, und das ist sein zweiter *modus operandi*, dass er im Namen einer unmittelbaren Begegnung mit dem Nichtkonstituierten der realen *Sache selbst* der konstituierten Wirklichkeit den Anspruch auf Existenz verwehrt, dass er also seine Ideen durch die Destruktion des Ortes, an dem sie verwirklicht werden sollten, geltend macht.²⁰ Er versucht, die Vernunftideen und ihr Objekt

¹⁸ Ebd.

¹⁹ Vgl. „Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes“, in: WA, Bd. 2, S. 896, (A 26); *KdU*, WA, Bd. 10, S.198 ff., (B 121/A 120 ff.).

²⁰ „Ich stelle den *Aristides* unter die Wucherer, den *Epiktet* unter Hofleute und den *Johann Jacob Rousseau* unter die Doktoren der Sorbonne. Mich deucht, ich höre ein lautes Hohn-gelächter, und hundert Stimmen rufen: *Welche Phantasten!* Dieser zweideutige Anschein von Phantasterei, in an sich guten moralischen Empfindungen, ist der *Enthusiasmus* und es ist niemals ohne denselben in der Welt etwas Großes ausgerichtet worden. Ganz anders ist es mit dem *Fanatiker* (*Visionär, Schwärmer*) bewandt. Dieser ist eigentlich ein Verrückter von einer vermeinten unmittelbaren Eingebung, und einer großen Vertraulichkeit mit den Mächten des Himmels. Die menschliche Natur kennt kein gefährlicheres Blendwerk. Wenn der Ausbruch davon neu ist, wenn der betrogene Mensch Talente hat, und der große Hau-

in der Welt als das Einzige, was in ihr auf einen Existenzanspruch Anrecht hat, zu verwirklichen. Subjektiv objektive Vorstellungen, die auf diese Art wirken, sind nicht Vorstellungen, die als Momente der Wirklichkeitskonstitution durch die Subtraktion des Realen wirken, sondern vielmehr Vorstellungen, die an der Dekonstituierung der phänomenalen Welt teilhaben.

Das Hauptthema der dritten *Kritik* bilden jedoch die subjektiv objektiven Vorstellungen nicht als Momente der Dekonstituierung der Wirklichkeit, sondern als Momente, von denen in die Wirklichkeit eine Spur des Nicht-Konstituierten, Realen, so eingeschrieben wird, dass die Wirklichkeit dadurch nicht dekonstituiert wird. Wir werden aber hier die subjektiven Vorstellungen der dritten *Kritik* beiseite lassen, um uns nur jenen subjektiv objektiven Vorstellungen zuzuwenden, die in die konstituierte Wirklichkeit die anwesende Abwesenheit des von ihr subtrahierten Realen so einschreiben, dass die Wirklichkeit dadurch keiner Dekonstituierung unterworfen wird. Wir werden dabei über einen Umweg vorgehen. Zunächst kehren wir zum Problem der *Ausschließung* der subjektiven Vorstellungen aus Welt des Objektiven zurück. Subjektive Vorstellungen treten in Kants Transzendentalphilosophie in unterschiedlichen Rollen auf und haben unterschiedliche Bedeutungen. Aber das Gepräge des Subjektiven wird ihnen weder von ihren unterschiedlichen Rollen noch von ihren unterschiedlichen Bedeutungen verliehen. Ihre subjektive Beschaffenheit ist im Sachverhalt begründet, dass sie jenen Vorstellungsbereich bilden, der aus den objektiven Vorstellungen *ausgeschlossen* ist, genauer gesagt, der innerhalb der objektiven Vorstellungen als ihr aus ihnen ausgeschlossener Teil wirkt.

Unsere These lautet insofern, dass ‚subjektiv‘ bei den (subjektiven) Vorstellungen im Rahmen des transzendentalen Ansatzes jenen Vorstellungsbereich benennt, der aus der objektiven Vorstellung, damit sie möglich sein kann, ausgeschlossen sein muss. Die ‚subjektive‘ Vorstellung ist das, was in der objektiven Vorstellung so anwesend ist, dass es in ihr *fehlt*, und was durch dieses ihr Fehlen die Konstituierung der objektiven Vorstellung ermöglicht. Das ‚Subjektive‘ der Vorstellung bezeichnet jenes Nicht-Vorstellungsmäßige der objektiven Vorstellung, was in dieser im Gegensatz zum transzendentalen Objekt

fe vorbereitet ist, dieses Gärungsmittel innigst aufzunehmen, alsdann erduldet bisweilen sogar der Staat Verzuckungen.“ („Versuch über die Krankheiten des Kopfes“, *Essai d'une philosophie négative*, Verdier, Paris 1993).

nicht nur etwas stets Äußerliches, sich Entziehendes ist, sondern gerade in seiner Äußerlichkeit in der objektiven Vorstellung anwesend ist. Kurz: ‚subjektiv‘ ist der Name für die *nicht-objektive, nicht-vorstellungsmäßige, nicht-konstituierte* Dimension der objektiven Vorstellung, die innerhalb ihrer wirkt.

Jetzt können wir die erste, obwohl nur partielle Antwort auf unsere oben gestellte Frage geben, ob die Gegenstandsvorstellung, wie sie von der ersten *Kritik* Kants bestimmt wird, auch als Ort der Einschreibung des subtrahierten Realen aufgefasst werden kann. Die Antwort lautet: Die Ausschließung der subjektiven Vorstellung schreibt in die objektive Vorstellung die Dimension der Nicht-Objektivität, des Nicht-Vorstellungsmäßigen, des Nicht-Konstituierten ein, und diese Einschreibung enthält das, was von uns gesucht wird, das, was für die phänomenale Wirklichkeit absolut entscheidend ist – *die Spur des Realen, der anwesenden Abwesenheit der Sache selbst in ihr*. Und nur infolge des ‚Subjektiven‘ als einer Spur des abwesenden Realen in den objektiven Vorstellungen kann die Unterscheidung zwischen objektiven und subjektiven Vorstellungen in der konstituierten Wirklichkeit als jene realistische Haltung fungieren, in der der harte Wirklichkeitskern der Vorstellungswirklichkeit für einen Augenblick anwesend ist.

Unsere Antwort verlangt jedoch noch eine Ergänzung. Der Ausschluss der subjektiven Vorstellung aus dem Feld der (objektiven) Vorstellung ist eine Operation, die sowohl für die objektiven als auch für die subjektiven Vorstellungen konstitutiv ist. Das Resultat dieser Operation sind nicht nur die zwei Arten der Vorstellungen, subjektive und objektive Vorstellungen, die auf der Ebene der konstituierten Wirklichkeit anwesend sind. Ihr Resultat ist auch die Herausbildung einer spezifischen Vorstellung, nennen wir sie einfach „die dritte Art“ der Vorstellung. Genau diese Vorstellung entspricht unseres Erachtens nach dem transzendentalen Ansatz. Wir werden sie als *subjektivierte objektive Vorstellung* benennen. Sie ist im Schnittpunkt der ‚wahren‘ objektiven und der ‚wahren‘ subjektiven Vorstellung situiert, wobei der Ausdruck ‚wahr‘ subjektive und objektive Vorstellungen bezeichnet, die sich als solche erst in ihrem differenziellen Verhältnis konstituieren. Mit anderen Worten, die subjektivierte objektive Vorstellung ist die Vorstellung der Transzendentalphilosophie in ihrer ‚wahren‘ Objektivität und ihrer ‚wahren‘ Subjektivität.

Eine ‚wahre‘ *objektive* Vorstellung ist eine in Gänze entwickelte objektive Vorstellung, also eine Vorstellung, die ihre volle Objektivität genau im Punkt der

aus ihr ausgeschlossenen *subjektiven* Vorstellung erreicht hat. Die ausgeschlossene subjektive Vorstellung wirkt zwar als ein überschüssiges Moment der objektiven Vorstellung, aber es handelt sich um einen Überschuss, der aus dem Inneren der Objektivität selbst kommt. Das ‚Subjektive‘ der subjektiven Vorstellung ist, formell gesehen, ein innerer Überschuss der objektiven Vorstellung, von dem in diese etwas Nicht-Objektives, Nicht-Vorstellungsmäßiges, Nicht-Konstituiertes eingeschrieben wird. Die ‚wahre‘ objektive Vorstellung ist eine Vorstellung, die ihre Objektivität im Punkt einer nicht-objektiven Objektivität erzielt. Diese ‚wahre‘, das heißt *nicht-objektive* Objektivität der Vorstellung werden wir mit einem aus der Psychoanalyse Jacques Lacans übernommenen Ausdruck *Objekthaftigkeit* bezeichnen.

Eine ‚wahre‘ objektive Vorstellung kann nur in Form der ‚wahren‘ subjektiven Vorstellung in Gänze entwickelt werden. Eine ‚wahre‘ *subjektive* Vorstellung ist eine *objektive* Vorstellung, die in Gänze so entwickelt wurde, dass sie den nicht anzueignenden Überschuss am Subjektiven, also den Punkt des Nicht-Objektiven, Nicht-Vorstellungsmäßigen, Nicht-Konstituierten, in sich reflektiert. Sie reflektiert diesen Punkt in sich als eine wesentliche Bestimmung sowohl der *Objektivität* als auch der *Subjektivität* der Vorstellung. ‚Wahre‘ subjektive Vorstellungen sind Vorstellungen, die zeigen, dass und wie mit dem Subjektiven der Vorstellung das Moment der *Objekthaftigkeit*, also das Moment einer nicht-objektiven Wirklichkeit verbunden ist. Kurz, sie sind der Ort, an dem die nicht-subjektive, ‚kopflöse‘ beziehungsweise objekthafte Subjektivität in die Vorstellung eingeschrieben wird.²¹ Solche ‚wahren‘ objektiven Vorstellungen, die zugleich auch ‚wahre‘ subjektive Vorstellungen sind, bezeichnen wir hier als *subjektivierte objektive* Vorstellungen. Solchen Vorstellungen entspricht streng genommen erst die von Kant in seiner dritten *Kritik* mit dem Konzept der reflektierenden Beurteilung entwickelte Vorstellung.

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Anhand dieser Ergänzung können wir jetzt eine Antwort auf die Frage formulieren, ob im Konzept der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellung in Kants erster

²¹ Die ‚subjektive Vorstellung‘ ist also ein Begriff, der in der Vorstellung als solcher die Dimension der *irreduziblen Subjektivität* bezeichnet. Diese Dimension ist irreduzibel *subjektiv*, weil sie mit der Zusammensetzung des Subjekts am engsten verbunden ist. Sie ist *irreduzibel* subjektiv auch deswegen, weil sie in sich selbst begründet ist, sich also nicht von der Dialektik des Objektiven und Subjektiven ableiten lässt, obwohl sie mit dieser Dialektik verbunden ist.

Kritik auch die Spur der anwesenden Abwesenheit der von der phänomenalen Wirklichkeit subtrahierten realen *Sache selbst* zu finden ist. Die Antwort lautet: die Subtraktion des Realen ist in der Gegenständlichkeit der Vorstellung der ersten *Kritik* nur *mittelbar* anwesend, und zwar in dem, was auf der Ebene der konstituierten Wirklichkeit *unmittelbar* anwesend ist. Und das ist das ‚Wirklichkeitsgefühl‘, das sich in der Unterscheidung zwischen den subjektiven und den objektiven Vorstellungen kundtut. Das, was dieser Unterscheidung eine Wirklichkeitsnote gibt, ist der Sachverhalt, dass von ihr eine Vorstellungsart hervorgebracht wird, die sich weder unter die objektiven noch unter die subjektiven Vorstellungen einordnen lässt. Wir haben diese Vorstellungen als *subjektivierte objektive* Vorstellungen bezeichnet. Subjektivierte objektive Vorstellungen sind Vorstellungen, von denen ein Wirklichkeitsmoment vorgestellt wird, in dem zugleich die Spur der subtrahierten *Sache selbst* zu Worte gekommen ist. Oder, um es in der Sprache Kants auszudrücken, sie stellen ein Wirklichkeitsmoment dar, das zugleich als ein „Fall“ jener realen *Sache selbst* wirkt, deren anwesende Abwesenheit der konstituierten Wirklichkeit ihr Wirklichkeitsgepräge verleiht. Von einer bloß mittelbaren Anwesenheit der Spur des Realen in der Gegenstandsvorstellung der ersten *Kritik* wird darüber hinaus auch deswegen gesprochen, weil dafür, dass eine neue, sozusagen dritte Art der Vorstellung zum Vorschein kommen konnte, eine neue Begriffsbildung erforderlich war, nämlich die Begriffsbildung der *Kritik der Urteilskraft*, von der die Verbindung zwischen Sinnlichkeit und Vernunft in der Figur der befreiten Einbildungskraft ausgearbeitet wurde.

Wenden wir uns zum Schluss also noch kurz Kants dritten *Kritik*, der *Kritik der Urteilskraft* zu. Rufen wir uns wenigstens in groben Zügen die wesentlichen Merkmale von Kants reflektierender Urteilskraft in Erinnerung. Wie wir wissen, unterscheidet Kant zwei Arten der Urteilskraft. Die Urteilskraft im Allgemeinen ist das Vermögen, ein Partikuläres als im universellen, allgemeinen Begriff enthalten zu bestimmen. Aber das Universale ist entweder schon gegeben, die Urteilskraft ist in diesem Fall bestimmend. Für die Welt der bestimmenden Urteilskraft gibt es nur Partikuläres und Universelles, Besonderes und Allgemeines, die Welt wird von uns so erkannt, dass wir ein Besonderes dem allgemeinen Begriff subsumieren, der schon ähnliches Besondere enthält.

Die andere Art der Urteilskraft ist die ästhetische reflektierende Urteilskraft. Hier haben wir es nur mit der Vorstellung von Etwas zu tun, verfügen aber mit

keinem universellen Begriff, der es uns erlauben würde das vorgestellte Etwas zu bestimmen. Die Aufgabe des reflektierenden Urteilens besteht hier darin, im Urteilsverfahren selbst den allgemeinen Begriff, von dem das vorgestellte Etwas auf den Begriff gebracht werden könnte.

Zwei kurze Bemerkungen zu dieser groben Beschreibung der beiden Urteilsarten. Die erste betrifft den Status des Universellen, mit dem das reflektierende Urteilen operiert. Die zweite den spezifischen Bezugspunkt des reflektierenden Urteilens.

Der Grund dafür, dass wir im Akt der reflektierenden Urteilskraft keinen allgemeinen Begriff zur Verfügung haben, liegt nicht darin, dass wir diesen Begriff aus Unwissen einfach nicht kennen, oder aber unfähig sind, ihn unter den bestehenden allgemeinen Begriffen herauszufinden. Wir haben keinen allgemeinen Begriff, weil es im Fall der reflektierenden Urteilskraft einen solchen Begriff streng genommen gar nicht gibt. Das Universelle der reflektierenden Urteilskraft ist prädikativ unbestimmt und unbestimmbar, es ist generisch. Es kann nur in der gleichzeitigen Bestimmung dessen gefunden bzw. erfunden werden, worauf es sich jeweils bezieht.

Der Bezugspunkt des reflektierenden Urteilens ist das, was von Kant *der Fall* genannt wird. Der Fall des ästhetischen Urteils, des Urteils vom Schönen oder Erhabenen, ist jenes, was im jeweiligen Besonderen seine irreduzible Besonderheit, das heißt, sein Singuläres, genauer gesagt, was es selbst als irreduzibles Singuläres ist. Das Singuläre ist das, was in jeweiligen Partikulären etwas mehr als dieses Partikuläre ist – ohne aber, und das ist wesentlich, *empirisch* bzw. *objektiv* etwas mehr zu sein. Das Singuläre ist einerseits nicht ablösbar von seinem Besonderen, von dessen situationeller, empirischer Gegebenheit. Andererseits wird dieses Singuläre *ein Fall* erst vermittelt seiner unmittelbaren Verbundenheit mit dem Universellen. Es ist ein Singuläres, insofern es unmittelbar universalisierbar ist, es ist etwas, mit Kant gesprochen, was für alle Zeiten und für alle Völker gelten kann. Das Singuläre des Falls ist jenes im Besonderen, dass als das Dasselbe seiner möglichen mannigfaltigen transtemporalen und transhistorischen Konsequenzen existiert. Es existiert also bloß in der Form der jeweils von Neuem entschiedenen Entscheidung „das ist der Fall“. Und nur insofern, als das Singuläre in einer prinzipiell unendlichen Reihe von immer derselben und universell gültigen Konsequenzen zur Geltung gebracht werden kann,

gibt es auch sein Universelles. Die wahre Mannigfaltigkeit einer Besonderheit der Welt ist nur in dem enthalten, das ein Fall vom Desselben ist.

Das führt uns nun zur folgenden Behauptung: Die Beschäftigung der Vernunft mit ihr selbst, die es ihr möglich macht, den geschlossenen Raum des bloßen Gedankenuniversums zu überschreiten, ist ein Verfahren, das im Rahmen der Lacanschen Psychoanalyse mit der Wendung vom Objekt, das vor dem Begehren steht, zum Objekt-Ursache, von dem das Begehren angetrieben wird, verglichen werden kann. Ich beziehe mich hier auf eine Bemerkung von J. Lacan, die in seiner „Remarque sur le rapport de Danielle Lagache“ zu finden ist. Sie lautet: „das Subjekt ist berufen, als Objekt *a* des Begehrens von Neuem geboren zu werden um zu wissen, ob es dasjenige will, was es begehrt.“²²

Wo genau kann Rahmen der Selbstkritik der Vernunft und im Begriff der reflektierenden Urteilskraft eine der Wendung zum Objekt-Ursache des Begehrens homologe Struktur gefunden werden? Fangen wir damit an, dass die Selbstkritik der Vernunft ein Verfahren ist, das auf zwei miteinander eng verbunden Ebenen abläuft. Die erste Ebene ist die Ebene eines Prozesses, in dem die Vernunft gelernt hat mit dem Unbedingten, der Objekt-Ursache ihres Begehrens, umzugehen. Sie hat gelernt, das zu wollen, was sie begehrt. Dieses zusätzliche Wollen des Begehrens manifestiert sich in einer Unterbrechung der unmittelbaren Identifikation der Vernunft mit dem Objekt ihres Begehrens. Die Selbstkritik ist der Denk-Akt, der zwischen die Vernunft und der ‚Sache selbst‘, von der sie affiziert wird, dem Unbedingten also, eine minimale Distanz einführt. Eine Distanz, von der das Unbedingte als Objekt des vorkritischen Vernunftbegehrens zur absoluten Bedingung der reinen Vernunft umgewandelt wird – aber zu einer Bedingung, die gleichzeitig von der Vernunft abgespalten ist, in der Form eines nicht-objektiven Objekt der empirischen Welt erscheint. Auch diesmal beziehe ich mich auf eine Bemerkung Lacan’s, und zwar in seinem Text „Subversion du sujet et dialectique du désir“²³. Sie lautet (meine Übersetzung): „Das Begehren kehrt das Unbedingte des Liebesanspruchs, bei dem das Subjekt dem Anderen unterworfen bleibt, um diesem Unbedingten gleichzeitig das Vermögen einer absoluten Bedingung zu geben (wobei absolut auch Abtrennung sagen will)“.

²² Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, Seuil, Paris 1966, S. 682; eigene Übersetzung.

²³ *Ibid.*, S. 814.

Die Distanz zwischen der Vernunft und der ihr eigenen Sache ist zwar minimal, sie ermöglicht aber der Vernunft eine materielle Erscheinungsform ihrer selbst zu finden. Das führt uns zur zweiten Ebene der Selbstkritik, auf der sich das Begehren der Vernunft als ein Begehren zu sehen manifestiert. Ein wirkliches Wollen seines Begehrens manifestiert sich nämlich immer auch in einem Begehren, das sein Objekt-Ursache in der phänomenalen Welt verwirklicht, materialisiert sehen möchte. Kurz, die Vernunft macht ihre Sache in der empirischen Welt in der Form von Vernunftideen sichtbar.

Die Anwesenheit der Vernunftideen in der Erfahrungswelt, wo sie der Definition nach keinen Ort haben, da ihnen hier kein Objekt entspricht, hat einen besonderen ontologischen Status: die Ideen sind weder auf eine unmittelbare Gegebenheiten der objektiven Wirklichkeit, noch auf die halluzinatorische Realisierung des bloß subjektiven Begehrens der Vernunft zurückführbar. Die Ideen existieren in der Erfahrung in der Form eines *Falls der Idee*.

Das heißt, sie existieren in einer partikulären Gegebenheit der Welt, die in ihrer Gegebenheit derealisiert ist und nur als Punkt eines absolut Singulären zählt, das unmittelbar schon Moment des Universellen ist. Die Derealisierung ist eine Operation, durch die Gegebenheiten der objektiven Wirklichkeit zum potentiellen Material der Idee, kurz, zu Gegebenheiten des jeweiligen Falls der Idee umgewandelt werden. Vom Gesichtspunkt der Kritik und Selbstkritik der Vernunft aus besteht die Erfahrungswelt wirklich nur insofern, als sie ihre Wirklichkeit auch schon verliert, insofern als sie als eine Welt ausgewiesen werden kann, in der die Selbstkritik der Vernunft ihre Folgen verwirklicht.

Die Wirklichkeit der Welt besteht nur in dem Maße, als partikuläre Gegebenheiten dieser Welt in den „Körper“ der Sache des Denkens umgewandelt werden können, in die materielle Präsenz von Etwas, das auf verschiedene Weisen darauf hinweist, dass in der Welt Fälle der Idee existieren. In dem Sinne könnte behauptet werden, dass die Selbstkritik der Vernunft einen Materialismus der Idee antizipiert, der nachher von der Verbindung des Singulären und Universellen im reflektierenden Urteil verwirklicht wird. Die Idee ist, um es noch einmal zu wiederholen, der Ort der Ununterscheidbarkeit von Denken und Handeln, und zwar einem Handeln, von dem eine doppelte minimale Differenz konstruiert wird.

Es handelt sich, erstens, um einen Akt, von dem eine minimale Differenz zwischen dem Denken und der „Sache des Denkens“, die das Denken affiziert, konstruiert wird. Und es handelt sich, zweitens, um einen Akt, von dem die Wirklichkeit als Fall der Idee konstruiert wird, d.h. als minimale Differenz zwischen der Wirklichkeit selbst und der Wirklichkeit als Existenz eines Falls der Idee. Oder auch, als minimale Differenz zwischen all den partikulären Ereignissen, die in der Wirklichkeit der Fall der Idee sind, und dem Fall der Idee selbst.

Wenn wir uns hier an das „Weiße Quadrat auf weißer Grundlage“ von Malevich und auf die Art und Weise, wie das Gemälde von Badiou im seinem *Jahrhundert* gedacht wird, erinnern: das Weiße Quadrat selbst ist nichts anderes, um Badiou's Worte zu gebrauchen, als die minimale, nichtige, aber absolute Differenz zwischen Weiß und Weiß.²⁴ Diese minimale Differenz ist gleichsam der Fall des Weißen Quadrats, in ihr hat das Weiße Quadrat seine materielle, auf dem Bild sichtbare Existenz.

Ebenso existiert auch die Idee in der Welt nur in der Form ihres eigenen Falls. Sie existiert in der Wirklichkeit als minimale Differenz zwischen der Wirklichkeit und der Wirklichkeit als Körper bzw. Fall der Idee. Der Fall der Idee wiederum ist eine minimale Differenz zwischen dem, was jeweils der Fall ist und dem Fall selbst. Er ist eine Partikularität der Welt, deren Partikularität dem untergeordnet ist, auf die Singularität ihrer selbst hinzuweisen. Jener Singularität, die unmittelbar universalisierbar ist und von der Formel der reflektierenden Urteilskraft „das ist der Fall“ ausgedrückt wird. Der Fall des reflektierenden Urteils, das ist die Vernunft, die in der Form von etwas verwirklicht ist das in der Welt enthalten ist, ohne ihr anzugehören. Der Fall ist ein Exzess der gegebenen Welt. In der Form des singulären Universellen des Falles arbeitet die Vernunft an der Konstitution der objektiven Welt so mit, dass sie die Welt gleichzeitig derealisiert: der empirische Gebrauch der Vernunft ist der Modus einer nicht-objektiven Konstitution der objektiven Welt. Es handelt sich um eine Derealisation der Wirklichkeit in dem Sinne, dass empirische Gegebenheiten als Körper bzw. Fall der Idee fungieren. So wie der Enthusiasmus der Zuschauer während der Französischen Revolution die empirische Wirklichkeit derealisiert hat, um an ihrer Stelle *diese selbe Wirklichkeit* als Fall der Idee, als ein auf die Ursache zum Fortschreiten zum Besseren hinweisendes Geschichtszeichen zu setzen.

²⁴ Siehe Alain Badiou, *Das Jahrhundert*, Diaphanes Verlag, Zürich-Berlin 2006, S. 72.

Wir können so die Frage nach dem Realismus bei Kant folgendermaßen abschließen: Der vom reflektierendem Urteilsakt entschiedene Fall der Idee stellt jenes Element der phänomenalen Welt dar, von dem die anwesende Abwesenheit der Welt an sich verkörpert wird und das auf diese Weise die Wirklichkeit der phänomenalen Welt verbürgt.

Bie-Modernity

Editors' Note:

Contributions printed below are a series of interrelated articles. They center around a theory of the Bie-modern, developed some time ago by Jianjiang Wang, who aims at overcoming what he perceives as the current problematic position of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics when compared with those from the West. In the simplest of terms, the enjeu of Jianjiang Wang's project is: how to put Chinese humanities—especially philosophy and aesthetics—into a global position resembling that of the Chinese economy? The articles below respond to such questions.

Aleš Erjavec

Wang Jianjiang*

Is it Possible for China to Go Ahead of the World in Philosophy and Aesthetics?

Response to Aleš Erjavec's, Ernest Ženko's, and Rok Benčin's
Comments on Zhu Yi and Bie-Modern Theories

The notion of Bie-modern (bie xian dai, 别现代, Pre-Modern, Modern, Post-modern, Bie-modern) theory that I have introduced in recent years in a series of publications, lectures and conference papers refers to doubtful modernity in China. I am employing the Pinyin (Chinese phonetic alphabet) “Bie” because I have not found an appropriate English equivalent to the Chinese Character “别.” “Bie-modern” therefore refers to the pre-modern, modern and post-modern, all of which are mixed together. It signifies a lack of real modernity, and it could therefore also be called pseudo-modernity. What Bie-modernists therefore strive to accomplish is to distinguish between real modernity and pseudo-modernity so as to eliminate this pseudo-modernity and establish a true modernity. Since 2014 there have been four international symposia¹ and two exhibitions² of Bie-modernism held both in China and in the United States that have promoted an in-depth discussion of this theory.

In July 2017 the international academic conference “Bie-Modern and Humanities in the Global Perspective” was held in Shanghai. Aesthetician and former President of the International Association for Aesthetics Aleš Erjavec presented his paper titled “Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of *Zhu Yi*” in that meeting. By taking achievements and art events in Japan, Europe, the United States and China as examples, Erjavec concluded that the humanities in China, with philosophy and aesthetics included, had not yet developed as much as contemporary Chinese art. This was the third occasion that

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¹ “International Academic Seminar on Discourse Innovation and Bie-modern Problem in Art and Aesthetics,” September 2016, Shanghai; “International Academic Seminar on Social Form and Art, Ecology, Hero and Bie-modern Problem,” June 2017, Shanghai; “Bie-modern Art and Humanities in the Global Perspective,” July 2017, Shanghai; “Art: Pre-modern Modern Postmodern Bie-modern,” October 2017, Atlanta.

² “Bie-modern Works Exhibition,” September 2016, Shanghai; “Bie-modern Art Exhibition,” October 2017, Georgia.

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Erjavec discussed with me the notions of *Zhuyi* and Bie-modern.³ By now the paper in which I responded to his first commentary has already been published. Two additional European philosophers, Ernest Ženko and Rok Benčin, participated in the discussion. Although foreign scholars discussed Bie-modern theories in various perspectives, they all focused on the question of whether the humanities in China could reach the pinnacle of global philosophy.⁴ I'm going to present my own standpoints on these issues so as to arouse more in-depth discussions.

Is There No Need for Chinese Aesthetics to Go Ahead of the World?

In "Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of *Zhuyi*," Erjavec concluded that, as yet, the Chinese humanities did not obtain the same decisive status in the world as Chinese art. He says,

In spite of the state of humanities in China today, the Chinese fine and the visual arts in general are extremely well-developed and even internationally influential. Any culture and country on the globe would be happy to possess such place, impact and presence within the global art world. Still, in my eyes this obviously did not amount to much. In my view, it seemed, the humanities and aesthetics too would have to be as developed and be as influential as the western theories in China or Chinese theories in China. I think these are two exaggerations: not all the realms of human creativity and activity can or must be equally developed. There is no need for contemporary Chinese aesthetics to be among the best developed in the world (although this would be nice) as there is no need for the Japanese tea ceremony to become a ceremony equal to western "ceremony" of drinking coffee.⁵

³ Aleš Erjavec, "*Zhuyi*: From Absence to Bustle?—Some Comments on Jianjiang Wang's Article 'The Bustle and the Absence of *Zhuyi*,'" *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, no. 13 (2017), pp. 111–121; Aleš Erjavec, "Some Additional Remarks Concerning Issues Opened by Prof. Jianjiang Wang," *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, no. 13 (2017), pp. 143–147; Aleš Erjavec, "Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of *Zhuyi*," *Exploration and Free Views*, no. 5 (2018), pp. 68–72.

⁴ Erjavec, "Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of *Zhuyi*," pp. 6–10.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

Erjavec's statement took me by surprise for we had discussed these issues in previous articles, and he agreed with me to establish *Zhuyi*⁶ or "ism" and promote academic prosperity in line with the current development of the Chinese economy. He says that

[t]here are numerous small and big countries across the world that find themselves in a similar situation [to China] as concerns aesthetics, philosophy and the humanities, but not many among them are striving to have their voice heard. I see Prof. Wang's article as an attempt to articulate such a voice and make it heard both at home and abroad. I believe that such stance—to acquire voice—is of paramount importance for any successful emancipation and therefore for erecting one's own position and place in the world (and society).⁷

Furthermore, Erjavec placed my proposition of *Zhuyi* within the range of a world philosophical quadrangle. In Erjavec's view, the establishment of the *Zhuyi* of Chinese philosophy could change the western philosophical empires (Anglo-American, German and French). Erjavec writes,

In my view the contemporary Chinese situation as regards *Zhuyi*, art and theory (aesthetics, philosophy and the humanities) is in many respects different from the present or the recent situation in the West. If some decades ago the cultural antagonism and competition in the West occurred mainly between the United States, on the one hand, and Continental Europe (especially France) on the other, this bipolar situation has now turned into a quadrilateral one: we are still witnesses to the American and the European culture, but there is now a new player in town, namely China, which has replaced the emergent Soviet culture.⁸

which has replaced the emergent Soviet culture.

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But why does Erjavec suddenly put forward a negative view to Chinese scholars for pursuing the higher development of aesthetics, philosophy and humanities in this article? I couldn't find answers from his discourse. I just recalled

⁶ See Wang Jianjiang, "The Bustle and the Absence of *Zhuyi*: The Example of Chinese Aesthetics," *Filozofski vestnik*, XXXVII, no. 1 (2016), pp. 157–178.

⁷ Erjavec, "*Zhuyi*: From Absence to Bustle?", pp. 119–120.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

the Western theory of dichotomy that he quoted after the philosophical quadrilateral; that is, although Chinese scholars already have their voice heard in the world, they are not powerful enough to turn it into speech. Speech is the decisive factor for Chinese philosophy to become one side of this quadrilateral. Thus, Rok Benčín also points out that this dichotomy is the key to establishing any philosophy, including that of the Chinese.

Rok Benčín comments,

In relation to the Chinese position in the international humanities academia, Erjavec refers to Rancière's distinction between voice and speech derived from Aristotle. China has a voice in international aesthetics, but not its own original speech.⁹

Aside from this dichotomy, my questions here are two:

1. Is there really no need for Chinese humanities, including aesthetics, to be among the best developed in the world?

For my part, I believe there is indeed such a need. Nowadays China's culture clamors to be among the best developed in the world—from government to people, and from material to spirit, which of course includes aesthetics, philosophy, and all the disciplines within the humanities. The Chinese government has invested large amounts of funding to support the construction of aesthetics, philosophy, and the entire humanities. China is eager to achieve in the humanities the same status it has in the world economy. It can even be said that the Chinese government is ambitious in this regard despite the current lack of experts in the field. The strategy it proposes is to rejuvenate China. Along with the One Belt, One Road Initiative, it is an expression of this ambition.

In the same way, the Chinese people are not without their needs. On the contrary, they have very strong needs. However, the official needs of China often go against the needs of the people under the banner of "state" and "nation."

⁹ Rok Benčín, "Remarks on Philosophical 'Moments,' on the Aesthetics of Emancipation and on the 'Bie-modern' in the Cinema of Jia Zhangke," *Conference Collection of Bie-modern Art and Humanities in Global Perspective*, July 2017, Shanghai, p. 58.

The former needs use the slogan of enriching the country, strengthening the people and rejuvenating the nation to lead individual thought and speech in order to maintain rule and become bigger and stronger. The latter needs strive for more individual freedom and individual rights under the premise of patriotism. Individual freedom and individual rights belong to independent thinking for people who are free to speak and publish. Therefore, there are often conflicts between the Chinese government and the people when it comes to the concepts of “state interests” and “national interests.” The so-called “Chinese dream” of Chinese scholars is the idea of freedom and the spirit of independence. This kind of freedom and the spirit of independence need to be allowed by the Chinese government. However, it is also necessary to develop the humanities so that they are compatible with international standards.

Therefore, for the humanities in China, it is not the case that there exists a lack of development needs. On the contrary, it is an overly strong demand which has caused internal contradictions, and the Chinese government has thus been uneasy and taken many measures to limit it. Take, for example, the “anti-spiritual pollution” campaign of 1984 that was led by the Communist Party of China and began with critical humanitarianism. Or consider the “anti-bourgeois liberalization” campaign launched by Deng Xiaoping in September 1986 under the leadership of the Communist Party of China. The internal needs of the development of the humanities in China are the need for modernity. What China currently lacks is the modernity of the Western Enlightenment from more than 200 years ago: namely, rationality, human rights, dignity, freedom, equality, and social contract, which can support the idea and system of survival and freedom, instead of post-modernity, which means anti-rationality, decentralization, and deconstruction. However, it is regrettable that Chinese scholars often overlook China’s lack of Enlightenment and modernity, but follow Western scholars’ post-modern theories and methods, thus creating an illusion that China has no desire for modernity. For example, before the Bie-modern theory was put forward, many Chinese scholars proposed many different Chinese modernity concepts, such as nuxws niswwebur (Zha Changping), new modernity (Ren Ping), complex modernity (Wang Xingfu), characteristic modernity (official), and total modernity (Gao Minglu).¹⁰ Although these are different authors, they are almost the same

¹⁰ Gao Minglu says of total modernity, “This ‘modernity’ should not be confused with ‘modernity’ in the Euro-American sense of a marker of temporal logic (as part of a sequence

in concealing and even distorting the modernity in China. Even their claims are farther away from the official assumption, which is that China will achieve primary modernization by 2035. Therefore, modernity in China is supposed to be an essentially inadequate modernity, a doubtful modernity, or even a pseudo-modernity. This kind of pseudo-modernity has obscured the reality of China's counterfeit and shoddy products, pseudo-files, pseudo-historical records, the large number of senior officials and celebrities holding American passports and permanent residence permits while proclaiming their patriotism, etc. All of this accordingly results in the illusion that China is very developed and does not need the development of humanities. This is really an upside-down reality.

In addition, you can also think ask yourself the following question: if the concept of a "country" exists without its core that is, if a country does not have its own philosophy and humanities, just like a person without his or her own mind), then how can it become a powerful country?

2. Can the development of art replace the development of the humanities? Or, on the contrary, can the development of the humanities replace the development of art?

Certainly not.

Erjavec does not discuss the details of the relationship between the humanities and the arts as mentioned above, but instead sharply points out the problems that China is confronted with in the process of transforming its voice into speech. In particular, he refers to features inherent to Chinese culture; that is, to what he terms the "internal cause":

from pre-modern to modern and then postmodern). Rather, it refers particularly to a specific time and a concrete space, and to the value choices of society at that time. This sense of the word had already emerged in the beginning of Chinese modern history, at the turn of the twentieth century. Since then, the consciousness of Chinese modernity has been determined by the condition of the nation. In my 1998 essay "Toward a Transnational Modernity," I put this in the following way: 'For the Chinese, modern has meant a new nation rather than a new epoch. Thus, Chinese modernity is a consciousness of both transcendent time and reconstructed space with a clear national, cultural and political territorial boundary.'" See Gao Minglu, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011, p. 1.

All this witnesses that at least as concerns the Chinese visual art it was not only on an equal footing with that of the rest of the world, but was even further down the road—it was turning into an unofficial leader of various trends within the contemporary global art. As such it displayed precisely the features that the Chinese academics were and are searching for in the humanities and in aesthetics. This combination, while an everyday occurrence elsewhere, was almost non-existent in art criticism and aesthetics in China. But since these two realms were epistemologically far apart, they were hardly ever regarded from the position of a common denominator that would include art and theory, even though the two remain, as for the moment, still essentially separated for they remain prisoners of earlier ideological struggles.¹¹

According to Erjavec, well-known overseas Chinese art works are separated from the domestic Chinese public. For a variety of reasons, until recently the domestic public had known little about those artists, and even Chinese art critics were unfamiliar with them. This situation hampers the transformation of voice into speech for Chinese aesthetics.

Erjavec says,

It could be concluded that contemporary visual art in its different settings has been seamlessly integrated into “contemporary global visual art” and it has furthermore from time to time served as a characteristic and perhaps even a leader within the global setting. So far this has not yet occurred to a significant extent in the humanities in China. Nonetheless I do believe that I have good reasons to criticize the current situation in the humanities in China. But the link between the two will only be established (and strengthened) when internal causes will outweigh the external ones: *contemporary Chinese humanities must feel the need to fuse with, and refer to, contemporary Chinese art.*¹²

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In the view of Erjavec, Chinese art has gotten rid of the influence of political ideology, while the Chinese humanities, including philosophy and aesthetics, are still under the control of ideology. Moreover, Chinese art has its own foreign

¹¹ Erjavec, “Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of *Zhuyi*,” p. 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

market, while the humanities in China have not yet been able, as yet, to form their own specific type of discourse.

Before pondering this question further, we should ask what kind of connection exists between the Chinese humanities and Chinese art. Is this connection a positive or a negative correlation? Has one part been affected positively or negatively by the other part? If a nation's art leads the world, is it inevitable that its humanities will lag behind the rest of the world? The examples of the developed countries—especially France and the United States, which developed synchronously both in the humanities and in art—suggest what the answer likely is. The soft power of a country comes first from discourse—philosophy and thought—not from art. The economically less developed countries have often shown amazing achievements in art and have been in this respect appreciated by other countries and nations, but their works of art are only decorations of the beautiful world, not the aesthetic pinnacles of the global world. Furthermore, at any time, under any circumstances, the development of the humanities cannot be ignored, abandoned or disregarded.

Erjavec claims that contemporary Chinese art has the world's leading position but the Chinese humanities possess only voice instead of speech. But why?

Erjavec thinks that the problem lies in the internal causes of the humanities in China, but I think there exist external ones as well. Whether China's humanities can establish themselves in the international arena not only depends on China's domestic needs but also requires recognition from the international academic community.

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I wish to argue that the success of contemporary Chinese avant-garde art¹³ lies in exports and in its works being recognized by international buyers, artists and art critics. So, what does this international recognition mean? Although China's avant-garde art could not directly criticize reality, as the post-socialist art of Eastern Europe did, but instead adopted a metaphorical approach, its crit-

¹³ The well-known and influential art critic and theorist Gao Minglu writes, "It is this double complexity or multiple social system that makes it more difficult to make a judgment on what is a true Chinese avant-garde art in current China." See Minglu, *Total Modernity and the Avant-Garde in Twentieth-Century Chinese Art*, p. 5. Bie-modernists usually designate this Chinese avant-garde art as Bie-modernist art.

icism was a powerful one, one that was both an aesthetic criticism and a criticism of society. Therefore, the international reputation of China's contemporary avant-garde art comes from this response to China's realistic appeals and social needs. Works of Zhang Xiaogang (Picture 1), Yue Minjun (Picture 2), or Fang Lijun (Picture 3) reflect and criticize the Cultural Revolution and the reality of Bie-modern society. Other works by artists like Meng Yan (Picture 4) and Wang Wangwang (Picture 5) also belong to this category of Bie-modernist works, which, as we stated earlier, eliminate or remove the pseudo-modernity of the Bie-modern in order to establish a true kind of modernity. However, the reason why China's humanities cannot exert the same international influence as that of Chinese contemporary art lies in the lack of critical spirit in Bie-modernism. Why is this so? The image of art is greater than previously thought. Most Bie-modernist art uses metaphors and hints that the audience can understand, but the art administrator cannot confirm what the idea of a given artistic image is or might be. On the contrary, the humanities need to be clear and precise in their expression. As a result, its criticisms will be expressly limited by China's political and cultural thought management system. Once the humanities in China acquire the modernity of contemporary Chinese avant-garde art, they will be at the forefront of the world.

Gao Minglu says that China's avant-garde art has disappeared since the political turmoil at the end of the 1980s, that it has become the art of everyday life and of the so-called "cynical realism," that—since 2000—it only exists as museum art.¹⁴ However, I think that the avant-garde art that was famous at home and abroad in the 1990s is still fruitful now. As a representative of "cynical realism," Fang Lijun says in the recent "Turning Point" exhibition in Shanghai that "it can no longer be deceived."¹⁵ Yue Minjun's work was evaluated as laughing not only at "socialist things," but also at the history of the pre-modern Chinese.¹⁶ These bold statements are barely visible in the humanities and social sciences literature since the 1990s. Actually, I have called Erjavec's "internal causes" a

¹⁴ Gao Minglu, *The Wall: Reshaping Contemporary Chinese Art*, Beijing: China's People University Publishing House, 2006, pp. 58–59 and 155.

¹⁵ Fang Lijun: "We would rather be called lost, boring, parlous, pimped, confused, but no longer be deceived. Stop educating us with old methods, any dogmas will be questioned 10000 times, denied, and thrown into the dump." See *Turning Point—40 Years Chinese Contemporary Art*, in Long Gallery, June 2018, Shanghai.

¹⁶ Zhi Yu, *Primary Form in Re-idol: Yue Minjun*, Hu Bei Province Gallery, December 2017.

desire for doctrine or *Zhuyi* since 2012, when I published my article, “Chinese Aesthetics: The Bustle and the Absence of *Zhuyi*/ism” in *Exploration and Free Views*. In my opinion, we can develop our voice and have international dialogue with Western scholars only by proposing our own *Zhuyi* or -ism. The reason why China’s philosophy and humanities develop slowly and suffer from aphasia is that they lack independent and original discourse, thought and theoretical systems. In such a situation, we must create various and independent *Zhuyi*.

However, the construction of *Zhuyi* is not easy.

First, contemporary Chinese scholars’ capacities and resources, as many western scholars know well, are limited. Second, the Chinese humanities are separated from contemporary art, which forms the soil that nourishes aesthetics and philosophy. Third, western recognition is still an accepted standard that strongly influences and assimilates Chinese scholars. All of this does not support the construction of *Zhuyi*.

However, because *Zhuyi* is always regarded as great wisdom that relates to world view and methodology, in order to understand the degree of civilization of a country, one has to examine the development of that country’s philosophy. The development of philosophy is not in contradiction with the development of art. Whether China can become a truly modern society or just remain a Bi-modern country, the development of its *Zhuyi* together with philosophy and the humanities is particularly important.

In short, China’s avant-garde art is a call for and expression of modernity, and it has an obvious reflexive and critical nature. However, due to the various publishing regulations and restrictions of the authorities, China’s humanities are not able to tell the truth in the face of reality and thus have more pseudo-modern attributes than properly modern ones. Therefore, in order to develop, the Chinese humanities are very much in need of learning from the experience of China’s avant-garde art in being successfully exported overseas. Ideologically, however, it is also necessary to learn from the spirit of reflection and criticism of China’s contemporary avant-garde art. Only when China’s humanities study the path of reflection and criticism can it be possible to turn needs into ideals and ideals into reality, so that it will be possible to be among the best in the world,

even though this means a great risk to Chinese scholars, even sometimes at the cost of one's own right to speech.

Why Are the Chinese Humanities Voice Rather than Speech?

Since my theory of Bie-modern was first published in the journal *Exploration and Free Views* in December 2014, it has aroused a great deal of attention and heated discussion at home and abroad. European scholars, such as Erjavec, Ženko, and Benčin, and American scholars, such as Keaton Wynn, Judy Orton Grissett, Margaret Richardson, Caitlin Daglis, Xiaodi Zhou, etc., have joined in the discussion. The *Journal of Media and Art Studies* (Belgrade) has published seven articles on the theme of *Zhuyi* in English, and *Filozofski vestnik* (Ljubljana) has published two relevant articles in Serbian and English respectively. Many Chinese journals of high standing have published 13 sets of articles that have discussed this proposition, and domestic scholars have also actively participated in the discussion. Up to now, there have been more than 60 articles and three academic books published that involve research into the Bie-modern theory. Another 30 articles are in the process of being published either in Chinese or in English. These articles discuss various questions, but generally speaking, European scholars focus on the aspect of philosophical ontology and methodology (such a choice is probably due to their being authored by philosophers).

The reason why American scholars pay increasing attention to issues of Chinese history and modernity has to do with the fact that they are concerned with the feasibility and applicability of Bie-modern theory.

However, Chinese scholars lay more emphasis on the legitimacy of transforming the Bie-modern theory into a *Zhuyi*.

Since “The Center for Chinese Bie-modern Studies” (CCBMS) was founded in the United States in the spring of 2017 and the European academic journal of *Art and Media Studies* started a special column on “China and the West: *Zhuyi* and the –Isms,” the research of Bie-modern theory has deepened and intensified. Domestic scholars of aesthetics also joined the discussions on professional websites for several days. After the conference “Art: Pre-modern, Modern, Bie-modern” held in Atlanta, Georgia (USA) in October 2017, more and more American scholars, critics and art historians joined in the research of Bie-modern theory

and the discussion on Chinese Bie-modernist art. In addition, the Bie-modern Works Exhibitions, guided by the principle of “letting art speak,” were successfully held in Shanghai and in the United States in 2016, 2017 and 2018. However, Erjavec’s argument that China has no domestic demand to develop the humanities to the same high level as its avant-garde art and the Western support of his view seem to give a test for the Chinese humanities to answer. To that end, let us look at Benčin’s comment on my discussion with Erjavec again:

In relation to the Chinese position in the international humanities academia, Erjavec refers to Rancière’s distinction between voice and speech derived from Aristotle. China has a voice in international aesthetics, but not its own original speech. While this distinction is indeed useful to describe the concerns expressed by Wang in the original article and inequalities certainly exist on the world academic stage, it has to be noted that the analogy also has its limitations, since the supposedly speechless Rancière is originally talking about the repressed, i.e. the slaves, the plebs, the proletarians, etc., whose position is hardly comparable to China’s academic ambition to be more of a leader and less of a follower in the international humanities. Nevertheless, Rancière’s thought extends beyond such cases into a theory of intellectual equality, as shown by Ženko, which also has implications for how Rancière views the academic research practices.¹⁷

I believe Erjavec himself communicates with me on an equal basis, but what is “intellectual equality”? Benčin does not give an explanation. Furthermore, this so-called “intellectual equality” cannot replace the distinction between voice and speech, because this definition refers to the distinction of various categories, namely, the difference between human and animals. Maybe Prof. Erjavec has just adopted the western tradition and simply maintains that Chinese scholars cannot make speech all at once, because it takes a process before one finally gets speech instead of voice, much like what has happened in Eastern Europe or the post-socialist countries.¹⁸ However, this argument is indeed likely to arouse

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¹⁷ Benčin, “Remarks on Philosophical ‘Moments,’ on the Aesthetics of Emancipation and on the ‘Bie-modern’ in the Cinema of Jia Zhangke,” p. 58.

¹⁸ Relevant here is the following: “As Jacques Rancière reminds us, for Aristotle, man ‘is political because he possesses speech, a capacity to place the just and the unjust in common, whereas all the animal has is a voice to signal pleasure and pain. But the whole question, then, is to know who possesses speech and who merely voice.’ If, then, individuals and communities in Eastern Europe are successful in making their voice heard—this voice

controversies. Guo Yaxiong, a young Chinese scholar, believes that the distinction between voice and speech is actually a defensive measure in the republic of letters, by means of which western scholars deal with non-western heterogeneous thoughts.¹⁹

The voice-speech distinction cannot answer the question of how to identify the equal dialogues between West and non-West. In other words, when western scholars and artists start to discuss Bie-modern theories and to establish the Center for Chinese Bie-modern Studies (CCBMS), is it necessary for the voice-speech distinction insisted on only by European scholars to continue to matter?

The Bie-modern conference held in the USA in October 2017 witnessed the process of Chinese aesthetics and art theories spreading to rest of the world. The conference also indicated that Bie-modern theory is not simply a matter of making a voice but rather of speaking in our own Chinese words. When the banner with the word “Bie” (别) was hung on the administrative building of a university in the U.S. (Picture 7) and the American “Center for Chinese Bie-modern Studies” uses “Bie” (别) as its name (Picture 6), it shows that Chinese aesthetics and arts are not just making a voice but speaking in their own language, which is the speech of academia, that is, of *Zhuyi*. There is no better representation than this.²⁰

Coincidentally, Ženko and Benčin, both of whom participated in the discussion, published some relatively objective comments on Bie-modern theory when they defended Erjavec. All of these comments highly praise Bie-modern theory. Ženko says,

stretching as speech from the sociopolitical realm to the artistic and cultural ones—then they have taken a political stance and have effected action toward others, themselves, and their place in the world as subjects.” See Aleš Erjavec, “Eastern Europe, Art, and the Politics of Representation,” *boundary 2* 41, no. 1 (2014), pp. 53–54.

¹⁹ Guo Yaxiong, “Disenchanted the Distinction between Voice and Speech: Rethinking of the Construction of National Philosophy in Bie-modern Era,” *Exploration and Free Views*, no. 7 (2017), pp. 72–76.

²⁰ See Wang Duo, “Which Kind of New Theory Offered by Shanghai Scholar Lets Western Scholars Reflect Themselves and Sets up CCBMS?” *Shanghai Perspective News*, 11 November 2017, p. 39.

A good case in point is the Time spatialization theory of Bie-modern, developed by Prof. Wang. The theory that he developed is not “extended from Western space theories, neither the application of them, but the generalization of China’s reality.”²¹

I think, Ženko understands me well. After all, the characteristics of the Bie-modern era are distinct because they are intertwined with the modern, pre-modern, and post-modern, which is quite different from western synchronic social form and historical stages of development (modern replacing the pre-modern, post-modern exceeding the modern). Bie-modern is neither modern nor pre-modern nor post-modern.

Ženko writes,

Bie-modern that has been developed in order to grasp the historical stage of development in China is still related to the West, however, not as a translation, but, in words of Rancière, as a bridge, “which is a passage, but it is also distance maintained.” The materiality of this historical stage, however, keeps two approaches at an equal distance, and enables a verification of the theory.²²

Ženko, who uses Rancière’s theory of equality to give Bie-modern theory an equal position, declares that the relation between Chinese humanities and Western humanities is not that of teacher and student, but rather a relationship between equals. Is this opinion still concerned with the distinction between voice and speech?

Benčin goes much further. He writes,

Badiou uses the Hegelian concept of the “concrete universal” to explain how philosophy, even though it addresses itself to all, has particular cultural and national characteristics. Great outbursts of philosophical creativity with a universal reach, he claims, are characterized by the moments in time and the specific places in which they appear. I believe that the concept of a “philosophical

²¹ Ernest Ženko, “Lesson in Equality: Some Remarks on the Development of Chinese Aesthetics,” *Conference Proceedings of International Academic Seminar on Discourse Innovation and Bie-modern Problem in Art and Aesthetics*, September 2016, p. 123.

²² *Ibid.*

moment” is very close to what was discussed by Wang as *Zhuyi*. Badiou cites two historical and one contemporary European philosophical moment: the Greek moment, which lasted for a couple hundred years between Parmenides and Aristotle; the even shorter German moment between Kant and Hegel; and finally, the French moment in the second half of the 20th century from Sartre to Deleuze (Badiou eventually counts himself in as the last figure of this moment).²³

Although Benčín also defended Erjavec’s assertion of a dichotomy theory, the Western tradition of distinction between voice and speech finally vanishes when he connects the theory of the Bie-modern with the “moment of philosophy.” If the Bie-modern *Zhuyi* can really become a human philosophy, as Benčín has said, China will become a philosophical empire in the world, one side of philosophical quadrangle, or even in a higher position beyond these. However, after getting the encouragement from building a philosophical quadrangle proposed by Erjavec, and at the same time suffering from the embarrassment of the voice-speech distinction, shall Chinese scholars become rashly and blindly optimistic?

I do not think so.

Erjavec claims that his article that he does not stop at the dichotomy between humans and animals; he instead admits that a process is needed in order to get from voice to speech. This process has been experienced by “post-socialist” countries in Eastern Europe.²⁴ In any case, Erjavec’s claim of dichotomy is still a challenge to the humanities in China. Is there any speech in China now? If this point of view had been put forward five years ago, it would indeed have posed a problem, because at that time, as pointed out in my articles published in 2012,²⁵ and 2016,²⁶ China did not have any internationally influential *Zhuyi* other than German Marxism since 1949. But now the situation has changed. Since I proposed Bie-modernism in 2014, China has had independent and free *Zhuyi* which

²³ Benčín, “Remarks on Philosophical ‘Moments,’ on the Aesthetics of Emancipation and on the ‘Bie-modern’ in the Cinema of Jia Zhangke,” p. 56.

²⁴ Erjavec, “Eastern Europe, Art, and the Politics of Representation,” pp. 53–54.

²⁵ Wang Jianjiang, “The Bustle and the Absence of *Zhuyi*: The Example of Chinese Aesthetics,” *Exploration and Free Views*, no. 2 (2012), pp. 22–26.

²⁶ Jianjiang, “‘Quadrilateral in Philosophy’ and Bie-modernism,” *Exploration and Free Views*, no. 9 (2016), pp. 80–86.

is popular in the world and is equal to the modern and post-modern concepts of the West. This is what Bie-modernism is all about.

The core views of this doctrine are as follows:

- (1) The Bie-modern is a hybrid of the three primary stages in human history, namely, feudalism, socialism, and capitalism (or modernity, pre-modernity, and post-modernity). Bie-modern looks like the modern in the chronicle of history, but actually it is non-modern. It is the coexistence of authentic modernity and doubtful modernity. Therefore, Bie-modernism is the distinction between authentic modernity and pseudo-modernity, which means the establishment of true modernity. Compared with European and American countries entering post-modern society, China has not completely entered the modern world. In the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2017, it was that basic modernization cannot be achieved until 2035. Therefore, the biggest problem for China today is the lack of sufficient modernity. Even compared to the post-socialist countries in Eastern Europe mentioned by Erjavec, China still lacks modernity. This can be related to the reality of three aspects. First, more than 20 million people are waiting for poverty alleviation by the Chinese government. Second, hundreds of thousands of migrant people without registered residence membership, a social system for the past 3,000 years in Beijing, where they are regarded as the “low-end population,” were sent away in the winter of 2017. Last, more than 1.3 million corrupt officials were officially documented. They all share a feudal patriarchal ideology, an emperor’s awareness of the country, feudal authoritarianism, feudal superstitions, hierarchical concepts, a prioritization of sentiment over the law, and the tradition of acting in accordance with unspoken rules. It is no longer a problem that post-modern and post-socialist countries face or something they can understand. However, Bie-modern issues exist not only in China, but also in countries such as Iran and Turkey, where democratic systems and religious authorities are intertwined and mingled with each other, though because of their religious traditions, they lack the so-called socialist stage and are therefore different from China. Many countries in East Asia look like they are Bie-modern, such as India where democratic structures do exist, but there is no socialism. The status of women is low, and social material supply is not sufficient; again, there is something that sets them apart from China. But Bie-modern issues

(that is, pseudo-modern issues) exist ubiquitously. Bie-modern theory has international universality because it is connected with pseudo-modernity and real modernity together. Therefore, the applicability of Bie-modern theory is not limited to China.

- (2) Bie-Modernism claims that everyone, although he or she still lives in a Bie-modern society, regardless of race, ethnicity, nation, wealth, poverty, strength, or weakness, and whether or not he or she is working, so long as he or she was born in this country, has a share in this country and society, namely, the life stocks. It is not related to a religious savior or to the leader, party, or government that controls the power of the state. Therefore, he or she has the inherent right to reap without sowing, just as the members born in the family naturally have the equal right to share food, safety, and convenience. This right is sacred and inviolable.
- (3) The settlement of the problem of disparity between the rich and the poor in the Bie-modern era, which has always plagued human society and caused countless revolutions and riots that bring about great damage to society, is different from the Marxist theory of destroying class society through the elimination of the bourgeoisie. It is believed that the solution to this human problem is to get rid of the proletariat rather than the bourgeoisie. The purpose of getting rid of the proletariat is to allow everyone to truly acquire and enjoy his or her share in the society, thereby carrying out the exchange of capital and thus qualifying equality. This exchange in the sense of equality is the foundation of democratic freedom, fairness, and justice. For this point, we have seen the hope that has sprung from the establishment of various social welfare systems in Europe.
- (4) With the unimaginable progress of AI and technology, the proletariat will become an extra class. If a member of this “extra or unemployed class” cannot become a bourgeoisie who enjoys the life stocks, he will inevitably become a part of a discriminated and oppressed class, one primed to become a rebelling class, a revolutionary class, and a destructive class of the sort that Marxism expected and that will eventually hinder the development of mankind. Therefore, the eradication of the proletariat and the idea of life stocks that will make a capitalist bourgeoisie of each member of the proletariat have become the shared mission of human society in the Bie-modern era.

- (5) The ideological and cultural development in the Bie-modern era does not choose the way to go after the post-modernism of the West, but first distinguishes modernity from authenticity and the pseudo by establishing a true modernity. This modernity includes natural share rights, democratic and free thinking, principles of fairness and justice, social welfare protection, legal system, etc. Achieving true modernity is not to follow the path of Western post-modern society, but to look back to the Bie-modern society after Western post-modernism so as to fully utilize the positive results of modernism and post-modernism to realize the modernity of our information age. That is, the modernization of multi-dimensions (materials, ideas, systems, technologies, services, and souls) can be realized quickly and easily with the help of informationization.
- (6) Emphasizing the existence and extension of Bie-modern aesthetic form in present-day China, maintaining the diversity of cultures and aesthetics, inheriting from traditional aesthetic spirit and forms, and interacting with the Western aesthetic form need to be implemented so as to set up an aesthetic morphological system with Chinese characteristics.
- (7) We should encourage a leapfrogging pause in the establishment of a democratic system, the inheritance and development of cultural heritage, the genre of art, and the formation of academic schools. Countries and districts such as the Soviet Union, Burma, Malaysia, and China's Taiwan have undergone a sudden democratic transition without a violent revolution. Many in China working in culture, art, and academia have succeeded in cutting off the successor and the inherited person, thereby realizing new cultural forms, artistic schools, and academic schools. Although Bie-modernism does not speak of "aesthetic revolution" like Rancière, Erjavec,²⁷ etc., it is in fact a kind of political revolution, involving politics, economy, art, and culture. It is a full-scale revolution in the way of thinking.

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These above-mentioned theories are unique in China, and they are also innovative in the history of human thought as a whole. The construction and promotion of these theories are related not only to the shallow needs of China's discourse

²⁷ Aleš Erjavec, ed., *Aesthetic Revolution and Twentieth-Century Avant-Garde Movements*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2015.

power, but also to the influence on the entire human being of the development of any country in the context of globalization. Therefore, Bie-modernism as an innovative theory not only happens to be a manifestation of China's domestic demand, but also a clear-cut and powerful speech backed by a loud voice. When Bie-modernism spreads worldwide with its works and writings, it communicates equally with international philosophy, aesthetics, and arts. Is it far from embracing the "moment of philosophy"?

Why is there uncertainty among Western philosophers about the Chinese humanities?

The three articles in which Erjavec addresses my work indicate both his spiritual process of researching Chinese humanities and his complicated feelings. Despite the promising future in which Chinese philosophy, aesthetics, and the humanities more broadly are likely to form part of a philosophical quadrangle, he limits the promise of the voice-speech distinction and ultimately feels doubtful about whether China truly has the need to establish a world-class discipline of humanities. Sometimes his complicated emotion appears as a pain. In his second article discussing me, he expresses his feelings in this way:

I could go on and on ... [P]rof. Wang has touched upon a neuralgic spot in our minds. He has noticed that somehow a part of the ground beneath us is missing. It is through this rabbit's hole (remember *Alice in Wonderland*?) that we may start consciously to ponder upon issues arising from the issues that he has brought forth. In other words, I definitely think that he is "up to something" and that this something deeply concerns all of us even if we don't yet know how and perhaps not even why.²⁸

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How could I touch his sore spot? To be sure, I have given him the truth of Bie-modern reality and shock him. Maybe he is in the midst of realizing that the base of researching China is missing. Perhaps he has also discovered an incision or "rabbit hole" through which one can observe and even solve Chinese issues.

²⁸ Erjavec, "Some Additional Remarks Concerning Issues Opened by Prof. Jianjiang Wang," p. 147.

I see the Bie-modern as an innovative theory concerning social form that can be used to explain the characteristics of present-day society. It can distinguish between true and false modernity and thereby establish a real society. In brief, it is an organic combination of social morphological description and social morphological transformation.

As Bie-modern theories are rooted in the specific social and cultural backgrounds of China, they can grip the reality of China closely and develop a set of theories on society, culture, economy, art, and aesthetic issues. These include Bie-modern theory, Bie-modernism, time spatialization theory, four-stages of development theory, aesthetic morphology theory, harmonious collusion theory, self-renewal theory, leapfrog-pause theory, theory of cutting the link between inheritance and innovation, the proposition of Chinese-Western-Marxism-I, theory of looking back from post-modern, and so on. These theories construct a system of Chinese speech and surpass the Chinese governmental voice of “going abroad” so that we can open an equal dialogue with western ideologies and art. This dialogue should be regarded by Western scholars as a pioneering work of human philosophy that comes from the construction of a philosophical quadrangle with Chinese philosophy and humanities included. However, if it is constrained by the tradition of European centrism and is to be evaluated only by the hoary old distinction between voice and speech, then it will inevitably produce confusion and pain.

On the other side, Erjavec’s expectations for and hesitations about the theory of the Bie-modern just represent the uncertain state in which we currently find ourselves when it comes to the process of the Chinese humanities spreading into the world during the Bie-modern era. The Bie-modern period is full of randomness, which may lead to a real modern society and may go backward to the pre-modern society. It is this randomness that has caused the uncertainty among Western scholars about whether or not to study Chinese issues or about how to evaluate Chinese academic circles.

What was not expected, but is nonetheless very interesting, is that the discussions on *Zhuyi* and Bie-modernity between Erjavec and myself have actually reached a high degree of consistency in methodology. Erjavec’s dichotomy between voice and speech is the same as the difference between modernity and pseudo-modernity. It is a distinction between different things, although he

stresses the disparity between people and animals, while my focus is on different social forms, yet both of us embody the methodological philosophy of difference, embodying the core values of the Bie-modernism distinction (Bie, 别). The word not only has methodological significance in China, but also has ontological significance. Chinese philosophy speaks of the unity of the heavens and the man. Western philosophy speaks of the separation of the subject and the object, but they cannot be separated from the rules of distinction. The universe, life, and society are all formed by divisions and unity. Therefore, the word of Bie has ontological significance. Although my cultural background is different from Erjavec's, and our philosophical perspectives are different as well, we have finally achieved a dialogue on the methodology and ontology of philosophy based on distinction.

Just as the old Chinese saying goes, adopting the good qualities or suggestions of others, one can remedy one's own defects. Erjavec's complicated views have illustrated the following issues:

1. The problem of *Zhuyi* is of universal significance, and China may form a key part of the philosophical quadrangle due to the establishment of *Zhuyi* and its approaching moment of human philosophy. The suspicions and disputations about *Zhuyi* held by Chinese and western scholars do not mean that *Zhuyi* has been outdated, but on the contrary, they demonstrate the value of our discussions about *Zhuyi*, which is being constructed at the right time. Only by the way of proposing *Zhuyi* can those countries with underdeveloped thoughts transform their voice into speech, achieve self-transcendence, and take their place on the stage of international philosophy.
2. Although Bie-modernism theory has been accepted and studied by world-wide scholars, Chinese philosophy still has a long way to go before it finally forms one side of the international philosophical quadrangle. The reasons are as follows: firstly, no other Chinese academic *Zhuyi*, which differs from the political tool of dominance, such as reports from the top, has come to the world except Bie-modern theory; secondly, Erjavec worries that the construction of *Zhuyi* is still under the control of nationalism, such as "five-year planning model"; and thirdly, there are the limitations of instrumentalized Marxism and a wide gap between Chinese aesthetics and its contemporary art.

3. The significance of Erjavec's argument is that, on the one hand, he has given us an expectation of constructing one side of this international philosophical quadrangle, so let us be confident. On the other hand, he has forced us to retain a clear mind, to recognize our own path, to find our own background, and to understand the internationalism of the academic world.

4. Erjavec's argument may manifest the complex mentality of many western philosophers when they consider the renaissance of Chinese culture, and this may be viewed as an incentive by Chinese scholars. First of all, we must affirm that Erjavec provides a western scholar's perspective of considering the Chinese humanities and a frame of reference for their further development. His view on Chinese issues is sincere and worth respecting, because the construction of thought is always accompanied by doubts and criticism rather than slavish praise. Second, his insight is profound, and for having training and experience in the history of aesthetics and art, he points out the kinds of dangers that can eventuate when the construction of theories become detached from the practice of contemporary art.

Erjavec holds that the Chinese humanities have no need to lead the world, which raises a question of great value. This is how the Chinese see the creation of the freedom of thought (how to express it freely and how it can attract international attention). Compared with China's propaganda of going abroad and speaking loudly, Erjavec's question is also a matter that is more universal than the narrow-minded nationalist conception of competition. The value of this issue lies in the fact that a European scholar has used both explicit and implicit Chinese methods to activate the Chinese people's internal needs for the development of consciousness within the humanities, and this issue has the potential to cause more discussion or growth.

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All in all, whether it is Erjavec's quadrilateral idea, Ženko's concept of equal dialogue, Benčin's quoted philosophical moment, or Aristotle's and Rancière's claim of dichotomy, all of them are using existing Western ideas. The philosophical theory system examines and tests the doctrine of Bie-modernism from China. Although the Bie-modern theory comes from the generalization of China's social form, it still cannot be separated from the recognition of human universal values and cannot be separated from the recognition of Western philosophy. However, on the other hand, even if it is not fully recognized by

Western philosophy as yet, the Bie-modern theory still has its influence in China and internationally, and it has already had an impact.

The American philosopher Richard Rorty said that classical philosophers live for raising questions, whereas modern philosophers live for transforming questions. Accordingly, we could transform Erjavec's question from "Is it necessary for Chinese aesthetics to lead the world like the Chinese arts?" into "When will Chinese aesthetics lead the world like the Chinese arts?" I do not know whether Prof. Erjavec will agree with my transformation of his proposition.

Appendix



Picture 1. Zhang Xiaogang's *Bloodline: Big Family No. 3*
179 × 229 cm, 1995

Bloodline: Big Family No. 3 is the most important and classic work among Zhang Xiaogang's *Bloodline* series. The tension of history and politics hidden behind the work can be pursued via the well-ordered portrait-like format and the image icons of the Cultural Revolution (Mao badges, red armbands, and the costume of Little Red Guards). Spots on the faces of the figures and red lines on their bodies represent the memory of history and their blood relationship. Their similar zombie-like faces signify a soul deficit. On behalf of Chinese art, the work once appeared in many important international exhibitions and at last was sold for HK \$47,3675 million at Sotheby's in April 2008.



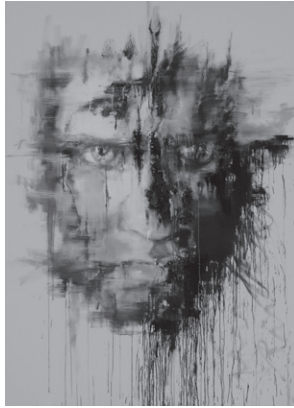
Picture 2. Yue Minjun's *Execution*
1996

Execution is a deconstruction and reconstruction of Francisco Goya's classic work, *The Third of May 1808*. With a jocose technique, the artist reassembles pre-modern, modern and post-modern elements. He substitutes Chinese political elements for the original figures and background. The atmosphere of terror and oppression caused by executing righteous men in the original version has changed into a relaxing atmosphere in which people are playing games by pointing finger-guns at people. The dark background of midnight is replaced with a scarlet wall under midday sunshine. The picture is dealt with in a typical Bie-modern artistic technique. It depicts that there is a fight against pre-modernism in real life. Behind the visual impact between pre-modernism and post-modernism, the artist deconstructs the meaning of the sublime, subverts the hero image, and scoffs at the executioner's ugly face. In that way, it produces a spoof effect. *Execution* was sold for US \$5.9 million / RMB 43.5 million at London's Sotheby's, which set a new record.



Picture 3. Fang Lijun's 2008 *Spring*
180 × 140 cm, 2008

During his peak period in 2008, Fang Lijun produced his most representative work, *Spring 2008*. In it, an overburdened boat is laden with fruit-like bald heads and drifts in a boundless sea. Living creatures are flying around the boat, living together or dying together with it. The work is symbolic. It transfers the feeling of disappointment about modern time into the salvation of pre-modern times. Behind satire, there is a Bie-modern hesitation: revitalization or re-enchantment? Back to modern times or pre-modern times? The overall style of Fang Lijun's work is adopting Pop art techniques to reveal the connection between modernism and pre-modernism while using its "bald head composition" to produce the artistic effect of helplessness, absurd, hesitation and comedy. The work was sold for RMB 5,726,160 / HK \$2,440,000 / US\$ 312,158,18 at Sotheby's Hong Kong Autumn in 2013.



Picture 4. Men Yan's *Happiness*
170 x 230 cm, 2007-2017

Meng Yan uses black and white oil portraits to uncover the soul of Chinese people. His paintings have been exhibited several times in Europe.



Picture 5. Wang Wangwang's *Meat Hills*
Color enlargement, 60 x 100 cm, 2007

The “Meat Hills” and “Money Hills” series adopt the traditional cavalier perspective in method, but use the piling of bodies or dollars to deconstruct both ink (the most important medium in traditional Chinese painting) and artistic conception. Both seem to have the form of Chinese ink painting but in fact are mixed with the artist’s present experience of Chinese and western concepts.

Their core is no longer a depiction of mental imagery, but the accumulation of the debris of the symbols of desire and the loss of human spirit and faith in the world of desire. The same is true of series such as “Find God in Money Hills” and “Find God in Vehicle Hills.”



Picture 6. The Studio of Center for Chinese Bie-Modern Studies (CCBMS) at GSW, USA



Picture 7. Bie-modern as a Slogan (別) Hung on a U.S. University Administration Building

Guo Yaxiong*

Surpassing the “Speech / Voice Distinction”: Rethinking the Construction of Chinese Philosophy in the Era of Bie-Modern (Doubtful Modernity)**

Recently, the question of whether Chinese academia should construct its own “zhuyi” (-isms)¹ or not has been given great attention by some Chinese and Western scholars.² In the discussion, several Chinese scholars, such as professor Wang Jianjiang at Shanghai Normal University, are eager to construct a new

** This study is supported by the National Social Science Program (17CZX027).

¹ In modern Chinese, “zhuyi” has multiple meanings, such as, “the main idea,” “a systematized thought on the world, society and academic problem,” “thinking model,” “regime, economic system,” etc. Cf. *Ci Hai*, (Shanghai: Shanghai Ci Shu Press, 1999), p. 3028. In some contexts, the significance of “zhuyi” is close to “philosophy,” “theory,” and “thought” in English. We use this word to highlight the multicultural perspective and goals of the construction of “zhuyi” in current Chinese academia.

² There have been a number of papers, international conferences and workshops on the topic, such as Aleš Erjavec, “Zhuyi: From Absence to Bustle, Some Comments on Jianjiang Wang’s Article ‘The Bustle and the Absence of Zhuyi,’” *Exploration and Free Views*, No. 9 (2016), pp. 75–80; Wang Jianjiang, “The Bustle and Absence of Zhuyi,” *Filozofski vestnik*, XXXVII, No. 1 (2016), pp. 157–178; Aleš Erjavec, “Some Additional Remarks Concerning Issues Opened by Prof. Wang Jianjiang,” *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, No. 13 (2017), pp. 143–147; Aleš Erjavec, “Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of Zhuyi,” in *Bie-modern Art and Theory International Academic Conference*, July, 2017; Ernest Ženko, “Lesson in Equality: Some Remarks on the Development of Chinese Aesthetics,” *Journal of Northwest Normal University*, 54, No. 5 (2017), pp. 23–28; Keaton Wynn, “Differing Modernisms: Similar Art, Different Meaning Zhuyi for a Bie-modern Age,” *Art Theory Innovation in Bie-modern Era*, September 2016; “From Postmodern to Bie-modern,” *Shanghai Culture*, No. 8 (2017), pp. 61–68; Rok Benčin, “Remarks on Philosophical ‘Moments,’ on the Aesthetics of Emancipation,” *Bie-modern Art and Theory International Academic Conferences*, July, 2017; Wang Jianjiang, “The Appeal and Construction of Zhuyi,” *Exploration and Free Views*, No. 12 (2014), pp. 72–77; “Bie-modern: Beyond Aesthetic and after Post-modern,” *Journal of Shanghai Normal University (Philosophy & Social Sciences Edition)* 44, No. 1 (2015), pp. 5–14; “Quadrilateral in Philosophy, Aesthetics and Humanities and Bie-modernism: Comments in Aleš Erjavec,” *Exploration and Free Views*, No. 9 (2016), pp. 80–86; “The Space of Heroes and the Hero Games,” *Chinese Journal of Literary Criticism*, No. 2 (2017), pp. 39–47; *Bie-modern: Space Encounter and Times Spans* (Beijing: China Social Science Press, 2017). There are also a number of international meetings focusing on the topic, such as *Art: Pre-modern, Modern, Post-modern and Bie-modern*, held by the Center for Chinese Bie-Modern Studies

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philosophical model in China's own discourse. Some European scholars admit that Chinese scholars have many quite persuasive insights and that contemporary Chinese visual art has been successfully integrated into global visual art circles, but they still insist the opportunity for China to conceive of its own “*zhuyi*” has not arrived yet. According to some Western researchers' opinions, Chinese scholars' expectation that “Chinese aesthetics will be developed to the same extent as the Western” cannot completely meet the actual need in China's present-day academia.³ In other words, there is indeed an *absence* of “*zhuyi*,” original philosophy, and aesthetics in China, but this does not mean Chinese aestheticians or philosophers must *bustle* to propose their own “*zhuyi*.”

I think Western scholars' queries have two reasons. Firstly, in the context of globalization and transnational academia, to call for a national “-ism” or “*zhuyi*” may raise the suspicion of “nationalism” or “fundamentalism.” Secondly, the given international academic circle or “republic of letters” has a set of rigorous conventions and terminology.

Therefore, conceptions or ideas with national characteristics may not be accepted by the international academic community. Accordingly, if a thought or discourse wants to find a place in the international academia, it should share “*speech*” otherwise, it is just a meaningless “*voice*.”

This distinction of “*voice*” and “*speech*” mentioned above is not just a simple metaphor, but a typical thinking model adopted by a substantial part of Western scholars when they talk about non-Western thought. This model can be traced back to Aristotle, who discusses the beginning of politics in *Politics*:

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Nature, as we often say, makes nothing in vain, and man is the only animal whom she has endowed with the gift of speech. And where as mere sound is but an indication of pleasure or pain and is therefore found in other animals (for their nature attains to the perception of pleasure and pain and the intimation of them to one another, and no further), the power of speech is intended to set

(CCBMS) and Georgia Southwestern State University, October, 2017; and *Art Theory Innovation in Bie-modern Era*, held by Shanghai Normal University, September 2016.

³ Aleš Erjavec, “Trivial Truths Related to Further Comments on the Absence of *Zhuyi*,” in *Bie-modern Art and Theory International Academic Conference*, July 2017.

forth the expedient and inexpedient, and likewise the just and unjust. And it is a characteristic of man that he alone has any sense of good and evil, of just and unjust, and the association of living beings who have this sense makes a family and a state. (1253a)⁴

In Aristotle's text, the distinction between "speech" and "voice" is not only a remarkable difference between human and animal but also a powerful symbol for the expedient and inexpedient, the just and unjust, the comprehensible and incomprehensible. This distinction is given much attention by contemporary French philosopher Jacques Rancière. According to Rancière, in the context of Western political philosophy, any voice which may encroach on speech's own privilege will be expelled from a social community because such an animal voice will "introduce trouble into the logos and into its political realization as *analogia* of parts of the community."⁵ To maintain a proper "analogia," a given community will adopt a set of "police" strategies for punishing those movements or thoughts that will pose threats to certain rules.⁶

As we see, this distinction between speech and voice is also a "police strategy" in the Western academic community in a deeper way. Once non-Western thought is accepted by the Western academic community or "republic of letters," it will change the constant "analogia" of the given community, which many Western scholars try very hard to avoid. Some scholars compare Western and non-Western cultures to prove the superiority of "speech." However, supposing a thought is an instance of meaningless and incomprehensible "voice," how can comparative study be possible in the first place?

In this essay, I want to discuss the above questions. I will inquire into the double meaning of the concept "Chinese philosophy," the inherent structure of the

⁴ Aristotle, *Politics*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885, p. 4.

⁵ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, translated by Julie Rose, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 22.

⁶ The terms "analogia" and "police" are both important concepts in Rancière's philosophy. "Analogia" comes from the ancient Greek "ana-logos," which means "proportion" and "analogy." Rancière uses this term for discussing speech's proportion which is arranged by "logos" in a given community. In Rancière's text, "police" means a set of rules, including language, social system, ethical and aesthetic standards, etc. that are shared by all the people in a given community. Any consciousness or movement which breaks the rule will be refuted or punished by the "police."

“speech / voice distinction,” and its operational model. I will also observe various ways of surpassing this distinction. After that, I will introduce Bie-modern (Doubtful Modernity) theory in order to find a solution to the “speech / voice distinction” problem.

Speech or Voice? Double Signification of the Concept “Chinese Philosophy”

Interestingly, as early as 1900s, when they began to discuss whether China’s traditional thought could be viewed as philosophy or not, Chinese scholars have adopted a model of thinking similar to that of the “speech / voice distinction.” Wang Guowei, a crucial person in the process of the modernization of the Chinese academic world, argued that “philosophy” is indeed contained in Chinese traditional thought. He also believed that the research field of philosophy is to deal with the universal issue of the human being rather than that of a given nation. Since the Chinese is a part of humankind, China certainly has had its own philosophy.⁷ Because of the remarkable consistency of their research objects, traditional Chinese thought is the same as Western philosophy. It seems that Wang Guowei’s convincing argument not only ends the discussion “whether Chinese has philosophy or not” but also sharply suggests the question itself is irrational. Besides Wang Guowei, this way to stop the argument about “Chinese Philosophy” is also adopted by many influential scholars, such as Hu Shi, Feng Youlan, Zhang Dainian, etc. They all admitted there are plenty of differences between Chinese and Western philosophy, but they also believed that these differences are the result of history and culture rather than of race or nation.

However, a cultural fundamentalist may claim that, since “philosophy” has been a part of traditional Chinese disciplines, it is unnecessary to introduce Western philosophy into China. To respond to those who despised the Western academic world, some founders of Chinese philosophy engaged in inquiring into the difference between Chinese thought and Western philosophy in order to construct Chinese philosophy according to Western standards. For example, Yan Fu, who translated many Western important writings, believed Western ac-

⁷ Wang Guowei, *Selected Essay about Philosophy and Aesthetics*, Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 1999, p. 4.

ademic thought is theorized and systematized, while Chinese academic is just a rough summation of experience.⁸ Cai Yuanpei, a great educator, clearly stated,

Traditional Chinese academic is never systematically integrated and therefore it cannot be viewed as "science" or "discipline" in modern sense. The urgent task for Chinese scholars is to construct systemized Chinese philosophy and aesthetics by referring to the Western academic form. To complete this work, one must be familiar with the Western academic standard and must have profoundly studied the history of Western philosophy.⁹

We can see there are two paradoxical answers to "whether the Chinese have philosophy" given by Wang Guowei and Cai Yuanpei respectively. The two competing attitudes clearly reveal the double signification of the term "Chinese philosophy." On the one hand, according to Wang Guowei, and similarly to Western philosophy, traditional Chinese academics also deal with general issues that cannot be replaced by any Western thought. On the other hand, Chinese academia lacks a rigorous way to express such valuable thoughts. A theorized and systemized "Chinese philosophy," which is close to the West, is not yet established. Obviously, Wang Guowei's answer focuses on the field, while Cai Yuanpei views "philosophy" as a discipline, i.e., as a thinking model and a way of academic study, whose standards must refer to those of the West. If we view Wang Guowei and Cai Yuanpei's ideas in the perspective of the "speech / voice distinction," we can summarize their opinions in the following way: ancient Chinese thought possesses valuable "voice," but it does not comprise understandable "speech," because it does not meet the requirements of "modern academic" standards, that is, those of "Western academia." To this extent, the conception of "Chinese philosophy" is a curious mixture of "voice" and "speech."

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Proposing the conception of "Chinese philosophy" is an important event in the development history of Chinese academic activity. It reveals that Chinese scholars have realized the defect of ancient academia and have attempted to restore traditional Chinese thought in an international perspective. From this time on, Chinese thought is not isolated but a part of "world philosophy." In this respect,

⁸ Yan Fu, *Collected Essays*, Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1986, p. 52.

⁹ Cai Yuanpei, *Collected Essays*, Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1984, p. 188.

an intrinsic connotation of “Chinese philosophy” is internationalism rather than nationalism.

The double signification of “Chinese philosophy” also reveals Chinese scholars’ complex attitude toward their academical tradition. Firstly, modern Chinese scholars have realized that it is necessary to consider the relationship between Chinese academia and the international academic community. Secondly, “Chinese philosophy” is not just an academic conception but also the transformation of the Chinese research paradigm. To construct the discipline of “Chinese philosophy” means the creation of a new type of academic “speech.” For modern Chinese scholars to demonstrate the value of traditional Chinese thought, it is crucial to transform traditional academic discourse from “voice” into “speech” by referring to the standards of the West. Many modern Chinese scholars have devoted themselves to completing this transformation, but it seems they ignore a potential problem if Chinese thought is expressed in a Western style, is it still Chinese philosophy?

The “Speech / Voice Distinction”: A Self-Deconstruction System

Although Chinese scholars have claimed that philosophy should be an indispensable part of the international republic of letters, the validity of Chinese philosophy has remained a controversial problem for Western academia. When Western scholars discuss whether Chinese thought can be considered a “philosophy” or not, the distinction between speech and voice has proven to be a typical thinking model adopted by some Western scholars.

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Take the early Jesuits to visit China, for example. As culture disseminators, Jesuits translated many Confucian classics and other works of Chinese traditional thought. In their travels, letters, and academic writings, we can find two contradictory attitudes toward China. On the one hand, China is described as a civilized country whose political institutions are highly efficient and even perfect. On the other hand, some Jesuits considered Chinese thought to be a meaningless “voice” that is short of logic and value, whereas Western philosophy, especially Christian thought, is systemized and valuable. In his journals of China, Matteo Ricci commented on Chinese moral philosophy as being comprised of

various maxims and unreliable legends.¹⁰ Eusèbe Renaudot straightforwardly claimed there is no “Erste Philosophie” (first philosophy) in China at all.¹¹

It seems that it was the Jesuit movement in which communication between Western and Chinese philosophy began, and this should have led to an international philosophy. However, this “comparative philosophy” implies the thinking model of the speech / voice distinction. According to the Jesuits, Chinese traditional thought is just incomprehensible and valueless “voice,” and comparing Western thought with Chinese simply proves that the former is “speech” and naturally superior to Chinese thought.

On the surface, the above comparative study confirms the rationality of the “speech / voice distinction,” but in the process of carrying out the comparison, the distinction is considered as being the premise, rather than the conclusion.¹² There is no doubt that Chinese classics carried their primary value for Chinese scholars and that Chinese traditional academics had their own norms and standards.¹³ However, since the Jesuits had accepted the “speech / voice distinction” before comparing the two thoughts, any evidence which could prove that Chinese thought is valuable could not be accepted and, in fact, had to be concealed. Furthermore, as we have mentioned, the “speech / voice distinction” is not just an evident mark of difference but a powerful symbol of the comprehensible and incomprehensible, etc. For a Jesuit, it is not important to find out what is the real specificity of Chinese thought; he only wants to convey the impression that Western philosophy is much better than Chinese thought. The simplest way to achieve this effect is to claim that Chinese thought is merely an instance of “voice” that is accordingly unnecessary to study. This case suggests that the boundary between voice and speech is not natural but a result of ideological construction.

¹⁰ Mathew Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Mathew Ricci*, translated by He Gaoji, Beijing: Zhong Hua Shu Ju, 1983, p. 31.

¹¹ *Jesuits's Letters on China*, vol. 3, edited by Jean Baptiste du Halde, translated by Zhu Jing, Zhengzhou: Da Xiang Publishing House, 2001, p. 285.

¹² For the point that the act of such comparisons takes the “speech / voice” distinction” as a precondition and evidence for the distinction at the same time, see Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, pp. 22–23.

¹³ For example, Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng in the Qing Dynasty proposed a set of rigorous rules for studying, which was accepted by the majority of scholars in that time.

However, since Chinese thought cannot be understood (that is to say, no one can know what the real meaning of Chinese thought is), how can Jesuits claim that Western thought is superior to the Chinese? Interestingly, as soon as someone utilizes the “speech / voice distinction” to distinguish between evaluate different cultures, he or she has to view “voice” as something understandable at once. In other words, before being disparaged, “voice” must first be considered as an instance of “speech.” This paradoxical transformation implies that the “speech / voice distinction” is an unreasonable and self-deconstructive system.

The Failure of Ways to Surpass the “Speech / Voice Distinction”

What is the real basis for the “speech / voice distinction”? We may draw some inspiration from early Western philosophers. Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz’s letters show that he found it curious whether there was metaphysics in China, and he also frankly admitted that “Erste Philosophie” in China was undeveloped. In other words, Chinese thought was not entitled to be named “philosophy,” because it did not pay attention to the problem of “being.”¹⁴ Hegel argued that Chinese thought was lower than Western language and that it was not a suitable language for studying philosophy.¹⁵ Jacques Derrida pointed out that philosophy in its nature was a production of the West, which is related to Western language, culture, and history. In dialogue with Wang Yuanhua, a famous contemporary scholar, Derrida directly claimed that China did not possess philosophy but only thought.¹⁶ Carine Defoort, a contemporary philosopher, insists it is a mistake to view Chinese thought as “philosophy” because Chinese thought lacks the fundamental and inherent elements of Western philosophy.¹⁷

According to these opinions, if Chinese thought wants to be accepted as “philosophy,” it needs to speak in a Western language and get used to the context of Western culture. Language and culture are not only the most serious setbacks

¹⁴ *German Thinkers Discussing China*, edited by Adrian Hsia, translated by Chen Aizhen etc., Nanjing: Jiangsu People’s Publishing House, 1995, pp. 8 and 19.

¹⁵ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, translated by He Lin, et al., Beijing: Commercial Press, 1959, pp. 115–122.

¹⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Collected Lectures in China*, Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press, 2003, p. 139.

¹⁷ Carine Defoort, “Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy,” *Philosophy East and West*, 51, No. 3 (2001), p. 396.

for Chinese thought but also the primary "police strategies" in the republic of letters. As sentinels, language and culture keep other thought at a distance from Western philosophy, which to some extent turns the republic of letters into a Western club. In fact, highlighting the elements of "philosophy" as another insidious form of the "speech / voice distinction" denies the possibility of two different cultures communicating with each other while keeping their own characteristics and independence respectively.

Many scholars have realized that the above thinking model is harmful for undertaking effective communication between different cultures, for surpassing this distinction, and for constructing a real international philosophy. Rein Raud points out that "philosophy" can include Eastern thought only if Western scholars expand the study field of traditional philosophy.¹⁸ However, if we do this, we may encounter an embarrassed situation. When we talk about "philosophy", we may refer to completely different disciplines and therefore drop into a "disagreement" situation as Jacques Rancière has put.¹⁹ Moreover, once non-Western thought is considered as the same as Western "philosophy", both Western and non-Western thought's unique features will be ignored. In that case, non-Western thought is admitted by the republic of letters at the expense of its own nature. It proves that expanding the field of philosophy is not a proper solution to the "speech / voice distinction," because such an expansion only strengthens it.

Some scholars, especially in Chinese academia, think the key to surpass the "speech/ voice distinction" is to find various "common principles" between Chinese and Western philosophy. For example, Ye Weilian adopts some conceptions, such as, "common principles" and "inner voice" proposed by T. S. Eliot,²⁰ and points out that the aim of international philosophy and poetics is to find out the basic differences between Western and Chinese culture while constructing "common poetics" and "common principles" to promote mutual

¹⁸ Rein Raud, "Philosophies versus Philosophy: In Defense of a Flexible Definition," *Philosophy East and West*, 56, No. 4 (2006), p. 624.

¹⁹ About the conception of "disagreement," see Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, p. x.

²⁰ T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1980, p. 22.

communication.²¹ He believes this standpoint is so suitable and flexible that it will at the same time surpass both fundamentalism and cultural imperialism.

Unfortunately, Ye Weilian's proposal is no more than a fantasy. For instance, let us study the etymology of "principle" or "yuan" (Chinese term signifying "origin"). According to etymology, "principle" is the Latin word "principium," which means "the first place and time of conduction."²² In Chinese, the original meaning of "yuan" is "the headstream of river" according to *Explanations of Simple and Compound Characters*, the first Chinese dictionary.²³ As we can see, both "principle" and "yuan" mean "beginning" and "foundation." The different "beginnings" or "foundations" (that is, diverse "principles" or "yuan") engender various cultures. In that case, since scholars such as Ye Weilian admit that cultural difference indeed exists, how can they discover the "common principle" between different cultures? This paradox suggests that cultural relativism and "common principles," which are both endorsed by Ye Weilian, cannot get along with each other.

Furthermore, as the beginning of a thing or an event, "principles" or "yuan" also conduct and control their followers. To this extent, once someone uses the concept "principle" or "yuan," he or she will construct a hierarchical system, such as, mainstream and branch, leaders and followers etc. In that case, it is impossible to surpass cultural imperialism by finding out "common principles" because such an attempt is just the reason for the establishment of cultural imperialism. In this sense, "common principle" is only a potential re-expression of the "speech / voice distinction."

Some scholars try to construct a "good international philosophy" in order to solve the conflict between Western and non-Western thought and to promote the development of international philosophy. According to American aesthetician Richard Shusterman, a "good international philosophy" has to give up cultural, national, and racial specifics so as to deal with the general prob-

²¹ Ye Weilian, *Collected Essays*, Hefei: Anhui Education Publishing House, 2002, pp. 1 and 39.

²² *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, edited by P. G. W. Glare, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968, p. 1459.

²³ Xu Shen, *Explanations of Simple and Compound Characters*, Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 1981, p. 569.

lem of humankind.²⁴ A "good international philosophy" should be based on the community of human kind, which will contain various thoughts belonging to diverse cultures. To some extent, this idea can be viewed as a replay of Christian "fellowship," i.e., Goethe's and Erich Auerbach's conception of "der Weltliteratur" (world literature).²⁵ In the name of "humankind," it seems there is no need to make a distinction between Western and Chinese culture in the first place. However, it is quite hard to prove that African-American criticism or Jewish diaspora literature has connections with academia in China today. Conversely, will a scholar who studies African-American criticism or other local cultures be guilty of fundamentalism and in turn be viewed as a "bad international philosopher" who ought to be excluded from the new republic of letters? If "a good international philosophy" can only deal with the general problem of humankind without considering a nation's or ethnicity's own specificity, then there will be no reason for developing a national philosophy. However, since a republic of letters is composed of various national philosophies, it will necessarily collapse if all regional cultures and national philosophies vanish as such. This case suggests that constructing a good international philosophy cannot rely on giving up dealing with a particular nation's own set of problems in the name of cultural universals. The "good international philosophy" project transforms the "speech / voice distinction" into a nation / world distinction, but the nature of Western-centrism is not thereby changed.

Superficially, the project of constructing a "good international philosophy" is similar to the proposal of making "world philosophy," which was proposed by Chinese scholars when they prepared to construct "Chinese philosophy" in the 1900s, but the two suggestions have different effects. The aim of Chinese scholars' desire for international philosophy is to earn an independent place for Chinese traditional thought, while the construction of "good international philosophy" will be at the cost of national philosophy altogether. Furthermore, who and how is one to judge which topic can be viewed as a "universal human problem" and ban in turn be situated in the field of "good international philosophy"?

²⁴ Richard Shusterman, "Internationalism in Philosophy: Models, Motives and Problems," *Metaphilosophy*, 28, No. 4 (1997), pp. 290–291.

²⁵ See Erich Auerbach, "Philology and Weltliteratur," translated by Jin Chengcheng, *Comparative Literature and World Literature*, No. 1 (2016), pp. 88–96.

Aleš Erjavec thinks students' own free will can lead them to find a proper field of study. He points out that the mode of operation of academia resembles that of the "market economy." There is an "invisible hand" that masters the distribution and transmission of the realm of philosophy (its topics and methods), and a student, no matter what country he or she belongs to, can choose the appropriate research field according to his or her own interests. Erjavec thinks financial support offered by governments to develop the study of national philosophical programs cannot succeed. He gives the example of Croatia, where the government had a project of developing Croatian national philosophy, even though "Croatian philosophers wanted to study Derrida, Lacan, Lyotard and the like." He reaches the conclusion that "[governmental] financial support will be generated only if such researchers and authors themselves from their own free will decide to carry out such agenda."²⁶

It seems the "free market of academia" makes students choose freely and gives them each an equal right to make their own speech. In this sense, the most popular philosophical topic will become the "universal problem of the human," making philosophy really international. However, this mode may just disguise as an optional choice that is in fact obligatory. Michel Foucault thinks the exercise of power is a "conduct of conducts" and a management of possibilities. Power means not only "confrontation" but also "conduct."²⁷ By means of the "invisible hand," the free market of philosophy conducts, or (more precisely) leads students to choose "freely." However, as we all know, Western culture is mainstream nowadays.

If we completely trust the free market of the academic community, we only obtain a set of Western, rather than international, discourses. In fact, those non-Western students just follow Western philosophy unconsciously and mistake Western topics for the universal study field. Even if the logic of today's academic community is indeed similar to the "free market," it will alert those nations who lack of original thought or "*zhuyi*" that they must create their own discourse and thus fully display their special value. Otherwise, a nation whose

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²⁶ Erjavec, "*Zhuyi*: From Absence to Bustle, Some Comments on Jianjiang Wang's Article 'The Bustle and the Absence of *Zhuyi*,'" p. 78.

²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Power*, edited by James D. Faubion, translated by Robert Hurley, et al., New York: The New Press, 1997, p. 341.

"*zhuyi*" is absent cannot equally trade with others in "the free market of philosophy."

"*Zhuyi*" Construction in the Bie-modern (Doubtful Modernity) Era

The above ways to surpass the "speech / voice distinction" are unsuccessful because they all consciously or unconsciously admit to the existence of such distinction. Firstly, no matter whether we take Rode and his endeavor to expand the connotation of the term "philosophy," or Ye Weilian and his attempt to discover the "common principle" between Western and Chinese cultures, or the disparate efforts to construct "good international philosophy," none of these strategies can avoid setting up a duality that contains speech and voice, core and margin, leaders and followers, etc. However, we have explained above that the "speech / voice distinction" is based on a self-deconstructing paradox. Secondly, surpassing the "speech / voice distinction" does not mean one must renounce distinction as such. On the contrary, the key to surpassing the "speech / voice distinction" is to realize that identity cannot be a substitute for diversity. It is indeed necessary to make distinctions between different cultures and various "*zhuyi*." When we reject "the East is East and the West is West" (Rudyard Kipling, "The Ballad of East and West"), we must also beware of eliminating culture difference in the name of identity. Only if a national philosophy blooms will a truly international philosophy be constructed that will then transcend the "speech / voice distinction." To this extent, professor Wang Jianjiang's Bie-modern (Doubtful Modernity) and other related theories can be viewed as a promising way to actualize the prospect of international philosophy.

Wang Jianjiang summarizes the Chinese contemporary social context as "Doubtful Modernity," which is a synthesis composed of the pre-modern, modern, and post-modern. It is obvious that so called "Bie-modernity" is completely different from Western "modernity." This typological difference suggests that it is useless to simply repeat Western conception of modernity if one wants to solve Chinese contemporary problems. In *Bie-Modern: Behind the Creation of Discourse*, Wang Jianjiang points out that because all the problems in a nation have a close relationship with the current social situation, an academic must have specific historical features in a given time. Since contemporary China cannot be classified as having "Western modernity," what Chinese philosophy and

aesthetics focus on is not the problem of the Western modern or post-modern, but rather a special issue, that is, the “Bie-modern,” or “Doubtful Modernity.”²⁸

However, the conception of “Doubtful Modernity” (Bie-modern) does not mean that China has left the process of modernization. On the contrary, the purpose of Bie-modernism is to surpass the Bie-modern by pursuing the authenticity of modernity and then reaching an ideal social and academic situation. To achieve this goal, “Bie-modernity” contains various original and convincing theories, such as, time spatialization and the four-period development theory, the theory of the great-leap-forward pause, and Sino-West-Marxism-I (“Chinese traditional philosophy, Western philosophy, Marxism and I”).²⁹ In short, what Bie-modernism is in pursuit of is the deterrence of the pseudo-modern and the establishment of *real modernity*.

The “*real modernity*” here means highlighting the subjectivity of Chinese philosophy by “bie,” that is, finding out the difference between Chinese and Western consciously, surpassing current hybrid social situations, and arriving at a new type of modernity. To this extent, “Bie-modern” or “Doubtful Modernity” is not only a new “word” but also a new “practice,” one that can be employed to understand China’s specific social and cultural situation, which can in turn be especially beneficial for Chinese scholars constructing their own Chinese academic discourse, that is, “*zhuyi*.” Furthermore, although “bie” is the goal of the “Bie-modern,”³⁰ it does not deny the value of other cultures. Consequently, there is no distinction, such as that between “speech and voice” or “center and margin,” in the context of the “Bie-modern.” The guarded “threshold” of the international academic community is replaced by a communicative “bridge,” which will be a platform for dialogue and open for all kinds of “*zhuyi*.” We can take the conception “leap-forward pause,” for example, to reveal Bie-modern

²⁸ Wang Jianjiang, “Bie-Modern: Behind the Creation of Discourse,” *Shanghai Culture*, No. 12 (2015), pp. 5–23.

²⁹ Wang Jianjiang, “Introduction of ‘Bie-modern’ Theory,” *Bie-modern: Space Encounter and Times Spans*, Beijing: Social Science Press, 2017, p. 1.

³⁰ “Bie” is the core idea in the theory of “Bie-modern.” In modern Chinese, “bie” has multiple meanings. Literally, it means “not,” “farewell,” or “wrongly written words”; more implicitly, it refers to “awkward,” “another,” etc. In “Bie-modern” theory, “bie” is a way of thinking, which means to pursue original ideas, creative discourse, and subjective awareness. Although it tries to find differences and make distinctions, it is not restricted to those “bie” but attempts to transcend them.

theory's "bie" (distinguishing) and "jie" (borrowing). To adapt the special social circumstances, Bie-modern proposes the "leap-forward pause," which means stopping and reflecting on the current stage of development from the position of the future.³¹ According to this theory, the present is integrated in the same space with the past, future, and different times. It is obvious that the "leap-forward pause" theory is a bit similar to Heidegger's conception of "project," but it is also very different from the Western thinking model. In fact, this theory is rooted in Chinese traditional philosophy, especially "Zen" Buddhism. This case clearly illustrates that Bie-modern has its own foundation, but it also accepts other valuable theories, whether Western or Eastern. The Bie-modern has its own core idea based on Chinese traditional thought and current social situation, but it does not need to be restricted to a particular national perspective. The Bie-modern and its theories are not another version of nationalism or fundamentalism but rather an open and inclusive system.

As an original theory, the Bie-modern has its own appeal for constructing a real international philosophy and refusing the pseudo-modern. From China's new cultural movement up to now, many scholars claim it is necessary for China to abandon its own tradition if it wants to arrive in modern society quickly.³² In fact, such a claim is a typical phenomenon in the Bie-modern. Because present-day China is a synthesis of pre-modern, modern, and post-modern, some people, in trying to transform society into a real modern sociality, mistake the traditional for the past. They attempt to transform *Chinese* into *world* by way of completely imitating the West. However, is that possible?

Let us take the translation of the term "philosophy" as an example. From the start Western missionaries, such as Giulio Aleni, François Furtado and Cai Yuanpei, translated the term "philosophy" as "li xue" (studying various objects and phenomena to acquire knowledge), "ai zhi xue" (love knowledge) and "hao xue" ("love learning," an allusion to the Analects).³³ These translations do not only transform the Western word into Chinese, but also change philosophy's

³¹ Wang Jianjiang, "Bie-modern: Leap over Pause," *Exploration and Free Views*, No. 12 (2015), pp. 9–14.

³² This opinion can be found in many thinkers in the May 4th Movement, such as Lu Xun. See *Complete Works of Lu Xun*, Beijing: People's Literature Publishing House, 2005, p. 45.

³³ About the history of the translation of "philosophy," see Chen Qiwei, "History of the Chinese Translation of Philosophy," *World Philosophy*, No. 3 (2001), pp. 60–68.

original connotation in its native culture. This case suggests that the foreign conception, in the process of translation, cannot maintain the same meaning it has in its original culture.

The same situation also exists in Western philosophy. When we summarize Western thought as a “republic of letters,” we often neglect that it contains the *tone* of German, French, and English along with different research paradigms, such as continental philosophy and Anglo-American philosophy. Hegel never worries that the word “Philosophie” has deviated from the original meaning of “φιλοσοφία” when he proposes to “let philosophy speak German.” Hegel believes that, although it was created by the ancient Greeks, philosophy cannot completely meet the needs of the development of German thought at his time. To this extent, “philosophie” is Germany’s own discourse rather than that of the city-states of ancient Greece.

Hegel successfully made “φιλοσοφία” with a “German style”. This case may inspire us to believe that introducing Western culture does not mean that we must assimilate or eliminate China’s own culture. The question is not whether we should discard “Chinese style” by referring to Western thought or rely on Chinese thought exclusively, but rather how we are to construct our own style. I think Bie-modern’s “Sino-West-Marxism-I” theory may be a promising model.

The importance of “Sino-West-Marxism-I” theory has to do with the function of “I”. Firstly, when a student integrates theories, he or she will bring his or her own understanding and experience into the theory, which will make it into something new, just as we saw in the example of the translation of the term “philosophy” above. Secondly, no matter how many theories are introduced, a nation must have its own discourse and solve its own problems. Although Chinese philosophical discourse takes the construction of international philosophy as its ultimate aim, it must be based on the native current context at first. In the context of the Bie-modern, what Chinese philosophical discourse must do is to surpass the situation of mere juxtaposition and to integrate other cultures into the Chinese-style system. The judgment of the structure of “Sino-Western-Marxism-I” responds precisely to this requirement. Thirdly, because of the introduction of Western knowledge, the traditional Chinese context does not exist as it did in its original situation. On the one hand, Marxism and Western modern philosophy have found a new way to develop their theories. In other

words, there is no need to have complete opposition between Chinese traditional philosophy, Western philosophy, and Marxism, nor do we have to use the first three to hinder or eliminate "I", nor are we required to mix all of them together into a jumbled mess; rather, the obligation is to discard this paradox, highlight the individuality and originality of "I." "Sino-Western-Marxism" is not simply a combination of three thoughts, but rather a synthesis, the construction of which must depend on the subjective consciousness and innovative spirit of the researchers themselves. In "Sino-West-Marxism-I" theory, there is no distinction of "core and margin" or "leader and follower" among Chinese traditional philosophy, Western philosophy, and Marxism, because researchers themselves can integrate various thoughts and construct an open system. To this extent, "Sino-West-Marxism-I" theory can not only successfully surpass the "voice / speech distinction" but also conceive of a kind of international philosophy.

Because of Bie-modern theory's independence, inclusiveness and pursuit of real modernity, it is attaining contemporary international influence. Georgia Southwestern State University (GSW) has established the Center for Chinese Bie-Modern Studies (CCBMS) to study and apply Bie-modern theory. Well-known European academic journals have devoted special columns to Bie-modernism. There have been four Bie-modern international academic conferences held in America and China respectively. Bie-modernism and its theory have been recorded in the *Chinese Aesthetic Association State of the Discipline Report*, and the series of works on this topic have been formally published by the China Social Sciences Press. At the same time, more and more artists illustrate their Bie-modern propositions by works and their own creative manifestos, which reveals a positive interactive relationship between artistic creation and art theory. Moreover, some scholars study the relationship between tourism and environment from the perspective of the Bie-modern, and others even deal with problems of economics, law, and linguistics by referring to this theory. Various disciplines come together by means of the Bie-modern theory, which not only clearly indicates that the study of the Bie-modern has expanded to philosophy, aesthetics, art theory, linguistics, literary theory, law, economics, sociology, and so on, but also suggests that the Bie-modern has become a thinking model and has been accepted by international academia, diverse disciplines, and artists.

We have analyzed the mistake of the "speech / voice distinction" and illustrated the advantage of the "Bie-modern" (Doubtful Modernity) in surpassing

it. As we can see, there will never exist a philosophy that can separate itself from its own national culture, and there is also no natural boundary between speech and voice. The Bie-modern era provides us a background to innovate discourses, but the way to “make them new” is not just simply to propose some conception or term. I think “Bie-modern” (Doubtful Modernity) has given us an illuminating model for constructing creative Chinese “*zhuyi*,” For example, in “‘For-non-existence,’ ‘For-being,’ and ‘Yet-for-being,’” Wang Jianjiang suggests using “for-non-existence” and “for-being” to summarize the two antagonistic attitudes of constructing local Chinese “isms”. In my opinion, instead of an opposition and limitation in viewpoints of whether there are aesthetics and literary theories in China in the first place, the issue of “yet-for-being” is to ask what is missed in Chinese aesthetics and literary theory in the situation of globalization. To solve the problem of “yet-for-being,” it is necessary to undertake a deep analysis of the history of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics, to re-interpret traditional conceptions or theories in the contemporary context, and to have meaningful interactions with international academia.³⁴

In short, a valuable Chinese “*zhuyi*” needs to profoundly rethink the situation of contemporary China (that is, the feature of the “Bie-modern”) and to be a benefit for deterring the pseudo-modern and pursuing the authenticity of modernity. At the same, Chinese “*zhuyi*” needs to be integrated into international academia. It cannot be restricted to a national perspective but should promote a more open and international philosophy.

³⁴ Wang Jianjiang, “‘For-non-existence,’ ‘For-being,’ and ‘Yet-for-being,’” *Academic Monthly*, No. 10 (2015), pp. 126–135.

Rok Benčin*

Temporalities of Modernity in Jia Zhangke's *Still Life***

The cinema of Jia Zhangke is well known and celebrated for its portrayal of the social and cultural impact of the Chinese economic reforms of the final decades of the past century and up to the present day. Usually associated with the so-called Sixth Generation of Chinese film directors, characterised by independent production, realist techniques, and focus on the individuals at the margins of society, some critics have claimed that his emphasis on “ordinary” people from the lower classes and provincial towns, corresponding to his own origin, represents a considerable shift even from the depictions of urban bohemia in the earlier Sixth Generation films.¹ Be that as it may (bohemian youth, as we will see, are important for Jia as well, only from a more provincial perspective), Jia himself said that one of the main motivations to start making films while he was still a film theory student at the Beijing Film Academy was that in 1997 he had yet to see a Chinese film that had anything to do with the Chinese reality that he knew.² To capture this reality, he claims, one should refrain from storylines of great “tragic and happy events” and focus rather on the more monotonous temporality of everyday life: “If cinema is going to show concern for ordinary people, one must first have respect for everyday life. One must follow the slow rhythm of life and empathize with the light and heavy things of an ordinary life.”³

And yet, in the grasp of this major societal transformation the slow rhythm of ordinary life is itself caught up in the whirlwind of historical change. Jia's

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¹ Zhang Zhen, “Bearing Witness: Chinese Urban Cinema in the Era of ‘Transformation’”, in: Zhang Z. (ed.), *The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema and Society at the Turn of the Twenty-First Century*, Duke University Press, Durham and London 2007, pp. 15–16.

² Jia Zhangke in Michael Barry, Xiao Wu, *Platform, Unknown Pleasures: Jia Zhangke's ‘Hometown Trilogy’*, Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute, Basingstoke and New York 2009, p. 128.

³ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out: The Chinese Director's Texts on Film*, trans. by Claire Huot et al., Kindle ed., Bridge21 Publications, Los Angeles 2015, Ch. 12.

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first three feature films were inspired by and eventually filmed in the director's hometown of Fenyang, which changed dramatically in economic and social terms in the years he spent studying in Beijing.⁴ It is precisely the juxtaposition of the slow, meandering rhythm of life and the fast-paced, goal-oriented era of modernisation and reform that creates the temporal knot of Jia's films. As Chris Berry observes, Jia focuses on "those who are not the drivers of China's post-socialist project but instead, at best, its passengers, and more often the onlookers at the roadside."⁵ Focusing on marginal characters left behind but still tossed about by the currents of progress, Jia manages to depict a conflictual coexistence of different temporalities and the social divisions they immanently entail.

In what follows, I explore the temporal construction of Jia's films in relation to the narrative structures implied by the idea of modernity and the processes of modernisation, but also by the aesthetic claim to realism. Presenting reality through its slow rhythms rather than through its great events seems to entail an aesthetisation that strays away from standard interpretations of realism, activating what Jia calls "the aesthetic sense of the real".⁶ I address these problems via Jacques Rancière's recent elaboration of the temporal hierarchies associated with the idea of modernity and his discussion of the redistribution of sensible capacities enabled by the aesthetical and political reversal of these hierarchies.

Modernisation at a Standstill

In no other Jia film is the problem of modernisation so dramatically set than in *Still Life* (2006), shot at the construction site of the Three Gorges Dam, completed in 2012 as the world's biggest power station. The film's attention, however, is not directed at the construction itself – the dam is almost completely absent from the film – but rather at the large-scale demolition process in the back-

⁴ "The rate of Fenyang's modernisation and economic growth, not to mention the impact the forces of commodification had on people there, were all unbelievable. Shanxi is already a backwater province, relatively, in China and Fenyang ... a rather remote place even in Shanxi, so the fact that these changes were reaching even Fenyang and in such a visible way had an incredible impact on me." Jia Zhangke in Michael Barry, *Xiao Wu, Platform, Unknown Pleasures*, p. 128.

⁵ Chris Berry, "Xiao Wu: Watching Time Go By", in: C. Berry (ed.), *Chinese Films in Focus II*, Palgrave Macmillan on behalf of the British Film Institute, Basingstoke and New York 2008, p. 251.

⁶ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 16.

ground. Due to the dam's reservoir, whole towns and villages were demolished before a large area was flooded, requiring the relocation of more than a million people. Two temporal lines intersect at the Three Gorges area, one pointed at the market-oriented future and its demand for energy, and the other pointed at the past, with the annihilation of towns with millennia of history.

This intersection, however, is itself pushed to the background by the addition of a fictional layer, which constitutes the multiple storylines of the film. Two newcomers come to the soon-to-be-demolished town in Fengjie County: the miner Han Samning, looking for his wife, who left him years ago, and the nurse Shen Hong, looking for her husband, an engineer working on the dam, in the hope of clarifying their estranged relationship. A third temporality is thus introduced, an uncertain present of wandering and searching, through the lens of which we encounter all of Fengjie's current social layers, from the local population on the move and migrant workers, to the leading figures in the dam's construction. The outsider's perspective allows Jia to avoid the simple opposition between progress and tradition, modernisation, and its human toll. Instead, the film produces a universalised portrayal of displacement without abstracting from concrete historical conditions or different social positions. The temporality Jia captures in his films is not the temporality of the grand narrative of historical progress, nor the temporality of nostalgia for an irretrievable past. The narrative of the past and the narrative of the future still have a starting point or a goal that structures their temporality. The present, however, is a time of displacement with unclear origins and destinations.

Showing the apocalyptic scenes at the Three Gorges, as shocking as they may be, is thus not an end in itself. *Still Life* is less a film about the on-going apocalypse, an outright critique of progress and modernity from the perspective of its victims, than a post-apocalyptic film that explores the fragile connectivity between the fleeting moments that fall out of the narrative temporal constructions of demolished pasts and constructed futures. The surreal scene witnessed by Sanming at the very end of the film, a figure of a tightrope walker between two half-demolished buildings, is thus a good indication of Jia's cinematic method: rather than dwelling on the loss and destruction, his films forge impossible

paths through the disintegrated world of his characters. As suggested by Bruno Besana, *Still Life* “creates a narrative of connection of disconnected elements.”⁷

But in what way is it still useful to frame this discussion in terms of the concept of modernity? According to Berry, the Maoist “grand narrative” structure of “socialist modernity” was reinstated in the post-Mao era of “the four modernisations” and “reform and opening-up”, which is also reflected in Chinese cultural production: “Appropriated and adapted for the People’s Republic of China, the continued domination of materialist ideologies of progress on both sides of the post-socialist and socialist historical divide helps to account for the continuation of modern modes of time as progress in mainstream television documentary and feature film work in the People’s Republic.”⁸ According to Berry, however, Jia’s works are among those other types of film that show different experiences of time and ultimately lead to the conclusion that time is never homogenous, but rather differential and disaggregated. It would, on the other hand, be wrong to claim that Jia simply opposes progress *per se* or that he is blind to the benefits that the reforms have brought. His tactic, as Jason McGrath observes, is one of “exposing rather than opposing,” showing the contradictions of modernisation in everyday life rather than promulgating an oppositional ideology.⁹

Rather than presenting the problem in terms of opposition to modernisation, we should explore the conflictual coexistence of temporalities inherent to modernity itself. One can find an indication of this in Wang Jianjiang’s understanding of Chinese modernity as “bie-modern”. *Bie* (别) here stands for alternative, awkward, or non-modernity, and is defined by Wang as a spatialisation of temporality in the sense of a contradictory coexistence of pre-modern, modern, and post-modern elements in contemporary China.¹⁰ Such coexistence, however, may very well be inscribed in the idea of modernity more generally. Fredric Jameson’s sceptical account of the re-emergence of discussions on modernity at

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⁷ Bruno Besana, “Fictioning Disagreement: The Construction of Separation in the Work of Jacques Rancière”, *Maska*, 32 (185–186/2017), p. 80.

⁸ Chris Berry, “Xiao Wu: Watching Time Go By”, pp. 254–255.

⁹ Jason McGrath, “The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke: From Postsocialist Realism to a Transnational Aesthetic”, in: Zhang Z. (ed.), *The Urban Generation*, p. 85.

¹⁰ Wang Jianjiang, “‘Quadrilateral’ in Philosophy and Bie-modernism”, *AM Journal of Art and Media Studies*, 13/2017, pp. 129–130.

the turn of the millennium turned our attention away from the ideal of the new and the linear temporality of progress as such and rather focused it on the temporality of catching up with an imposed ideal of modernity. What is thus being sold, according to Jameson, is either “the illusion that the West has something no one else possesses” from the perspective of developing countries or, also within the West itself, the social adaptation demanded by the necessities of the global free market.¹¹

More recently, Jacques Rancière has shown how instead of a simplistic horizontal line interrupted by the breaks that separate the old from the new, modernity should rather be thought of as entailing “a complex intertwining of temporalities, a complex set of relations between the present, the past, and the future; between anticipation and lateness; fragmentation and continuity; movement and immobility.”¹² In our supposedly post-historic age, Rancière claims, the temporal structure of the so-called grand narratives has actually been recycled. Capitalist and State power in Europe and elsewhere continue to rely on the discourse of historical necessity, although its outcome is no longer Revolution but Reform. The triumph of the global free market becomes the new historical *telos*, for which certain sacrifices need to be made.¹³

Rather than simply reviving the Lyotardian grand narrative, Rancière gives his own understanding and genealogy of the concept. For Rancière, narratives of time are fictions, constitutive of how a sense of reality is produced via the distribution of the sensible. Narratives of time shape the common experience by introducing “the causal rationality of temporal linkage between events,” a rationality itself “bound up with a hierarchical distribution of temporalities which is a distribution of forms of life.”¹⁴ His genealogy of this hierarchy starts with Aristotle’s *Poetics*, in which the temporality structured by the causal rationality of events according to necessity and verisimilitude is contrasted to the temporality of the purely empirical succession of events, which lacks a specific inner logic and is therefore contingent. The first temporality, linked to poetic fiction,

¹¹ Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essay on the Ontology of the Present*, Verso, London and New York 2002, pp. 8–9.

¹² Jacques Rancière, *Modern Times: Essays on the Temporality of Art and Politics*, Multimediální institut, Zagreb 2017, p. 61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

is given preference by Aristotle over the second temporality, which is characteristic of historical chronicle. Such temporal hierarchy, Rancière claims, presupposes a social hierarchy between two classes of human beings that experience time according to one of these forms: on the one hand, free, active, and knowledgeable people, living in a time of rational causality, and, on the other, passive people, who live in a time dictated by production and reproduction, to whom, being ignorant of its ways, history merely happens as a succession of events.¹⁵ In other words, the two forms of temporality imply a distinction between those who have time and those who do not. The modern grand narrative then applies Aristotle's fictional logic to history itself and today reproduces its immanent social division by denouncing "the ignorant people who are unable to fit the time of the globalized free market" and who oppose the supposedly necessary reforms it dictates.¹⁶

For Rancière, the question is how this temporal injustice, the injustice of not having time, can be reversed, which leads to the question of whether there can be a different way of linking events, one based precisely on the temporality of bare succession, which was discarded by Aristotle. The temporality of emancipation thus entails "an inner redivision of time," which is dependent on "the production of gaps" in the logical temporality of causes and effects, based on inducing "the power of the moment that begins another time."¹⁷ In order to describe the temporal structure of such emancipatory moments, Rancière draws on not only his repertoire of emancipatory figures, especially "the plebeian philosopher," carpenter Gauny, and the "ignorant schoolmaster" Jacotot, but also on the recent occupation movements and the problem of precarious work today. What is at stake here is not a preference for the ephemerality of the moment against any kind of duration or progress. The question is rather how these moments can be prolonged and connected so that "a new common time" can be "constructed out of breaches made within the dominant order of time."¹⁸

Finally, the reversal of the Aristotelian temporal hierarchy also takes place in literature, i.e. the narrative art itself. Modern literature from Gustave Flaubert

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 33–4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 35.

to Virginia Woolf challenged the preference for a well-constructed narrative and introduced “a time made of a multiplicity of micro-events [in] democratic coexistence” into which plots and characters dissolve as if into “an incessant shower of innumerable atoms,” to use Woolf’s idiom frequently quoted by Rancière.¹⁹ While there is no direct relation between artistic and political transformations, no direct correlation between the aesthetics of politics and the politics of aesthetics, they both operate with fictions that determine the framing and distribution of the sensible fabric of what is perceived as reality. Fiction, for Rancière, is “not the invention of an imaginary world,” but a framework that determines a sense of reality.²⁰

With this in mind, what kind of a sense of reality can we find in Jia’s films, which are, according to Barry, characterised by a strong “narrative distension” that resists the narrative structures implied by both socialism and so-called post-socialism alike?²¹ What is achieved by the long takes and other means Jia uses, in his own words, to “preserve real time”?²²

The Aesthetic Sense of the Real

As we have seen, Jia’s primary motivation to start making films was to record the everyday reality of post-Mao China in the turmoil of market reforms, the effects of which have been, as he claims, just as drastic as those of the more widely discussed Cultural Revolution.²³ Jia’s films have thus been commonly viewed as an epitome of a new style of urban realism in Chinese cinema.²⁴ Jia himself, while committed to portraying historic reality as he thinks and experiences it, is sceptical of the stylistic ideal of realism. Realist techniques such as using a handheld camera, natural settings, non-professional actors, etc., all of which he has employed, can just as easily be used to produce hallucinogenic effects, completely bypassing any realist ambitions: “It’s quite possible that the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 35–7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²¹ Chris Berry, “Xiao Wu: Watching Time Go By”, p. 251.

²² Jia Zhangke in Stephen Teo, “Cinema with an Accent – Interview with Jia Zhangke, Director of Platform”, *Senses of Cinema*, July 2009, http://sensesofcinema.com/2001/feature-articles/zhangke_interview/ (last accessed 12 July 2018).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Jason McGrath, “The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke”, p. 82.

so-called reality that is produced with realist techniques is actually obstructing and concealing the way reality really works.”²⁵

Rather than in terms of realist adequacy, he defines what he is after as an aesthetic sense of the real: “I pursue a sense of the real in cinema more than I pursue reality itself, because I think that the sense of the real is aesthetic, whereas reality itself is the domain of sociology and sciences.”²⁶ Obviously, this does not imply that the aesthetic real is in any way an imaginary realm detached from reality. Social issues ranging from privatisation and working conditions to ecological concerns in contemporary China, along with their clearly stated “sociological” causes, are essential to Jia’s cinema, but are explored through distortions in the fabric of experience rather than as adequate representations of a concept of social totality.

The first indication of this approach is the peculiar mix of realism and fiction or, more accurately, of hyperrealist settings with added fictional layers or even surreal elements. Jia first went to Fengjie County to film a documentary about the contemporary painter Liu Xiaodong, who used the demolition workers as models for his paintings, many of which then also appeared in *Still Life*. While observing the setting, the workers, and the local people, Jia decided to make a fictional film at the same location, adding the stories of Sanming and Hong looking for their spouses. The fictional film and the documentary, *Still Life* and *Dong*, respectively, which share a number of shots, were released separately in 2006, while in his next film, *24 City* (2008), both approaches coexist. In a similar tale of demolition and construction, Jia documents the oral history of a demolished factory in Chengdu that made way for an upmarket apartment complex. The interviews with actual former factory workers are complemented by fictional interviews, scripted by Jia and filmed with professional actors. Jia sees no contradiction here, since history, as he explains, “is built with [both,] facts and fabrications.”²⁷ The use of well-known actors made the distinction between the documentary and the fictional part of the film clear to Chinese viewers. Rather than deception or stylisation, the added layer of fiction thus conveys

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²⁵ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 16.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, Ch. 11.

something real about the situation which might be missed in a strict documentary and which corresponds to the aesthetic dimension of the real itself.

The most curious interruptions of the realist cinematic mode in *Still Life* are the surreal scenes, from the already mentioned figure of a tightrope walker to properly sci-fi elements such as UFO-like objects in the sky and an enormous concrete monument that at a certain point in the film lifts off from the ground like a rocket. Jia explains that the introduction of such seemingly misplaced elements corresponds to the surreal nature of the Fengjie reality itself: "Seeing this place, with its 2,000 years of history and dense neighborhoods left in ruins, my first impression was that human beings could not have done this. The changes had occurred so fast and on such a large scale, it was as if a nuclear war or an extraterrestrial had done it."²⁸ Such scenes therefore function as some kind of a prosthetic enhancement of realism itself. As noted by Corey Byrnes, discussions on realism in Chinese art and literature have tended to favour "a disinterested representational mode" over formal and stylistic concerns, while Jia's "stylistic hybridity" manages to put forward and benefit from the "transformative capacity of realism" that explores "the unstable nature of the category of reality," which is never more obvious than in the case of the Three Gorges Dam.²⁹

If, on the one hand, realism is enhanced by additional layers of fiction, on the other it is in a certain way reduced by narrative subtractions. This approach is most glaring in *Platform* (2000), where an original 210-minute cut was reduced to the 150-minute final cut preferred by the director, in which many scenes important for the continuity of the storyline are omitted. As Michael Berry explains:

The primary difference between the final cut and the various extended versions lies in the removal of numerous scenes (or portions of scenes) that further elucidate the motivations behind various characters' actions. ... Certain plot details that are very clearly delineated in the longer versions need to be extracted from subtle hints in existing dialogue, or, in many cases, simply inferred from context. The result is a significantly different viewing experience between different

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²⁸ Jia Zhangke in Andrew Chan, "Interview: Jia Zhang-ke", *Film Comment*, March/April 2009, <https://www.filmcomment.com/article/jia-zhangke-interview/> (last accessed on 12 July 2018).

²⁹ Corey Byrnes, "Specters of Realism and the Painter's Gaze in Jia Zhangke's *Still Life*", *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture*, 24 (2/2012), pp. 55–56.

cuts, with the original version following much more closely traditional conventions of film narrative.³⁰

Jia completely embraced the shorter version and the plot gaps in the film as a narrative method: “I don’t want to provide reasons or explain why a young girl who was dancing is suddenly wearing a tax-clerk uniform or why she is still single after so many years. This is my narrative philosophy. Isn’t that the way we get to know people and understand the world? In bits and pieces and on a superficial level?”³¹ *Platform* follows a group of cultural workers based in a small town and their evolution throughout the 1980s from an official group performing shows filled with revolutionary songs and propaganda pieces to a private group performing an eclectic mix of newly-embraced pop-culture influences, from punk rock to breakdance. The film aims to show the historical changes of the period through the everyday experiences of provincial youth, who, for all their big hopes influenced by the market reforms and cultural opening-up, experience time in a series of prolonged moments, detached from any idea of progress. McGrath claims that “the film manages to depict epochal historical change largely through the scenes of trivial events and even boredom,” minimising “obvious cause-effect narrative progressions.”³² By allowing us to observe the effects without necessarily showing the causes, McGrath concludes, the filmic ellipses achieve a realism of true-life experience, along the lines of Bazin’s analyses of Italian neorealism.

In *Still Life* such narrative subtractions occur again, only this time Jia credits the actors for rejecting some parts of the original script. The character Han Samning gets his name from the actor Han Samning, who is actually a coal miner and – to add some trivia – the director’s cousin (Sanming, as a miner and the protagonist’s cousin, also appears in *Platform*). It was Sanming who suggested that no reasons for his character’s 16-year long wait to go and look for his wife should be given, contrary to the script: “There are so many things in life that don’t need to be explained clearly. There is no need to spell out every cause and effect.”³³ Jia also reports that the actor Zhao Tao (also a regular in Jia’s films and now the director’s wife), who played the other protagonist, Shen

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³⁰ Michael Barry, *Xiao Wu, Platform, Unknown Pleasures*, p. 55.

³¹ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 3.

³² Jason McGrath, “The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke”, p. 98.

³³ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 38.

Hong, suggested the scene in front of the fan, where she lets herself be swayed by the artificial wind that blows away the narrative tension of the troubled relationship with her husband:

We shot the night before she had to make a decision about her estranged husband. The original script described her as being alone, yawning, and clueless. I chose a documentary-style shoot. I shot her sitting around for more than an hour; she really got tired and impatient, until she finally fell asleep. When I was ready to wrap, she asked me to look at the fan on the wall and said, "Breaking up is a big and difficult decision. To express her wavering emotion, can we shoot her using the fan to blast away the Sichuan heat and humidity? To relieve the anxiety inside her?"³⁴

This scene typifies Jia's relation to temporality, caught between the monotony of duration and the affective intensity of the moment. In such scenes, Jia explains, narrative "linearity becomes a surface plane."³⁵ In several interviews and commentaries the director elaborates on another scene from *Platform*, showing two friends sitting on a bed talking. The long take allows Jia to preserve the real time of youthful boredom: "You see two people smoking and talking aimlessly for a long time. Nothing happens plotwise, but at the same time, time itself is kept intact. ... Everybody experiences the monotony of time passing where nothing that is noteworthy occurs."³⁶ The conversation casually moves from public executions to the latest developments in their romantic affairs. The monotony is thus ambiguously charged with joy and melancholy mixed in a specific kind of affected indifference. This is the kind of fleeting moment that the camera can preserve and prolong: "The two women's melancholy passes swiftly, as does their leisure time. This type of scene is exactly how I remember such moments. I get sad about the ceaseless passing of time. I felt a dull pain while shooting it. I was hoping the camera would just keep rolling."³⁷ What appears on one hand as a time of empty duration, which the long take attempts to capture, is, on the other, an affectively charged moment that the camera seeks to prolong.

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³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Jia Zhangke in Stephen Teo, "Cinema with an Accent – Interview with Jia Zhangke, Director of *Platform*".

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 3.

Among the Ruins

But what is there to prolong in Fengjie, a place in which archaeological excavations are being rushed to preserve at least some ancient artefacts from the rising waters, which will efface any trace of the town and its history? On the other hand, the future is very uncertain for the people moving away, for the migrant workers seeking new jobs, and for Samning, who must return home to make enough money to pay off his wife's brother's debt and thereby free her from the usurer whom she is forced to work for. Snippets of community remain, from the opening shot of the passengers on the riverboat carrying Samning to Fengjie, which the long shot embraces as a panorama of humanity, to the migrant workers talking about the natural wonders of their provinces, which, somewhat ironically, they observe as represented on banknotes. As Pheng Cheah observes, among the destruction, "the film depicts the establishment of new ties of solidarity and community and the restoring of sundered ties of affection ... that involve the sharing of mundane objects of consumption," particularly cigarettes, liquor, tea, and candy, which appear as subheadings to quasi-divide the film into distinct parts.³⁸ Yet even these fragile communities are, as Pheng admits, provisional and themselves always on the brink of ruination.³⁹

The film thus goes beyond communities to the core of ruination to portray elementary encounters between vanishing ruins and bodies on the move. Jia explains how the apocalyptic situation at the Three Gorges was not in itself what moved him to make the film. Rather, it was his enthusiasm for the way Liu painted the demolition workers that gave him the idea to make a fictional film at the same location.⁴⁰ In *Dong* we see a group of workers together with Jia's cousin Sanming posing for what is to become a five-panel canvas entitled *Hot Bed No. 1*. Jia claims that regardless of the harsh realism reminiscent of Lucien Freud, the canvas manages to capture the beauty of their bodies.⁴¹ Ultimately, for Jia, Liu's paintings convey a universal capacity to be poetic, to affect and be

³⁸ Pheng Cheah, "World as Picture and Ruination: On Jia Zhangke's Still Life as World Cinema", C. Rojas, E. Chow (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Chinese Cinemas*, Oxford University Press, Oxford and New York 2013, p. 199.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 203.

⁴⁰ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 27.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

affected, “a form of poetry that anyone can experience.”⁴² What we see in Liu’s canvases and Jia’s films is not an aesthetisation of the hardships in the sense that beauty would prevail over social misery in the eyes of an artist, who does not share the burden of the workers. There is no escape from the omnipresent misery. Nevertheless, despite the misery, a universal capacity to be poetic is transmitted, thus countering the distribution of capacities dictated by the temporality of modernisation.

As for the ruins, their poetic quality should generally come as no surprise, but the ruins of Fengjie are not ancient monuments to long-lost worlds. They are fresh ruins, produced by the very same poetic bodies that inspired *Still Life*. Not only does this ruination put bodies on the move, those of demolition workers and, more crucially, former inhabitants, but its trace will also soon disappear, immersed in the water, and will therefore be bereft of any capacity to testify to this lost world in the future. Walter Benjamin described how ruins became the finest material of creation in the context of German baroque *Trauerspiel*, available for the melancholic allegorist as fragments to invest meaning in after the sense of the whole has been lost.⁴³ It is doubtful that apart from the dam itself, with all its ambiguity, these ruins could be used for creation or allegory, but a minimum potential for figurative connectivity – and therefore poeticity – remains, as testified to by the figure of the tightrope walker. On the one hand, the ruins cast their shadow on other objects in several still-life compositions in the film, commented on by Jia in his notes on the film:

I entered an empty room one day and saw a bunch of dusty objects on the table. I seemed to have uncovered the secret of still objects. Those furnishings that sat in the same places for years, the dusty utensils on the table, the wine bottles on the windowsill, and the decorations hanging on the wall all carried some sort of poetic sadness. Still objects are one part of reality we neglect. Although they endure, they remain silent and hold secrets.⁴⁴

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne, Verso, London, New York 1998.

⁴⁴ Jia Zhangke, *Jia Zhangke Speaks Out*, Ch. 8.

On the other hand, the ruins break away from the stillness and become the setting of life itself in its endurance. As Jia adds in his notes on shooting in Fengjie: “Among the deafening noise and flying dust, there was still a sense of vibrant colour blooming out of life itself, despite the despair.”⁴⁵

The question that remains to be answered is what this poetisation of ruins and the demolition process entail in terms of the peculiar realism of Jia’s cinema. McGrath suggests that already with *Platform* Jia moved away from the more direct documentary-style “on-the-spot” realism achieved by means of shaky handheld camera and similar techniques that characterised his earlier work, to the long-take aesthetisation characteristic of many contemporary art-house directors on the film festival circuit: “Such films become so exclusively reliant on the long take, so concerned with showing in detail the real-time intervals between narrative actions, that the Bazinian long-take realism is pushed to, and sometimes past, the point that it becomes its ostensible opposite – an intriguing kind of formalism.”⁴⁶

The opposition between realism and formalism can, however, be re-examined through a more detailed look at – to use Jameson’s phrase – the antinomies of realism itself.⁴⁷ The basic antinomy of realism was given its classic formulation by Georg Lukács, the greatest proponent of realism against formalism, who identified a formalist deviation already at work within realism. In his 1936 essay “Narrate or Describe?”, Lukács pits Balzac and Tolstoy, representatives of realism proper, against Flaubert and Zola, who in their novels get too close to real-life perception and thereby lose any focus on the social totality.⁴⁸ According to Lukács, only the narrative can properly represent the forces of history at work in a specific situation. In Flaubert and Zola, however, detailed descriptions of scenes are emancipated from the narrative and become an end in themselves, thereby dissolving realism into formalism.

Lukács’s essay finds its distant echo and mirror image in Rancière’s writings on modern literature. For Rancière, it was precisely the descriptions, written

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Jason McGrath, “The Independent Cinema of Jia Zhangke”, p. 102.

⁴⁷ Fredric Jameson, *The Antinomies of Realism*, Verso, London and New York 2013.

⁴⁸ Georg Lukács, *Writer & Critic and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Arthur D. Kahn, The Merlin Press, London 1970, pp. 110–148.

as “chains of perceptions and affects,” rather than narrative constructions of causes and effects, that defined realism and with it, the modern literary revolution.⁴⁹ Even in film, as Rancière elaborates in relation to Béla Tarr (another “post-socialist” director fond of long takes), the “essence of realism ... is the distance taken with regard to stories, to their temporal schemes and their sequences of causes and effects,” the distance that, however, “requires us to go ever deeper into the interior of the situation itself, to expand, ever farther back, the chain of sensations, perceptions, and emotions” that precedes stories and even makes them possible.⁵⁰ The Aristotelian temporal hierarchy is thus reversed, opening the possibility of a new type of temporal linkage based on the succession of moments that breach the narrative structure.

From this perspective, the so-called formalist aesthetisation is no longer necessarily the opposite of realism, but rather a way of exploring and transforming the temporal and spatial aesthetic fabric that constitutes what we experience as reality. *Still Life* redistributes the sensible capacities by delving into what Jia calls the aesthetic sense of the real, following the slow rhythm of life in the intervals and cracks of the narrative of modernisation. This approach transforms the ruins from a site of loss to a scene of fragile connectivity.

⁴⁹ Jacques Rancière, *The Lost Thread: The Democracy of Modern Fiction*, trans. by Steven Corcoran, Bloomsbury, London 2017, p. 16.

⁵⁰ Jacques Rancière, *Béla Tarr: The Time After*, trans. by Eric Beranek, Univocal, Minneapolis 2013, pp. 8–10.

Helena Motoh*

Between Problems (*Wenti*) and -Isms (*Zhuyi*), a Hundred Years Since

China will be celebrating an important anniversary in 2019. One hundred years ago, on 4 May 1919, a movement broke out over the disappointment with the results of the Versailles Peace Conference. Although it was on the winning side, China had to give up some of its territories to Japan and this only proved the unequal relationship between the two neighbouring countries. While Japan was a modernized reformed monarchy with big ambitions, China was paralyzed in its newly obtained republic, while the modernizing processes seemed not yet to bear any fruit. Demonstrations from the first students and later a much more heterogeneous crowd started in the centre of Beijing to protest the weak position of the Chinese government after World War I and its failure or inability to protect the interests of Chinese nation at the Versailles conference. While the so-called “May Fourth” movement (*wusi yundong*) mostly focused on the political aspect of the situation, a related movement questioned the broader cultural causes for such an unflattering situation of China. It could be said that, compared to the political uprising of May Fourth, this other related trend, the “New Culture Movement”, as it was later called, was not only developing longer than its political counterpart, but also had much longer lasting implications. The protagonists of the New Culture Movement pinpointed traditional Chinese culture as the cause of China’s failure, and blamed it for the limits it imposed upon the Chinese society and nation. The ethical philosophy and political ideology of Confucius and Confucians were seen as responsible for the failure of the “Sick man of East Asia” (*Dongya bingfu*), the image that critical Chinese intellectuals adopted for their country and its international position.

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In the shade of these ground-breaking events, a seemingly minor debate took place among people who were all supporters of the New Culture viewpoints. It turned out, however, that this disagreement was a marker of a historically important split, where the protagonists of the two sides went their separate ways and their ideas were only put in dialogue again more than half century later. Both main protagonists were also editors of the key magazine of the movement,

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which was issued under the telling title “New Youth”. Debate began with an article that one of them, 28-year-old Hu Shi, published in the *Weekly Review* (*Mei zhou pinglun*), another publication issued by the same group of New Culture intellectuals. On 20 July 1919 they published Hu’s commentary with the title “More Study of Problems, Less Talk of ‘Isms’” (*Duo yanjiu xie wenti, shao tan ‘zhuyi’*)¹. A month later the same journal published a response by Li Dazhao, its 31-year old editor with the title “More Debate about Problems and ‘Isms’” (*Zai lun wenti yu zhuyi*)². However tiny the volume of the texts was, this debate in the *Weekly Review* broke the spell of the unity of the New Culture Movement irreparably. Not only did the movement split, but the two protagonists’ paths also diverged to the greatest extent. Li Dazhao went on to become one of the founders of the Communist Party of China and was executed in one of the warlord raids in 1927, while Hu Shi took to Taiwan after 1949 and was president of Academia Sinica until his death in 1962. The debate about the correct relationship between ideology and pragmatism became commonplace again much after their time. It was not until Deng Xiaoping took over leadership after the end of the Cultural Revolution that a debate on how to think about those notions separately and together could be revived. Deng’s famous metaphor on the colour of cats being irrelevant if they catch mice was a signpost for a newly revived pragmatism of the late 20th century China, where ideology came to play only a supporting role. In the last decade, however, with Xi Jinping’s presidential terms, it seems that the relationship between the two is again reconsidered and rethought, also invoking again the old debate between Hu and Li. The present paper will focus on the 1919 debate by an analysis of the two main texts, Hu Shi’s “More Study of Problems, Less Talk of ‘Isms’” and Li Dazhao’s “More Debate about Problems and ‘Isms’”. In order to explain the background of these two viewpoints, I will present beforehand an overview of the intellectual contexts that brought Li Dazhao and Hu Shi together and that later pulled them apart. In the final part of the paper I will reflect on the contemporary relevance of the controversy.

¹ All references to and quotations from Hu Shi’s text “More Study of Problems, Less Talk of ‘Isms’” are taken from the electronic version at: <https://baike.baidu.com/item/多研究些问题，少谈些主义> (acc. 1 September 2018).

² All references to and quotations from Li Dazhao’s text “More Debate about Problems and ‘Isms’” are taken from the electronic version at: <https://www.marxists.org/chinese/li-dazhao/marxist-org-chinese-lee-19190817.htm> (acc. 5 September 2018).

New Ideas Coming to China

The paths along which Marxist and Leninist ideas arrived to China are complex, mostly because the early decades of the 20th century were a rather puzzling time for intellectuals in China. Following the first introduction of “Western” ideas in the late Qing dynasty, different groups of Chinese scholars were open to philosophy and science coming from outside of China. The form it came in, however, was an amalgam, often ahistorical, of different ideas and streams of thought. The paths through which it arrived were also manifold, since they mostly relied on the influence of Chinese students and young intellectuals who were returning to China after their studies abroad. After the famous first student in the United States, the 1854 Yale graduate Yung Wing³, a series of young Chinese students attended universities in Europe and US and brought back the new intellectual trends, along with a more or less profound knowledge of Euro-American intellectual traditions. 120 students were subsequently invited to the United States on the Chinese Educational Mission and more attempts like that followed even before the collapse of the Qing dynasty⁴. A similar initiative started towards the East by establishing an educational link with Japan after the end of the Sino-Japanese war. In a more organized fashion than those going to USA, following the bilateral agreement between the two countries this enterprise had a clearer political goal in mind. The quickly modernized Japan sought for more influence over the developing China, especially in the light of other Euro-American ambitions to do the same.⁵ However uneasy and complex this political alliance was, it still produced one of the most influential intellectual exchanges in China’s recent history, which also largely shaped the intellectual premises that still define China today. The rapidly absorbed, condensed version of “Western” knowledge that became readily available in Japanese educational institutions after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 was an important source for the arriving Chinese students. As Ishikawa Yoshihiro points out, “Japan served as middleman to China’s intellectual Westernization”⁶. Under this im-

³ Qian Ning, *Chinese Students Encounter America*, University of Washington Press, 2012, p. ix.

⁴ Cf. Chih-Ming Wang, *Transpacific Articulations: Student Migration and the Remaking of Asian America*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu 2013.

⁵ Cf. Paula Harrell, *Sowing the Seeds of Change: Chinese Students, Japanese Teachers, 1895-1905*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1992.

⁶ Ishikawa Yoshihiro, “Chinese Marxism in the Early 20th Century and Japan”, quoted from: <https://chinajapan.org/articles/14/14.24-34ishikawa.pdf> (30 August 2018), p. 25.

pact, Chinese theoretical vocabulary also changed completely, especially under the influence of translations from Japanese (or from Japanese translations of “Western” authors), which were extremely widespread⁷. The vocabulary that Japanese translators of “Western” texts used had to first be invented, and these neologisms, often themselves inspired by collocations in classical Chinese or Japanese sources, were seen as new words for Chinese readers of Japanese translations. It is difficult to imagine the Chinese theoretical language today without those “inventions”, neologisms such as “history” (*lishi*), “philosophy” (*zhexue*), “revolution” (*geming*), “culture” (*wenhua*), and “nation” (*minzu*). Because the characters Japanese used were of the *kanji* type, i.e. of Chinese origin, the Chinese intellectuals could simply use the Chinese reading of the same characters and imported the neologisms without translation.

However, there was much more than terminology; for the topic of the present paper it is most important to see how Japan served as a crucial route for the introduction of socialist ideas to China. This is especially true for the early years, before a direct link was established between the new Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic and Chinese intellectuals. The first wave of this influence came to China when the Japanese socialist movement was at its peak at the beginning of the 20th century and the second one came after 1919, when it was revived again after the Meiji state tried to suppress them in 1910.⁸ One of the two protagonists in the debate on problems and -isms, Li Dazhao, was himself under the especially strong influence of early Japanese socialism. He was a student in Japan and most of the works he published in his rather short life were written under evident influence of the Japanese authors and translations. Notably, his key text *My Views on Marxism* (*Wo de Makesi zhuyi guan*) was an adaptation of a text by an important Japanese Marxist scholar Kawakami Hajime,⁹ which Li also repeatedly referred to in his other writings.

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After the Russian revolution, however, the Bolshevik version of Marxism started coming to China and becoming a more prominent intellectual source. This shift towards the Soviet version of Marxism can also be traced within the most

⁷ Cf. Karen Steffen Chung, “Some Returned Loans: Japanese Loanwords in Taiwan Mandarin”, in: T. E. McAuley (ed.), *Language Change in East Asia*, Curzon, Richmond, Surrey 2001, chap. 7.

⁸ Ishikawa, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

influential intellectual movement at the time, the New Culture Movement, mentioned above. In the main intellectual journal of the movement, *New Youth* (*Xin qingnian*), which had been published since 1915, Marxist ideas were virtually absent for the first few years, even after the revolution happened in Russia.¹⁰ The ideas of Marxism-Leninism were only introduced in 1919, when the April issue included an article “The philosophical foundation of the Russian revolution” (Eguo geming zhi zhaxue de jichu). The May issue then published two critical articles about Marxism and it was unclear what direction the *New Youth* would opt for until it fully started to support the Marxist-Leninist position in May 1920.¹¹ The main shift thus happened in the year after the May Fourth movement, when two of the main protagonists of the New Culture Movement, who were the dean of the Beijing University Chen Duxiu and professor of philosophy Hu Shi, respectively, started to differ in their views. Chen, the editor of *New Youth*, was boldly radical in his views and uncompromising in his critique of the traditional Confucian mind-set, which he blamed for the lack of the modern perception of an independent individual.¹² As the editor of *New Youth*, he summarized, in the January 1919 edition, a few months before the political movement began, the goals of this movement in what became one of the most famous metaphors of Chinese modernisation:

Those who oppose the *New Youth*, that is only because we are destroying Confucianism, we are destroying ceremonial etiquette, we are destroying national essence, we are destroying chastity, we are destroying old ethics, we are destroying old art, we are destroying old religions, we are destroying old literature, we are destroying old politics, these crimes. We can admit the guilt of those crimes. But we only committed those crimes because we support those two gentlemen, Mr. De Moukelaxi (Democracy) and Mr. Sai Yinsi (Science). Because we support Mr. De, we can't avoid opposing Confucianism, ceremonial etiquette, chastity, and old ethics. Because we support Mr. Sai, we can't avoid opposing old art and

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¹⁰ Cf. Jen Ch'o-Hsüan and Ignatius J. H. Ts'ao, “The Introduction of Marxism-Leninism into China: The Early Years, 1919–1924”, *Studies in Soviet Thought*. Vol. 10, no. 2 (1970), pp. 144–145.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*, 2nd ed., W. W. Norton, New York 1999, p. 303.

old religions. Because we support Mr. De and Mr. Sai, we can't avoid opposing national essence and old literature.¹³

Democracy and science being the hallmarks of New Culture Movement, the members of it still varied greatly in how they envisioned this should be achieved. Over the course of 1919, the answer for Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao became a Marxist-Leninist revolution and the Chinese Communist Party was formally established the following year. The despair after the May Fourth movement faded away without much consequence led many to seek for more radical ways of bringing about the necessary changes. The disillusionment was also related to the new phenomena that sprung up following the ideals of the movement. One of them, which was ridiculed as “movement of constitutions” (*zhangcheng yundong*) was a trend among students to establish small factions, mostly preoccupied by drafting their own manifestoes. The other phenomenon that Chen saw as a problem was an experiment with local self-ruled government, led by Tan Yankai in Hunan (i.e. *Xiang ren zijue zhuyi*, “Hunanese self-determinism”), which instead of a bottom-up democratic change brought about the perpetuation of old elites in the countryside.¹⁴

As part of the attempt to organize an independent Hunan, Tan Yankai organized a conference in Changsha, at which he aimed to bring together the most educated and prominent thinkers to talk about the possibilities of the future Hunan constitution. At this conference, held between 27 October and 20 November, there were a series of events, meetings, talks, and opportunities for scholars to meet.¹⁵ Surprisingly, two famous scholars met in Changsha for the first time, although they were rivals for a long time before that. John Dewey and Bertrand Russell were both invited to the Changsha conference, and while the latter hurried through with a lack of courtesy that did not go overlooked, the former lingered longer. Despite their disagreements, the two scholars followed a similar path. Russell was in China between October 1919 and July 1920, while Dewey visited for two years between late April 1919 and July 1921. For the pres-

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¹³ Yu Yingshi (余英時), *Renwen yu lixing de Zhongguo*, Lian jing chuban shiye gongsi, 2008, p. 522.

¹⁴ Hans J. van de Ven, *From Friend to Comrade: The Founding of the Chinese Communist Party, 1920-1927*, University of California Press, Berkeley 1992, pp. 19–20.

¹⁵ Stephen R. Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA 2007, p. 205.

ent topic we will mostly focus on the impact of Dewey's visit, although Russell's lectures also resonated among learned circles.

John Dewey was invited to China by Hu Shi, one of his students at Columbia University. Between 1909 and 1929, 1300 Chinese students participated in the Boxer Rebellion Indemnity Scholarship Program (*geng zi peikuan jiangxuejin*),¹⁶ an attempt by the United States to seemingly alleviate the unreasonably high rebellion reparations. Apart from Hu Shi, many other important scholars were Dewey's students at Columbia: the education reformer Jiang Menglin, the founders of Nanjing University and Nankai University Guo Bingwen and Zhang Boling, and even the renowned philosopher Feng Youlan. Upon this invitation, Dewey arrived to Shanghai on April 30 1919. He remarked prophetically on 1 May for his wife and himself, that they were "very obviously in the hands of young China"¹⁷ and just a few days later the May Fourth demonstrations began. Beyond the romanticism and exoticism of imaginary Asia that one might have expected before, China struck him as the place where history was happening at the very moment, and this feeling enticed him to prolong his stay for one more year.¹⁸

After finally reaching Beijing at the end of May, he started a series of around sixty lectures.¹⁹ The main topics of those lectures were social and political philosophy and the philosophy of education, arguably also the fields where his thought had the largest impact in China.²⁰ He also held many lectures on ethics and other aspects of philosophical thinking, while also devoting special lectures to William James, Henri Bergson, and Bertrand Russell. Being in China in one of the most turbulent periods, his lectures also obtained much more than mere scholarly attention. The impact, often dubbed *Duweihua*, i.e. "Deweyization", was preconditioned by his prior influence on the Chinese intellectual circles and their activities in the modernizing of China's political and

¹⁶ Vanessa Künemann and Ruth Mayer, *Trans-Pacific Interactions: The United States and China, 1880-1950*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2009, p. 106.

¹⁷ Jessica Ching-Sze Wang, *John Dewey in China: To Teach and to Learn*, SUNY Press, Albany 2012, p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁹ For more details, cf.: Zhixin Su, "A Critical Evaluation of John Dewey's Influence on Chinese Education", *American Journal of Education*, Vol. 103, No. 3 (May, 1995), pp. 302-325.

²⁰ Ding Zijiang, "A Comparison of Dewey's and Russell's Influences on China", *Dao* (2007) 6, pp. 149-165.

educational system. The applicability of his thought and the particular relation between universalism and interculturality²¹ that marked his work, made this transplantation of ideas extremely important for 1920s China and beyond. One of the most evident fields of his influence was education, which in China was in dire need of reform. He saw education as a prerequisite for democracy, which resonated strongly in the minds of Chinese scholars. There can be no political change without social and cultural change, which was a lesson the Chinese citizens had just learned painfully with the failed republican revolution.

An important factor in the popularity of Dewey's thought were the efforts of his Columbia students, most notably Hu Shi. Hu saw Dewey's experimentalism as an optimal method for China's reform. Dewey's method provided a model for Hu Shi in his gradual split with the advocates of the revolutionary change. Instead, interpreting on Dewey, he stood for gradual progression and peaceful change, i.e. reformation, while avoiding the Russian style of a violent and radical transformation of the society, i.e. revolution.²² As Spence notes, "his boldness in some cultural and historical matters existed side by side with his caution over speedy solutions",²³ a contradiction he resolved by resorting to Dewey's notion of the enduring process of perfecting – and not perfection.

The Debate

In July 1919, two months after the May demonstrations in Beijing and while Dewey was in Beijing, Hu Shi openly declared his views on reform in the 31st issue of *Weekly Review*, a weekly newspaper of the New Culture movement. The short text clarified what Hu had started to formulate as some kind of a "third" (or even "fourth") way for China. He lists a number of views that he accuses of "relying on paper doctrines":

Those that advocate for the respect for Confucius and for the worship of the Sky don't understand the needs of our present society. Those that blindly follow nationalism or anarchism – do they understand the needs of the present society?

²¹ For more on this topic, see: Lenart Škof, "Thinking between Cultures: Pragmatism, Rorty and Intercultural Philosophy", *Ideas y Valores: Revista Colombiana de Filosofía* 57: 138 (2008), p. 48.

²² Ding, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

²³ Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 305.

In the following text, Hu presents three arguments against relying on ideologies, the term he famously uses for that, is “-ism” (*zhuyi*). He criticized a recent development, when one of the current corrupt political leaders wanted to get some credibility by advocating a well sounding -ism, namely the seemingly socialist doctrine on human welfare (*minshengzhuyi*) of Sun Yatsen, by saying:

Vaguely talking about a nice-sounding “-isms” is a very simple matter, something anyone can do; this can be done by a parrot or a gramophone.

Furthermore, he adds, the exploitation of paper ideologies can also be dangerous. Not even a year after the end of the Great War, he bitterly adds:

Relying on paper “-isms” is dangerous. Repeating such mantras can be used by the shameless politicians to do harmful things. It is well known how European politicians and capitalists poison people with nationalism.

Another argument, which seems a bit unusual with regard to Hu’s personal experience of adapting the philosophy of an American scholar, is that importing doctrines is a dangerous undertaking. It is not, of course, that Hu advocates the priority of “domestic”, traditional Chinese ideas and thought systems. The reason for this argument is pragmatic. The type of universalism that “-isms” offer is a false one. The only worthy pursuit within Hu’s framework is solving the issues that a certain real society faces, and, in order to do that, it is insufficient to talk merely about ideological concepts, but one needs to go, metaphorically speaking or not, to the actual location and explore. This exploration, research, or study (*yanjiu*) is set as an antidote to mere talking (*tan*) and hence the title of Hu’s article, which advocates for more “study” and less “talk”. What is studied is the circumstances in actual *loci* of the society and the questions or problems (*wenti*) that need to be answered. Mere talking on the other hand focuses on the ideas within the grand scheme of things, namely on ideologies or “-isms”. In Hu’s pragmatist interpretation even the ideologies develop from an experimentalist setting. In the beginning, every “-ism” is a study:

All “-isms” are aspirations of people from a certain time and place, offering solutions to help society in that time and place.

[...]

Every “-ism” begins as a response to circumstances. Every society, in every period of time, is under a certain influence and exhibits certain dissatisfying circumstances. ... This is how “-isms” start; mostly they are some sort of a concrete view in times of need.

In the process of spreading the doctrine, these concrete views and solutions are simplified, summarized, as Hu says, down to “one or two words”, and then start to be known as “this-or-that-ism” (*mou mou zhuyi*). When a view becomes an “-ism”, the concrete plan becomes an abstract notion, and subsuming different concrete views under the umbrella term of an “-ism” is both lacking and dangerous:

For example the term “socialism”: Marx’s socialism and Wang Yitang’s²⁴ socialism are not the same; your socialism and my socialism are not the same (and) this cannot be comprised into one abstract notion. ... There may be seven or eight centuries in between, or twenty or thirty thousand miles, but you and me and Wang Yitang call ourselves socialists (and) we can all deceive people with this abstract term.

Instead of resorting to these general terms under the pretence that we are discussing the “fundamental solutions” (*genben jiejie*), Hu advocates for concrete measures to alleviate societal problems, “the livelihood of rickshaw drivers”, “the emancipation of women”, etc. The refusal to do so, he said, is a sign of a moral laziness:

Why so many discuss “-isms” and so few study problems? This all comes down to the notion of laziness. The definition of laziness is avoiding difficulties and resorting to what is easy. Studying problems is a difficult thing; a lofty discussion about “-isms” is an easy thing.

Studying, continues Hu, demands a lot of sacrifice and suffering, while on the other hand, lofty debates only require a “reading of one or two anarchist pamphlets written in western languages and leafing through the Encyclopaedia Britannica”. “-Isms”, concludes Hu, should not be a replacement for the study of

²⁴ One of the corrupt Anhui clique, which Hu previously mentions as those who misuse the allegedly socialist Sun Yatsen’s notion of human welfare (*minshengzhuyi*).

real problems of society, but only a “reference material in the back of the brain” while solving them.

In this short article by Hu we can see that the distinction he wants to make between the advocates of “-isms” and himself is a fundamental one. While responding to a current situation, the abuse of the term “socialism” in recent political intrigues, he nonetheless sees that as a symptom of the dangerous prevalence of “-isms” over the solving of problems. The reply, however, starts in a seemingly more reconciliatory tone. Li Dazhao, the editor of the *Weekly Review*, published his reply in the August 17th issue under the title “More Debate about Problems and ‘Isms’”. Firmly in the support of radical revolutionary change, he tries to first negate Hu’s criticism by a methodological insight, arguing that his view of “-isms” is too narrow. The distinction Hu made, is, according to Li, ungrounded:

I think that “problems” and “-isms” are related in a way that cannot be completely separated.

The fundamental difference between the two is perhaps in the perception of how problems are to be solved – and, even more importantly, by whom. Solving society’s problems, argues Li Dazhao, can only be done by the majority of the members of this society, and if something is not a common problem, it has to become one:

Because the solution for a societal problem has to rely on the common dynamics of the majority of the people in that society. If we therefore want to solve a problem, we must make it into a common problem for the majority of the people in that society.

The idealist approach of an ideology, i.e. of an “-ism”, is a prerequisite for achieving this. An “-ism” gives people “a measure (a tool) with which they can test whether they are satisfied with their life or not”. Only with this fulfilled do people reach the point of having the desire to change the conditions of their life. Otherwise, all attempts to change society are pointless:

... you can endlessly research the social phenomena, but the majority of people will not have any relation to that; such research into social problems has no influence on reality.

By claiming this, Li puts the relationship between Hu's opposites into another perspective. Research and ideology are namely both necessary for social change:

Therefore our movement, although on one hand researching real problems, must on the other hand spread an idealistic “-ism”. This functions mutually and is not exclusive.

Li argues that there is also a utopian function of ideology and underlines this with examples of closed utopian communities, such as those created following Owen's or Fourier's ideas or Mushanokōji's more recent “new village” in Japan. In these examples people or their followers unite and “establish a community where they can put to practice their ideal social system and make a specimen of the ideal society, which then causes average people to realize that it is possible to hope for a life in new society”.

Li also rejects Hu's view that the multitude of different streams of thought and practice that call themselves socialist is a dangerous phenomenon. He claims instead that these are just “forms in which the spirit [of socialism] is put into practice and adapted to the necessary attempts”. It is not the ideology's fault if it is misused, adds Li:

This can show that it is the fundamental nature of ideology to be able to adapt to reality, but if it is used by professional lofty speakers, it becomes void. I'm afraid that Mr. Hu therefore saw as the danger of the “-ism” does not originate in the “-ism”, but in the void speaking person.

At the end of his “friendly” argument against Hu's criticism, Li also addresses the main issue between them: why would one prefer to solve “fundamental solutions” when problems must be addressed, a decision Hu ascribed to laziness. This might not be a necessary tactic in a developed country, or what Li calls “a society that is organized and alive”. In China, however, such a condition had not been met, and the debate about the fundamental issues is a prerequisite for any other change. For fundamental problems, fundamental solutions should be used and an ideological framework consulted rather than a small-scale experimentalist reform of the Deweyan type. He explains that with the classical Marxist model of base and superstructure:

The solution to the economic problem is a fundamental solution. When the economic problems are solved, any political problems, legal problems, problems in the family system, women's liberation problems, and workers' liberation problem can (all) be resolved.

The Aftermath

After the debate in *Weekly Review*, the paths of Chen Duxiu's and Li Dazhao's group started to differ from those of Hu Shi and other Deweyans. What in 1919 was a theoretical distinction became a gravely serious matter after the revolution. The Chinese communist party, established in 1921 by Chen and Li, set the scene for the victory in the civil war in 1949 and the subsequent decades. Hu Shi left the country and was severely criticized *in absentia*, especially in the 1950s.²⁵ His teacher's reputation also dwindled. The protagonists of the revolutionary part of the New Culture Movement had no issues with Dewey at the time of his stay in China, he had a good relationship with Chen Duxiu and Zhou Enlai, and even Mao went to listen to his lectures in Changsha. A few decades later, his openly harsh opposition to revolution as a solution for China's problems – a view shared by Hu – made him a target of discreditation. His students were harassed and criticized, he was labelled a “class-enemy”, a “counter-revolutionary”, and a “reactionary capitalist”, his thought was deconstructed as “anti-scientific”, and he himself was accused of deliberately introducing a depoliticized educational system.²⁶ Interestingly enough, as Bruno-Jofré and Schriewer point out in their book on the global reception of Dewey's thought, it was only during the cultural revolution that the criticism of pragmatism and Dewey was completely silenced, perhaps due to the fact that the methods of the Gang of Four had many similarities with the Deweyan principles of “open-door education”. Furthermore, a comparison of the Gang of Four with Dewey, whose views were deemed as wrong, became a useful tool to criticize their policies indirectly. A more positive reappraisal of Dewey's pragmatism then followed, first through praise for his student Tao Xingzhi. This second twist of views re-interpreted Dewey's thought as anti-capitalist (especially because of his idea of

²⁵ Cf. Chan Lien, “Chinese Communism versus Pragmatism: The Criticism of Hu Shih's Philosophy, 1950-1958”, *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (May, 1968), pp. 551-570.

²⁶ Rosa Bruno-Jofré, Jürgen Schriewer, *The Global Reception of John Dewey's Thought: Multiple Refractions Through Time and Space*, London, Routledge, 2012.

classless equality in schools) and praised him anew for his seemingly useful and balanced views on the relation between the individual and society.

When pragmatism became an almost ideological view in China with the late 1970s with the policies of Deng Xiaoping and his famously doctrine of the “colour of cats”, the pragmatist position of Dewey and Hu also became a commonplace reference again. The same is partly true for the current political atmosphere, where it seems that pragmatism still provides a welcome combination of the atheist ethics and social experimentalism, which is not alien to the synthesis between Mao and Confucius that the Chinese Communist Party advocates today. The last period of Xi Jinping, however, signifies a new shift on the spectrum between problems and -isms, the two notions of the hundred years’ old debate. Since Deng Xiaoping and his pragmatic shift, it seemed for a few decades that the solving of problems or seeking of solutions prevailed, while ideology was pushed aside, except for a few brief episodes of ideological rigour in late 1970s and late 1980s. The common claim that ideology had been slowly disappearing from the picture since 1978, however, is misleading. As Brown and Bērziņa-Čerenkova point out,²⁷ the ideology of the CPC did not disappear, but it changed and became more flexible, refined, and indirect. Since the beginning of Xi Jinping’s presidency, however, we can trace another change, from the focus on economic matters to political issues. It is precisely in this shift that we can see an echo of the same early 20th-century debate. In his speech at the Central Party School on 5 January 2013, Xi asserted that there is a necessary continuity between the reform era post-1976 and the time before.

There are two historical periods, one before the Reform and opening up, and the other after it; these are two mutually interconnected, but also very different time periods, but in essence, all this was a practical attempt of the Communist party at leading the people to build socialism.²⁸

According to Xi, the choice is not which one to follow and which one to reject. There would not be a reform without the period of revolutionary fervour before it:

²⁷ Kerry Brown and Una Aleksandra Bērziņa-Čerenkova, “Ideology in the Era of Xi Jinping”, *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, September 2018, Volume 23, Issue 3, pp. 323–339.

²⁸ Xi Jinping’s speech is quoted from: <http://news.sohu.com/20130106/n362503875.shtml> (acc. 20 September 2018).

The Socialism with Chinese Characteristics was created during the historical period of Reform and opening up, but it was also created on the basis of the New China, which has built a socialist system and maintained it for 70 years.

It is interesting to note how much does Xi's position, so different in content and style from those of his immediate predecessors, goes back to the debate about the correct relationship between ideology and practice, between "-isms" and "problems". Even more, the summarizing phrase on the topic, which became the new slogan for negotiating ideology and pragmatism in Xi's China, almost echoes Li Dazhao's 1919 response to Hu Shi, namely, that "none of the two can be denied" (*liang ge bu neng fouding*).²⁹

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Povzetki | Abstracts

Monique David-Ménard

How Does One Become a Citizen, if One Becomes One?

Key words: politics, anthropology, psychoanalysis, Butler, Abélès, political space, contingency

According to classical and modern political philosophy from Hobbes via Kant and Hegel to Marx, one becomes a citizen by transforming one's family and social rootedness into a juridical and/or political existence. By insisting on the precariousness of politics, Judith Butler and Marc Abélès challenge the classic distinctions, such as between private and public, by showing how the immanence of conflicts and their contingency is constitutive of the emergence of politics today. In thinking politics beyond the state, both Butler and Abélès conceive the political place as the intersection of various dimensions of a concrete space where the perilous exposition of bodies is rendered visible. It is against this background that the author departs from an ontology of precariousness insofar as this ontology tends to obscure the radical contingency of freedom as the latter is always a freedom under multiple conditions. In order to render the contingency of the creation of a political space visible, it is therefore necessary to pay attention to the social and historical conditions of such a creation. A non-ontological conception of precariousness in politics, by contrast, makes it possible to explore the surprising proximity between the methods used in psychoanalysis and political anthropology. Psychoanalysis has some affinities with politics insofar as it constructs, just like politics, a site for wandering. However, while psychoanalysis is not to be assimilated to politics insofar as it concerns individual singularities and not collectives, it can nevertheless provide precious instruments for the analysis of political situations.

Monique David-Ménard

Kako postanemo državljani oziroma ali sploh to postanemo?

Ključne besede: politika, antropologija, psihoanaliza, Butler, Abélès, politični prostor, kontingentnost

Za klasično in moderno politično filozofijo od Hobbesa prek Kanta in Hegla do Marxa postanemo državljani, ko svojo zakoreninjenost v družinske in družbene vezi spremenimo v pravni in/oziroma politični obstoj. Judith Butler in Marc Abélès, s tem da poudarjata prekrasnost politike, postavljata pod vprašaj klasične distinkcije, kot je ločevanje med zasebnim in javnim, ko pokažeta, da sta imanentnost in kontingentnost konfliktov konstitutivna za vznik politike danes. Ker mislita politiko onstran države, tako Butler kot

Abélès pojmujeta politični prostor kot križišče različnih razsežnosti konkretnega prostora, kjer postane vidna prekarnost teles. Opirajoč se na ta dognanja, se avtorica distancira od ontologije prekarnosti, kolikor le-ta zamrači radikalno kontingentnost svobode, ki je vedno svoboda pod različnimi pogoji. Zato da bi lahko naredili vidno kontingentnost ustvarjanja političnega prostora, je zato nujno upoštevati konkretne družbene in zgodovinske pogoje takega ustvarjanja. Neontološko pojmovanje prekarnosti politike pa naspotno omogoča pokazati nenavadno bližino metod, ki jih uporabljajo v psihoanalizi in politični antropologiji. Psihoanalizi in politiki je skupno to, da konstruirata prostor za tavanje. Toda če psihoanalize vseeno ni mogoče priličiti politiki, kolikor ima namreč opraviti s posameznimi singularnostmi in ne kolektivi, pa vseeno lahko ponudi orodja za analizo političnih situacij.

Patricia Gherovici

Clinic of the Clinamen: The Materiality of the Symptom

Key words: clinamen, sinthome, transsexuals, autobiographical narratives of sex-change

My work with transsexuals has allowed me to understand how the concept of synthome can apply to their case, especially in so far as it allowed me to distinguish pathological from non-pathological structures. To buttress my clinical work, a reading of transsexual memoirs has led me to perceive how a second materialization of the body is a consequence of a torsion knotted by writing.

Patricia Gherovici

Klinika klinamena: materialnost simptoma

Ključne besede: klinamen, sintom, transseksualci, avtobiografske pripovedi o spremembi spola

Moje delo s transseksualci mi je omogočilo razumeti, kako je mogoče pojem sintoma uporabiti na njihovem primeru, in sicer natanko v tisti meri, v kateri mi je omogočil ločiti patološke strukture od nepatoloških. Branje transseksualnih spominov, ki je opora mojega kliničnega dela, mi je omogočilo videti, da je druga materializacija telesa posledica torzije, ki jo spenja pisanje.

Frances L. Restuccia

The Glorious Body: Agambenian Non-Unavailable Nudity in Art

Key words: messianic time, nudity, *poiesis* and *praxis*, form-of-life, sovereignty

“The Glorious Body” explores Agamben’s conception of art—through his notion of the messianic as it comprises “nudity” to infer his idea of the nude. Agamben’s “ontology of nudity” heals the fracture between *poiesis* and *praxis* that paved the dreary way to aesthetics, giving a key role in this process to the nude figure in art. Insofar as art may be rediscovered through “nudity,” art can awaken us to the intimate contact of *poiesis* and *praxis* in life itself, allowing us to reclaim our poetic status in the world by constituting our lives as “form-of-life.” Agamben’s messianic nudity (in art, through the nude), moreover, effects the inoperativity of sovereignty by precluding presupposition—that which a veil relies on—by simply italicizing what already exists. Sovereignty is thus disempowered, as it depends on the presupposition of an exception that Agamben’s messianic vision held within nudity rules out.

Frances L. Restuccia

Veličastno telo: agambenovska ne-razodevajoča se golota v umetnosti

Ključne besede: mesijanski čas, golot, *poiesis* in *praxis*, forma-življenja, suverenost

Pričujoče besedilo preiskuje Agambenovo pojmovanje umetnosti, opirajoč se pri tem na njegov pojem mesijanskega, kolikor le-ta vključuje »goloto«, zato da bi na tej podlagi izpeljalo njegovo idejo o golem. Agambenova »ontologija golote« zacementira razpoko med *poiesis* in *praxis*, ki je odprla uničevalno pot k estetiki, pri čemer je osrednjo vlogo v tem procesu dodeljena goli figuri v umetnosti. Če je umetnost mogoče ponovno odkriti prek »golote«, pa nas lahko umetnost po drugi strani naredi dovzetne za tesni stik med *poiesis* in *praxis* v samem življenju, s čimer nam omogoči, da zahtevamo obnovo našega poetičnega statusa v svetu prek konstitucije naših življenj kot »form življenja«. Toda Agambenova mesijanska golota (v umetnosti – prek golote) hkrati povzroči neoperativnost suverenosti, s tem da izključi predpostavko – tisto, na katero se opira tenčica – zgolj s tem, da poudari to, kar že obstaja. Suverenost s tem izgubi svojo moč, saj je odvisna od predpostavke izjeme, ki jo Agambenova mesijanska vizija, kolikor ostaja znotraj golote, ravno izključuje.

Jelica Šumič Riha

Sadean Politics or a Tyranny of Jouissance

Key words: Sade, politics, nature, jouissance, the law, the social bond, freedom

One of the lessons to be drawn from Freud's *Civilization and Its Discontents* is undoubtedly that jouissance – because it implies pain and suffering – is something harmful to the subject. However, this inherent cruelty of jouissance becomes a problem for modern moral and political philosophy with Sade, for whom the right to jouissance is a fundamental human rights and as such universal. While Sade's universal right to jouissance is inconceivable outside the horizon of human rights discourse, the only space in which universal rights can arise, it represents the ultimate limit of this discourse precisely to the extent that the despotism of the passions, which Sade advocates, promotes the rights, not of man, but of jouissance. But can there be something like an ethics of jouissance and, consequently, a politics of jouissance at all if ethics and politics are founded on a relationship with the Other, whereas jouissance, being solipsistic, autistic in nature, problematises the very status of the Other? And conversely, if Sade's project of emancipation aims at the realisation of the tyranny of jouissance precisely at the level of the *socius*, then one might ask: What is the social bond that is founded on something which appears to be incompatible with it? To answer these questions, this article examines the radical nature of Sade's despotism of passions as a reinvention of the social bond that consists in bringing together two incompatible instances: freedom and jouissance.

Jelica Šumič Riha

Sadovska politika ali tiranija užitka

Ključne besede: Sade, politika, narava, užitek, zakon, družbena vez, svoboda

Eden od naukov Freudovega *Nelagodja v kulturi* je, da je užitek, ker prinaša bolečino in trpljenje, nekaj škodljivega za subjekta. Toda ta inherentna krutost užitka postane problem za moderno moralno in politično filozofijo s Sadom, za katerega je pravica do užitka ena temeljnih človekovih pravic in kot taka univerzalna. Če je Sadova univerzalna pravica do užitka nepojmljiva zunaj okvira diskurza o človekovih pravicah, znotraj katerega je univerzalna pravica sploh mogoča, pa sadovska pravica do užitka pomeni mejo tega diskurza v tisti meri, v kateri Sadov despotizem strasti ne zagovarja pravic človeka, marveč pravice užitka. Toda ali sploh lahko obstaja nekaj takega kot etika in, posledično, politika užitka, če sta etika in politika utemeljeni na razmerju do Drugega, užitek, ki je po definiciji solipsističen, avtističen, pa status Drugega ravno problematizira? In narobe, če Sadov emancipatorni projekt meri na uresničenje tiranije užitka prav na ravni družbe, potem bi se lahko vprašali, kakšna je družbena vez, ki je utemeljena na užitku, ki se zdi nezdržljiv z njo? Zato da bi odgovoril na ti vprašanji, pričujoči članek analizira radi-

kalno naravo Sadovega despotizma strasti kot reinvincijo družbene vezi, ki med seboj poveže dve nekompatibilni instanci: svobodo in užitek.

Jan Völker

Psyche's Speculative Figure: Freud – Derrida

Key words: Freud, Derrida, psychoanalysis, philosophy, *Interpretation of Dreams*, *différance*, speculation

In the *Interpretation of Dreams* Freud presents the unconscious as the figure of a threshold, oscillating between pleasure and unpleasure, form and content, effectiveness and non-materiality. In further texts, speculative concepts answer these oscillating moments, and thus psyche unfolds as a speculative figure. The main question of this article is then: How can philosophy be able to grasp psyche's speculative body? One decisive attempt is Derrida's answer to psychoanalysis. Deconstruction attempts to reconstruct psychoanalysis as the other to philosophy, but also deconstructs the possibility of the other as such. Thus, deconstruction rejects psychoanalysis as an 'other' and insists on its own sameness, but is incapable of upholding this distinction. As a consequence, philosophy is situated at the place of a structural impossibility; it produces its own loss, while becoming infinitely similar to psychoanalysis.

Jan Völker

Spekulativna figura psihe: Freud – Derrida

Ključne besede: Freud, Derrida, psihoanaliza, filozofija, *Interpretacija sanj*, razloka, spekulacija

V *Interpretaciji sanj* Freud predstavi nezavedno kot mejno figuro, ki niha med ugodjem in neugodjem, formo in vsebino, dejanskostjo in nematerialnostjo. V poznejših tekstih Freud vpelje spekulativne pojme, ki ustezajo tem trenutkom nihanja, pri čemer se tudi psiha razgrinja kot spekulativna figura. Centralno vprašanje pričujočega članka je zato: kako lahko filozofija zapopade spekulativno telo psihe? Enega odločilnih poskusov v tej smeri vidimo v Derridajvem odgovoru psihoanalizi. Dekonstrukcija je prizadevanje rekonstruirati psihoanalizo kot drugo filozofije, obenem pa dekonstruira tudi možnost drugega kot takega. Dekonstrukcija torej zavrača psihoanalizo kot »drugo« in vztraja na svoji lastni istosti, vendar ne more ohraniti te distinkcije. Posledično je filozofija situirana na mesto strukturne nemožnosti in proizvaja svojo lastno izgubo, s čimer je neskončno bolj priličena psihoanalizi.

Cláudio Oliveira

Pure Langage and *Lalangue*: An Encounter between Benjamin and Lacan

Key words: Benjamin, Lacan, language, idiom

The aim of this article is to open an approach – an initiative still rare in the philosophical and psychoanalytic fields – between the thought of Jacques Lacan and the Frankfurt School, focusing on the discussion on the conceptions of language and idiom present in Walter Benjamin's and Lacan's works. In doing so, the author will be guided by Agamben's reading of Benjamin, a reading that emphasises the idea of the origin of the historical condition of man as coinciding with and being inseparable from the emergence of signification in human language. Starting from this elaboration, it will be possible to think with Benjamin about another language, which he sometimes presents as something coming before history and language's fall into the realm of signification, and sometimes as something coming after history – and through this, the idea of a "pure language". Would it be possible, then, to draw a parallel between such "pure language" as elaborated by Benjamin, and the conception of "letter" in Lacan's thought? Such is the path opened up by this text.

Cláudio Oliveira

Čista govornica in jezik: srečanje med Benjaminom in Lacanom

Ključne besede: Benjamin, Lacan, jezik, idiom

Pričujoči prispevek si prizadeva odpreti dostop – pobuda, ki je razmeroma redka tako v polju filozofije kot psihoanalize – med mislijo Jacquesa Lacana in frankurtsko šolo, pri čemer se osredinja predvsem na obravnavo koncepcij govornice in idioma v delu Walterja Benjamina in Lacana. Avtorja bo pri tem vodilo Agambenovo branje Benjamina, branje, ki v ospredje postavlja idejo izvira človekovega zgodovinskega stanja, ki je dojeto kot neločljivo od in celo sovpadajoče z vznikom pomena v človeški govorici. Opirajoč se na tako branje se članek loti, sledeč pri tem Benjaminu, vprašanja možnosti druge govornice, ki jo Benjamin ponekod predstavlja kot nekaj, kar je umeščeno pred zgodovino in padcem govornice v polje pomena, ponekod pa kot nekaj, kar je umeščeno po zgodovini. Na tej podlagi članek obravnava idejo »čiste govornice«. Ali je na tej podlagi mogoče popleči vzporednico med »čisto govornico«, ki jo je obravnaval Benjamin, in pojmovanjem »črke« v Lacanovem mišljenju? To je pot, ki jo odpira pričujoči tekst.

Rado Riha

Kant and the Question of Realism

Key words: transcendental philosophy, aesthetic reflective judgement, the subject, the object, constitution of reality

Due to its turn to the subjective constitution of reality, Kant's transcendental philosophy is nowadays often viewed as a paradigm case of the subject/object correlation, a position which is, as such, exposed to the objection of being unable to conceive of a non-constituted world without human beings and, as a result, of turning thought against any realism whatsoever. In departing from such a reading of Kant's transcendental philosophy, the present essay sets out from the assumption according to which it is precisely Kant's philosophy which – on the condition that we understand and present it in its orientation to systematicity, such as it is manifested in the notion of the aesthetic reflexive power of judgement in the third Critique – allows us to affirm in philosophy and elaborate further realism.

Rado Riha

Kant in vprašanje realizma

Gljučne besede: transcendentalna filozofija, estetska reflekirajoča sodba, subjekt, objekt, konstitucija realnosti

Kantova transcendentalna filozofija je zaradi svojega obrata k subjektivni konstituciji dejanskosti danes pogosto predstavljena kot tako rekoč paradigmatični primer korelacije subjekta in objekta in je kot takšna izpostavljena očitku, da ni zmožna misliti nekonstruiranega sveta brez ljudi, da torej odvrta mišljenje od slehernega realizma. V nasprotju s tem razumevanjem Kanta prispevek razvija in utemeljuje stališče, da nam ravno Kantova filozofija, pod pogojem, da jo razumemo in prikažemo v njeni sistematični naravnosti, tako, kot se ta naravnost naposled manifestira v pojmu estetske reflektirajoče razsodne moči v tretji *Kritiki*, omogoča, da zastopamo in razvijemo v filozofiji stališče realizma.

Wang Jianjiang

Is it Possible for China to Go Ahead of the World in Philosophy and Aesthetics? Response to Aleš Erjavec's, Ernest Ženko's, and Rok Benčin's Comments on *Zhuyi* and Bie-Modern Theories

Key words: humanities in China, bie-modernism, bie-modernist art, modernity, Chinese avant-garde, leading the world

European philosophers and aestheticians hold that the humanities in China, including philosophy and aesthetics, may have bright prospects, but they do not necessarily regard

them as first class. Contrary to this point of view, Bie-modernism (“*bie xian dai zhuyi*” in Chinese pinyin) believes that China’s humanities have world-class aspirations, although in this respect there are different motivations with regard to the Chinese government and the Chinese people. Lacking the most basic Enlightenment modernity, Chinese society and China’s humanities also lack a real modernity, which has been guiding the discourse of Chinese humanities since 1989. Only exported contemporary Chinese avant-garde art has the modernity of reflection and criticism that is proper to Bie-modernist art. Therefore, if China’s humanities can learn from the Chinese avant-garde art spirit and adhere to Bie-modernism, it is possible to enter the international ranks. Then it will not be impossible to lead the world.

Wang Jianjiang

**Ali je Kitajska sposobna prehiteti svet v filozofiji in estetiki?
Odziv na komentarje Aleša Erjavca, Ernesta Ženka in Roka Benčina
o teorijah *zhuyi* in Bie-moderni**

Ključne besede: humanistika na Kitajskem, bie-modernizem, bie-modernistična umetnost, modernost, kitajska avantgarda, voditi svet

Evropski filozofi in estetiki trdijo, da imajo humanistične vede na Kitajskem, vključno s filozofijo in estetiko, morda svetlo prihodnost, vseeno pa v njih ne vidijo nujno nečesa prvovrznega. V nasprotju s tem pogledom bie-modernizem (*bie xian dai zhuyi*) verjame, da ima kitajska humanistika pričakovanja svetovnih razsežnosti, čeprav obstajajo glede tega različne motivacije, ko gre za kitajsko vlado in ko gre za kitajsko ljudstvo. Ob tem, da pogršata najosnovnejšo razsvetljensko modernost, kitajska družba in kitajska humanistika pogršata tudi dejansko modernost, ki je vodila diskurz kitajske humanistike od leta 1989. Le izvožena sodobna avantgardna kitajska umetnost poseduje modernost refleksije in kritike, ki je lastna bie-modernistični umetnosti.² Le če se kitajske

¹ Bie-modern theory, which was published in 2014, includes both the Bie-modern social situation and Bie-modernism, the latter of which counters the Bie-modern social situation. “Bie-modern” means the hybridity of the pre-modern, modern and post-modern, or the mixed social form of feudalism, socialism and capitalism. “Bie-modern” is doubtful modernity or pseudo-modernity, but Bie-modernism aims to eliminate pseudo-modernity and to set up real modernity. In Georgia Southwestern State University (USA), the Center for Chinese Bie-modern Studies (CCBMS) was founded in 2017.

² Teorija o bie-modernosti, ki je bila objavljena leta 2014, vsebuje tako bie-moderno družbeno situacijo kot bie-modernizem, drugi od katerih nasprotuje bie-moderni družbeni situaciji. »Bie-moderen« pomeni hibridnost pred-modernega, bie-modernega in postmodernega ali mešano družbeno obliko fevdalizma, socializma in kapitalizma. »Bie-moderen« je dvomeča modernost ali psevdomodernost, pri čemer skuša bie-modernizem odstraniti psevdomodernost in vzpostaviti dejansko modernost. Gl. Georgia Southwestern State University, ZDA, Center za kitajske bie-moderne študije (CCBMS), ustanovljen leta 2017.

humanistične vede lahko učijo od duha kitajske avantgarde ter so zveste bie-modernizmu, lahko vstopijo v mednarodne vrste. pripadajo lahko vstopijo v mednarodni okvir. Potem sveta ne bo nemogoče voditi.

Guo Yaxiong

Surpassing the “Speech / Voice Distinction”: Rethinking the Construction of Chinese Philosophy in the Era of Bie-Modern (Doubtful Modernity)

Key words: bie-modern, doubtful modernity, Chinese philosophy, discourse innovation

In *Politics*, Aristotle makes the distinction between speech and voice. Speech means rational, just, useful and understandable, while voice is the animal’s meaningless howl, which stands for the injustice, the useless, and the unreasonable. This distinction had a strong influence on Western philosophy. This essay argues that the “speech / voice distinction” is an unreasonable and self-destructive discourse; a real international philosophy or a new republic of letters should renounce this distinction and instead promote the boom of national philosophy; a fruitful Chinese national philosophy should attempt to deal with its own problems by critical thinking rather than repeating the theory and experiences of others. In the Bie-modern (Doubtful Modernity) era, Chinese scholars need to fully consider the specificity of contemporary Chinese society and deter the pseudo-modern by proposing various “*zhuyi*” for pursuing the authenticity of modernity. A valuable Chinese “*zhuyi*” should not be restricted to a Chinese national perspective and needs to have deep interactions with international academia in order to promote a more open and cosmopolitan philosophy.

Guo Yaxiong

Preseči razlikovanje med »govorico in glasom«: ponovno premisliti izgradnjo kitajske filozofije v dobi bie-modernosti (dvomeče modernosti)

Ključne besede: bio-moderen, dvomeča modernost, kitajska filozofija, diskurz inovativnosti

Aristotel v *Politiki* razlikuje med govorico in glasom. Glas pomeni racionalno, pravično, koristno in razumljivo, medtem ko je glas živali nesmiselno zavijanje, ki pomeni nepravilnost, nekoristnost in nerazumnost. To razlikovanje je močno vplivalo na zahodno filozofijo. Ta esej trdi, da je razlikovanje »govor/glas« nerazumen in samouničevalen diskurz; resnično mednarodna filozofija ali nova knjižna republika bi morala zavreči to razlikovanje in namesto tega zagovarjati eksplozijo nacionalne filozofije, plodna kitajska nacionalna filozofija bi morala poskusiti reševati svoje lastne probleme s pomočjo kritič-

nega mišljenja ne pa s ponavljanjem teorije in izkustva drugih. V dobi bie-modernosti (dvomeče modernosti) morajo kitajski učenjaki v celoti upoštevati specifičnost sodobne kitajske družbe ter odvreči psevdo-modernost, predlagati različne *zhuyi* ob tem ko sledi avtentičnost modernosti. Koristen kitajski *zhuyi* ne bi smel biti omejen na kitajsko perspektivo in bi moral imeti globoko medsebojno delovanje z mednarodnim akademskim svetom, da bi lahko promoviral bolj odprto in bolj svetovljansko filozofijo.

Rok Benčin

Temporalities of Modernity in Jia Zhangke's *Still Life*

Key words: contemporary Chinese cinema, modernity, temporality, realism, fiction, Jia Zhangke, Jacques Rancière

The essay attempts to unravel the complex intertwinement of different temporalities in Jia Zhangke's *Still Life* (2006). Set at the construction site of the Three Gorges Dam, the world's biggest power station, the film focuses on the large-scale demolition process in the background: due to the dam's reservoir, a large area has to be flooded, requiring the relocation of more than a million people. Against the background of the intersection of temporal lines of modernisation and nostalgia that still have a goal or starting point which structures their temporality, Jia uses a distinctive blend of realist and fictional elements to portray the uncertain present as a time of displacement, searching, and wandering. The essay proposes a reading of temporal and narrative structures of Jia's films through Jacques Rancière's recent writings on the social hierarchies implied by the temporalities of modernity and his understanding of the reversal of these hierarchies in realist literature and film.

Rok Benčin

Moderne časovnosti v *Mirnem življenju Jie Zhangkeja*

Ključne besede: sodobni kitajski film, modernost, časovnost, realizem, fikcija, Jia Zhangke, Jacques Rancière

Članek poskuša razvozlati kompleksen preplet različnih časovnosti v *Mirnem življenju* (2006) Jie Zhangkeja. Film je bil posnet na območju gradnje Jezu Treh sotesk, največje elektrarne na svetu, vendar se osredotoča na velikopotezni proces rušenja v ozadju – zaradi nastalega akumulacijskega jezera je bilo namreč iz območja preseljenih več kot milijon ljudi. Na ozadju križanja časovnih premic modernizacije in nostalgije, ki ju strukturira določen cilj ali izhodiščna točka, Jia z značilno mešanico realističnih in fiksijskih prvin prikaže negotovo sedanost kot čas premeščanja, iskanja in tavanja. Članek obravnava časovne in narativne strukture v filmih režiserja predvsem z vidika novejših spisov Jacquesa Rancièra, v katerih razpravlja o družbenih hierarhijah, ki jih

predpostavljajo časovnosti moderne, in načinih, na katere te hierarhije rušita realistična literatura in film.

Helena Motoh

Between Problems (*Wenti*) and – Isms (*Zhuyi*), a Hundred Years Since

Key words: Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, "ism", ideology, pragmatism

Since the last change at the top of the Communist Party of China, a shift can be noticed from the declarative pragmatism of the reform period of Deng Xiaoping to a reappraisal of ideology. The debate on the importance of *zhuyi*, "isms", in art and aesthetics is only one of the most prominent forms of this shift. From this starting point, the paper reaches back to 1919, when Chinese intellectual circles first witnessed a heated debate about the relation between pragmatist and ideological approaches. The debate followed the article "More Study of Problems, Less Talk of 'Isms'" published by Hu Shi in the *Weekly Review* in July 1919. Hu's arguments in favour of pragmatism are opposed by Li Dazhao and other members of the nascent communist movement. The paper analyses this debate between members of the May Fourth generation and its echoes in following decades until the present day.

Helena Motoh

Med vprašanji (*wenti*) in –izmi (*zhuyi*), sto let kasneje

Ključne besede: Hu Shi, Li Dazhao, »-izem«, ideologija, pragmatizem

Vse od zadnje menjave oblasti v vrhu kitajske komunistične partije je opazen premik od deklarativnega pragmatizma, ki je bil značilen za reformno obdobje Deng Xiaopinga, k ponovnemu poudarjanju pomena ideologije. Debata o pomembnosti *zhuyi*, -izmov, v umetnosti in estetiki, je ena od bolj izrazitih oblik te naravnosti. Članek se iz tega izhodišča vrača v leto 1919, ko se v kitajskih intelektualnih krogih prvič razvname debata o odnosu med pragmatičnim in ideološkim pristopom. Polemika sledi odmevnemu članku »Več vprašanj, manj –izmov« [多研究些问题, 少谈些主义], ki ga Hu Shi v tedniku *Mei zhou pinglun* objavi julija 1919. Hujevim argumentom v prid pragmatizma se postavijo nasproti Li Dazhao in drugi pripadniki nastajajočega komunističnega gibanja. Članek analizira to medsebojno polemiko članov četrtomajske generacije in odmeve polemike v nadaljnjih desetletjih do danes.

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3. Granger, *op. cit.*, str. 31.
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3. Granger, *op. cit.*, p. 31.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
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