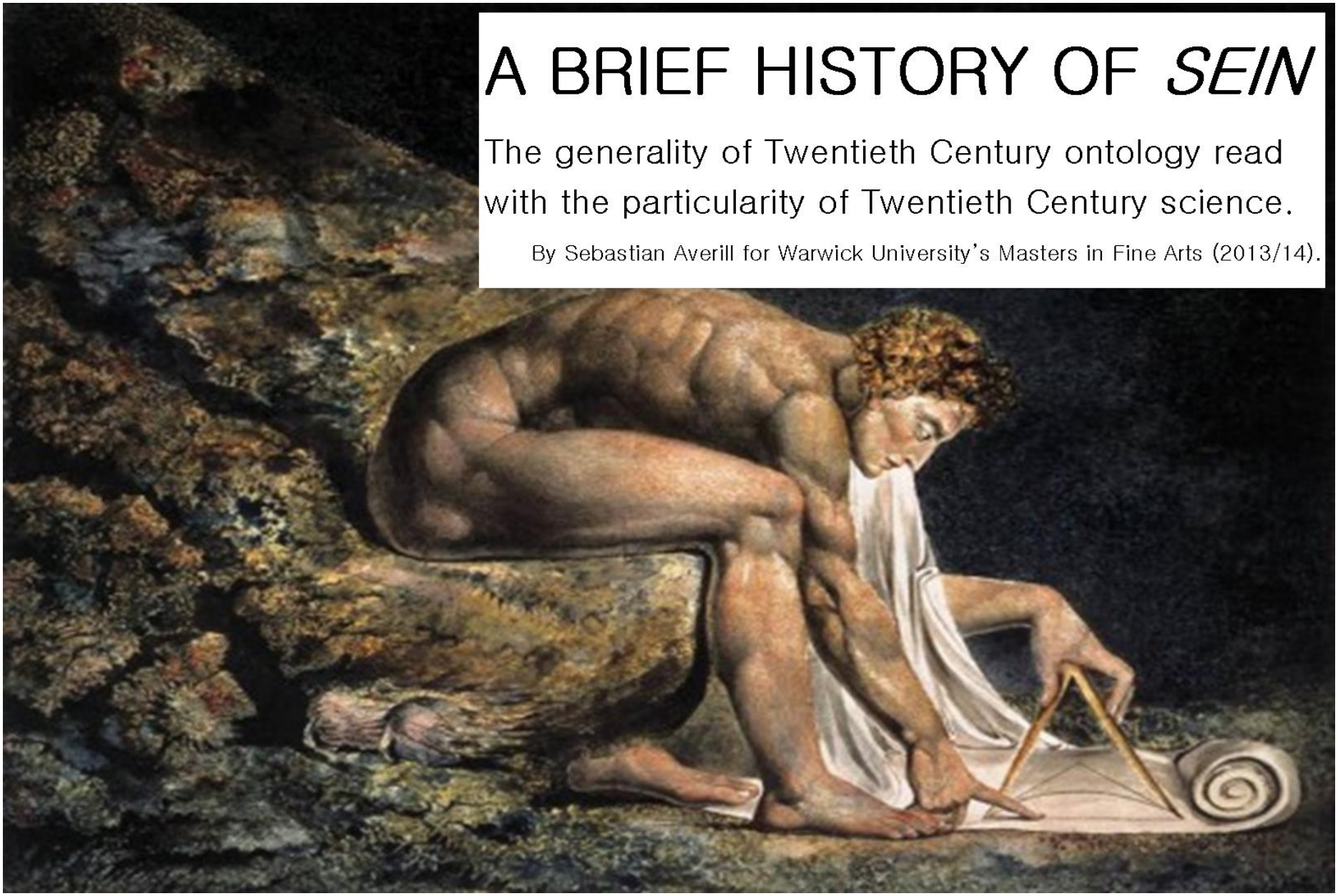

A BRIEF HISTORY OF *SEIN*

The generality of Twentieth Century ontology read with the particularity of Twentieth Century science.

By Sebastian Averill for Warwick University's Masters in Fine Arts (2013/14).

For my friend Rogan Collins, whose patience listening to me talk through some of the ideas contained in this book tells me he really will make a good academic one day (once he reads more Hegel and watches less football). Speaking of which, he is the only person who might understand my (lack of) annoyance on finding out that my best ideas were already casually uttered by the Italy and Juventus goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon in an interview in late-2005.

There is a common notion that football players are stupid and ignorant, and that they merely know how to move their legs. What do you think about that?

For me, intelligence isn't about knowledge, but is rather an activity related to humor, pleasure, and curiosity. I take an aesthetic pleasure in an idea; I love its form and shape, rather than its tendency to harden into a series of irrefutable facts. Maybe I am talking about an invisible kind of intelligence that doesn't need to be written. It relates more to a conversation between friends or with the things that cross my mind when I am traveling from one city to another. It's about being awake, outside of common ideas about the world; an instant response, a joke, a trick, a flip of meaning that makes you laugh. There is a space opened behind my mind. Sometimes I think that interesting things are always behind senseless connections, they stay hidden there because people are too serious and they don't play with notions of truth.

It is a very common mistake that we think we're ignorant of something because we are unable to define it. You could say that we can move toward a definition of something only when we know nothing about it. Perhaps the human mind has a tendency to deny statements. Arguments convince nobody because they are presented as arguments. No one has ever won an argument and anyone who believes you can is living in a fantasy world. We look at them, we weigh them, we turn them over, and we decide against them. But when something is merely said or—better still—hinted at, and maybe that's a trick too, there is a kind of hospitality in our imagination and we are ready to accept it. I think that games are one way to open this space in people's imaginations.

Mariana Castillo Deball, 'Issue 19 Chance Fall 2005; Chance, Intelligence, and Humor: An Interview with Gianluigi Buffon', *Cabinetmagazine.org http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/19/deball.php* (5 January 2014).

Heidegger observed in *Sein und Zeit* (1927) that 'to say that before [Isaac] Newton his laws were neither true nor false, cannot signify that before him there were no such entities as have been uncovered and pointed out by those laws'.[1] 'Through Newton', he claimed surprisingly, 'the laws became true; and with them, entities became accessible in themselves to *Dasein*'.

> Once entities have been uncovered, they show themselves precisely as entities which beforehand already were. Such uncovering is the kind of Being which belongs to "truth".

One of the interesting features of the world my friends and I live in today (materially, and ideologically *live in*) is that it is profoundly difficult to shock people; everything is being well-meaningly deconstructed, from the older sacred cows of Christian religion and liberal economics to newer terrains like football, excrement, night-time and so-called 'Chavs'.[2] Žižek would explain neo-liberal capitalism as the bizarre material supplement to Derridean, Foucauldian, Sartrean or Deleuzian modes of thinking (all of which stress in only slightly different ways the incumbent paranoiac requirement to question, penetrate and overturn concepts, perfectly buttressed by the commodity form which structures our sociality);[3] getting

[1] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Oxford, 1962), §I.6(c).

[2] Particularly enjoyable on football are the columnist James Lawton's irregularly frequent columns for *The Independent* newspaper. To quote a few examples of his bombastic yet stirringly ambitious style would not do him justice. I encourage the reader to seek these columns out for examples of how a tennis or football match can be explored with (admittedly superficial) engagements with ancient Stoic philosophy, G. K. Chesterton or Nietzsche; Dominique Laporte, *History of Shit* (Cambridge MA, 2002); A. Roger Ekirch, *At Day's Close: Night in Times Past* (London, 2005); Owen Jones, *Chavs: The Demonization of the Working Class* (London, 2012). The reader might enjoy exploring Norman Davies' observation 'of the modern compulsion to know more and more about less and less' (Oxford, 1996).

[3] Matthew Sharpe and Geoff Boucher, *Žižek and Politics. A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh, 2010), pp. 33-5; 'Although the Right constantly alleges that the supposedly "anti-Western", "postmodern", "adversary culture" within the universities is responsible for some sort of decline in the West, Žižek thinks that "radical" intellectual circles today do not really oppose the new globalising order at all. Thus Žižek agrees with right-wing critics that a "post-modernist" or "post-structuralist" consensus emerged in the humanities in the West after the 1970's. He unhesitatingly uses terms such as "politically correct" (or PC) to describe the liberal postmodern consensus in the humanities. But Žižek disagrees with the Right that this postmodernist consensus is politically radical.

For Žižek, the key element of the new "PC multiculturalism" or "postmodernism" is its rejection of Marxism as an "essentialist" or "economically reductive" philosophy, and the supplanting of class politics by "identity politics". Class struggle and economic issues have largely disappeared from political debates in the West, Žižek notes. "Culture wars" about issues to do with race, sexuality and gender, and the ethical questions being raised by today's advances in the biogenetic sciences, have taken their place. For this reason, Žižek suggests that the postmodernists' celebration of difference, "becoming (change), otherness and the new postmodern plurality of lifestyles and subcultures is "radical" only from the perspective of the cultural conservatives they oppose. In the same era in which neoliberal economics has taken on an unprecedented political importance, Žižek complains that the New Left has been directing progressives' focus away from what really matters in shaping public life.

Think, by contrast, of what occurs as soon as the prospect of any far-reaching change affecting the economy is raised. Žižek proposes that we soon find that a "politically correct" *Denkenverbot* (prohibition against thinking) operates to suggest questioning of global capitalism. And, despite the fashionable "anti-hegemonic" rhetoric, this happens in the postmodern academy just as much as in the mainstream media. Žižek notes that philosophers as different as Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida "would probably adopt the same left-of-centre liberal democratic stance in practical political decisions". We should not be fooled by their "great passionate public debates", then, nor by the Right's outrage against their "relativism", "permissiveness", "adversarial culture", and so on. Far from providing any real ethical or political resistance to the neoliberal, free-

outside the consumerist basilica is difficult – talking subversively in a way which genuinely undermines the material-ideological constellation is difficult. It fascinates me, then, that the more scientific-minded of my friends are genuinely shocked by Heidegger's claim that truth is mediated socially – that science is not its own autonomous discourse generating autonomous truth but simply just another part of politics.[4] Heidegger's claim is a good one – truly subversive, truly shocking. Where ideology seems not to function (and science is a fantastic example) is where ideology functions in its purest and most effective sense – it eschews its own traces and renders its influence undetectable.[5] If philosophy is, as Hegel believed, the present time re-conceptualized in thought, this book repeats Heidegger's gesture – it sketches out a history of Twentieth Century science and its theoretical underpinnings arguing that a unique historical moment is arriving, a moment of terrifying possibility and potential. Twentieth Century science was fundamentally determined by two models: Einsteinian relativity used to examine the very large (like planets) and quantum mechanics used to examine the very small (like quarks). As Brian Greene has said (and said better), practitioners in both fields worked under the troubling knowledge that the two models contradicted each other – they made contradictory assumptions about all sorts of things, so anyone seeking to understand the world holistically could not utilize both simultaneously.[6] Einstein famously went to his grave searching for an holistic understanding of how the world worked that relied on something other than mystified shaking-of-heads at seemingly random occurrences (for example the masses of elemental particles) and died with his dreams

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market consensus, postmodernism is merely the cultural logic of global capitalism. … Scratch the surface, keep an eye on popular culture or even the news, Žižek suggests, and it soon becomes clear that all is not well in the post-cold-war order.'

[4] Thomas S. Kuhn seems to aim at the former view in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (London, 1996), pp. 92-3; 'Political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow subdivision of the scientific community, that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and scientific development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution. Furthermore, though it admittedly strains the metaphor, that parallelism holds not only for the major paradigm changes, like those attributable to Copernicus and Lavoisier, but also for the far smaller ones associated with the assimilation of a new sort of phenomenon, like oxygen or X-rays. Scientific revolutions … need seem revolutionary only to those whose paradigms are affected by them. To outsiders they may, like the Balkan revolutions of the early twentieth century, seem normal parts of the developmental process. Astronomers, for example, could accept X-rays as a mere addition to knowledge, for their paradigms were unaffected by the existence of the new radiation. But for men like Kelvin, Crookes, and Roentgen, whose research dealt with radiation theory or with cathode ray tubes, the emergence of X-rays necessarily violated one paradigm as it created another. That is why these rays could be discovered only through something's first going wrong with normal research.'

[5] Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London, 1989), p. 155.

[6] Brian Greene, *The Elegant Universe; Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions and the Quest for the Ultimate Theory* (London, 2000), pp. 3-4.

unfulfilled.[7] Over the course of the Twentieth Century, however, numerous Theories-Of-Everything emerged but the best-publicized has been String Theory. My contention is that we are potentially experiencing the return of an assured scientific holism of a kind unseen since the Sixteenth Century in Europe, such was the extent to which Twentieth Century scientific praxis functioned/emanated from a paradoxical aporia.[8] I am fascinated by Hegel's dialectical understanding of time, reality and continuative progress; we are experiencing the rise of String Theory, yes, which (qua Badiou's notion of *la passion pour le réel*) may encumber us with a convincing truth-schema, but the holism of String Theory can only engender an opposed dialectical truth.[9] Whatever that truth may turn out to be (and here I do not mean a Deconstructive-exercise superficially diminishing the allure of the Lytoardist grand-narrative, but an equally-assured, equally-holist truth emanating from the other side of the Lacanian gap) we are certainly not yet in a position to say (a very Hegelian admission), but a dialectical truth-stream will still move – to paraphrase Galileo (as Žižek consistently does): *e tuttavia si muoverà* [it will still move].[10] We might like to pause on a parable Žižek uses to illustrative this continuative dialectical-narrative *muove*;

> Anna Akhmatova encountered a … problem when, in the Soviet Union of the 1930's, she tried to depict the atmosphere of the Stalinist terror. In her memoirs she describes what happened when, at the

[7] ibid., pp. 4-5.

[8] We could of course have a great deal of fun deconstructing the idea of sixteenth-century science as holistic and I would welcome such efforts. This would just in effect be a replaying of the French answer to German Idealism (Deleuze's notion of differential repetition, Derrida's *ancrage* to explain the uncertain relationship between truth statements, Foucault's archaeology of subaltern discourses). We should instead remember Žižek's Lacanian notion of a Master-Signifier structuring the chain-of-signification. In the sense that *something* was holding the dialectical process in place, historians could probably agree that the Christian conception of God was serving that function, whatever contemporaries perceived him to be (their disagreements of course the basis of dialectics). After and through Nietzsche, certainly, God died as a legitimate means of *ancrage*. We can then play with the observations to follow on this basis, whatever the objections might be which as I have said I welcome.

[9] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five essays on September 11 and related dates* (London, 2002), pp. 5-6; 'When Brecht, on the way from his home to his theatre in July 1953, passed the column of Soviet tanks rolling towards the *Stalinallee* to crush the workers' rebellion, he waved at them and wrote in his diary later that day that, at that moment, he (never a party member) was tempted for the first time in his life to join the Communist Party. It was not that Brecht tolerated the cruelty of the struggle in the hope that it would bring a prosperous future: the harshness of the violence as such was perceived and endorsed as a sign of authenticity. … Is this not an exemplary case of what Alain Badiou has identified as the key feature of the twentieth century: the "passion for the Real [*la passion du reel*]"? In contrast to the nineteenth century of utopian or "scientific" projects and ideals, plans for the future, the twentieth century aimed at delivering the thing itself – at directly realising the longed-for New Order. The ultimate and defining moment of the twentieth century was the direct experience of the Real as opposed to everyday social reality – the Real in its extreme violence as the price to be paid for peeling off the deceptive layers of reality.'

[10] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester, 1986), p. xxiv; the best analysis of the Lacanian gap remains Slavoj Žižek, *The parallax view* (Cambridge MA, 2006); for Žižek on Galileo, read Slavoj Žižek, *Less Than Nothing; Hegel and the shadow of dialectical materialism* (London, 2012), pp. 3-4. '*Less Than Nothing*', he claims, 'endeavours to draw all the ontological consequences from this *eppur si muove*. Here is the formula at its most elementary: "moving" is the striving to reach the void, namely, "things move," there is something instead of nothing, not because reality is in excess in comparison with mere nothing, but because *reality is less than nothing*.'

> height of the Stalinist purges, she was waiting in a long queue outside the Leningrad prison to learn the fate of her arrested son Lev:
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> "One day somebody in the crowd identified me. Standing behind me was a young women, with lips blue from the cold, who had of course never heard me called by name before. Now she started out of the torpor common to us all and asked me in a whisper (everyone whispered there), *Can you describe this?* And I said, *I can*. Then something like a smile passed fleetingly over what had once been her face."
>
> What kind of description is intended here? Surely it is not a realistic description of the situation, but a description which extracts from the confused reality its own inner form, in the same way that, in his atonal music, Schoenberg extracted the inner form of totalitarian terror. At this level, truth is no longer something that depends on the faithful reproduction of facts. One should introduce here the difference between (factual) truth and truthfulness: what makes a report of a raped woman (or any other narrative of a trauma) truthful is its very factual unreliability, confusion, inconsistency. If the victim were able to report on her painful and humiliating experience in a clear way, with all the data arranged into a consistent order of exposition, this very quality would make us suspicious. The same holds for the unreliability of the verbal reports given by Holocaust survivors: a witness who was able to offer a clear narrative of his camp experience would thereby disqualify himself. In a Hegelian way, the problem is here part of the solution: the very deficiencies of the traumatized subject's report on the facts bear witness to the truthfulness of his report, since they signal that the reported content has contaminated the very form in which it is reported.[11]

In the best Hegelian spirit of Anna Akhmatova, this book offers the beginnings of a stumbling, lurching preparation of the theoretical ground on which a resistance to String Theory could stand (were that ultimately required). It is happily stumbling and lurching because the mobilisation of forces has barely begun (we could also note Žižek's jovial recognition of the difficulty in writing in 'red ink' – damaging writing by definition can only grope in the dark because it works within linguistic conventions often provided for it by another Master-Signifier);[12] I write this fundamentalist plea for Lacan applied to String Theory perfectly aware that the scientific establishment has hardly come entirely under the sway of that model just yet. The best lesson I draw from some of the theory my friends and I enjoy is the relative security of constant theoretical mobilisation – the militarisation of thought. This probably highlights how far to the Left we all are (although perhaps not); it perhaps takes something from Trotskyist 'permanent revolution' (although perhaps not).[13] What is Orwell's *1984*, to me, if not a nightmare-parable of what can happen when we fail to stay mentally and ideologically alert. In the best sense of the canon which has launched me, then, I offer an ideological response to the scientific world wanting nothing more than

[11] Žižek, *Less*, p. 24.
[12] Žižek, *Desert*, p. 1; What possible danger can language pose us? Is it not just a neutral homogenous mechanism within which any kind of argumentation can be developed? No. Let me answer by quoting a famous Žižekian joke; every night a worker leaving a factory has his wheelbarrow grumpily searched by the security guards. Every night they find nothing but cannot shake the sense that something is wrong. Many days later, with the worker long gone, the management team of the factory discover that the worker had been stealing wheelbarrows.
[13] Leon Trotsky, *The Permanent Revolution*, trans. Max Shachtman (New York NY, 1931), p. 37; 'The permanent revolution is no isolated leap of the proletariat, rather it is the rebuilding of the whole nation under the leadership of the proletariat. That is how I pictured the perspective of the permanent revolution since 1905, and so I construed it.'

marching columns of intellectual foot-soldiers (led by no General) armed to the teeth against whatever may arise from the opposite side of the Lacanian gap; let's stay militarised, let's stay ready, in order that we might just get through the Twenty-First century alive. 'What if', Žižek ponders, 'we are "really alive" only if we commit ourselves with an excessive intensity which puts us beyond "mere life"?'[14]

> What if, when we focus on mere survival, even if it is qualified as "having a good time", what we ultimately lose is life itself? What if the Palestinian suicide bomber on the point of blowing him-or-her-self (and others) up is, in an emphatic sense, "more alive" than the American soldier engaged in a war in front of a computer screen against an enemy hundreds of miles away, or a New York yuppie jogging along the Hudson river in order to keep his body in shape? Or, in psychoanalytic terms, what if a hysteric is truly alive in his or her permanent excessive questioning of his or her existence, while an obsessional is the very model of choosing a "life in death"? That is to say, is not the ultimate aim of his or her compulsive rituals to prevent the "thing" from happening – this "thing" being the excess of life itself? Is not the catastrophe he or she fears the fact that, finally, *something will really happen* to him or her? Or, in terms of the revolutionary process, what if the difference that separates Lenin's era from Stalinism is, again, the difference between life and death? There is an apparently marginal feature which makes this point clearly: the basic attitude of a Stalinist Communist is that of following the correct Party line against the "Rightist" or "Leftist" deviation – in short, steering a safe middle course; for authentic Leninism, in clear contrast, there is ultimately only one deviation, the Centrist one – that of "playing it safe", of opportunistically avoiding the risk of clearly and excessively "taking sides". There was no "deeper historical necessity" in the sudden shift of Soviet policy from "War Communism" to the "New Economic Policy" in 1921, for example – it was just a desperate strategic zigzag between the Lefist and the Rightist line, or – as Lenin himself put it in 1922 – the Bolsheviks made "all the possible mistakes". This excessive "taking sides", this permanent zigzagging imbalance, is ultimately (revolutionary political) life itself – for a Leninist, the ultimate name of the counterrevolutionary Right is the "Centre" itself, the fear of introducing a radical imbalance into the social edifice.

He is correct that 'it is a properly Nietzschean paradox that the greatest loser in this apparent assertion of Life against all transcendent Causes is actually life itself'. 'What makes life "worth living"', seemingly, 'is the very excess of life: the awareness that there is something for which one is ready to risk one's life (we may call this excess "freedom", "honour", "dignity", "autonomy", etc.).' Surely 'only when we … take this risk are we really alive'. This quotation from Chesterton's *Orthodoxy* (1908) is apt, and deserves to be reproduced in full;

> A soldier surrounded by enemies, if he is to cut his way out, needs to combine a strong desire for living with a strange carelessness about dying. He must not merely cling to life, for then he will be a coward, and will not escape. He must not merely wait for death, for then he will be a suicide, and will not escape. He must seek his life in a spirit of furious indifference to it; he must desire life like water and yet drink death like wine.[15]

In the first of four sections, I re-tell the confusing and yet exhilarating story of Twentieth Century Western European ontology without mentioning science at all (that is to say, I extend Bertrand Russell's gesture of a philosophical history). I enjoy Žižek's idea of all post-Hegelian thought as being principally defined by its inability to overcome Hegel: Hegel was

[14] Žižek, *Desert*, pp. 88-9.
[15] G. K. Chesterton and Philip Yancey (ed.), *Orthodoxy* (New York NY, 2001), p. 169.

the true break, the true rupturing *deus ex machina* who, rather like the birds Žižek is so fond of describing in Hitchcock's 1963 film of the same name, fluttered rudely into our gazing frame as an abhorrent stain that could not be subsequently removed (*fig*. 1).[16] Where

Kierkegaard, Schopenauer and Marx failed, so too did all of us in the Twentieth Century, and I offer the reader a sense of *how* they and we failed.[17] The second section narrates the developmental rise of String Theory as it appears from my own broken (Althusserian) perspective, beginning with Einstein in the later 1890's.[18] The third section binds the two

[16] Žižek, *Desert*, p. 15; 'Was not the plane which hit the WTC tower literally the ultimate Hitchcockian blot, the anamorphic stain which denaturalized the idyllic well-known New York landscape?'; In *Différence et Répétition* (1968), Deleuze would certainly caution us against deciding too concretely that a particular thinker and their trajectory is so *different*, so *external* from any predecessor. And of course, in Badiou's materialist-dialectical sense, Hegel was just another product of a developing series of objects (this time the gathering industrialization Hobsbawm observes in Europe in *The Age of Revolution; Europe 1789-1848*). And yet, my sense is that for all of this I have to trust my sensibility (produced of course by another series of materialist-dialectics) that Hegel's thought *is* qualitatively different and challenging. There is no way to account for it purely in terms of economics.

[17] Žižek, *Less*, p. 194; 'Can one still be a Hegelian after the post-Hegelian break with traditional metaphysics which occurred more or less simultaneously in the works of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Marx? After all this, is there not something inherently false in advocating a Hegelian "absolute Idealism"?'

[18] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 2; 'the real break is represented by Althusser, by his insistence on the fact that a certain cleft, a certain fissure, misrecognition, characterizes the human condition as such: by the thesis that the idea of the possible end of ideology is an ideological idea *par excellence* (Althusser, 1965)'; for Althusser's original words, see Louis Althusser, *Essays on Ideology* (London, 1984), pp. 1-60. 'To speak in a Marxist language', the famous essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)' claims, 'if it is true that the representation of the real conditions of existence of the individuals occupying the posts of agents of production, exploitation, repression, ideologization and scientific practice, does in the last analysis arise from the relations of production, we can say the following: all ideology represents in its necessarily imaginary distortion not the existing relations of production (and the other relations that derive from them), but above all the (imaginary) relationship of individuals to the relations of production and the relations that derive from them.' 'What is represented in ideology', Althusser insists, 'is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live.'

analyses together, attempting to cohere the maps of Twentieth Century science and ontology into one fragmentary glimpse which may be of use in the struggles to come. The fourth section recovers aspects from all three previous sections to predict how the next part of the Twenty-First Century may play out with regard to these interlinking ideas. I end restating the plea contained in this introduction: String Theory cannot, to paraphrase Lacan, speak the whole truth because nothing ever can.[19] The complete picture *qua* Hegel can only emerge through the dialectical form of a totality, and it is incumbent upon anyone seeking to maintain what former-British Prime Minister Gordon Brown called (speaking the language of Kant) a 'moral compass', to remain vigilant about what other truth might emerge as regards the holistic understanding of science.[20]

1. The problems of philosophy.

So who was Hegel and why did he constitute a rupture? Simply put, where Immanuel Kant moved ontological 'reality' into the ontic horizons of the observer, Hegel transposed this ontological incompleteness *back* into the perceived thing (*Das Ding*) itself.[21] Where Kant

[19] Jacques Lacan, *Television. A Challenge to the Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, Annette Michelson and Jeffrey Mehlman (New York NY, 1990), p. 3.

[20] Guardian (2007). Gordon Brown: "I joined this party as a teenager … Its values are my moral compass". *Guardian*, 25 June.

[21] 'It all begins with Kant', Žižek argues in *Less*, p. 9, 'with his idea of the *transcendental constitution of reality*.' 'In a way', Žižek continues, 'one can claim that it is only with this idea of Kant's that philosophy reached its own terrain: prior to Kant, philosophy was ultimately perceived as a general science of Being as such, as a description of the universal structure of entire reality, with no qualitative difference from particular sciences. It was Kant who introduced the difference between ontic reality and its ontological horizon, the *a priori* network of categories which determines how we understand reality, what appears to us as reality. From here, previous philosophy is readable not as the most general positive knowledge of reality, but in its hermeneutic core, as the description of the historically predominant "disclosure of Being," as Heidegger would have put it. (Say, when Aristotle, in his *Physics*, struggles to define life and proposes a series of definitions – a living being is a thing which is moved by itself, which has in itself the cause of its movement – he is not really exploring the reality of living beings; he is rather describing the set of pre-existing notions which determine what we always-already understand by "living being" when we designate an object as "alive".)' Sublime, p. 190. brings us forward to what Žižek considers to be the limitation of Kantian metaphysics, when seen through the prism of Hegel; '"Truth"', he says now arguing against Kant in dialogue, 'is definitely not a kind of surplus *eluding* us again and again; it appears, on the contrary, in the form of traumatic *encounters* – that is, we chance upon it where we presumed the presence of "mere appearances": the "shock of the truth" consists in its sudden emergence in the midst of the realm of reassuring phenomenon. The "unthinkable" for Kant is just such an encounter, such a paradoxical point at which "appearance" itself, without knowing it, touches the truth: what is at stake in Kant's "obsessional" economy is precisely the avoidance of the traumatic encounter of the Truth. That is to say, his "transcendental" procedure of limiting our possible experience to the world of phenomena and of excluding from it the "Thing-in-itself" apparently expresses an aspiration to truth – the fear of falling into error by illegitimately taking phenomena for the Thing-in-itself. However, as Hegel puts it, this fear of error, of a confusion between phenomena and the Thing-in-itself, conceals its opposite, the fear of Truth – it announces a desire to elude, at any price, an encounter with the Truth:

> … if the fear of falling into error sets up a mistrust of Science, which in the absence of such scruples gets on with the work itself, and actually cognizes something, it is hard to see why we should not turn

believed that perfect reality could only be glimpsed by an imperfect *camera obscura*, Hegel gave us the notion that there was no static perfection beyond the peering human lens. The world (such as it constituted by bodies) was for Hegel in a breath-taking process of flux (and not just because he lived in the time of the Napoleonic Wars: this was a primordial, timeless observation for him which stretched back and forward remaining relevant). In the sense of the naturalistic turn this pamphlet takes in the subsequent chapters, the reader may enjoy the analogy Hegel draws here between the ideas I outline and the life-cycle of *flora* and *fauna*:

> The bud disappears when the blossom breaks through, and we might say that the former is refuted by the latter; in the same way when the fruit comes, the blossom may be explained to be a false form of the plant's existence, for the fruit appears as its true nature in place of the blossom. The ceaseless activity of their own inherent nature makes these stages moments of an organic unity, where they not merely do not contradict one another, but where one is as necessary as the other; and constitutes thereby the life of the whole.[22]

Where a Kantian would need to talk about how differences in our methodological perspective impel different understandings of the plant stem and its embryonic shoot, Hegel shows awareness here of how the kind of uncertainty that has traditionally surrounded our methodology is *actively constitutive* of the (purportedly-)external processes we describe.[23] My contention, following Žižek, is that Hegel was *not* the arrogant and mad Prussian-militarist claiming absolute knowledge of the historical process that many (and today we carry the burden of the Deconstructivists on this point) allege he was;[24] Hegel was precisely

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> round and mistrust this very mistrust. Should we not be concerned as to whether this fear of error is not just the error itself? (Hegel, 1977, p. 47)

The relation between appearance and Truth should thus be conceived in a dialectically reflexive way: the most radical illusion consists not in accepting as Truth, as the "Thing-in-itself", what is effectively a mere deceptive illusion, but rather in a refusal to recognize the presence of the Truth – in pretending that we are still dealing with a fictitious appearance, when Truth is already here.'

[22] G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford, 1977), §2.

[23] The reader will undoubtedly enjoy paralleling Hegel's account of the plant-bud and Deleuze's parable of Alice (of Lewis Carroll fame) from the 1969 work *Logique du Sens*; '*Alice and Through the Looking-Glass*', Deleuze begins the book, 'involve a category of very special things: events, pure events. When I say "Alice becomes larger," I mean that she becomes larger than she is now. Certainly, she is not bigger and smaller at the same time. She is larger now; she was smaller before. But it is at the same moment that one becomes larger than one was and smaller than one becomes. This is the simultaneity of a becoming whose characteristic is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation of the distinction of before and after, or of past and future. It pertains to the essence of becoming to move and to pull in both directions at once: Alice does not grow without shrinking, and vice versa. Good sense affirms that in all things there is a determinable sense or direction (*sens*); but paradox is the affirmation of both senses or directions at the same time.'

[24] The phrase Žižek oft-repeats to characterise the dominant anti-Platonist sentiment he detects in much of the Western academy today is 'from Plato to NATO'; drawing on G. K. Chesterton's 1908 novel *The Man Who Was Thursday: A Nightmare*, he suggests that in today's modernity there is a second and more insidious police force operating alongside that which we more readily recognise. The everyday policemen commutes around the political space attempting to determine *whether*, *how* and *by whom* a particular crime of violence or injustice has been committed. Chesterton's vision of the 'philosophical policeman' is for those thinkers who attend fashionable dinner parties and intellectual gatherings in order to determine whether a crime *will be committed* in the future (and not necessarily the imminent future). They do this, Žižek supplements Chesterton, by detecting

not saying that his understanding of the fragility of what Badiou would call physical 'bodies' permitted his unique glimpse on universality (the 'gods-eye-view' of Hitchcock's *The Birds*, *fig*. 2*)*. He was claiming the exact opposite - the ultimate modest gesture, that insight into ontological incompleteness mandates a position similar to Zhou En-lai's when asked in 1949 about the significance of the French Revolution: that it is always 'too soon to tell' about whatever we may wish to analyse.[25] Portraying Hegel as so many do, is a convenient (yet, on the evidence of the many more interesting revisions that have since emerged, flawed) attempt to short-circuit the immanent critique of Hegel's work, to attempt to expunge from social life

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any evidence of a belief in philosophical totality (we can see here how this relates to his dismay at the two-centuries-long particular portrayal of Hegel as an absolutist). The dominant strain of totality, Žižek insists these philosopher-policemen believe, emanates through the Western canon directly from the works of Plato. 'Badiou', he comments in *Less* pp. 40-41., 'has enumerated six main (and partially intertwined) forms of twentieth-century anti-Platonism:

1. *Vitalist* anti-Platonism (Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze): the assertion of the real of life-becoming against the intellectualist sterility of Platonic forms – as Nietzsche put it, "Plato" is the name for a disease …

2. *Empiricist-analytic* anti-Platonism: Plato believed in the independent existence of Ideas, but as Aristotle already knew, Ideas do not exist independent of sensuous things whose forms they are. The main counter-Platonic these of analytic empiricists is that all truths are either analytic or empirical.

3. *Marxist* anti-Platonism (for which Lenin is not blameless): the dismissal of Plato as the first Idealist, opposed to pre-Socratic materialists as well as to the more "progressive" and empirically oriented Aristotle. In this view (which conveniently forgets that, in contrast to Aristotle's notion of the slave as a "talking tool," there is no place for slaves in Plato's *Republic*), Plato was the main ideologist of the class of slave owners….
4. *Existentialist* anti-Platonism: Plato denies the uniqueness of singular existence and subordinates the singular to the universal. This anti-Platonism has a Christian version (Kierkegaard: Socrates versus Christ) and an atheist one (Sartre: "existence precedes essence").

5. *Heideggerian* anti-Platonism: Plato as the founding figure of "Western metaphysics," the key moment in the historical process of the "forgetting of Being," the starting point of the process which culminates in today's technological nihilism ("from Plato to NATO …").

6. *"Democratic*" anti-Platonism in political philosophy, from Popper to Arendt: Plato as the originator of the "closed society," as the first thinker who elaborated in detail the project of totalitarianism. (For Arendt, at a more refined level, Plato's original sin was to have subordinated politics to Truth, not seeing that politics is a domain of phronesis, of judgements and decisions made in unique, unpredictable situations.)

Plato's position is thus similar to that of Descartes: "Plato" is the negative point of reference which unites otherwise irreconcilable enemies: Marxists and anti-Communist liberals, existentialists and analytic empiricists, Heideggerians and vitalists ….'

Žižek's purpose in *Less* seems to be to rehabilitate Plato and Hegel together by making the same argument for both: that they were not necessarily the advocates of totality some allege and that in fact this notion of totality that some interpreters find in their works has actually been imposed by much newer materialist circumstances. We can go to David Gress, *From Plato to Nato* (New York NY, 1998), p. 2 for the kind of sympathetic reading of Plato that Žižek would favour ('Western liberty', Gress says, 'was not something marvelously distinct from historical reality, but the initially unintended side effect of the drive for power'), and pp. 319, 328 and 470 for appropriately brisk treatments of Hegel which do not fall into claims of absolutism.
[25] Simon Schama, *Citizens. A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), p. xiii; from this position, of course, we are thrust into the question of what ethical questions arise about this newly-discovered *place* of philosophical finitude. Here I recommend Thomas Brockelman, *Žižek and Heidegger. The Question Concerning Techno-Capitalism* (London, 2008), pp. 3-10. for a sense of how Kant, Heidegger and Žižek think about this.

the imbalanced pus Hegel noticed growing under and inside and behind everything we take for granted (to paraphrase the 1999 David Fincher movie *Fight Club*).[26] Such was Hegel's

reliance and insistence on an idealist quotient to seemingly concrete material (and even ideational) bodies, that he conceded that philosophy (being 'the present time conceptualised in thought) could only arise *retroactively*; here we should enjoy his Preface to *The Philosophy of Right* (where Solomon sees a mature Hegel grappling with his younger self).[27]

> To add a word concerning teaching how the world should be: in any case, philosophy always comes too late for that. As the thought of the world, it always appears only in the time after actuality has completed its process of cultivation, after it has finished. This is taught by the concept and shown with equal necessity by history: only in the ripeness of actuality does the ideal appear over against the real, only then does it construct the same world, grasped in its essence, in the shape of an intellectual realm. When philosophy paints its grey in grey, then has a shape of life grown old, and with grey in grey it cannot be rejuvenated, it can only be known; the owl of Minerva begins its flight only with the falling of dusk.

Foucault once famously admitted that at the end of all his philosophical labours, he encountered Hegel laughing at him.[28] I personally relish the notion of all post-Hegelians struggling with their Sisyphean burden; characterising historicism *not* by fluidic mobilism and the potential for rapacious roaming back through the annals of thought, but its polar

[26] *Fight Club*. Dir. David Fincher. 20th Century Fox.
[27] Robert C. Solomon, *In The Spirit of Hegel* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 15-16; 'In his later years Hegel remembered his early works only in terms of the first Hegel, Hegel the absolute idealist, who in the *Phenomenology* established the groundwork for his future professional enterprises and established himself as *the* philosopher in Germany, after Kant. Accordingly, most traditional Hegel scholars have taken Hegel at his word and read the *Phenomenology* as a work on "the Absolute," as another self-congratulatory contribution to the age-old attempt to end philosophy with a single definitive statement, to solve all the problems and lay bare *the* structure of the cosmos, the nature of *the* human mind. In this book, I want to emphasise the second [younger] Hegel, the Heraclitan Hegel, the Hegel of endless change, and what he calls "the bad infinity," running on without end.'
[28] Ian Buchanan, 'Žižek and Deleuze', in G. Boucher, J. Glynos and M. Sharpe (eds.), *Traversing the Fantasy. Critical Responses to Slavoj Žižek* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 69.

opposite (the idea that genuine ruptures occurred in the past which are impossible to completely overcome) is central to my work. Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) helps me directly engage with what Lacan called the (Hegelian) Real, and I hope the reader will be similarly enthused. Take this passage for example, from the chapter 'PROTEUS' where Stephen Dedalus wanders thinking on one of Dublin's beaches.

> The grainy sand had gone from under his feet. His boots trod again a damp crackling mast, razorshells, squeaking pebbles, that on the unnumbered pebbles beats, wood sieved by the shipworm, lost Armada. Unwholesome sandflats waited to suck his treading soles, breathing upward sewage breath, a pocket of seaweed smouldered in seafire under a midden of man's ashes. He coasted them, walking warily. A porterbottle stood up, stogged to its waist, in the cakey sand dough. A sentinel: isle of dreadful thirst. Broken hoops on the shore; at the land a maze of dark cunning nets; farther away chalkscrawled backdoors and on the higher beach a dryingline with two crucified shirts. Ringsend: wigwams of brown steersmen and master mariners. Human shells.[29]

The cleverness of Joyce is that, for all his swirling sweeping allegorical enthusiasm (which certainly announces itself more than rudely elsewhere in this particular chapter), he is careful to ground *Ulysses* in an accessible, naturalistic city; what is being described here is *just* a man on a beach (though of course the Surrealist conflation of thoughts with reality complicates that). The Hegelian observation would be that '*just* a man on a beach' involves a whole orchestra of movement and becoming, and Joyce's descriptions certainly support that. It is no accident that, while *all* of *Ulysses'* happenings inherently and constitutively involve such a process of becoming, Joyce has the pontifications of Dedalus take place on shifting sands. Even theory, it seems (to paraphrase the old Heraclitan motto), cannot step in the same river twice.[30] 'Am I', Dedalus wonders, 'walking into eternity along Sandymount strand?'[31] In *On Chesil Beach* (2007), Ian MacEwan made a similar gesture by having two infatuated individuals explore their complicated contingencies on the Dorset seashore. A parallel motif in *Ulysses* is the sea itself. Enjoy these lines from the first chapter TELEMACHUS, in which three men wait for and then enjoy breakfast in the Sandycove Martello Tower before stealing a swim.

> … Buck Mulligan wiped the razorblade neatly. Then, gazing over the handkerchief, he said:
> - The bard's noserag! A new art colour for our Irish poets: snotgreen. You can almost taste it, can't you?
> He mounted to the parapet again and gazed out over Dublin bay, his fair oakpale hair stirring slightly.
> - God! he said quietly. Isn't the sea what Algy calls it: a great sweet mother? The snotgreen sea. The scrotumtightening sea. *Epi oinopa ponton.* Ah, Dedalus, the Greeks! I must teach you. You must read them in the original. *Thalatta! Thalatta!* She is our great sweet mother. Come and look.
> Stephen stood up and went over to the parapet. Leaning on it he looked down on the water and on the mailboat clearing the harbourmouth of Kingstown.

[29] James Joyce and Hans Walter Gaber (ed.), *Ulysses* (London, 1986), p. 34.
[30] C. P. Goold (ed.), *Plato IV; LCL 167*, trans. H. N. Fowler (Cambridge MA, 1926), §402A/p.67; 'Heraclitus says, you know, that all things move and nothing remains still, and he likens the universe to the current of a river, saying that you cannot step twice into the same stream [δὶς ἐς τὸν αὐτὸν ποταμὸν οὐκ ἂν ἐμβαίης]'.
[31] Joyce and Gaber, *Ulysses*, p. 31.

> -Our mighty mother! Buck Mulligan said.
>
> He turned abruptly his grey searching eyes from the sea to Stephen's face.[32]

The sea is uncertain, unyielding, mystifying and elusive, exactly like the Hegelian 'world' (to use a term of Badiou's).[33] As we read in Dickens' *A Tale Of Two Cities* (1859),

> The sea of black and threatening waters, and of destructive upheaving of wave against wave, whose depths were yet unfathomed and whose forces were yet unknown. The remorseless sea of turbulently swaying shapes, voices of vengeance, and faces hardened in the furnaces of suffering until the touch of pity could make no mark on them.[34]

> When Mr. Lorry had finished his breakfast, he went out for a stroll on the beach. The little narrow, crooked town of Dover hid itself away from the beach, and ran its head into the chalk cliffs, like a marine ostrich. The beach was a desert of heaps of sea and stones tumbling wildly about, and the sea did what it liked, and what it liked was destruction.[35]

So how did Søren Kierkegaard attempt to overcome Hegel? Žižek talks a lot about how Plato anticipates Hegel (using *Parmenides* as the example) and then, in the beginning of *Less Than Nothing*, outlines (*qua* Badiou) six varieties of anti-Platonism (Foucault of course famously said that all philosophy could be successfully summarised as two centuries of anti-Platonism). In *Parmenides*, Plato performs a thought exercise in which he tries to delineate eight instances of the two notional-counterparts of a totality ('the One' and 'the Rest') possessing being or not. Some of these possibilities mimic Lacan's notion of the gap, of a fundamental (what I might call New Materialist) divide characterising the social order. Apropos of his Hegelian inheritance, Lacan's lesson is that it categorically *is* possible to speak about objective truth (counter to what contemporary post-modernists or neo-Deconstructivists would have us believe), in the reconstructed sense of multiple truths constituting what Badiou would call a 'world'. This lesson implies the unity of discourse within though not (crucially) *between* two social groups ('the unconscious', Lacan wrote, 'is the discourse of the Other').[36] The presence of a radical imbalance within the social order was, for Kierkegaard, clearly traumatic; across his canon, he emphasised faith in a unifying Christian principle which would short-circuit, by-pass this traumatic imbalance.

> If there were no eternal consciousness in a man, if at the bottom of everything there were only a wild ferment, a power that twisting in dark passions produced everything great or inconsequential; if an unfathomable, insatiable emptiness lay hid beneath everything, what would life be but despair? If it were thus, if there were no sacred bond uniting mankind, if one generation rose up after another like

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[32] ibid., pp. 4-5.

[33] Alain Badiou, *Logiques des Mondes* (Paris, 2006), pp. 442-445; In these pages, Žižek believes, 'Badiou develops the notion of "atonal" worlds (*monde atone*), worlds lacking a "point," in Lacanese: the "quilting point" (*point de capiton*), the intervention of a Master-Signifier that imposes a principle of "ordering" onto the world, the point of a simple decision ("yes or no") in which the confused multiplicity is violently reduced to a "minimal difference."'

[34] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (London, 1949), p. 209.

[35] ibid., p. 17.

[36] Jacques Lacan, *Écrits* (Paris, 1966), p. 16; 'La pluralité des sujets bien entendu ne peut être une objection pour tous ceux qui sont rompus depuis longtemps aux perspectives que résume notre formule: *l'inconscient, c'est le discours de l'Autre*.'

> the leaves of the forest, if one generation succeeded the other as the songs of birds in the woods, if the human race passed through the world as a ship through the sea or the wind through the desert, a thoughtless and fruitless whim, if an eternal oblivion always lurked hungrily for its prey and there were no power strong enough to wrest it from its clutches – how empty and devoid of comfort life would be! But for that reason it is not so, and as God created man and woman, so too he shaped the hero and the poet or speech-maker.[37]

Consider this discussion of the Biblical figure of Abraham who, when commanded by God to kill his son Isaac on the mystical Mount Moriah, went ahead with every intention to do so (such was his divine love). God benevolently steps in at the last moment to halt the process, declaring that all that was required was *evidence* of divine love, not *consummation* of it;

> We read in those Holy Scriptures: "And God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: Abraham where are you? But Abraham answered: here I am." You, to whom my speech is addressed, was that the case with you? When you saw, far off, the heavy fate approaching, did you not say to the mountains: "hide me", to the hills, "fall on me"? Or if you were stronger, did your feet nevertheless not drag along the way? Did they not hanker, as it were, to get back into the old tracks? When you were called, did you answer, or did you not? Perhaps softly and in a whisper? Not so Abraham, gladly, boldly, trustingly he answered out loud "here I am". We read further: "And Abraham rose up early in the morning." He hurried as though to some celebration, and he was at the appointed place, the mountain in Moriah, early in the morning. He said nothing to Sarah, nothing to Eleazar. After all, who could have understood him? Hadn't the test by its very nature exacted an oath of silence from him? "And [he] clave the wood, he bound Isaac, he kindled the fire, he drew the knife." My hearer" Many a father has felt the loss of his child, but then it was God, the unchangeable and inscrutable will of the Almighty, it was his hand that took it. Not so with Abraham. For him a harder trial was reserved; along with the knife the fate of Isaac was put into Abraham's own hand. And he stood there, the old man with his only hope! But he did not doubt, he did not look in anguish to left or right, he did not challenge heaven with his prayers. He knew it was God the Almighty that tried him, he knew it was the hardest sacrifice that could be demanded of him; but he also knew that no sacrifice was too hard when God demanded it – and he drew the knife.
>
> What gave strength to Abraham's arm, who kept his right arm raised so that it did not fall helplessly down! Anyone who saw this would be paralysed. Who gave strength to Abraham's soul, so that his eye did not become too clouded to see either Isaac or the ram! Anyone who saw this would become blind. And yet rare enough though they may be, those who are both paralysed and blind, still more rare is he who can tell the story and give it its due. We know it, all of us – it was only a trial.
>
> Had Abraham doubted as he stood on the mountain in Moriah, had he looked about in indecision, if before drawing the knife he had accidentally caught sight of the ram and God had allowed him to offer it in place of Isaac – then he would have gone home, everything would have been as before, he would have had Sarah, he would have kept Isaac, and yet how changed! For his withdrawal would have been a flight, his deliverance an accident, his reward dishonor, his future perhaps damnation. Then he would have borne witness, not to his faith or to God's mercy, but to how dreadful was the journey to the mountain in Moriah. Abraham would not be forgotten, nor the mountain. Yet it would not be mentioned like Ararat, where the Ark came to land, but as a horror, for it was here that Abraham doubted.
>
> Venerable Father Abraham! When you journeyed home from the mountain in Moriah you needed no speech of praise to console you for what was lost; for in fact you gained everything and kept Isaac. Was it not so? The Lord never again took him from you, you sat happily at table with him in your tent, as you do in the hereafter in all eternity. Venerable Father Abraham! Thousands of years have slipped by since those days, but you need no late-coming lover to snatch your memory from the power of oblivion; for every mother-tongue commemorates you – and still you reward your lover more gloriously than anyone. You make him blessed hereafter in your bosom, you captivate his eye and his heart in the here and now with the marvel of your deed. Venerable Father Abraham! Second father to the human race! You who first saw and bore witness to that tremendous passion that scorns the fearful struggle with the raging elements and the forces of creation in order to struggle with God instead, you who first knew that supreme passion, the sacred, pure and humble expression of the divine madness which the pagans admired – forgive him who would speak in your praise if he did not do it correctly.

[37] Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*, trans. Alastair Hannay (London, 1985), p. 49.

> He spoke humbly, seeing it is his heart's desire; he spoke briefly, as is fitting; but he will never forget that you needed a hundred years to get the son of your old age, against every expectation, that you had to draw the knife before keeping Isaac; he will never forget that in one hundred and thirty years you got no further than faith.[38]

There are less extreme examples of these counter-chaotic logics operating in today's world than the Westboro Baptist Church (*fig. 3*), the virulently homophobic hate group

headquartered on the west side of Topeka, Kansas, but they are not necessarily more revealing for being subtle; in two famous documentaries by the English documentarist Louis Theroux (2007 and 2011), various members of the group (mostly emanating from the large family of the founder, disbarred 83-year old lawyer Fred Phelps) confided in Theroux their most desperate and triumphalist hopes of disbarring the Hegelian imbalance (epitomized in their eyes by the contradictory potentials of Liberalism); consider the brief remarks of a frighteningly young member to whom it is put that the homophobic term 'fag' is offensive.

> THEROUX: Do you understand that gay people, homosexuals find the word "fag" offensive?
> NOAH: I really don't care. It's a good way to put it; "gay" actually means "happy" and so it's way better than that and, you can put all those big words ("homosexual"), they're just a bunch of filthy fags; I don't care if they find it offensive: it's wrong, the bible says it's wrong, so you can just shut up about it.[39]

Next Noah elaborates his vision for *where* and *how* the movement will end up, should they manage to successfully obfuscate the tempted sins of the flesh and practice stoic devotion.

> THEROUX: And, and so what will happen next [following a battle with the Satanic "beast" who has "already ascended" and, according to Noah, is Barack Obama]? Do you know? What do you expect?
> NOAH: My aunt Paulette, she … imagined us all in pink, all – all of us, all of our people, in a pink cave and--and far away from … the place we are now – nothing like it. And so, guess what? We looked up on the internet and we were looking for things? Someone looked, for that? And d'you know what

[38] ibid, pp. 54-56.
[39] "America's Most Hated Family in Crisis." BBC. London. 3 Apr. 2011. Television.

> we found? Somewhere in the fertile crescent, in Jordan (which used to be Moab), there are pink caves … that are big: ... that's just kindof, isn't that kinda cool?
> THEROUX: You could end up in a pink cave in Jordan [smiling]!?

Four years previously, Fred Phelps had delineated in a sermon what he saw as the position of his ministry on the issue of homosexuality and the theory that had produced such conclusions (the sermon is provocatively-titled 'GOD IS NOW AMERICA'S TERRORIST').

> Same-sex marriage, by any name ("civil union" or otherwise), is the ultimate smash-mouth, in-your-face insult to God Almighty and you think he's gonna let England and America and the rest of this evil world get by with it? God Almighty has *not* joined fags in holy wedlock. God no longer keeps America safe: America is doomed, we're getting the pants beat off of us in Iraq and Afghanistan. God is now America's terrorist! That's who Bush is fighting; that's the terrorist that he best be afraid of. You tweaked his nose, you jackass! You tweaked his nose! God put it in your wicked heart to start that war! That's the message we've god at the funerals of these dead soldiers: God duped you! Into starting a war, so he could punish you. And any preacher preaching it any other way is a lying, hell-bound false prophet! It's almost eighteen months now and the siege has got people eating their babies, and their small children and each other! YOU'RE GONNA EAT YOUR BABIES! God himself duped Bush into a no-win war, and he did that by the technique of putting a lying spirit in the mouth of all his trusted advisors: to punish America.[40]

Just as Christian faith, for Kierkegaard, seemed to by-pass the traumatic insight of German Idealism (which is more than adequately expressed in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* but Žižek prefers to identify in Schelling), does the Westboro Baptist Church not *naturalize* their scriptural interpretation to by-pass 'the ultimate abyss of free will, the imponderable fact of "I did it because I did it!" which resists any explanation in terms of psychological, social, ideological, etc., causes?'[41]

Now we can return to those *more* subtle Kierkegaardian examples I alluded to above, having approached the issue courtesy of the Westboro Baptist Church. Let's travel as far back as 1547 and the *Homily on Obedience*, part of *The Books Of Homilies* (which were released by the Tudor Church of England in 1547, 1562 and 1571 to codify its doctrine in the effective manner it believed the 1536 *Ten Articles*, the 1539 *Six Articles*, the 1543 *King's Book*, the 1552 *Forty-Two Articles* and the 1563 *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* never had). *Fig 4.* reproduces the *Homily* as it appeared in *Certayne Sermons, or Homelies, appointed by the*

[40] "The Most Hated Family in America." BBC. London. 1 Apr. 2007. Television.
[41] Žižek, *Desert*, p. 137; Žižek admires Schelling because Schelling reads the abyssal moment of decision (think of the character Mathieu in Sartre's 1945 novel *L'âge de raison* agonising over how and whether to fund his mistress' abortion) back 'Before the Beginning' - i.e. to God himself at the earliest moment we can conceptualize him. See Slavoj Žižek, *The Indivisible Remainder. An essay on Schelling and related matters* (London, 1996), p. 62: the 'obscure-impenetrable side of God, the ground of His Existence, is *not* to be conceived as a positive Base, the true foundation of Being, with Reason as its parasitic accident: the Ground is in itself ontologically hindered, hampered; its status is, in a radical sense, *pre-ontological*: it "is" only *sous rature*, in the mode of its own withdrawal. The only true Substance is the Spirit, that is, God in His actual Existence; and *Grund* is ultimately a name for God's self-deferral, for that elusive X which lacks any proper ontological consistency, yet on account of which God is never fully Himself, can never attain full self-identity. God needs this foreign body at its heart, since without this minimum of contractive force He would not be "Himself" – what, paradoxically, forever prevents God from attaining full self-identity is the very impenetrable kernel of his *Selbstheit*…"

Kynges Majeffte, to be declared and redde, by all perfones, Vicars or Curates, every Sundaye in their churches, where they have care. The *Homily* stretches to several pages, but we can pull more than enough from *Fig. 4* to illustrate the ways in which it artificially stresses social unity and cohesion where social historians like Steve Hindle and Brodie Waddell have reminded us none existed.[42] The key phrase of the whole document on which its significance for social historians (though perhaps crucially, *qua* Althusser, not for all contemporaries) turned, was the following: *On earth he [Allmightie God] hath aligned kynges, princes, with other governors under them, all in good & neceffary ordre*. We know from the sheer quantity of tangible early-modern '"commotion[s]", "insurrection[s]", "pernicious treason[s]"' that historians have sensed, that the very constitution of society underwent continual Deleuzian negotiation and spasmodic evolution, a change anchored always by the encroaching logics of statist-protocapitalism.[43] Such anxieties commonly came in the context of intra-elite factionalism and sectarianism, for example the Northern Rising (1569), the Ridolfi Plot (1571), the Throckmorton Plot (1583), the Babington Plot (1586), the Lopez Plot (1594) and

[42] Steve Hindle, 'Imagining insurrection in seventeenth-century England : representations of the Midland Rising of 1607', *History Workshop Journal*, 66:1 (2008), pp. 21-61. ISSN 1363-3554; 'the carnage at Newton' in 1607 which Hindle describes in grisly depth (where 'a crowd of approximately one thousand men and women [began] "busily digging" in enclosures … three miles north of Kettering in Northamptonshire'), 'represented the culmination of six weeks of disorder across the three counties of Leicestershire, Northamptonshire and Warwickshire.' 'The long-term context of this rebellion', Hindle argues, 'was the significant population growth and associated price-inflation of the sixteenth century, which resulted in increasing differentials of wealth between rich and poor.' The article is interesting in that, among horrific depictions of cavalry charges against the mostly unarmed, it touches upon our topic: artificial calls for unity. 'The common orthodoxy', we are told, 'is that by the end of the sixteenth century the rural elite, including both the gentry and the middling sort who had once provided the natural leadership of popular protest, had distanced themselves from the tradition of disorder. That withdrawal, it is argued, explains "the poor's increasing inability to translate discontent into rebellion", a tendency apparently confirmed by the abortive Oxfordshire conspiracy of 1569. 'There was, to be sure, considerable "momentum for obedience" in late Elizabethan and early Stuart society.' Within this prism, we are offered glimpses of four discursive engagements with the Lacanian Real (epitomised, as it so often is, in this case by the problem of material scarcity and socio-structural exclusion). 'The four protagonists considered … are, respectively, a *commoner* (the tinker and rebel leader John Reynolds, popularly known as "Captain Pouch"); the *monarch* himself (James I of England and VI of Scotland); a *clergyman* (Robert Wilkinson, chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant of Northamptonshire); and, finally, a very experienced lawyer and *statesman* (the Solicitor-General Sir Francis Bacon). Of course these four individuals did not actually enjoy a convivial evening's discussion over venison pasties watered down with claret, but we might read (as contemporaries surely would have read, had they seen or heard them) their analyses of social protest as a sub-conscious symposium among those whose economic and political interests were at stake during the early summer of 1607.' In *God, Duty and Community in English economic life, 1660-1720* (Woodbridge, 2012), Hindle's protégé Brodie Waddell follows up similar enquiries making similar conclusions; despite the insistence of John Walter that 'the "moralization of economic relationships" was "a resource to be drawn upon" by both the strong and the weak, a "rhetorical strategy" employed to defend each group's interests', we 'must still[, Waddell insists,] against [a kind of] "crass economic reductionism", and even against its more sophisticated cousins. We must study not only "hard facts" but also culture, and we cannot rationalize this culture – it cannot be demoted to the derivative "superstructure" of a particular "base" or reduced to utilitarian "tactics" protecting an underlying "interest". We must regard it not as an epiphenomenon but as a powerful entity in its own right. Only then will we begin to understand the ways in which cultural presumptions and moral values inflected every single economic interaction in early modern England.'

[43] Hindle, 'Imagining', p. 23.

4.

¶ An exhortacion, concernyng good or-
der and obedience, to rulers and magistrates.

ALmightie God hath created & appointed all thinges, in heauē, yearth, and waters, in a mooste excellent and perfect ordre. In heauē, he hath appoynted distinct orders and states of Archangelles and Angels. In yearth he hath assigned kynges, princes, with other gouernors vnder them, all in good & necessary ordre. The water aboue is kept and ratneth doune in due time and season. The sunne, mone, starres, rainbow, thūder, lightning, cloudes, and al birdes of the aire, do kepe their ordre. The yearth, trees, seedes, plantes, herbes, corne, grasse, and all maner of beastes, kepe thē in their ordre. All the partes of ꝑ whole yeare, as winter, somer, monethes, nightes & dayes, continue in their ordre. All kyndes of fishes in the sea, riuers and waters, with all fountaynes, sprynges, yea, the seas themselues, kepe their comely course and ordre. And mā hymself also, hath al his partes, both within & without: as soule, harte, mynd, memory, vnderstandyng, reason, speache, withall and singuler corporall mēbres of his body, in a profitable, necessary and pleasaunt ordre. Euery degre of people, in their vocacion, callyng, & office, hath appoynted to them, their duetie & ordre. Some are in high degre, some in lowe, some kynges & princes, some inferiors and subiectes, priestes, and laymen, maisters & seruauntes, fathers & children, husbandes and wiues, riche and poore, and euery one haue nede of other: so that in all thinged, is to be lauded & praysed the goodly ordre of God, without the whiche, no house, no citie,

of course Essex's Rebellion (1601). Indeed, Julius R. Ruff (and he is just one among many others) has tried to isolate and emphasise the category of violence as a structural (if perhaps, if I follow his tone correctly, unfortunate) agent in early modern polities; 'Politically', he tells us, 'the western European state was perfecting and strengthening its institutions in this period, a process particularly marked in the assertion of its judicial power.'[44]

> This was an age in which many states codified their criminal laws (Germany's *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* of 1532, France's Criminal Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts of 1539 and that of 1670, and the Criminal Ordinance of Philip II for the Spanish Netherlands in 1570) and began to expand their judicial institutions to impose state justice throughout their territories. The expansion of state justice injected a measure of violence into European life through the corporal and capital punishments that the penology of the day employed, yet we will see this brutality eventually diminishing along with violent crime itself. But early modern authorities also exercised the growing power of the state more subtly than in simple, raw displays of brutality in public executions. Increasingly, the early modern state regulated its citizens' lives in a multitude of ways. The state issued ordinances and rules governing all manner of human activities, from tavern closure hours to sports, dress and gender relations. Collectively, such regulatory power, backed at the end of our period by the growing police power of the state, gradually reshaped human behaviour.

Let us now take a much more recent example, the autumn 1985 report by the then-Archbishop of Canterbury's Commission on Urban Priority Areas to investigate what the Anglican Church perceived as striking economic and spiritual problems developing in tandem. We could of course endlessly dispute any narrative which claimed west-European society in the decades after Denazification as in any sense 'stable', but let us take it as a working initial hypothesis that the October 1973 OPEC Oil Crisis so profoundly destabilized existing macroeconomics that an obscene Hegelian socio-dialectical split became visible.[45] In August 1971, the United States had unilaterally disengaged the dollar from the Bretton Woods Gold Exchange Standard system, allowing it to 'float' digitally and spasmodically. The geopolitical tremors of the October 1973 Yom Kippur conflict more than quadrupled the resting price of Arabian crude oil, introducing inflationary shocks into the economies of all Western oil-importers (*fig. 5*).[46] Traditional capital flows essentially reversed, with states like

[44] Julius R. Ruff, *Violence in Early Modern Europe 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 3.

[45] Dennis Kavanagh and Peter Morris, *Consensus Politics From Attlee to Major* (Oxford, 1989), p. 1; As everyone knows, the prevalent term for this state of affairs in Britain was 'consensus'. Interestingly, though not unexpectedly, 'the term [only] acquired prominence in 1975 [as the concept to which it referred was dying] with the publication of Paul Addison's *The Road to 1945*. Addison argued that British politics since the First World War could be divided into two periods, which he labelled respectively the consensus of Baldwin and the consensus of Atlee. This did not mean that Stanley Baldwin and/or Clement Atlee singlehandedly created a set of principles and strategies by which British politics was organized; the idea was rather that each symbolized and became the focus of a set of ideas and conventions about the nature and scope of political – and particularly governmental – activity. They represented, in other words, a set of governing assumptions and expectations. Essentially, the hands-off approach that had characterized government's attitude towards the economy and society was replaced by a more dynamic and interventionist one. Addison saw the Second World War as a catalyst for the implementation of ideas that had been developed in the years before 1939.' For a sceptical view see D. Marlow, *Questioning the Postwar Consensus Thesis. Towards an Alternative Account* (Aldershot, 1996).

[46] Øystein Noreng, *Crude Power; politics and the oil market* (London, 2007), p. 234; Indexed to one thousand $US, the output value per capita of crude oil spiked sharply between 1970 and 1975. Iran saw a 0.30 to 2.01

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait suddenly profiting obscenely from Western over-dependence on oil as an energy source. It is in this context that we should read the upheavals in 1970's Britain;

U.S. economic repercussions of the OPEC price hike 1972-2000 **5.**

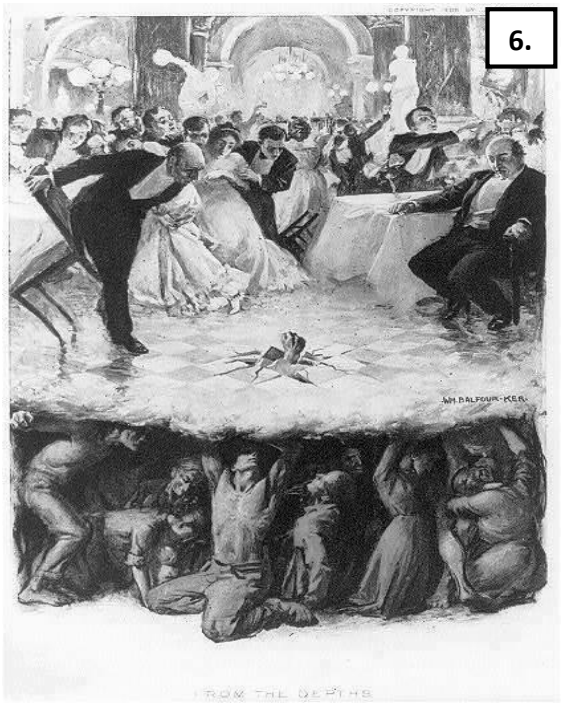
Per cent	1973	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Price increase (nominal)	48.95	16.51	-4.01	30.82	7.51	34.62
Price increase (real)	41.11	2.77	-7.68	24.24	4.54	30.39
Inflation rate	6.20	13.50	3.60	5.40	2.80	3.20
Nominal bank prime rate	8.03	15.26	9.93	10.01	8.83	9.21
Real bank prime rate	1.83	1.76	6.33	4.61	6.03	6.01
GDP growth	5.20	-0.50	3.20	0.80	2.00	5.20
Unemployment rate	4.90	7.10	7.20	5.60	5.60	4.00

by the time Thatcher entered office, there was a palpable appetite for some qualitatively new political agenda. The OPEC crisis was, in my opinion, something like the final whimpering end of Victorian Britain: no longer could we benefit from an historic hegemony, and heretofore we would have to earn our economic gains on a more assertive (though of course not still in any sense equal) globe. The impetus, then, was for some kind of messianic faith, a Kierkegaardian faith, which would facilitate our engagement with the horrifying socio-economic gap - the true horrors of which had previously been simpler to mask (*fig. 6*). Thatcher's faith (stemming from her strict Methodist upbringing) is well known; when once asked what she thought of the large raft of social scientists (most paying homage to, for example, Foucault or other Marxist critics of ideology) critiquing her macroeconomic assumptions, she simply replied that society was not, in her opinion, a science.[47] Conviction

jump, Iraq 0.36 to 2.56, Kuwait 8.79 to 25.29, Qatar 7.13 to 30.94, Saudia Arabia 1.45 to 11.92 and the UAE 7.75 to 40. To give some valuable context, dramatically-increased oil revenues permitted the OPEC nations to proportionately develop their military capabilities. Iran's military expenditure increased ten times between 1970 and 1975 (3,184 million US$ to 31,249 million US$). In 1971 Iranian marines besieged the islands of Abu Musa and the Greater and Lesser Tunbs vacated by Britain; this was a definitely *new* geo-political environment.

[47] Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (London, 2011), p. 626; 'My meaning, clear at the time but subsequently distorted beyond recognition, was that society was not an abstraction, separate from the men and women who composed it, but a living structure of individuals, families, neighbours and voluntary associations. I expected great things from society in this sense because I believed that as economic wealth grew, individuals and voluntary groups should assume more responsibility for their neighbours' misfortunes. The error to which I was objecting was the confusion of society with the state as the helper of first resort. Whenever I heard people complain that "society" should not permit some particular misfortune, I would retort, "And what are you doing

in one's approach, she believed, could harness the great majority of people into one holistic and ascetically-beautiful Nietzschean effort - those who refused to participate could simply be forgotten about or punished.[48] So-called 'conviction politics', then, was the politics of Kierkegaardian faith.[49] Thatcher was Kierkegaardian in the sense that her belief was reflexive: *she believed in belief itself*.[50] The interest of the Faith in the Cities report is that it proffered an equally assured, equally Kirkegaardian theology with radically different policy assumptions. Where the Thatcher administration envisioned a relentlessly productive association of sovereign individuals, the authors of the report saw only frightening disunity and fragmentation exacerbated by harsh governmental aloofness. As well as offering a critique in the broadest possible sense (for example of macroeconomic direction in the style of a Jim Tomlinson), the thirteen authors targeted very specific initiatives of the Thatcher administration.[51] Discretionary local council funding was scrutinised for example, along with overtime working levels, ethnic ghettoization in housing, palliative measures to deal with homelessness and Child Benefit provision.[52] In classic Kierkegaardian fashion, the Thatcher administration attacked the authors of the report *ad hominem*. John Campbell's seminal biography of Thatcher has an unnamed Cabinet member slamming the report as 'pure Marxist theology' whilst a Conservative backbencher bemoaned the governance of the Anglican Church by 'a load of Communist clerics'.[53]



about it, then?" Society for me was not an excuse, it was a source of obligation.'; Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-76*, trans. David Macey, English series ed. Arnold I. Davidson (New York, 2003), p. 15; 'At this point', Foucault told the world on the 7th of January 1976, 'we can invert Clausewitz's proposition and say that politics is the continuation of war by other means.'

[48] Max Weber, *Basic Concepts in Sociology* (New York NY, 1990), §5/p. 71; 'Conduct, especially social conduct, and more particularly a social relationship, can be oriented on the part of the individuals to what constitutes their "idea" of the existence of a *legitimate authority*. The probability that such orientation actually occurs shall be called the "validity" of the authority in question.'

[49] Eric J. Evans, *Thatcher and Thatcherism* (London, 1997), p. 54; 'Thatcher's policies depended more upon instinct than mature consideration of the issues'.

[50] Slavoj Žižek, 'WITH OR WITHOUT PASSION ● .....What's Wrong with Fundamentalism? – Part I', Lacan.com. http://www.lacan.com/zizpassion.htm (4 September 2013).

[51] Jim Tomlinson, *Public policy and the economy since 1900* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 313-347.

[52] Church of England. Commission on Urban Priority Areas, *Faith in the city: a call for action by Church and nation* (London, 1985), pp. 205, 213-5, 219-224, 231-7.

[53] John Campbell, *Margaret Thatcher. Volume Two: The Iron Lady* (New York NY, 2003), p. 390.

Schopenhauer's anti-Hegelian gesture was similar in thrust but with wildly different connotations; where Kierkegaard laced his anti-Hegelianism with almost-messianic Christian overtones, Schopenhauer preferred to stress that the primacy of the individual will itself could depart in all sorts of (usually atheistic, if still *faith*-based) directions. Like Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer thought that Hegel's insistence that the Kantian 'thing-in-itself' (*das Ding an sich*) could not be known was woolly, unhelpful and superfluous.[54] For Schopenhauer, our lives both collectively and individually are motored by a diverse array of esoteric drives.

> Just as the boatman sits in his small boat, trusting his frail craft in a stormy sea that is boundless in every direction, rising and falling with the howling, mountainous waves, so in the midst of a world full of suffering and misery the individual man calmly sits, supported by and trusting the *principium individuationis*, or the way in which the individual knows things as phenomenon. The boundless world, everywhere full of suffering in the infinite past, in the infinite future, is strange to him, is indeed a fiction. His vanishing person, his extensionless present, his momentary gratification, these alone have reality for him; and he does everything to maintain them, so long as his eyes are not opened by a better knowledge.[55]

Here, it might be helpful to consider one way in which Hegel is more similar to Marx than Kierkegaard and Schopenhauer. We all know Marx's famous dictum that 'men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past'.[56] Here, socio-Structuralist path dependency is very much shaping the contours of individual possibility. Schopenhauer preferred to and did often stress the obverse: that individual will itself is pivotal in determining how subjects relate to objects. This, of course, is not entirely dissimilar to Hegel; the dialectical fluctuations of the Spirit would, seemingly, mandate *how* subjects relate to objects, but for Schopenhauer there is a much wider possibility for individualistic interpretations of signs. *Das Ding an sich* was not, of course (as a Positivist would understand the concept) present in Hegel either, and Schopenhauer

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[54] Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (eds.), *The Cambridge Edition of the works of Immanuel Kant. The critique of Pure Reason* (Cambridge, 1998), Bxviii/p. 111; 'As for objects insofar as they are thought merely through reason, and necessarily at that, but that (at least as reason thinks them) cannot be given in experience at all – the attempt to think them (for they must be capable of being thought) will provide a splendid touchstone of what we assume as the altered method of our way of thinking, namely that we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them.'

[55] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World As Will And Representation. Volume I*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Toronto ON, 1966), pp. 352-3.

[56] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (London, 1984), p. 10; 'And just when they seem engaged in revolutionising themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language. Thus Luther donned the mask of the Apostle Paul, the revolution of 1789 to 1814 draped itself alternately as the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, and the revolution of 1848 knew nothing better to do than to parody, now 1789, now the revolutionary tradition of 1793 to 1795. In like manner a beginner who has learnt a new language always translates it back into his mother tongue, but he has assimilated the spirit of the new language and can freely express himself in it only when he finds his way in it without recalling the old and forgets his native tongue in the use of the new.'

detested Hegel too for elaborating unwelcome mazes of rhetorical abstraction which, in Schopenhauer's mind, sent humanity tumbling further and further away from Truth.

> As, in the life of an individual, one false step in youth often ruins the whole career, so, when Kant made that one false assumption of a practical reason [*Vernunft*] that is furnished with wholly transcendent credentials and, like the highest courts of appeal, gives decisions "without grounds," the result was that from the austere promises of critical philosophy sprang teachings utterly heterogenous to it. Thus there are doctrines of a reason [*Vernunft*] at first only faintly "*surmising*," then clearly "*becoming aware of*," and finally perceiving quite vividly with an "*intellectual intuition*" the "*supersensuous*". Every dreamer could now promulgate his musings as the "absolute," that is, officially issued, utterances and revelations of this reason [*Vernunft*]. This new privilege has frankly been made use of. Here, then, is to be found the origin of that philosophical method which appeared immediately after Kant's teaching, and which consists in mystifying, producing an impression, misleading, throwing dust in the eyes, and bragging. One day this era will be known in the history of philosophy as the "period of dishonesty." For here the *character of honesty*, of an investigation in common with the reader which the works of all previous philosophers bore, has disappeared. The philosophaster of this period tries not to instruct but to fool his reader, and every page is evidence of this. Fichte and Schelling shine as the heroes of the period, but ultimately we have another who is quite unworthy even of these two, who as a man of talent is far inferior to them, namely the clumsy and senseless charlatan Hegel. The chorus consisted of all kinds of professors of philosophy who, with serious countenances, talked to their public of the infinite, the Absolute, and many other things of which they could not possibly know anything at all.[57]
>
> At last I have attained my end in the teeth of the united and long-standing opposition of all the professors of philosophy, and the eyes of the educated public are being opened ever more widely regarding the *summi philosophi* of our academicians. If they are still feebly supported for a short time by wretched professors of philosophy, with whom they long ago compromised themselves and who also need them as material for their lectures, then they have sunk very low indeed in public esteem, and Hegel in particular is fast approaching that contempt which posterity has in store for him. In the last twenty years the opinion about him has come three-quarters of the way toward the conclusion reached by Gracián's allegory, given in the Preface to the first edition. In a few years it will have gone the whole way toward agreeing fully with the judgement that twenty years ago gave the Danish Academy *tam justam et gravem offensionem*. As a gift in return for their censure, I will therefore grace the album of the Danish Academy with a poem by Goethe:
>
> Thou art ever able to extol the bad:
> For this thou hast at once thy prize!
> In thy pool thou floatest at the top,
> And *art the patron saint of quacks*.
>
> Inveigh against the good, thou canst but try!
> 'Tis easy when thou dost presume:
> Yet when thou hast been tracked by men,
> Thou art undone, as thou hast merited.
> (*Mild Epigrams*)[58]

[57] Arthur Schopenhauer, *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford, 1995), pp. 79-80.
[58] ibid., pp. 34-5; One could go on and on here; in 1851 aged 63, some thirty years after the indignity of lecturing in Berlin on "The whole of philosophy, i.e. the theory of the essence of the world and of the human mind" to an average of five people whilst Hegel could be heard lecturing to 300 in the same building, Schopenhauer was still damming Hegel (who by now had been dead almost exactly twenty years); Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena. Volume One*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford, 1974), p. 144; 'Anyone who … is still in doubt concerning the spirit and aim of university philosophy, should consider the fate of Hegel's pretended wisdom. Has it in any way been discredited by virtue of the fact that its fundamental ideas were the absurdest fancy, a world turned upside down, a philosophical buffoonery, or by virtue of its contents being the hollowest and most senseless display of words ever lapped up by the blockheads, and its presentation, as seen in the works of the author himself, being the most repulsive and nonsensical gibberish, recalling the rantings of a bedlamite? No, not in the least! On the contrary, it has flourished these last twenty years as the most brilliant chair-philosophy that has ever brought in fees and emoluments; it has grown fat and been proclaimed throughout Germany in hundreds of books as the final pinnacle of human wisdom and the

For all his bombast, did Schopenhauer ever really overcome the Idealist turn? I think not. In some ways (tragic ways, which the tediously cynical Schopenhauer would probably get some bizarre kick out of), Schopenhauer was the first post-Kantian and post-Hegelian thinker to really assume their Idealism as a first point of departure. I find nothing in Schopenhauer to suggest that he did not essentially agree with whatever we have collectively agreed to have been the Spirit of German Idealism (that spirit determined, *qua* Saussure, in terms of 'its difference from all other phenomes').[59] In both despairing times and (rare) hopeful times, Schopenhauer returned again and again to an insistence that 'life has no *genuine intrinsic worth*, but is kept in *motion* merely by want and illusion'.[60] Shortly before collapsing with breathlessness and dying on the floor of Number 16, Schöne Aussicht near the river Main in Frankfurt in 1860, Schopenhauer remarked that he could 'bear the thought that in a short time worms will eat away my body; but the idea of philosophy professors nibbling at my philosophy makes me shudder'.[61] And yet, nibble away at his work we must, inching towards what Heidegger termed *In-der-Welt-sein*.[62] Disgust of Kant's transcendentalist turn and Hegel's dialectical oeuvre coupled with an intellectual *mentalité* which operationalizes and explores both, is the aporia from which Positivism itself springs; Schopenhauer's paradoxes are our paradoxes, and his failure to meaningfully overcome Kant and Hegel continues to over-determinately influence the ways our lives are structured – he is the embarrassing, inadequate father who spawned the bastard child Postivism. G. K. Chesterton understood well enough Sloterdijk's cynical *Ideologiekritik*: 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it.'[63] For Chesterton, an ideology (for example Catholicism) *has important social effects* (social deference, the self-censorship of overtly violent behaviour) but, crucially, *the artificiality and arbitrariness of the ideology needs to be consistently*

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philosophy of philosophies; in fact it has been lauded to the skies. Students were examined in it and professors appointed to teach it. Anyone not wishing to go with the rest was declared to be a "fool on his own responsibility" by the impudent tutor of its author, as docile as he is dull; and even the few who ventured a feeble opposition against such mischief, were diffident and shy in face of the recognition and acknowledgement of the "great mind and boundless genius" – that preposterous philosophaster.'

[59] Jacques Derrida, *De la grammatologie*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore MD, 1976), p. xii.

[60] Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga and Paralipomena. Volume Two*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (Oxford, 1974), p. 287.

[61] Alain de Botton, *The Consolations Of Philosophy* (London, 2000), p. 182.

[62] Heidegger, *Sein*, §25/p.149.

[63] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 29; 'In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, a great bestseller in Germany (Sloterdijk, 1983), Peter Sloterdijk puts forward the thesis that ideology's dominant mode of functioning is cynical, which renders impossible – or, more precisely, vain – the classic critical-ideological procedure. The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but he none the less still insists upon the mask. … Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it.' This is of course an inversion of Marx's famous dictum in Volume I of *Kapital* that 'they [the bourgeois and proletarian classes] don't know it, but they are doing it [actuating dialectical class-struggle]'. Žižek and Sloterdijk are, today, making Marx into a more honest Marx.

concealed if those social effects are to be widely reproduced.[64] If the artificiality of an ideology is brought to light (if those previously-interpellated subjects think with Lacan that *Le grand Autre n'existe pas*), any intended social effects can never properly re-occur.[65] To effect change, we have to *forget* the artificiality of ideology and socio-political structures;

> The guillotine has many sins, but to do it justice there is nothing evolutionary about it. The favourite evolutionary argument finds its best answer in the axe. The Evolutionist says, "Where do you draw the line?" The Revolutionist answers, "I draw it *here:* exactly between your head and body." There must at any given moment be an abstract right or wrong if any blow is to be struck; there must be something eternal if there is to be anything sudden.[66]

Equally, in order to try to preserve the socio-economic status quo, the conservative must forget that both the society she so loves and the Other arriving to deprive her of it exists only on the plane of imagined and deconstructed interplays between discourses, materialities and particularities. The 1985 publication *Goodbye To All That* by David Horowitz, currently one of America's most merciless Republicans and president of the Conservative think-tank The David Horowitz Freedom Center (and labelled by the Southern Poverty Law Center as one of America's 10-strong 'Anti-Muslim Inner Circle'), is necessarily self-deceptive in breaking with Leftist assumptions; it necessarily adopts a decentred ontology (a Derridean 'esoteric

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[64] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 23, 27 & 29; Recognising the artificiality of ideological systems, Chesterton knew, is 'a thought that stops thought.' 'The ordinary man has always been sane because the ordinary man has always been a mystic. He has permitted the twilight. He has always had one foot in earth and the other in fairyland. … He has always cared more for truth than for consistency. If he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and the contradiction along with them.' 'What we suffer from to-day is humility in the wrong place. Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition. Modesty has settled upon the organ of conviction; where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. Nowadays the part of a man that a man does assert is exactly the part he ought not to assert – himself. The part he doubts is exactly the part he ought not to doubt – the Divine Reason.' 'The young sceptic says, "I have a right to think for myself." But the old sceptic, the complete sceptic, says, "I have no right to think for myself. I have no right to think at all.

There is a thought that stops thought. That is the only thought that ought to be stopped. That is the ultimate evil against which all religious authority was aimed. It only appears at the end of decadent ages like our own: and already Mr. H. G. Wells has raised its ruinous banner; he has written a delicate piece of scepticism called "Doubts of the Instrument." In this he questions the brain itself, and endeavours to remove all reality from all his own assertions, past, present, and to come. But it was against this remote ruin that all the military systems in religion were originally ranked and ruled. The creeds and the crusades, the hierarchies and the horrible persecutions were not organized, as is ignorantly said, for the suppression of reason. They were organized for the difficult defence of reason. Man, by a blind instinct, knew that if once things were wildly questioned, reason could be questioned first. The authority of priests to absolve, the authority of popes to define the authority, even of inquisitors to terrify: these were all only dark defences erected round once central authority, more undemonstrable, more supernatural than all – the authority of a man to think. We know now that this is so; we have no excuse for not knowing it. For we can hear scepticism crashing through the old ring of authorities, and at the same moment we can see reason swaying upon her throne. In so far as religion is gone, reason is going. For they are both of the same primary and authoritative kind. They are both methods of proof which cannot themselves be proved. And in the act of destroying the idea of Divine authority we have largely destroyed the idea of that human authority by which we do a long-division sum. With a long and sustained tug we have attempted to pull the mitre off pontifical man; and his head has come off with it.'

[65] Slavoj Žižek, 'Lacan – At What Point Is He Hegelian?', trans. Rex Butler and Scott Stephens, in R. Butler and S. Stephens (eds.), *Interrogating the Real* (London, 2005), p. 27, cited in Adrian Johnston, *Žižek's Ontology: A Transcendental Materialist Theory of Subjectivity* (Evanston IL, 2008), p. 180.

[66] Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 112-13.

centre') from which all kinds of normative assumptions and pre-assumptions can be formulated – this is how ideology works, riding into the future looking backwards (this hinted in Goya's 1800 'Sketch for "Truth Rescued by Time, Witnessed by History"', *fig. 7*).[67]

[67] Jacques Derrida, 'Signature Event Context', University of Toronto Scarborough. <http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=signature%20event%20context&source=web&cd=1&sqi=2&ved=0CC4QFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.utsc.utoronto.ca%2F~engdept%2Fdocs%2FDerrida%2520-%2520Signature%2520Event%2520Context.pdf&ei=JJrEUK6PHaHL0QXy3YHoCg&usg=AFQjCNGnYk-Ormm0ybte3yTMZ6Ok-J79fw> (9 December 2012), p. 12.

Marx exemplified Schopenhauer's paradoxes, innovating in ways which seemed exciting to the Frankfurt School and other early Twentieth Century revivalists (inventors) of Scientific Marxism, yet deepening Schopenhauer's conflicted engagement with Kant and Hegel. In the German Idealist sense, he was able to re-imagine a world (which had only comparatively recently been commodified, partially-industrialised and subjected to regular injections of capital) in blisteringly new and blisteringly appropriate (I do not say *accurate*) terminologies.[68] Yet, he was too wedded to these terminologies - not mindful that human beings bring an indecipherable variety of psychological modes to bear on their economic behaviour. Herbert Marcuse's 1955 *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* went some way towards redressing the balance, as did Lacan and the influence of Pierre-Félix Guattari on Gilles Deleuze in *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980), the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. It is my conviction, however, that this central Psychoanalytic (Hegelian) problem in Marx only began to be properly addressed in Žižek's 1989 breakout work *The Sublime Object Of Ideology*; let us consider how Žižek deals with the problem of how ideology intersects with economics (the reader can return to footnote 18 for the seminal work Althusser did between January and April 1969 allowing us to continue to *think* this issue).

> Herein lies the difference [of Hegelian thinking] with Marxism: in the predominant Marxist perspective the ideological gaze is a *partial* gaze overlooking the *totality* of social relations, whereas in the Lacanian perspective ideology rather designates *a totality set on effacing the traces of its own impossibility*. This difference corresponds to the one which designates the Freudian from the Marxist notion of fetishism: in Marxism a fetish conceals the positive network of social relations, whereas in Freud a fetish conceals the lack ("castration") around which the symbolic network is articulated. …
>
> Marxism, then, did not succeed in taking into account, coming to terms with, the surplus-object, the leftover of the Real eluding symbolization – a fact all the more surprising if we recall that Lacan modelled his notion of surplus-enjoyment on the Marxian notion of surplus-value. The proof that

[68] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution. 1789-1848* (London, 1962), pp. 42-69 is excellent on these developments. Hobsbawm is illustrative of the kind of Scientific Marxism I talk about when I talk about, for example, Althusser or John Maynard Keynes; 'What does the phrase "the Industrial Revolution broke out" mean? It means that some time in the 1780's, and for the first time in human history, the shackles were taken off the productive power of human societies, which henceforth became capable of the constant, rapid and up to the present limitless multiplication of men, goods and services. This is now technically known to the economists as the "take-off into self-sustained growth". No previous society had been able to break through the ceiling which a pre-industrial social structure, defective science and technology, and consequently periodic breakdown, famine and death, imposed on production. The "take-off" was not, of course, one of those phenomena which, like earthquakes and large meteors, take the non-technical world by surprise. Its pre-history in Europe can be traced back, depending on the taste of the historian and his particular range of interest, to about AD 1000, if not before, and earlier attempts to leap into the air, clumsy as the experiments of young ducklings, have been flattered with the name of "industrial revolution" – in the thirteenth century, in the sixteenth, in the last decades of the seventeenth. From the middle of the eighteenth century the process of gathering speed for the take-off is so clearly observable that older historians have tended to date the Industrial Revolution back to 1760. But careful enquiry has tended to lead most experts to pick on the 1780's rather than the 1760's as the decisive decade, for it was then that, so far as we can tell, all the relevant statistical indices took that sudden, sharp, almost vertical turn upwards which marks the "take-off". The economy became, as it were, airborne.'

Marxian surplus-value announces effectively the logic of the Lacanian *objet petit a* as the embodiment of surplus enjoyment is already provided by the decisive formula used by Marx, in the third volume of *Capital*, to designate the logical-historical limit of capitalism: "the limit of capital is capital itself, i.e. the capitalist mode of production".

This formula can be read in two ways. The first, usual historicist-evolutionist reading conceives it, in accordance with the unfortunate paradigm of the dialectics of productive forces and relations of production, as that of "content" and "form". This paradigm follows roughly the metaphor of the serpent which, from time to time, sheds its skin, which has grown too tight: one posits as the last impetus of social development – as its (so to speak) "natural", "spontaneous" constant – the incessant growth of the productive forces (as a rule reduced to technical development); this "spontaneous" growth is then followed, with a greater or lesser degree of delay, by the inert, dependent moment, the relationship of production. We have thus epochs in which the relation of production are in accordance with the productive forces, then those forces develop and outgrow their "social clothes", the frame of relationships; this frame becomes an obstacle to their further development, until social revolution again co-ordinates forces and relations by replacing the old relations with new ones which correspond to the new state of forces.

If we conceive the formula of capital as its own limit from this point of view, it means simply that the capitalist relation of production which at first made possible the fast development of productive forces became at a certain point an obstacle to their further development: that these forces have outgrown their frame and demand a new form of social relations.

Marx himself is of course far from such a simplistic evolutionary idea. If we need convincing of this, we have only to look at the passages in *Capital* where he deals with the relation between formal and real subsumption of the process of production under Capital: the formal subsumption *precedes* the real one; that is, Capital first subsumes the process of production as it found it (artisans, and so on), and only subsequently does it change the productive forces step by step, shaping them in such a way as to create correspondence. Contrary to the above-mentioned simplistic idea, it is then the *form* of the relation of production which drives the development of productive forces – that is, of its "content".

All we have to do to render impossible the simplistic evolutionary reading of the formula "the limit of capital is capital itself" is to ask a very simple and obvious question: How do we define, exactly, the moment – albeit only an ideal one – at which the capitalist relations of production become an obstacle to the further development of the productive forces? Or the obverse of the same question: When can we speak of an accordance between productive forces and relation of production in the capitalist mode of production? Strict analysis leads to only one possible answer: *never*.

This is exactly how capitalism differs from other, previous modes of production: in the latter, we can speak of periods of "accordance" when the process of social production and reproduction goes on as a quiet, circular movement, and of periods of convulsion when the contradiction between forces and relation aggravates itself; whereas in capitalism this contradiction, the discord forces/relation, *is contained in its very concept* (in the form of the contradiction between the social mode of production and the individual, private mode of appropriation). It is this internal contradiction which compels capitalism to permanent extended reproduction – to the incessant development of its own conditions of production, in contrast to previous modes of production where, at least in their "normal" state, (re)production goes on as a circular movement.

If this is so, then the evolutionist reading of the formula of capital as its own limit is inadequate: the point is not that, at a certain moment of its development, the frame of the relation of production starts to constrict further development of the productive forces; the point is that *it is this very immanent limit, this "internal contradiction", which drives capitalism into permament development*. The "normal" state of capitalism is the permanent revolutionising of its own conditions of existence: from the very beginning capitalism "purifies", it is branded by a crippling contradiction, discord, by an immanent want of balance: this is exactly why it changes, develops incessantly – incessant development is the only way for it to resolve again and again, come to terms with, its own fundamental, constitutive imbalance, "contradiction". Far from constricting, its limit is thus the very impetus of its development. Herein lies the paradox proper to capitalism, its last resort: capitalism is capable of transforming its' limit, its' very impotence, in the source of its power – the more it

> "putrefies", the more its immanent contradiction is aggravated, the more it must revolutionize itself to survive.
>
> It is this paradox which defines surplus-enjoyment: it is not a surplus which simply attaches to some "normal", fundamental enjoyment, because *enjoyment as such only emerges in this surplus*, because it is constitutively an "excess". If we subtract the surplus we lose enjoyment itself, just as capitalism, which can survive only by incessantly revolutionizing its own material conditions, ceases to exist if it "stays the same", if it achieves an internal balance. This, then, is the homology between surplus-value – the "cause" which sets in motion the capitalist process of production – and surplus-enjoyment, the object-cause of desire. Is not the paradoxical topology of the movement of capital, the fundamental blockage which resolves and reproduces itself through frenetic activity, *excessive* power as the very form of appearance of a fundamental *impotence* – this immediate passage, this coincidence of limit and excess, of lack and surplus – precisely that of the Lacanian *objet petit a*, of the leftover which embodies the fundamental, constitutive lack?
>
> All this, of course, Marx "knows very well … and yet": and yet, in the crucial formulation in the Preface to the *Critique of Political Economy*, he proceeds *as if he does not know it*, by describing the very passage from capitalism to socialism in terms of the above-mentioned vulgar evolutionist dialectics of productive forces and the relation of production: when the forces surpass a certain degree, capitalist relation become an obstacle to their further development: this discord brings about the need for socialist revolution, the function of which is to co-ordinate again forces and relation; that is, to establish relations of production rendering possible the intensified development of the productive forces as the end-in-itself of the historical process.
>
> How can we not detect in this formulation the fact that Marx failed to cope with the paradoxes of surplus-enjoyment? And the ironic vengeance of history for this failure is that today there exists a society which seems to correspond perfectly to this vulgar evolutionary dialectics of forces and relation: "real socialism", a society which legitimizes itself by reference to Marx. Is it not already a commonplace to assert that "real socialism" has rendered possible rapid industrialization, but that as soon as the productive forces have reached a certain level of development (usually designated by the vague term "post-industrial society"), "real socialist" social relationships began to constrict their further growth?[69]

A close friend recently cautioned me not to be *too* dogmatic that those assertions (since renounced by the author who is embarrassed about them) made by Francis Fukuyama in his 1992 *The End of History and the Last Man* still apply today, following the sudden liquidity shortage in the Anglo-American world and the European Union.[70] It has recently been as if the artificiality of capitalism (in just the sense Žižek defrocks it above) has been widely recognized – we now need not search too hard in any newspaper or television news broadcast for commentators queuing to openly critique capitalism.[71] This, however, is just the problem:

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[69] Žižek, *Sublime*, pp. 49, 50-53.

[70] Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992), p. 45; 'What is emerging victorious … is not so much liberal practice, as the liberal *idea*. That is to say, for a very large part of the world, there is now no ideology with pretensions to universality that is in a position to challenge liberal democracy, and no universal principle of legitimacy other than the sovereignty of the people. Monarchism in its various forms had been largely defeated by the beginning of this century. Fascism and communism, liberal democracy's main competitors up till now, have both discredited themselves. If the Soviet Union (or its successor states) fails to democratize, if Peru or the Philippines relapse into some form of authoritarianism, democracy will most likely have yielded to a colonel or bureaucrat who claims to speak in the name of the Russian, Peruvian, or Philippine people alone. Even non-democrats will have to speak the language of democracy in order to justify their deviation from the single universal standard.'

[71] I say "defrocks" in reference to Žižek's tendency to talk about ideology in terms of Hans Christian Andersen's 1837 *The Emperor's New Clothes* [*Kejserens nye Klæder*]. Here, Žižek takes his analysis in the same direction I do: Slavoj Žižek, ● Ideology II: Competition is a Sin ●', http://www.lacan.com/zizdesolationroad.html (11

the Left has an abundance of anti-capitalist critique available to it, and yet has not adequately formulated an alternative project to replace the Soviet Union whose fall Fukuyama so relished. The result is that when conservatives (from David Cameron to Angela Merkel to Latvian Prime Minister Valdis Dombrovskis) have advocated austerity measures as *the* panacea for the economic downturn, the Left has been unable to offer any meaningful reply. What we have got instead is *more* capitalism to fix the problems capitalism structured and perpetuated, always with the assurance that capitalism as it was before *was not the only possible capitalism and another, more humane type, will finally create the desired balance*.[72] This seems to me indicative of Žižek's characterisation above of ideology as necessarily fanatical, excessive, totalitarian and *illogical/irrational*; ideology necessarily curves the simulacrum we call society, suggesting to us an imbalanced (obscured) menu of futures.[73] It is, I argue, only possible to read Marx productively *now* (the now of Postmodernism 'theorizing its own condition of possibility', of 'incredulity toward metanarratives', of

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September 2013); 'Today, it seems that appearances no longer have to be protected. We all know the innocent child from Andersen's "The Emperors [sic] New Clothes" who publicly proclaims the fact that the emperor is naked – today, in our cynical era, such a strategy no longer works, it lost its disturbing power, since everyone is publicly saying all the time that the emperor is naked (that Western democracies are torturing terrorist suspects, that wars are fought for profit, etc. etc.), and nothing happens, nobody seems to mind, the system just goes on functioning as if the emperor has his clothes on...'

[72] Slavoj Žižek, 'Why the free market fundamentalists think 2013 will be the best year ever. As communists once did, today's capitalists blame any failures on their system being "impurely" applied', *The Guardian* http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/feb/17/free-market-fundamentalists-think-2013-best (11 September 2013); In order not to miss this link between progress and instability, one should always focus on how what first appears as an incomplete realisation of a social project signals its immanent limitation. There is a story (apocryphal, maybe) about the left-Keynesian economist John Galbraith: before a trip to the USSR in the late 1950s, he wrote to his anti-communist friend Sidney Hook: "Don't worry, I will not be seduced by the Soviets and return home claiming they have socialism!" Hook answered him promptly: "But that's what worries me – that you will return claiming USSR is *not* socialist!" What Hook feared was the naive defence of the purity of the concept: if things go wrong with building a socialist society, this does not invalidate the idea itself, it simply means we didn't implement it properly. Do we not detect the same naivety in today's market fundamentalists?'

[73] Jean Baurdrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor MI, 1994), p. 1; 'The simulacrum is never what hides the truth – it is truth that hides the fact that there is none.

The simulacrum is true.

-Ecclesiastes

If once we were able to view the Borges fable in which the cartographers of the Empire draw up a map so detailed that it ends up covering the territory exactly (the decline of the Empire witnesses the fraying of this map, little by little, and its fall into ruins, though some shreds are still discernible in the deserts – the metaphysical beauty of this ruined abstraction testifying to a pride equal to the Empire and rotting like a carcass, returning to the substance of the soil, a bit as the double ends by being confused with the real through aging) – as the most beautiful allegory of simulation, this fable has now come full circle for us, and possesses nothing but the discrete charm of second-order simulacra.

Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory – *precession* of simulacra – that engenders the territory, and if one must return to the fable, today it is the territory whose shreds slowly rot across the extent of the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges persist here and there in the deserts that are no longer those of the Empire, but ours. *The desert of the real itself*.'

capitalism having *won*).[74] We can recall here Sartre's remark that France was 'never more free than under the German Occupation'.[75] *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!* insists the following:

> Much more difficult than to denounce/unmask (what appears as) reality as fiction is to recognise the part of fiction in "real" reality. (This, of course, brings us back to the old Lacanian notion that, while animals can deceive by presenting what is false as true, only humans (entities inhabiting the symbolic space) can deceive by presenting what is true as false.[76]

This enquiry, I claim, is *exactly* what can now be properly pursued; we are ready to confront the Althusserian virtuality of any genuine ontological commitment to dialectical materialism - to read Marx *unscientifically*. What, in terms of the chronology I have offered here, we might call 'Third Wave Marxism' (the first being Marx and his contemporaries themselves, 'Second Wave Marxism' being those subsequent Marxists who adopted Marx and his contemporaries in the sense of the Lacanian *Nom du père*, *fig. 8*), does not yet know what it concretely wants, but it does manage to remain firm about what it does *not* want: all the (perceived) miseries attendant of sociostructural inequality, the sovereignty of 'surplus value' and 'commodity fetishism'.[77] The current attitude is this 1951 villanelle of Dylan Thomas:

> Do not go gentle into that good night,
> Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
> Rage, rage against the dying of the light.
>
> Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
> Because their words had forked no lightning they
> Do not go gentle into that good night.[78]

Understanding the direction in which Auguste Comte (now regarded as the *fondation* of modern sociology, for reasons which will soon become obvious) tried to and largely did take Western European philosophy between 1830 and 1842 is essential; Schopenhauer aimed his attack largely at Kant, at the transcendental turn *itself* – at Kant's insistence (as we have already read above in footnote 54) that 'we can cognize of things *a priori* only what we ourselves have put into them'. Hegel's innovation was to transpose the ontological fragility of the Kantian mind *back into* those objects which that mind perceives; with Hegel, the world is

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[74] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism. Or, the cultural logic of late capitalism* (London, 1992), p. ix; Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester, 2001), p. xxiv.
[75] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Republic of Silence* [*La République du Silence*], trans. A. J. Liebling (New York NY, 1947), p. 498.
[76] Žižek, *Desert*, pp. 19-20.
[77] 'Lacan theorizes the prohibition of incest', explains Judith Feher-Gurewich in Jean-Michel Rabaté's *The Cambridge Companion to Lacan* (2003), 'as the child's ability to identify with the clues, the signifiers, the signposts of the mother's desire for something that the mother's Other – the father, for example – seems to possess, something that can lead the child to a safer harbour provided by the desire and interests of this Other.'
[78] Daniel Jones (ed.), *Dylan Thomas. The Poems* (London, 1978), pp. 207-8.

fragile, and fragile humans just a fragile part of a fragile world. What better exemplification of ontological fragility than that event we name 'The French Revolution';[79] what better exemplification, because that evental rupture provoked just the same consternation and disgust that I wish to begin to explore in Auguste Comte. Are these lines from Wordsworth's amorphous and evolutionary poem 'The Prelude' (1798-1805) not an excellent way to begin?

> Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
> With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook,
> The maiden from the bosom of her love,
> The mother from the cradle of her babe,
> The warrior from the field--all perished, all--
> Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
> Head after head, and never heads enough
> For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
> They made it proudly, eager as a child,
> (If light desires of innocent little ones
> May with such heinous appetites be compared),
> Pleased in some open field to exercise
> A toy that mimics with revolving wings
> The motion of a wind-mill; though the air
> Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes

[79] For the politics of the naming of an event, see Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy In A Time Of Terror. Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida* (London, 2003), pp. 85-86; 'BORRADORI: September 11 (*Le 11 seþtembre*) gave us the impression of being a *major event*, one of the most important historical events we will witness in our lifetime, especially for those of us who never lived through a world war. Do you agree?

DERRIDA: *Le 11 seþtembre*, as you say, or, since we have agreed to speak two languages, "September 11." We will have to return later to this question of language. As well as to this act of naming: a date and nothing more. When you say "September 11" you are already citing, are you not? You are inviting me to speak here by recalling, as if in quotation marks, a date or a dating that has taken over our public space and our private lives for five weeks now. Something *fait date*, I would say in a French idiom, something marks a date, a date in history; that is always what's most striking, the very impact of what is at least *felt*, in an apparently immediate way, to be an event that truly marks, that truly makes its mark, a singular and, as they say here, "unprecedented" event, I say "apparently immediate" because this "feeling" is actually less spontaneous than it appears: it is to a large extent conditioned, constituted, if not actually constructed, circulated at any rate through the media by means of a prodigious techno-socio-political machine. "To mark a date in history" presupposes, in any case, that "something" comes or happens for the first and last time, "something" that we do not yet really know how to identify, determine, recognize, or analyse but that should remain from here on in unforgettable: an ineffaceable event in the shared archive of a universal calendar, that is, a *supposedly* universal calendar, for these are – and I want to insist on this at the outset – only suppositions and presuppositions. Unrefined and dogmatic, or else carefully considered, organized, calculated, strategic – or all of these at once. For the index pointing towards this date, the bare act, the minimal deictic, the minimalist aim of this dating, also marks something else. Namely, the fact that we perhaps have no concept and no meaning available to us to name in any other way this "thing" that has just happened, this supposed "event." An act of "international terrorism," for example, and we will return to this, is anything but a rigorous concept that would help us grasp the singularity of what we will not be trying to discuss. "Something" took place, we have the feeling of not having seen it coming, and certain consequences undeniably follow upon the "thing." But this very thing, the place and the meaning of this "event," remains ineffable, like an intuition without concept, like a unicity with no generality on the horizon or with no horizon at all, out of range for a language that admits its powerlessness and so is reduced to pronouncing mechanically a date, repeating it endlessly, as a kind of ritual incantation, a conjuring poem, a journalistic litany or rhetorical refrain that admits to not knowing what it's talking about. We do not in fact know what we are saying or naming in this way: September 11, *le 11 seþtembre*, September 11. The brevity of the appellation (September 11, 9/11) stems not only from an economic or rhetorical necessity. The telegram of this metonymy – a name, a number – points out the unqualifiable byrecognizing that we do not recognize or even cognize, that we do not yet know how to qualify, that we do not know what we are talking about.'


8.

> Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
> But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
> His front against the blast, and runs amain,
> That it may whirl the faster.[80]

'Head after head, and never heads enough' is surely the dismayed line to which Simon Schama's dismayed *Citizens: A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (1989) best attests (indeed Schama quotes Wordsworth's lines from Book IX about 'universal ferment; … commotions, strife/ Of passion and opinion [that[fill'd the walls/ Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds' in the books' preface).[81] Schama was dismayed in the book at the chaotic violence which seemed to him unhappily inherent and constitutive to the Revolution. 'Even allowing for a good deal of cynicism and hypocrisy on the part of the Thermidorians who encouraged their production', he begins his Epilogue, 'there is no doubt that the outpouring of anti-Terror prints [after the 27th of July 1794] was a genuine expression of relief.'[82]

> In one of the most alarming of these images [*Fig. 9*], Robespierre, dressed as he had appeared at the Festival of the Supreme Being, guillotines the executioner, "having guillotined all of France." Each of the guillotines that extend behind him like some monstrous forest is labelled for a category of his victims: "L: Hébertistes; O: Old Men, Women and Children; P: Soldiers and Generals"; and so on. At the top of the obelisk bearing the legend "Here Lies All France," an inverted liberty bonnet has been spiked through and turned into a chimney of cremation.
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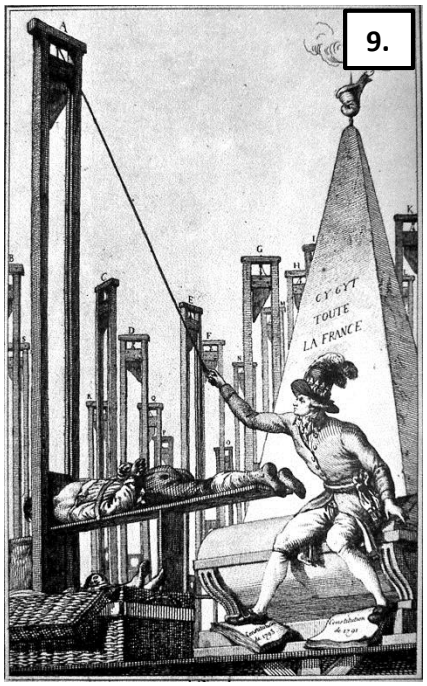
> It is a horrifying and haunting image, and there were many more: of pyramids of skulls surmounted by Robespierre's own death mask grimacing at the beholder; Marat dancing in hell, surrounded by writhing serpents; a *danse macabre* performed by a blindfolded France teased by the capering skeleton of Death. They all share a powerful sense of having drawn back from the edge of Apocalypse.



'The violence', Schama continues, 'did not stop … with the Terror.'[83] We hear second-hand from Richard Cobb 'of the waves of the Counter-Terror, especially brutal in the Midi and the Rhone Valley; of anarchic murder gangs picking off selected targets implicated in Jacobinism'. 'Corpses', Schama says, 'were dumped in front of cafés and inns in the Midi or thrown into the Rhone or Saône [and] in many areas, the Counter-Terrorists would gather together at an inn as if for a day's hunting, and go off in search of their quarry.' *This* was the world immediately preceding the birth of (and casting a shadow on the life of) Auguste Comte – the man who couldn't stomach chaos.

[80] Jonathan Wordsworth, M. H. Abrams and Stephen Gill (eds.), *The Prelude - 1799, 1805, 1850. William Wordsworth* (London, 1979), pp. 377 & 379.
[81] ibid., p. 321.
[82] Simon Schama, *Citizens. A Chronicle of the French Revolution* (London, 1989), p. 851.
[83] ibid., p. 852.

Comte's attempted bypass of Hegelian ontological fragility was a narrative assuming the metaphysical stage *not* as we might imagine Hegel envisaged it (as an intellectual apex), but as simply a *mid*-point containing the origins of new and functionally-*better* methodologies. The theological stage (i), Comte assumed, was where people thought little and cared less. The methodological stage (ii), he conceded, did at least indicate people beginning to reason with and question inherited idioms. The problem for him, however (and this is crucial), is that *the metaphysical stage produced no testable evidence*.[84] For Comte, the abject failure of the internationalist-liberationism of the French Revolution and Napoleon (whose decision to crown himself 'Emperor' on the 2nd of December 1804 provoked Beethoven to angrily scratch out the dedication to him on his Symphony No. 3 'Eroica' in E-flat major), required the search for truth or the nature of truth to assume a deductive, investigative mode. 'As Comte envisaged it', Giddens writes, 'the science of man completed the historical evolution of the hierarchy of the scientific disciplines, and for the first time made possible an adequate understanding of that evolution.'[85] 'Finally, in [this] positive state, the human mind, recognizing the impossibility of obtaining absolute truth, gives up the search after the origin and hidden causes of the universe and a knowledge of the final causes of phenomena – that is to say, their invariable relations of succession and likeness.'[86]

> The explanation of facts, thus reduced to its real terms, consists henceforth only in the connection established between different particular phenomena and some general facts, the number of which the progress of science tends more and more to diminish.

Critical theory today proceeds best not when it posits some underlying reality *behind* the virtuality of discourse (for this would surely be a slippage into the kind of scientific Marxism Comte inadvertently helped create), but when it engages with the reality *of* virtual discourse. I have no doubt that Comte's gesture towards cautious scientific enquiry sculpted an ontology with multitudes of Real effects (indeed, those who are disadvantaged in the post-modern global economy necessarily and continually confront those Real rabbits springing startlingly

[84] We should keep in mind here the more recent adherent to Comte, Karl Popper (whom Žižek despises). *The Poverty of Historicism* (1957) sounded the trumpet against overarching metaphysics – Popper dedicated the book to the 'memory of the countless men and women of all creeds or nations or races who fell victim to the fascist and communist belief in Inexorable Laws of Historical Destiny'. Instead, for Popper, there was great dignity in attempting only the smallest and most parochial parameters for investigation. Vis-à-vis science, Popper insisted that any law we manage to dream up can exclude the possibility of external chance occurrences, but it can never explicitly produce one prediction for how the object of scientific scrutiny might behave. A hypothesis emerges and is subjected to testing of various rigour; if no tests successfully dislodge the hypothesis, it might then become known as a law but functions, instead, as merely a so-far-unfalsified hypothesis we should suspect and even fear; Comte himself anticipated Popper by denouncing the metaphysical stage (ii) as 'in reality only a simple general modification of the first [theological] stage' (ii), which 'represent[ed] phenomena as being produced by the direct and continuous action of more or less numerous supernatural agents, whose arbitrary intervention explains all the apparent anomalies of the universe'.

[85] Anthony Giddens (ed.), *Positivism and Sociology* (London, 1974), p. 1.

[86] Auguste Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive* (Indianapolis IN, 1988), p. 2.

out of Comte's hat). I simply contend that Comte's universalism relies on the kind of 'non-All' designation for which Althusser would have looked; Comte promulgated logic, and yet for this to continue it is imperative that any practitioner overlooks the illogicality of a designation of the Revolutionary period as *simply* metaphysical and, so the argument goes, not containing its own substantial and powerful logics. One of the things contemporary thinkers seem to continue to delight in finding in Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel is precisely that they destabilized the contours within which we identify logic, progress and falsifiability. Much like French Deconstructivism one hundred and fifty years later, had the Idealist movement entirely surrendered themselves to conventional modes of enquiry, the political change they evidently desired would never have been formally possible. Assessing Comte, then, we should return to Sloterdijk's cynical *Ideologiekritik*: 'they know very well what they are doing, but still, they are doing it'.[87] I contend that Comte knew very well the illogicality of his logic, and yet he insisted on foisting his new discoveries on anyone who would listen – something of which perhaps we are all guilty, but reprehensible nonetheless. Giddens agrees with me when he says the following.

> Since there is no longer much consistency in the general employment of the word, it would seem appropriate to attempt to impose some order upon the flux of differing usages. Positivism as a *philosophy* I take to imply simply two main elements. First, what Kolakowski has called the "rule of phenomenalism", which asserts the uniqueness of experience as the basis of knowledge. Only that qualifies as "knowledge" which can in some sense, more or less directly, be related to a "reality" immediately apprehended by the perceiver. This is often regarded as separable from the postulate of "nominalism"-that is to say, the notion that an abstract concept or generalization, such as may be involved in science, in Kolakowski's words, "gives us no extra, independent knowledge in the sense that, via its abstractions, it opens access to empirically inaccessible domains of reality". But actually these are merely different aspects of the fundamental supposition of the experiential foundation of all (viable) knowledge in sensorily apprehended "reality". Secondly, as necessarily following from the first proposition, the idea that judgements of value have no empirical content of a sort which renders them accessible to any tests of their "validity" in the light of experience. There is no kind of observation of the sensory environment which can have a direct bearing upon the content of value judgements or normative assertions.
>
> Defined in this way, positivism certainly does not begin with Comte (any more than sociology itself does!), but has a long history in Western philosophy.[88]

Despite his influence on the so-called 'Religion of Humanity', therefore (which spawned religious and secular humanism in the mid-to-late Nineteenth Century), the idea Comte would gladly fall back on according to Giddens is a cautious reliance on scientific proof emanating from the everyday experiential interactions with 'reality'. We have all now read far too much Althusser and recently Žižek to be in any sense convinced by such assertions; 'reality' as Comte conceived it, is experienced from within violently-imposed abstractions.

[87] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 29.
[88] Giddens, *Positivism*, pp. 2-3.

The preceding assessments of post-Hegelian thinkers has emphasised the different ways in which they either fundamentally misunderstood or unsuccessfully tried to circumvent the Hegelian Idealist dialectic (where 'being' operates in tandem with a 'becoming' which is 'not-being', where the negativity of Idealist abstractions constitutes the attributes of objects). Now is probably a good time to remember Hegel's most succinct statement in this regard:

> The living Substance is being which is in truth *Subject*, or, what is the same, is in truth actual only in so far as it is the movement [read: becoming] of positing itself, or is the mediation [read: becoming] of its self-othering with itself. The substance is, as Subject, pure *simple negativity*, and is for this very reason the bifurcation of the simple; it is the doubling which sets up opposition, and then again the negation of this indifferent diversity and of its anti-thesis [the immediate simplicity]. Only this self-*restoring* sameness, or this reflection in otherness within itself-not an *original* or *immediate* unity as such-is the True. It is the process of its own becoming, the circle that presupposes its end as its goal, having its end also as its beginning; and only by being worked out to its end, it is actual.[89]

Friedrich Nietzsche is significant because he successfully critiqued Hegel's dialectical model to the point that I argue he and those he influenced imploded it from within. After Nietzsche, Hegel ceased to be the explicit negative influence on philosophy that he had been before (in the same way both Plato and Descartes represented negative points of subsequent departure). The fragmentation of Hegel's dialectical model was the necessary condition for the kinds of modernities Western Europeans probably experienced in the Twentieth Century. So how did Nietzsche approach dialectics in *The Will To Power* (1906) – the fragments of his later thought assembled posthumously by his sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche and Heinrich Köselitz, Nietzsche's longtime friend who read for him during his spells of blindness? Simply put, Nietzsche more rigorously conceived of Hegel's notion of the subject as shown above; where Hegel believed Descartes had fundamentally misrecognised the nature of a thing, Nietzsche believed Hegel himself had gone nowhere near far enough in correcting Descartes. Let us go much more deeply into the topic, for it is significant enough to demand much care. For Descartes, conceiving of actuality and truth meant only determining whether something possessed those attributes delineating actuality and truth; for Hegel, the furious stripping away of superfluous layers of reality in order to reach some essential kernel was a narcissistic dead-end project which could only ever succeed in discovering what the 'thinking thing' [*res cogitans*] wished to discover there (here, surely, Hegel made Descartes speak the language of Kant). For Hegel, any 'thinking thing' *does* something: it *effects* its' surrounding reality and can never statically determine anything. Now let us see Hegel the way Nietzsche saw him; if a 'thinking thing' *effects* external reality by the simultaneity of 'being' and 'becoming', the 'becoming' must necessarily be the important component on which we focus though,

[89] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §18/p. 10.

crucially, Nietzsche believed Hegel conceived of 'becoming' as just another part of 'being'. Nietzsche had this to say on (as bizarre as it may sound) Hegel's profound *conservatism* on the topic of radical finitude, the space in which a subject or object becomes other than it is:

> What are attributes?– We have not regarded change in us as change but as an "in itself" that is foreign to us, that we merely "perceive": and we have posited it, not as an event, but as a being, as a "quality"–and in addition invented an entity to which it adheres; i.e. we have regarded the *effect* as something that *effects*, and this we have regarded as a being. But even in this formulation, the concept "effect" is arbitrary: for those changes that take place in us, and that we firmly believe we have not ourselves caused, we merely infer to be effects, in accordance with the conclusion: "every change must have an author";–but this conclusion is already mythology: it separates that which effects from the effecting. If I say "lightning flashes," I have posited the flash once as an activity and a second time as a subject, and thus added to the event a being that is not one with the event but is rather fixed, *is*, and does not "become."–To regard an event as an "effecting," and this as being, that is the double error, or interpretation, of which we are guilty.[90]

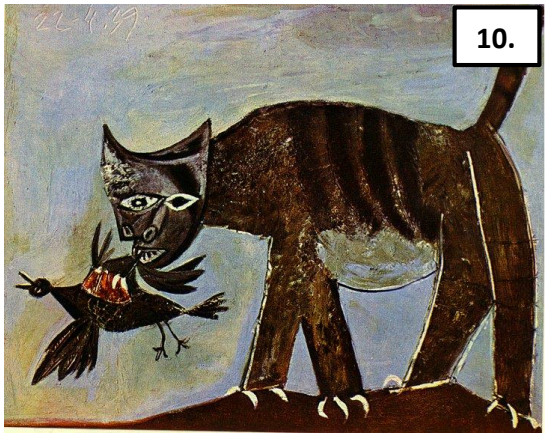
To a Hegelian, the substance of the lightning actualizes or realises itself by flashing because it is ceasing to be whatever it 'is' (or 'was'), 'becoming' what it 'is' (or 'was') not. Is this not, as Hegel so hated about Descartes, a statement which actually tells us very little about how lightning 'becomes'? Does lightning not 'become' lightning *only* by flashing? In missing this fundamental point, does Hegel not fundamentally miss the opportunity to offer a meaningful ontology of the event? Change, to a Nietzschean, is never something stable but something which is radically finite, something so surging with inelegant negativity that it escapes logic;

> What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins.[91]

A very simple way to separate the Nietzschean and Hegelian perspectives is to ask how they differ in understanding the role truth(s) play in over-determining social operations; for Hegel, truth always stands just outside (and necessarily outside) individual and collective behaviour. It functions, *qua* Žižek's deployment of Lacan as a means of reading Hegel, as a '*point de caption*: the "rigid designator", which totalizes an ideology by bringing to a halt the metonymic sliding of its signified, … a point of supreme destiny of Meaning, a kind of Guarantee which, by being itself excepted from the differential interplay of elements, would serve as a stable and fixed point of reference'.[92] What Nietzsche observed in the *essential and formal character of the Hegelian notion of change* to be profoundly static, almost conservative (and certainly not change-like), is the inevitable rump of the persistence of

[90] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will To Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York NY, 1968), §531/pp. 288-9.
[91] Keith Ansell Pearson and Duncan Large (eds.), *The Nietzsche Reader* (Oxford, 2006), p. 117.
[92] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 99.

omniscient Truth which understands the unfolding of history so that we do not have to. Nietzsche, instead, observed the 'becoming' of subjects and objects as the space in which qualitatively new Truth(s) (independent of any pre- or post-existing dialectic) could emerge flourishing into full voice (this is the lesson of so many of Nietzsche's famous works).[93] To Hegel, the lightning flashes as part of some dialectic (it 'becomes' to attenuate its 'being'); to Nietzsche, the lightning flashes alone in a hostile sky that offers it no future guarantees. The much-lauded Master-Slave dialectic in Hegel gives some hope to this Picasso painting '*Chat saisissant un oiseau*' (1939, *fig. 10*); the bird (or the Spanish Republican militia it purported to represent) is annihilated, consumed alongside some co-existent Truth or series of Truths – the bird is utterly vanquished now, of course, but the same dialectic which structured its demise now may be that very same which, in time, deposits *it* as the aggressor in whatever sense. What happens in this image, instead, in Nietzsche's eyes? There may be some kind of connection between cat and bird, but whatever connection exists is structured by the radically finite character of the event itself. There are no transcendental ethical matrices operating here, and it is surely better to be the cat than the bird. If saying so seems commonsensical, this is only testament to the extent that Nietzschean individualism has pervaded our consciousness. We can now begin to approach some of the events in late-Nineteenth-Century European history with different eyes; 'the tradition of all the dead generations [perhaps] weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living', but perhaps, equally, Marx (the reader of Hegel) underestimated the capacity of human beings to harness the power of their radical finitude;[94] perhaps the jagged bolt of anarchist lightning which threatened to shriek across the sky in the decades after Marx should be approached differently. Perhaps the Italian anarchist Gaetano Bresci, who shot his King Umberto III four times with a five-shot .32 revolver in Monza on July 29th 1900, had no role in dialectical struggling; perhaps late-Nineteenth Century anarchism presented *de jure* structures with a problem they couldn't solve: radical finitude.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[93] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff (Cambridge, 2001), §109/pp. 109-10, §111/pp. 112-3, §121/p. 117, §265/p.151; Friedrich Nietzsche, *On The Genealogy Of Morals*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge, 1994), §III.12/pp. 91-2; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human. A book for free spirits*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, 1986), p. 10; Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge, 2005), §I.5/p. 80; 'A god who descends to earth should *only* do wrong, - it is not divine to take the punishment upon yourself – it is divine to take on the *guilt*.'

[94] David McLellan, *Karl Marx: selected writings* (Oxford, 2000), p. 329.

Žižek takes a different view, and one which deserves a full hearing; for him, the shadow of Hegelian dialectical materialism (the title of his latest and certainly most programmatic work from 2012) is too great – the Hegelian insight too convincing to be destabilized even by such a nuanced thinker as Nietzsche. I should add in advance that this represents one moment at which I am content for the question (as Derrida would put it) to 'remain open' – whether we should read Nietzsche apropos Hegel or vice versa is a question constitutive of what I experience as modernity.[95] There are no easy answers here, just as free will is never easy.[96] 'The main feature of historical thought proper', Žižek cautions (and historical thought is what I aim at in this chapter with an overview of philosophical problems presented chronologically), 'is not "mobilism" (the motif of the fluidification or historical relativization of all forms of life), but the full endorsement of a certain *impossibility*: after a true historical break, one simply cannot return to the past, or go on as if nothing happened – even if one does, the same practice will have acquired a radically changed meaning.'[97]

> Adorno provided a nice example with Schoenberg's atonal revolution: after it took place, it was (and is), of course, possible to go on composing in the traditional tonal way, but the new tonal music has lost its innocence, since it is already "mediated" by the atonal break and thus functions as its negation. This is why there is an irreducible element of *kitsch* in twentieth-century tonal composers such as Rachmaninov – something of a nostalgic clinging to the past, something fake, like the adult who tries to keep alive the naïve child within. And the same goes for all other domains: with the emergence of Plato's philosophical analysis of notions, mythical thought loses its immediacy, any revival of it becomes fake: after Christianity, revivals of paganism become nostalgic simulacra.

'One cannot', so one of Nietzsche's more caustic aphorisms goes, 'refute an eye disease.'[98]

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[95] Borradori, *Philosophy*, p. 90; 'A major event should be so unforeseeable and irruptive that it disturbs even the horizon of the concept or essence on the basis of which we believe we recognize an event *as such*. That is why all the "philosophical" questions, perhaps even beyond philosophy itself, as soon as it is a matter of thinking the event.'

[96] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Existentialism is a Humanism', *Marxists.org http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm* (20 September 2013); 'Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith, that he is without excuse. For if indeed existence precedes essence, one will never be able to explain one's action by reference to a given and specific human nature; in other words, there is no determinism – man is free, man *is* freedom. Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or commands that could legitimise our behaviour. Thus we have neither behind us, nor before us in a luminous realm of values, any means of justification or excuse. – We are left alone, without excuse. That is what I mean when I say that man is condemned to be free. Condemned, because he did not create himself, yet is nevertheless at liberty, and from the moment that he is thrown into this world he is responsible for everything he does.'; Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being And Nothingness. An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes (London, 1958), pp. 555-6; 'I am *abandoned* in the world, not in the sense that I might remain abandoned and passive in a hostile universe like a board floating on the water, but rather in the sense that I find myself suddenly alone and without help, engaged in a world for which I bear the whole responsibility without being able, whatever I do, to tear myself away from this responsibility for an instant. For I am responsible for my very desire of fleeing responsibilities. To make myself passive in the world, to refuse to act upon things and upon Others is still to choose myself, and suicide is [simply] one mode'.

[97] Žižek, *Less*, p. 193.

[98] Peter Gay, *Basic Writings Of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York NY, 2000), p. 647, cited in Gérard Lebrun, *L'envers de la dialectique: Hegel à la lumière de Nietzsche* (Paris, 2004); '*On ne réfute pas une maladie des yeux.*'

'Is not Hegel's speculative idealism', Žižek continues his particularist insistence, '*the* exemplary case of such a properly historical impossibility?'[99] 'Can one', we need to ask, 'still be a Hegelian after the post-Hegelian break with traditional metaphysics which occurred more or less simultaneously in the works of Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Marx?'

> After all this, is there not something inherently false in advocating a Hegelian "absolute Idealism" [as Nietzsche does]? Will not any re-affirmation of Hegel fall victim to the same anti-historical illusion, by-passing the impossibility of being a Hegelian after the post-Hegelian break, writing as if that break had not happened? Here, however, one should complicate things a little bit: under certain conditions, one can and should write as if a break had not happened. What are these conditions? To put it simply and directly: when the break in question is not a true but a false break, in fact one which obliterates the true break, the true point of impossibility. Our wager is that this, precisely, is what happened with the "official" post-Hegelian anti-philosophical break (Schopenhauer-Kierkegaard-Marx): although it presents itself as a break with idealism as embodied in its Hegelian climax, it ignores a crucial dimension of Hegel's thought; that is, it ultimately amounts to a desperate attempt to *go on thinking as if Hegel had not happened*. The hole left by this absence of Hegel is then, of course, filled in with the ridiculous caricature of Hegel the "absolute idealist" who "possessed Absolute Knowledge." The re-assertion of Hegel's speculative thought is thus not what it may appear to be – a denial of the post-Hegelian break – but rather a bringing-forth of that very dimension whose denial sustains the post-Hegelian break itself.

Let us consider one more withering, attacking passage before looking more closely at what Žižek has to say about Nietzsche directly.

> [Gérard] Lebrun accepts that one cannot "refute" Hegel: the machinery of his dialectic is so all-encompassing that nothing is easier for Hegel than to demonstrate triumphantly how all such refutations are inconsistent, to turn them against themselves … Most ridiculous among such critical refutations is, of course, the standard Marxist-evolutionist idea that there is a contradiction between Hegel's dialectical method – which demonstrates how every fixed determination is swept away by the movement of negativity, how every determinate shape finds its truth in its annihilation – and Hegel's system: if the destiny of everything is to pass away in the eternal movement of self-sublation, does the same not hold for the system itself? Is not Hegel's own system a temporary, historically relative formation which will be overcome by the progress of knowledge? Anyone who finds such a refutation convincing is not to be taken seriously as a reader of Hegel.[100]

All 'this', Žižek comments elsewhere, 'is why the standard reproach – according to which Hegelian dialectics reduces the procedure to its purely logical structure, omitting the contingency of delays and overtakings, all the massive weight and inertia of the real which troubles and spoils the dialectical game, that is, which does not allow itself to be absorbed in the movement of *Aufhebung* – completely misses the point: this game of delays and overtaking is included in the dialectical process, not merely on the accidental, non-essential level, but absolutely as its central component.'[101]

> The dialectical process always takes the paradoxical form of overtaking/delay, the form of the reversal is a "not yet" into an "always already", of a "too soon" and an "after the fact" – its true motor is the structural impossibility of a "right moment", the irreducible difference between a thing and its "proper time". Initially, the "thesis" arrives by definition too soon to attain its proper identity, and it can only realise "itself", become "itself", after the fact, retroactively, by means of its repetition in the "synthesis".

[99] Žižek, *Less*, p. 194.
[100] ibid., pp. 194-5.
[101] Slavoj Žižek, *Interrogating The Real* (London, 2005), p. 45.

The precedents were therefore established for what I recognise as *another* false break from Hegel, in the form of Bertrand Russell's 'analytic' collaborations with Ludwig Wittgenstein (1911-21). To really understand Russell as I insist we should understand him, it is necessary to speculate (as we have done with Comte) what his formative adolescent experiences were; what was the intellectual architecture in which he first began to speculate - what, in sum, was the dominant philosophical trajectory for which he formed an answer? The late nineteenth century in Britain was (so the cliché of so many TV travel programmes goes, but one startlingly appropriate here) a time of *immense contradiction*. Hobsbawm frames the period squarely in terms of an engagement with the stark political and economic questions posed by the Revolutionary year of 1848; the tumults which broke out in Sicily, Paris (of course), Baden, Eberfeld, Berlin, Frankfurt, Dresden, Düsseldorf, Iserlohn, Solingen, much of Bavaria, the Schleswig, Vienna, the Grand Duchy of Posen, Christianborg, Pest and Buda, Lucerne, Fribourg, Wallachia, the Belgian provinces of Liège and Hainaut and even Irish Munster (*to not even mention subsequent South American arenas*) had so much to do, we can now understand, with the 'uneven development' of the European bourgeoisie.[102] 'Eighteen forty-eight', Hobsbawm wrote, 'the famous "springtime of peoples", was the first and last European revolution in the (almost) literal sense, the momentary realization of the dreams of the left, the nightmares of the right, the virtually simultaneous overthrow of old regimes over the bulk of continental Europe west of the Russian and Turkish empires, from Copenhagen to Palermo, from Brasov to Barcelona'.[103] 'It had', he continues, 'been expected and predicted.'

> It failed, universally, rapidly and – though this was not realized for several years by the political refugees – definitively. Henceforth there was to be no general social revolution of the kind envisaged before 1848 in the "advanced" countries of the world. The centre of gravity of such social revolutionary movements, and therefore of twentieth-century socialist and communist regimes, was to be in the marginal and backward regions, though [for the foreseeable future] remain[ing] episodic, archaic and themselves "underdeveloped". The sudden, vast and apparently boundless expansion of the world capitalist economy provided political alternatives in the "advanced" countries. The (British) industrial revolution had swallowed the (French) political revolution.

'The history of [Russell and Wittgenstein's early] period is therefore lopsided.' 'It is', I think, 'primarily that of the massive advance of the world economy of industrial capitalism, of the social order it represented, of the ideas and beliefs which seemed to legitimize it and ratify it:

[102] Leon Trotsky, 'The Third International After Lenin; 1. The Program of the International Revolution or a Program of Socialism in One Country', *Marxists.org http://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/1928/3rd/ti01.htm#p1-04* (21 September 2013); 'The entire history of mankind is governed by the law of uneven development. Capitalism finds various sections of mankind at different stages of development, each with its profound internal contradictions. The extreme diversity in the levels attained, and the extraordinary unevenness in the rate of development of the different sections of mankind during the various epochs, serve as the *starting point* of capitalism. Capitalism gains mastery only gradually over the inherited unevenness, breaking and altering it, employing therein its own means and methods.'
[103] Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital. 1848-1875* (New York NY, 1975), pp. 2-3.

in reason, science, progress and liberalism.' And yet, of course, if the economy became (as Lacan termed it) 'politics distanced from itself', dialectical difficulties would reveal themselves *via* the workings of that economy and the intellectual products thereby created.[104] Russell's British birthplace 'could still', in 1872, regard the world as [its'] oyster, but with marginally less confidence than twenty or thirty years earlier'.[105] 'By 1880 there were altogether 97, 568 miles of cable across the world's oceans, linking Britain to India, Canada, … Africa and Australia', yet the news Queen Victoria I attentively heard was increasingly worse and worse.[106] Not news that Hobsbawm above would call 'general social revolution' (though 'the major exception was the great rising of 1857-8 on the north Indian plains, known to British historical tradition as the "Indian Mutiny", a turning-point in the history of the British administration which has been retrospectively claimed as a forerunner of the Indian national movement'), but bad economically-geopolitical news.[107] The inherent logics of the nineteenth century European economy conditioned the emergence of gigantic transnational corporations and conglomerates, mandating unprecedented capital-borrowing/speculation. For those who managed it, these conglomerates could count on massively reduced production costs which, in the end, meant them flooding the market with a quantity of goods which exceeded demand. For the rest who slipped behind, businesses in practically every sector had to endure plummeting profits and price deflation after 1873. Eventually, control was re-asserted, with progressively greater capital being generated by the London banking sector which freed Westminster to start to address a gaping social divide. At the same moment, the

[104] Žižek, *Sublime*, pp. 23-4, 26; 'commodity fetishism is "a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things" (Marx, 1974, p. 77). The *value* of a certain commodity, which is effectively an insignia of a network of social relations between producers of diverse commodities, assumes the form of a quasi-"natural" property of another thing-commodity, money: we say that the value of a certain commodity is such-and-such amount of money. Consequently, the essential feature of commodity fetishism does not consist of the famous replacement of men with things ("a relation between men assumes the form of a relation between things"); rather, it consists of a certain misrecognition which concerns the relation between a structured network and one of its elements: what is really a structural effect, an effect in the network of relations between elements, appears as an immediate property of one of the elements, as if this property also belongs to it outside its relation with other elements'; 'This fetishism in relations between men has to be called by its proper name: what we have here are, as Marx points out, "relations of domination and servitude" – that is to say, precisely the relation of Lordship and Bondage in a Hegelian sense; and it is as if the retreat of the Master in capitalism was only a *displacement*: as if the de-fetishization in the "relations between men" was paid for by the emergence of fetishism in the "relations between things" – by commodity fetishism. The place of fetishism has just shifted from intersubjective relations to relations "between things": the crucial social relations, those of production, are no longer immediately transparent in the form of the interpersonal relations of domination and servitude (of the Lord and his serfs, and so on); they disguise themselves – to use Marx's accurate formula – "under the shape of social relations between things, between the products of labour'; We should also read here the turn Badiou proffers in *Logiques des mondes* between 'democratic materialism' which recognizes only bodies regulated by juridical languages and the 'materialist dialectic', which recognizes that bodies and languages are important constituent parts of reality, *except* that there are also autonomous truths.
[105] Lawrence James, *The Rise & Fall Of The British Empire* (London, 1994), p. 200.
[106] Niall Ferguson, *Empire. How Britain made the modern world* (London, 2004), p. 168.
[107] Hobsbawm, *Capital*, p. 123.

value of American and German exports were increasing, and Britain's hegemony starting to slip in relative terms (*fig.* 11).[108] It is in this context of a geopolitical reasserting-yet-slipping that Russell's 'analytic' insistence should be understood; the effort to *understand and interrogate* reality was a reflection of a wider British re-asserting, and yet (a Deconstructivist point), also a reflection of a growing weakness - after all, *il n'y a pas dehors de texte*.[109]

GNP of the European Great Powers, 1830-90 (at market prices of the 1960 US dollar)

11.

	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890
Russia	10.5	11.2	12.7	14.4	22.9	23.2	21.1
France	8.5	10.3	11.8	13.3	16.8	17.3	19.7
Britain	8.2	10.4	12.5	16.0	19.6	23.5	29.4
Germany	7.2	8.3	10.3	12.7	16.6	19.9	26.4
Habsburg Empire	7.2	8.3	9.1	9.9	11.3	12.2	15.3
Italy	5.5	5.9	6.6	7.4	8.2	8.7	9.4

Russell's primary background was mathematics and the surety it could ostensibly provide; he would later remark in his *Autobiography* (a three-work extravaganza of the late 1960's) that, as a younger man, 'there was a footpath leading across fields to New Southgate, and I used to

[108] Paul Kennedy, *The Rise And Fall Of The Great Powers. Economic Change And Military Conflict From 1500 to 2000* (London, 1989), pp. 291-2; 'After 1870 … the shifting balance of world forces was eroding British supremacy in two ominous and interacting ways. The first was that the spread of industrialization and the changes in the military and naval weights which followed from it weakened the relative position of the British Empire more than that of any other country, because it was *the* established Great Power, with less to gain than to lose from fundamental alterations in the status quo. Britain had not been as directly affected as France and Austria-Hungary by the emergence of a powerful, united Germany (only after 1904-5 would London really have to grapple with that issue). But it was *the* state most impinged upon by the rise of American power, since British interests (Canada, naval bases in the Caribbean, trade and investment in Latin America) were much more prominent in the western hemisphere than those of any other European country; it was *the* country most affected by the expansion of Russian borders and strategic railways in Turkestan, since everyone could see the threat which that posed to British influence in the Near East and Persian Gulf, and ultimately perhaps to its control of the Indian subcontinent; similarly, it was *the* country which, by enjoying the greatest share of China's foreign trade, was likely to have its commercial interests the most seriously damaged by a carving up of the Celestial Empire or by the emergence of a new force in that region; similarly, it was *the* power whose relative position in Africa and the Pacific was affected the most by the post-1880 scramble for colonies, since it had (in Hobsbawm's phrase) "exchanged the informal empire over most of the underdeveloped world for the formal empire of a quarter of it" – which was not a good bargain, despite the continued array of fresh acquisitions to Queen Victoria's dominions. … The second, interacting weakness was less immediate and dramatic, but perhaps even more serious. It was the erosion of Britain's industrial and commercial pre-eminence, upon which, in the last resort, its naval, military, and imperial strength rested. Established British industries such as coal, textiles, and ironware increased their output in absolute terms in these decades, but their relative share of world production steadily diminished; and in the newer and increasingly more important industries such as steel, chemicals, machine tools, and electrical goods, Britain soon lost what early lead it possessed. Industrial production, which had grown at an annual rule of about 4 per cent in the period 1820 to 1840 and about 3 per cent between 1840 and 1870, became more sluggish; between 1875 and 1894 it grew at just over 1.5 per cent annually, far less than that of the country's chief rivals. This loss of industrial supremacy was soon felt in the cutthroat competition for customers. At first, British exports were priced out of their favourable position in the industrialized European and North American markets, often protected by high tariff barriers, and then out of certain colonial markets, where other powers competed both commercially and by placing tariffs around their new annexations; and finally, British industry found itself weakened by an ever-rising tide of imported foreign manufactures into the unprotected home market – the clearest sign that the country was … unproductive.'

[109] Derrida, *grammatologie*, p. 158.

go there alone to watch the sunset and contemplate suicide'.[110] 'I did not, however, commit suicide', he tells us, 'because I wished to know more of mathematics.' 'At the age of eleven', we learn, he 'began Euclid, with my brother as my tutor.'[111]

> This was one of the great events of my life, as dazzling as first love. I had not imagined that there was anything so delicious in the world.

In his 1945 *A History of Western Philosophy*, Russell gave this succinct summation of 'Analytic philosophy' – the approach he bequeathed to the Anglo-American world:

> Modern analytical empiricism … differs from that of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume by its incorporation of mathematics and its development of a powerful logical technique. It is thus able, in regard to certain problems, to achieve definite answers, which have the quality of science rather than of philosophy. It has the advantage, as compared with the philosophies of the system-builders, of being able to tackle its problems one at a time, instead of having to invent at one stroke a block theory of the whole universe. Its methods, in this respect, resemble those of science. I have no doubt that, in so far as philosophical knowledge is possible, it is by such methods that it must be sought; I have also no doubt that, by these methods, many ancient problems are completely soluble.[112]

The following illustrates just how willing Russell was to *do* philosophy mathematically:

> By a "description" I mean a phrase such as "The present President of the United States," in which a person or thing is designated, not by name, but by some property which is supposed or known to be peculiar to him or it. Such phrases had given a lot of trouble. Suppose I say "The golden mountain does not exist," and suppose you ask "What is it that does not exist?" It would seem that, if I say "It is the golden mountain," I am attributing some sort of existence to it. Obviously I am not making the same statement as if I said, "The round square does not exist." This seemed to imply that the golden mountain is one thing and the round square is another, although neither exists. The theory of descriptions was designed to meet this and other difficulties.
> According to this theory, when a statement containing a phrase of the form "the so-and-so" is rightly analysed, the phrase "the so-and-so" disappears. For example, take the statement "Scott was the author of *Waverley*." The theory interprets this statement as saying:
> "One and only one man wrote *Waverley*, and that man was Scott."
> Or, more fully:
> "There is an entity *c* such that the statement "*x* wrote *Waverley*" is true if *x* is *c* and false otherwise; moreover *c* is Scott."
> The first part of this, before the word "moreover," is defined as meaning: "The author of *Waverley* exists (or existed or will exist)."
> Thus "The golden mountain does not exist" means:
> "There is no entity *c* such that "*x* is golden and mountainous" is true when *x* is *c*, but not otherwise."
> With this definition the puzzle as to what is meant when we say "The golden mountain does not exist" disappears.[113]

Writing after the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and his *Cours de linguistique générale* (1916), Ludwig Wittgenstein (Russell's student because he flew into Russell's Cambridge office unannounced on the 18th of October 1911) made a similar logical gesture, except he chose language instead of mathematics as his instrumental scaffold. 'The logical picture', states §2.19 of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922), 'can depict the world.'[114]

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[110] Bertrand Russell, *Autobiography* (Abingdon, 2010), p. 32.
[111] ibid., p. 25.
[112] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York NY, 1945), p. 834.
[113] ibid., p. 831.
[114] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (London, 1922), p. 30.

2.2 The picture has the logical form of representation in common with what it pictures.

2.201 The picture depicts reality by representing a possibility of the existence and non-existence of atomic facts.

2.202 The picture represents a possible state of affairs in logical space.

2.203 The picture contains the possibility of the state of affairs which it represents.

2.21 The picture agrees with reality or not; it is right or wrong, true or false.

2.22 The picture represents what it represents, independently of its truth or falsehood, through the form of representation.

'To present in language anything which "contradicts logic" is', Wittgenstein goes on to say in §3.032, 'is as impossible as in geometry to present by its co-ordinates a figure which contradicts the laws of space; or to give the co-ordinates of a point which did not exist.'[115] Such was the faith Wittgenstein placed in language efficiently deployed as a means of accessing truth that he made no apology for 'the shortness of the book'.[116]

> I am *awfully sorry for it; but what can I do?* If you were to squeeze me like a lemon you would get nothing more out of me.

By 1953, Wittgenstein had almost completely changed his mind. Now, he well understood, over-essentialized assumptions about language and its relationship to the logical process had led philosophers into an array of frustrating cul-de-sacs. Perhaps Žižek is of some use here;

> There are two opposed types of stupidity. The first is the (occasionally) hyper-intelligent subject who just doesn't "get it," who understands a situation logically, but simply misses its hidden contextual rules. … Alan Turing was an exemplary idiot: a man of extraordinary intelligence, but a proto-psychotic unable to process implicit contextual rules. In literature, one cannot avoid recalling Jaroslav Haŝek's good soldier Švejk, who, when he saw soldiers shooting from their trenches at the enemy soldiers, ran into no-man's land and started to shout: "Stop shooting, there are people on the other side!" The arch-model of this idiocy is, however, the naïve child from Andersen's tale who publicly exclaims that the emperor is naked – thereby missing the point that, as Alphonse Allais put it, we are all naked beneath our clothes.
>
> The second and opposite figure of stupidity is that of the moron: the stupidity of those who fully identify with common sense, who fully stand for the "big Other" of appearances. In the long series of figures beginning with the Chorus in Greek tragedy – which plays the role of canned laughter or crying, always ready to comment on the action with some common wisdom – one should mention at least the "stupid" common-sense partners of the great detectives: Sherlock Holmes's Watson, Hercule Poirot's Hastings … These figures are there not only to serve as a contrast to and thus make more visible the detective's grandeur; they are indispensable for the detective's work. …
>
> But does this opposition cover the entire field? Where, for instance, are we to put Franz Kafka, whose greatness resides (among other things) in his unique ability to present idiocy as something entirely normal and conventional? (Recall the extravagantly "idiotic" reasoning in the long debate between the priest and Josef K. which follows the parable "Before the Law.") For this third position, we need look no further than the Wikipedia entry for "imbecile": "Imbecile is a term for moderate to severe mental retardation, as well as for a type of criminal. It arises from the Latin word *imbecillus*, meaning weak, or weak-minded. *Imbecile* was once applied to people with an IQ of 26-50, between "moron" (IQ of 51-70) and "idiot" (IQ 0-25)." So it is not too bad: beneath a moron, but ahead of an idiot – the situation is catastrophic, but not serious, as (who else?) an Austrian imbecile would have put it. Problems begin with the question: where does the root "becile" preceded by the negation

[115] ibid., p. 31.
[116] Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (London, 1990), p. 207.

> ("im-") come from? Although the origins are murky, it is probably derived from the Latin *baculum* (stick, walking stick, staff), so an "imbecile" is someone walking around without the help of a stick. One can bring some clarity and logic into the issue if one conceives of the stick on which we all, as speaking beings, have to lean, as language, the symbolic order, that is, what Lacan calls the "big Other." In this case, the tripartite idiot-imbecile-moron makes sense: the idiot is simply alone, outside the big Other, the moron is within it (dwelling in language in a stupid way), while the imbecile is in between the two – aware of the need for the big Other, but not relying on it, distrusting it, something like the way the Slovene punk group Laibach defined their relationship towards God (and referring to the words on a dollar bill "In God we trust"): "Like Americans, we believe in God, but unlike Americans, we don't trust him." In Lacanese, an imbecile is aware that the big Other does not exist, that it is inconsistent, "barred." So if, measured by the IQ scale, the moron appears brighter than the imbecile, he is too bright for his own good (as reactionary morons, but not imbeciles, like to say about intellectuals). Among the philosophers, the late Wittgenstein is an imbecile *par excellence*, obsessively dealing with variations of the question of the big Other: is there an agency which guarantees the consistency of our speech? Can we reach certainty about the rules of our speech?[117]

Any means of stripping down extraneous diversions from a scaffold intended to propagate 'pure' logic (a scaffold like mathematics or a lexis), Wittgenstein understood by 1953, was simply impossible. This was now the age of Althusser and his insistence that knowledge as such relies on an obscured kernel of willed-ignorance;[118] Badiou today uses mathemes extensively but, in complete contrast to Russell, to explore some of Althusser's insights.[119]

With his 1927 *Sein und Zeit*, Heidegger returned explicitly to Hegelian themes, but – like Nietzsche – chipped away at the overarching theses (sometimes beautifully), repackaging

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[117] Žižek, *Less*, pp. 1-2.

[118] Consider the classic Anarchist insight in this direction; the property-owner - influenced by Fairfax, Hobbes and Locke – accuses the smelly, uncouth but probably under-privileged brute of thieving when the brute reaches inside his windowsill and grabs the glimmering brooch his wife has put aside absent-mindedly. Yet, said Pierre Joseph-Proudhon in 1840, 'Property is theft! [*La propriété, c'est le vol!*]'. Property always-already has to contain theft as its' essential but unacknowledged interior in order to function successfully; Pierre Joseph-Proudhon, 'Chapter 1. Method Pursued in this Work. – The Idea of a Revolution', Marxists.org. http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/economics/proudhon/property/ch01.htm (16 October 2013); with Proudhon, Žižek suggests, 'the "negation of negation" is here the shift from theft as a distortion ("negation," violation) of property to the dimension of theft inscribed into the very notion of property (nobody has the right to fully own means of production, their nature if inherently collective, so every claim "this is mine" is illegitimate). And does[,Žižek continues,] the same not go for nature itself? Here, "negation of negation" is the shift from the idea that we are violating some natural balanced order to the idea that imposing on the Real such a notion of balanced order is in itself the greatest violation … which is why the premise, the first axiom even, of every radical ecology is "there is no Nature." This passage from the distortion of a notion to a distortion constitutive of this notion is what is enacted in the Hegelian notion of totality: "totality" is not an ideal of organic Whole, but a critical notion – "to locate a phenomenon in its totality" does not mean to see the hidden harmony of the Whole, but to include into a system all its "symptoms," antagonisms, inconsistencies, as its integral parts. In other words, the Hegelian totality is by definition "self-contradictory," antagonistic, inconsistent: the "Whole" which is the "True" (Hegel: "*das Ganze is das Wahre*") is the Whole plus its symptoms, unintended consequences which betray its untruth. For Marx, the "totality" of capitalism includes crises as its integral moment; for Freud, the "totality" of a human subject includes pathological symptoms as the indicators of what is "repressed" in the official image of the subject. The underlying premise is that the Whole is never truly whole: every notion of Whole leaves something out, and the dialectical effort is precisely the effort to include this excess, to account for it. Symptoms are never just secondary failures or distortions'.

[119] Lacan maintained a humorously ambiguous relationship with mathematics as a scaffold for logic; on the one hand, David Macey writes in a 1994 introduction to *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-Analysis*, 'Lacan saw his "matheme[s]" as something that would ensure the integral transmission of his teachings … proof against the "noise" or interference inherent in any process of communication. [p. xxxii]' Yet elsewhere, he claimed that these mathemes were 'created to allow for a hundred and one different readings, a multiplicity that is as admissible as long as the spoken remains caught in its algebra'.

them as something appropriate for the modern industrialized psyche. Heidegger was intensely alive to the particularized, vivacious (and I will say again, Nietzschean) sense in which being *is*: a transient sparkly glittery translucence '(… the root of the root and the bud of the bud and the sky of the sky of a tree/ called life; which grows/ higher than the soul can hope or mind can hide)'.[120] 'And this', Heidegger believed, 'is the wonder that's keeping the stars apart.' Stephen Mulhall uses the motif of a tree to illustrate for us Heidegger's qualitative emphasis;

> Late in William Golding's novel *The Spire*, its medieval protagonist – a cathedral dean named Jocelin – has a striking experience as he leaves his quarters:
>
> "Outside the door there was a woodstack among long, rank grass. A scent struck him, so that he leaned against the woodstack, careless of his back, and waited while the dissolved grief welled out of his eyes. Then there was a movement over his head. … He twisted his neck and looked up sideways. There was a cloud of angels flashing in the sunlight, they were pink and gold and white; and they were uttering this sweet scent for joy of the light and the air. They brought with them a scatter of clear leaves, and among the leaves a long, black springing thing. His head swam with the angels, and suddenly he understood there was more to the appletree than one branch. It was there beyond the wall, bursting up with cloud and scatter, laying hold of the earth and the air, a fountain, a marvel, an apple-tree. … Then, where the yard of the deanery came to the river and trees lay over the sliding water, he saw all the blue of the sky condensed to a winged sapphire, that flashed once.
>
> He cried out.
>
> *Come back!*
>
> But the bird was gone, an arrow shot once. It will never come back, he thought, not if I sat here all day.
>
> (Golding 1964: 204-5)"
>
> Jocelin, as if for the first time, is struck by the sheer specificity of the appletree – its springing branches and trunk, the cloud and scatter of its leaves and blossom, everything that makes it the particular thing that it is. He is struck by what one might call the distinctive mode of its existence or being. The kingfisher, in the singular sapphire of its flight, conveys rather a sense of contingency, of the sheer, transient fact of its existence or being. Together, then, the appletree and the kingfisher impress upon Jocelin a fused sense of *how* the world is that *that* the world is; they precipitate an immeasurable astonishment and wonder at the reality of things, at the fact of there being a highly differentiated world to wonder at. It is just such a sense of wonder that Heidegger thinks of as a response to the Being of things, a response to Being; and he aims to recover in his readers a capacity to take seriously the question of its meaning or significance.[121]

Hegel had written on ontological fragility at a time when industrial processes had barely gathered pace. When the French Revolution broke out, one of the biggest internal threats the Paris authorities faced was in the rural Vendée (1793-96), where a mostly ramshackle peasant outfit scrambled together whatever weapons they could find which improved on sharpened sticks and horticultural implements, as well as the few artillery pieces they seized as the conflict dragged on (*fig.* 12). By 1927, Fordist industrial organization seems to have been shaping the majority of the content of life for the majority of people (or so Heidegger argued). If social processes before 1927 remained sufficiently *open* in the technological sense to make relevant Hegel's relatively *open* account of fluidic ontology, Heidegger believed that

[120] Blair Mahoney, *Poetry Reloaded* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 236.
[121] Stephen Mulhall, *The Routledge Guidebook to Heidegger's Being and Time* (Abingdon, 2013), pp. 26-8.

the word in which he was born into was fundamentally *closed* on account of technologies. The breadth of Hegelianism seemed to him a luxury anxious philosophers could no longer afford (I will argue for Heidegger as a precursor for the so-called Speculative Realist school at the end of this chapter). '"Being"', states the crucial beginning of *Sein und Zeit*, 'is the

most "universal" concept: *to on esti katholou malista pantõn. Illud quod primo cadit sub apprehensione est ens, cuius intellectus includitur in omnibus, quaecumque quis apprehendit.* "An understanding of being is always already contained in everything we apprehend in beings." But the "universality" of "being" is not that of *genus*.'[122] 'The question of Being', therefore, was for Heidegger 'aim[ing] at ascertaining the a priori conditions not only for the possibility of the sciences which examine entities as entities of such and such a type, and in so doing already operate with an understanding of Being, but also for the possibility of those ontologies themselves which are prior to the ontical sciences and which provide their foundations.'[123]

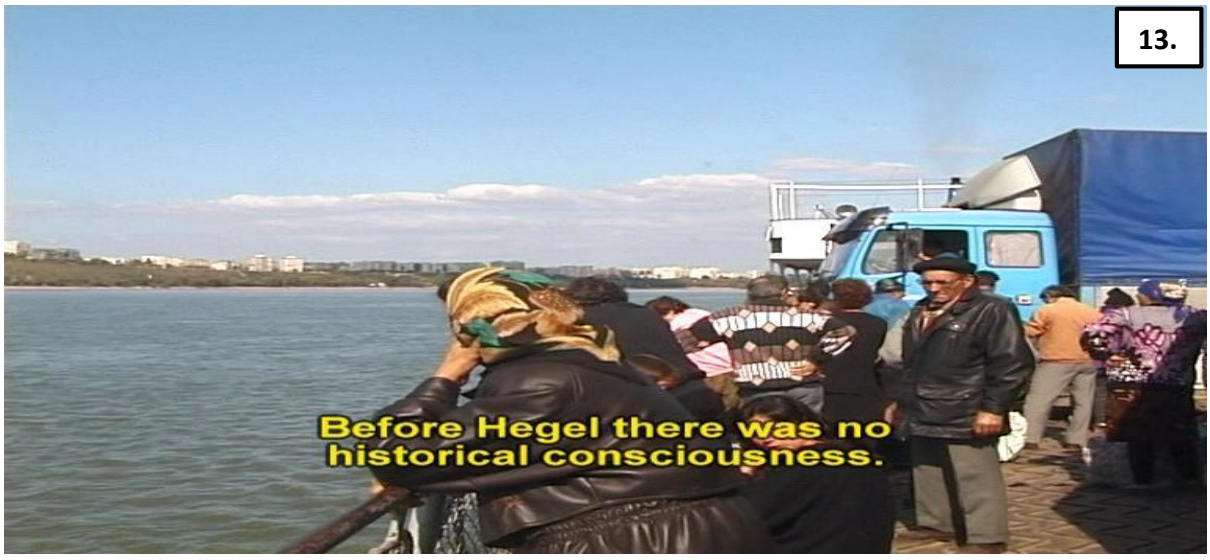
> *Basically, all ontology, no matter how rich and firmly compacted a system of categories it has at its disposal, remains blind and perverted from its ownmost aim, if it has not first adequately clarified the meaning of Being, and conceived this clarification as its fundamental task.*

Akin, I think, to the manner in which Nietzsche delicately unpicked the Hegelian account of being and becoming, Heidegger identified his 'notion of some infinitely gentle/ Infinitely

[122] Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (SUNY NY, 1996), p. 2.
[123] Mulhall, *Guidebook*, p. 20.

suffering thing' (the 'entity which each of us is himself', 'which in its Being has this very Being as an issue'): *Dasein*, meaning to many translators something like 'there being' (other translators read 'presence', a notion we shall pick up momentarily with Jacques Derrida).[124] 'Being there', then, differs from the Nietzschean quibble with Hegelian notions of 'being' and 'becoming' by fixating on *the capacity of material circumstances to effectively close the possibilities of finitude*. We might be reminded here of Marx (and I certainly am myself), though Heidegger marshals a much vaster array of imaginings regarding human possibility. Heidegger, then, *pays particular attention to materially reciprocated, perpetuated and enculturated modes of 'being there'*, and it is in the 1954 essay *The Question Concerning Technology* (*Die Frage nach der Technik*) that he shows us the kinds of fruitful questions those trapped in modernity (and it is always a kind of trapping when industrial processes are involved) should be asking; 'the current conception of technology', he observes, 'according to which it is a means and a human activity, can … be called the instrumental and anthropological definition of technology.'[125] This is a complacency he angrily kicks against;

> The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character of a setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing, and switching about are ways of revealing. But the revealing never simply comes to an end. Neither does it run off into the indeterminate. The revealing reveals to itself its own manifoldly interlocking paths, through regulating their course. This regulating itself is, for its part, everywhere secured. Regulating and securing even become the chief characteristics of the challenging revealing.



[124] Cary Nelson, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern and Contemporary American Poetry* (Oxford, 2012), p. 136; Heidegger, *Being*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, pp. 27 & 68.
[125] Martin Heidegger, 'The Question Concerning Technology', *Simondon.ocular-witness.com http://simondon.ocular-witness.com/wp-content/uploads/2008/05/question_concerning_technology.pdf* (18 October 2013); refer to my unpublished MA thesis for a discussion of this particular essay of Heidegger's applied to Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis* (taking account of the very keen, more recent Critical insights of Andrew Feenberg); Sebastian Averill, *'Shadows betray you because they belong to me'; Christopher Nolan's Batman trilogy and the ideological functioning of persistent auterism* (submitted September 2013), pp. 23-33.

The Epilogue (and part of the third chapter) of David Barison and Daniel Ross's 2004 film *The Ister* (*fig.* 13) displays for us a subsequent development in Heidegger's thought that most analysts recognize had begun by the early 1930's. Julian Young understands this Turn (*die Kehre*) as a shift from *doing* philosophy to *dwelling* in philosophical thought (from *Sein und Zeit* to *Time and the kinds of Being it permits*).[126] The earnestness remained, but the penetrative interrogations of *Sein* took a frighteningly innovative form; now, *Sein* was not confronted as directly, but confronted instead as a feature of its many artistic manifestations ('after all, if desire always gets you in the end, it's not because it shoots straight').[127] A poet is someone who reaches into the abyss (the abyss which condemns us to be forever groundless, to be desolate). This reaching is a reach after the 'traces of the fugitive gods';[128]

> Here we go round the prickly pear
> Prickly pear prickly pear
> Here we go round the prickly pear
> At five o' clock in the morning.[129]

'Reality', then, is not everything: some of a world's positive content is *un*real - yet to be born.

> The situation is like that in psychoanalysis, where the patient knows the answer (his symptoms are such answers) but does not know what they are the answers to, and the analyst has to formulate the questions. Only through such patient work will a program emerge.
>
> …
>
> In a letter to Einstein, as well as in his *New Introductory Lectures to Psychoanalysis*, Freud proposed as a utopian solution for the deadlocks of humanity the "dictatorship of reason" – men should unite and

[126] Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 5; 'Heidegger', Young instructs, 'first turned to extended thinking about art in the mid-1930's. In close proximity to each other he produced the lectures on Hölderlin's "Germania" and "The Rhine" (*GA* 39) of 1934-5, the *Introduction to Metaphysics* (*IM*) of 1935, in which art receives considerable attention, "Hölderlin and the Essence of Poetry" (HE) of early 1936, the final (of three versions of "The Origin of the Work of Art" (*PLT* pp. 17-87) of late 1936, and *The Will to Power as Art* (*N* I) (the first volume of the four-volume Nietzsche study) of 1936-7.'

[127] Justin Clemens, 'The Politics of Style in the Works of Slavoj Žižek', in Boucher, Glynos and Sharpe (eds.), *Traversing*, p. 3.

[128] Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York NY, 1971), p. 93; 'Long is the destitute of the world's night. To begin with, this requires a long time to reach to its middle. At this night's midnight, the destitution of the time is greatest. Then the destitute time is no longer able even to experience its own destitution. That inability, by which even the destitution of the destitute state is obscured, is the time's absolutely destitute character. The destitution is wholly obscured, in that it now appears as nothing more than the need that wants to be met. Yet we must think of the world's night as a destiny that takes place this side of pessimism and optimism. Perhaps the world's night is now approaching its midnight. Perhaps the world's night is now approaching its midnight. Perhaps the world's time is now becoming the completely destitute time. But also perhaps not, not yet, not even yet, despite the immeasurable need, despite all suffering, despite nameless sorrow, despite the growing and spreading peacelessness, despite the mounting confusion. Long is the time because even terror, taken by itself as a ground for turning, is powerless as long as there is no turn with mortal men. But there is a turn with mortals when these find the way to their own nature. That nature lies in this, that mortals reach into the abyss sooner than the heavenly powers. Mortals, when we think of their nature, remain closer to that absence because they are touched by presence, the ancient name of Being. But because presence conceals itself at the same time, it is itself already absence. Thus the abyss holds and remarks everything. In his hymn "The Titans" Hölderlin says of the "abyss" that it is "all-perceiving." He among mortals who must, sooner than other mortals and otherwise than they, reach into the abyss, comes to know the marks that the abyss remarks. For the poet, these are the traces of the fugitive gods.'

[129] T. S. Eliot, *Poems, 1909-1925* (London, 1937), p. 127.

> together subordinate and master their irrational unconscious forces. The problem here, of course, lies with the very distinction between reason and the unconscious: on the one hand, the Freudian unconscious is "rational," discursive, having nothing to do with a reservoir of dark primitive instincts; on the other hand, reason is for Freud always close to "rationalization," to finding (false) reasons for a cause whose true nature is disavowed. The intersection between reason and drive is best signalled by the fact that Freud uses the same formulation for both: the voice of reason or of the drive is often silent, slow, but it persists forever. This intersection is our only hope.[130]

Heidegger had been a student of Husserl - the pioneer Phenomenologist who tried to puncture the August Comte and William James-inspired 'logical' bubble (of the kind I have described in connection with Bertrand Russell) in the very early part of the twentieth century. Heidegger, though, *rebelled against Husserl* (specifically in *Sein und Zeit*), and Timothy J. Stapleton gives us some help; 'the central theme in a dialogue between these two thinkers', he says in his 1983 *The Question of a Phenomenological Beginning*, 'would be that of the adequacy of transcendental, phenomenological analyses for the comprehension of the Being of beings.'[131]

> The problem of the "origin of the world" is a more Husserlian formulation of this question of Being. "It is," in the words of Fink, "man's eternal question concerning the origin of things which myth, religion, theology, and philosophical speculation each answer in their own way." Husserl and Heidegger agree on the deficient nature of traditional,
>
> "basic, metaphysical notions which express the relationship of world-ground and world along the lines of intramundane relations of one being to another (for example: ground and consequent, creation and production)."
>
> For Heidegger explicitly says, as has been noted: "We agree that beings, in the sense of that which you call *world*, cannot be clarified through a return to beings of the same nature." But from Heidegger's position, transcendental analyses of the life of consciousness, whether they be of theoretical or pretheoretical life (*Lebenswelt*), focus upon intentional acts and the genesis of their objective correlates. Throughout, however, the Being of those acts, as well as the Being of the subject of those acts, is presupposed.
>
> For Heidegger, accordingly, intentional analyses of *any* sort do not achieve the genuine philosophical (ontological) domain. And no change in "attitudes" or "standpoints" will alter this state of affairs. For the ontological problematic lies in a new and *different* dimension, this difference being the ontological difference. Heidegger sees the access to this domain as being achieved hermeneutically, through an interpretation as a "laying-out" of that prior understanding of Being. If the sphere of origins escapes transcendental reflection, this suggests that the way of questioning which leads to transcendental phenomenology might itself be deficient. A philosophical treatment and critique of Husserl's phenomenology, for Heidegger, would attempt to lay out that understanding of Being which underlies the basic question of Husserlian thought.

Should we not attempt to understand Husserl and Heidegger as we understood Kant and Hegel? As Husserl (and Kant) emphasised the metaphysical potentials of phenomenal consciousness, Heidegger (and Hegel) *transposed this fragility back into the 'world'*. Mulhall's tree example would be interesting for Husserl *as is* ('to the things themselves!'),

[130] Žižek, *Less*, pp. 1008-10.
[131] Timothy J. Stapleton, *Husserl and Heidegger: The Question of a Phenomenological Beginning* (SUNY NY, 1983), pp. 115-6.

but for Heidegger would be interesting *as is, was, and therefore might be* ('the possible ranks higher than the actual'); the early twentieth century return to Hegel as a counterblast against the logicians, then, risked (in the insularity of Husserl, *fig.* 14) missing Hegel's potency.[132]

Where Heidegger stressed the determinacy of the 'there being', stressed the aching, groaning capacity of 'world' [*eine Welt*] (and the relationship between 'worlds' and an abyssal pre-ontological 'Ground' [*der Boden*]) to both constrain and disclose our Being (and, by extension, even what we understand the term 'Being' to refer to), Sartre drew strikingly different assessments of an individual's finitude; for Sartre, 'existence precedes essence' [*l'existence précède l'essence*].[133] For Sartre, human freedom – the capacity for human agency – is so great, that the life to which we often remain satirically detached, distanced and deflected is in fact entirely our own creation; our creation not in the sense that we can powerfully determine those individuals and power structures which impinge upon our conscious 'island', but in the sense that *we* are in complete control of *our perception choices*. 'The presence of the for-itself to being as *totality* comes', Sartre laid down in his 1943 *L'Être et le néant: Essai d'ontologie phénoménologique*, 'from the fact that the for-itself has to be – in the mode of being what it is not and of not being what it is – its own totality as a detotalized totality.'[134]

> In so far as the for-itself makes itself be in the unity of a single upsurge as *all* which the for-itself is not being, being stands before it as *all* which the for-itself is not. The original negation, in fact, is a radical negation. The for-itself, which stands before being as its own totality, is itself the whole of the negation and hence is the negation of the whole. Thus the achieved totality of the world is revealed as constitutive of the being of the unachieved totality by which the being of totality comes into being.

Behind all this elegance there is a very simple point operating: our broken, beautiful voices *can* join mankind's collective chorus (whether Dionysian or Apollinian, whether singing of evental rupture or desperate reconciliation), *but can only join it as intensely individual voices*

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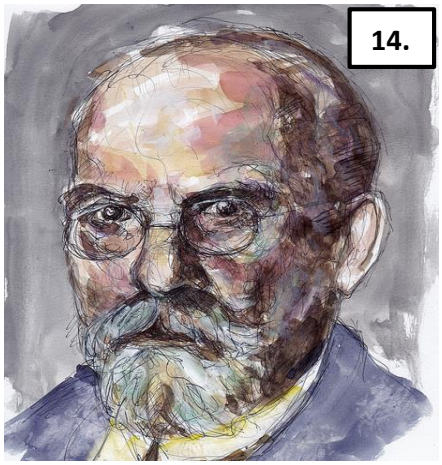
[132] Robert J. Dostal, 'Time and phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger', in Charles B. Guignon (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 120; this second phrase seems to be a common paraphrase of Heidegger (though roughly approximate to Heidegger, *Being*, trans. Macquarrie and Robinson, §6/p. 41); 'Whatever the way of being it may have at the time, and thus with whatever understanding of Being it may possess, Dasein has grown up both into and in a traditional way of interpreting itself: in terms of this it understands itself proximally and, within a certain range, constantly. By this understanding, the possibilities of its Being are disclosed and regulated. Its own past – and this always means the past of its "generation" – is not something which *follows along after* Dasein, but something which already goes ahead of it.'

[133] Jean-Paul Sartre, 'Existentialism is a Humanism', *Marxists.org http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/sartre/works/exist/sartre.htm* (20 September 2013); '*Ce qui rend les choses compliquées, c'est qu'il y a deux espèces d'existentialistes : les premiers, qui sont chrétiens, et parmi lesquels je rangerai Jaspers et Gabriel Marcel, de confession catholique ; et, d'autre part, les existentialistes athées parmi lesquels il faut ranger Heidegger, et aussi les existentialistes français et moi-même. Ce qu'ils ont en commun, c'est simplement le fait qu'ils estiment que l'existence précède l'essence, ou, si vous voulez, qu'il faut partir de la subjectivité.*'

[134] Sartre, *Being*, p. 204.

– the result being something like a Pointillist painting with each one of us representing a dot (*fig*. 15).[135] Is Sartre haunted by Descartes, and the problem of how the *res cogitans* ('thinking thing') relates to whatever it is we mean by *res extensa* ('extended or corporeal substance')?[136]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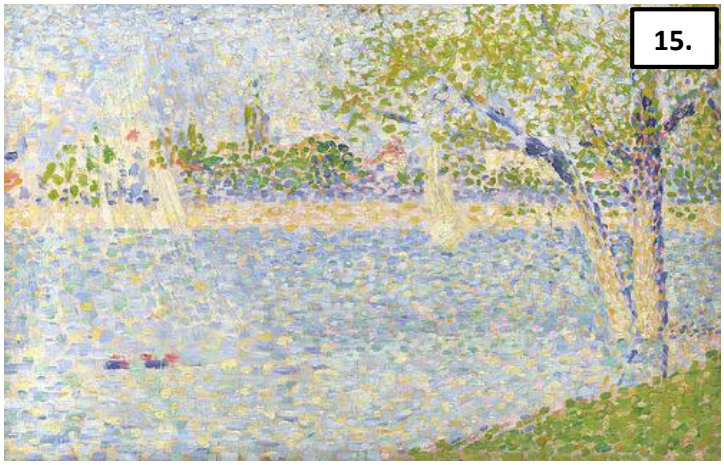
15.

[135] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy and The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York NY, 1967), p. 33; 'We shall have gained much for the science of aesthetics, once we perceive not merely by logical inference, but with the immediate certainty of vision, that the continuous development of art is bound up with the *Apollinian* and *Dionysian* duality – just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, involving perpetual strife with only periodically intervening reconciliations. The terms Dionysian and Apollinian we borrow from the Greeks, who disclose to the discerning mind the profound mysteries of their view of art, not, to be sure, in concepts, but in the intensely clear figures of their gods. Through Apollo and Dionysus, the two art deities of the Greeks, we come to recognize that in the Greek world there existed a tremendous opposition, in origin and aims, between the Apollinian art of sculpture, and the nonimagistic, Dionysian art of music. These two different tendencies run parallel to each other, for the most part openly at variance; and they continually incite each other to new and more powerful births, which perpetuate an antagonism, only superficially reconciled by the common term "art"; till eventually, by a metaphysical miracle of the Hellenic "will," they appear coupled with each other, and through this coupling ultimately generate an equally Dionysian and Apollinian form of art – Attic tragedy.'; I select here a piece by Seurat where the Pointillist technique is particularly, severely visible – this (rather than, for example, the 1890 *Morning, Interior* by Maximilien Luce) better exemplifies Sartre's creed.

[136] Jean-luc Marion, 'Cartesian metaphysics and the role of the simple natures', in John Cottingham (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 126; '"What then am I? A thing that thinks (*res cogitans*). What is that? A thing that doubts, understands, affirms, denies, is willing, is unwilling and also imagines and has sensory perceptions" (*res dubitans, intelligens, affirmans, negans, volens, nolens, imaginans quoque et sentiens*, AT VII 28: CSM II 19).'; the best Cartesian analogous parable of *res extensa* is melted wax; René Descartes, 'Meditation II. Of The Nature Of The Human Mind; And That It Is More Easily Known Than The Body', *Oregon State University* *http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/descartes/meditations/Meditation2.html* (23 October 2013); '11. Let us now accordingly consider the objects that are commonly thought to be [the most easily, and likewise] the most distinctly known, viz., the bodies we touch and see; not, indeed, bodies in general, for these general notions are usually somewhat more confused, but one body in particular. Take, for example, this piece of wax; it is quite fresh, having been but recently taken from the beehive; it has not yet lost the sweetness of the honey it contained; it still retains somewhat of the odor of the flowers from which it was gathered; its color, figure, size, are apparent (to the sight); it is hard, cold, easily handled; and sounds when struck upon with the finger. In fine, all that contributes to make a body as distinctly known as possible, is found in the one before us. But, while I am speaking, let it be placed near the fire--what remained of the taste exhales, the smell evaporates, the color changes, its figure is destroyed, its size increases, it becomes liquid, it grows hot, it can hardly be handled, and, although struck upon, it emits no sound. Does the same wax still remain after this change? It must be admitted that it does remain; no one doubts it, or judges otherwise. What, then, was it I knew with so much distinctness in the piece of wax? Assuredly, it could be nothing of all that I observed by means of the senses, since all the things that fell under taste, smell, sight, touch, and hearing are changed, and yet the same wax remains. [L][F]'

> Thus, because our senses sometimes deceive us, I wanted to suppose that nothing was exactly as they led us to imagine. And because there are men who make mistakes in reasoning, even in the simplest matters in geometry, and who commit paralogisms, judging that I was just as prone to err as any other, I rejected as false all the reasonings that I had previously taken for demonstrations. And finally, considering the fact that all the same thoughts we have when we are awake can also come to us when we are asleep, without any of them being true, I resolved to pretend that all the things that had ever entered my mind were no more true than the illusions of my dreams. But immediately afterward I noticed that, while I wanted thus to think that everything was false, it necessarily had to be the case that I, who was thinking this, was something. And noticing that this truth – *I think, therefore I am* [*je pense, donc je suis*] – was so firm and so assured that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were incapable of shaking it, I judged that I could accept it without scruple as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking.[137]

(Though §24 of *Sein und Zeit* reminds us how vastly Phenomenologists differed from Descartes, there is an essential connection here with the sovereign, untangled *cogito*).[138] Sartre's 1945 novel *L'âge de raison* illustrates nicely how the Heideggerian problem of socio-structural determination was a non-problem for him (he seems almost to *make* it a non-problem, in a kitschy fashion which is easy to detect); the sometimes-successful, sometimes bumbling schoolteacher Mathieu accidentally impregnates a woman he does not love and has never really loved, but has continued an affair with her mostly for sordid sexual gratification. Over the next three days (the time period the novel concerns), Mathieu scrabbles around deciding how to spend the money he possesses. Should he marry the mistress, pay the significant sum required for a safe backstreet abortion, or (an entirely believable choice) dither mercilessly, parading his indecision in a cacophony of Paris bars while all the time frittering his resources. This last, of course, is the choice towards which he continually gestures ('some', it seems, 'must watch, while some must sleep:/ So runs the world away').[139] A number of times, he bemoans the fate of the as-yet unborn foetus, condemned as it progressively is to entering a world where perceptual choices are experienced as yawning burdens which swallow up every small decision, spitting them out as myths of stoic Atlas.

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[137] René Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Donald A. Cress (Indianapolis IN, 1998), §32/p. 18.

[138] Heidegger, *Sein*, §24/pp. 45-6; 'We shall show why Kant could never achieve an insight into the problematic of Temporality. There were two things that stood in his way: in the first place, he altogether neglected the problem of Being; and, in connection with this, he failed to provide an ontology with Dasein as its theme or (to put this in Kantian language) to give a preliminary ontological analytic of the subjectivity of the subject. Instead of this, Kant took over Descartes' position quite dogmatically, notwithstanding all the essential respects in which he had gone beyond him. Furthermore, in spite of the fact that he was bringing the phenomenon of time back into the subject again, his analysis of it remained oriented towards the traditional way in which time had been ordinarily understood; in the long run this kept him from working out the phenomenon of a "transcendental determination of time" in its own structure and function. Because of this double effect of tradition the decisive *connection* between *time* and the "*I think*" was shrouded in utter darkness; it did not even become a problem.

In taking over Descartes' ontological position Kant made an essential omission: he failed to provide an ontology of Dasein. This omission was a decisive one in the spirit [im Sinne] of Descartes' ownmost Tendencies. With the "*cogito sum*" Descartes had claimed that he was putting philosophy on a new and firm footing. But what he left undetermined when he began in this "radical" way, was the kind of Being which belongs to the *res cogitans*, or−more precisely−the *meaning of the Being of the "sum"*.'

[139] William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet Prince of Denmark* (New Haven CT, 2003), p. 121.

Let us return to Heidegger, specifically the way Hegel might react to Heidegger's framework, because 'perhaps the most productive way to deal with an "official" history of philosophy is to consider how a philosopher who was "overcome" by his successor (according to this "official" line) *reacted* (or *would have reacted*) *to his successor*'.[140] 'According to Heidegger', Žižek offers, 'the Hegelian process of experience moves at two levels, that of lived experience (*Erlebnis*) and that of conceptual machination (*Machenschaft*): at the level of lived experience, consciousness sees its world collapse and a new figure of the world appear, and experiences this passage as a pure leap with no logical bridge uniting the two positions.'[141] '"For us" [scholars], however, the dialectical analysis makes visible how the new world emerged as the "determinate negation" of the old one, as the necessary outcome of its crisis.'

> Authentic lived experience, the opening to the New, is thus revealed as being underpinned by notional work: what the subject experiences as the inexplicable rise of a new world is actually the result of its own conceptual work taking place behind its back and can thus ultimately be read as having been produced by the subject's own conceptual machination. Here there is no experience of genuine otherness, the subject encounters only the results of its own (conceptual) work.

This, though, was far from a sympathetic reading; Hegelian dialectics, Heidegger claimed in *Sein und Zeit*, 'has been a genuine philosophical embarrassment'.[142] 'By going back to *the selfsameness of the formal structure which both spirit and time possess as the negation of a negation,* Hegel shows how it is possible for spirit to be actualized historically "in time".'[143]

> Spirit and time get disposed of with the very emptiest of formal-ontological and formal-apophantical abstractions, and this makes it possible to produce a kinship between them. But because time simultaneously gets conceived in the sense of a world-time which has been utterly levelled off, so that its origin remains completely concealed, it simply gets contrasted with spirit—contrasted as something that is present-at-hand. Because of this, spirit *must first of all fall* "into time". It remains obscure what indeed is signified ontologically by this "falling" or by the "actualizing" of a spirit which has power over time and really "is" ["seienden"] outside of it. Just as Hegel casts little light on the source of the time which has thus been levelled off, he leaves totally unexamined the question of whether the way in which spirit is essentially constituted as the negating of a negation, is possible in any other manner than on the basis of primordial temporality.

'We cannot', Heidegger states, 'as yet discuss whether Hegel's Interpretation of time and spirit and the connection between them is correct and rests on foundations which are ontologically primordial.'[144] 'But', he insists, 'the very *fact that* a formal-dialectical "construction" of this connection can be [and was] ventured *at all,* makes manifest that these are primordially akin.' If 'Hegel's "construction" was prompted by his arduous struggle to

[140] Žižek, *Less*, p. 137; 'How', Žižek asks, 'would Plato react to Aristotle, or Wagner to Nietzsche, or Husserl to Heidegger, or Hegel to Marx?'
[141] ibid., pp. 868-9.
[142] Heidegger, *Sein*, §26/p. 47.
[143] ibid., §435/p.485-6.
[144] ibid., §436/p. 486.

conceive the "concretion" of the spirit', then, Heidegger's 'existential analytic of Dasein, on the contrary, starts with the "concretion" of factically thrown existence itself in order to unveil temporality as that which primordially makes such existence possible.'

'But', Žižek cautions, Heidegger's 'reproach only holds if we ignore how both sides, the phenomenal "for itself" of the natural consciousness and the "for us" of the subterranean conceptual work, are caught up in the groundless, vertiginous abyss of a repeated loss.'[145]

> The "transcendental pain" is not only the pain the natural consciousness experiences, the pain of being separated from its truth; it is also the painful awareness that this truth itself is non-All, inconsistent. Which brings us back to Heidegger's claim that Hegel fails to include the phenomenal experience of negativity: what if negativity names precisely the gap in the order of phenomenality, something which does *not* (and can never) appear? Not because it is a transcendental gesture which by definition eludes the phenomenal level, but because it is the paradoxical, difficult-to-think negativity which cannot be subsumed under any agent (experiential or not)—what Hegel calls "self-relating negativity," a negativity which precedes all positive grounding and whose negative gesture of withdrawal opens up the space for all positivity.

These simple points (which announced themselves again in this period in the pen of Althusser) allow us to make one very simple criticism of *Sein und Zeit*; *there is no ultimate truth of the relationship between temporality and being, just continual contestations over the questions involved.* Those cycles of dialectical loss which precisely produced Heidegger were the things he most bemoaned, and for that reason his early work seems just good compost – the most beautiful manifestation of dialectics certainly, *but beautiful only for its utter failure*. Heidegger and Nietzsche seem to me the two thinkers who grappled most directly with Hegel (and I hope my admiration for them is reflected), but I find no evidence whatsoever that either ever fully came to terms with the uncomfortable fact 'that truth itself is non-All, inconsistent'; why, of course, would anyone not fight this basic point (I admire them for doing so). Yet Hegelian ontology *still moves*, rupturing its predecessors.[146] When we believe, as both Nietzsche and Heidegger surely did, that we transcend negativity (even for a moment), *this is when negativity as constituted by some abyssal dialectic we will never properly glimpse 'hath thee in thrall!'*[147] This leaves a definitional problem to mop up; what, then, is the point of anything (loving another person, doing philosophy or cooking beef stew), if what determines our lives is not (as Nietzsche thought) an under-theorized account of the connection between 'being' and 'becoming or (as Heidegger thought) the socio-structural determinations embodied by this Nietzschean problem? The answer is simple and liberating: *abyssal dialectics is the only thing that can produce happiness/meaning and all that ever has*.

[145] Žižek, *Less*, p. 869.
[146] ibid., p. 5.
[147] Mark Sandy, *Poetics of Self and Form in Keats and Shelley. Nietzschean Subjectivity and Genre* (Aldershot, 2005), p. 49.

There is a precedent for Heidegger's failure; 'the root of what Hegel calls "negativity"', Žižek begins a passage, 'is (our awareness of) the future: the future is what is not (yet), the power of negativity is ultimately identical to the power of time itself, this force which corrodes every firm identity.'[148]

> The proper temporality of a human being is thus not that of linear time, but that of engaged existence: a man projects his future and then actualizes it by way of a detour through past resources. This "existential" root of negativity is, according to Koyré, obfuscated by Hegel's system, which abolishes the primacy of the future and presents its entire content as the past "sublated" in its logical form—the standpoint adopted here is not that of engaged subjectivity, but that of Absolute Knowing. A similar critique of Hegel was deployed by Alexandre Kojève and Jean Hyppolite: what they all try to formulate is a tension or antagonism at the very core of Hegel's thought which remains unthought by Hegel—not for accidental reasons, but necessarily, which is why, precisely, *this antagonism cannot be dialecticized*, resolved or "sublated" through dialectical mediation. What all these philosophers offer is thus a critical "schizology" of Hegel.

Foucault was the exemplary Heideggerian; 'for me', Foucault once commented in a famous interview, 'Heidegger has always been the essential philosopher.'[149]

> I began by reading Hegel, then Marx, and I set out to read Heidegger in 1951 or 1952; then in 1952 or 1953—I don't remember any more—I read Nietzsche. I still have here the notes that I took when I was reading Heidegger. I've got tons of them. And they are much more important than the ones I took on Hegel and Marx. My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger. … It is possible that if I had not read Heidegger, I would not have read Nietzsche. I had tried to read Nietzsche in the fifties but Nietzsche alone did not appeal to me—whereas Nietzsche and Heidegger: that was a philosophical shock.

We can use a major work by Foucault to illustrate how, for the frustrated Heideggerian scholar, 'the phenomenal experience of negativity [is] something which does *not* (and can never) appear'.[150] In the 1975 *Naissance de la prison* [Discipline And Punish. The birth of the prison], Foucault 'consider[s] the disappearance of torture as a public spectacle' (or rather its libidinal and symbolic sublimation/distantiation within the contours of the Weberian state).[151] What we get is the oft-fetishized genealogical 'interpretation of Aristotle's essay on time, … chosen as providing a way of *discriminating* the basis and the limitations of the ancient science of Being'.[152] There is a chapter on 'The spectacle of the scaffold' in the Romantic era, which we can usefully contrast with a chapter on 'Complete and austere institutions' (which focuses on the succeeding decades).[153] The conclusion is that 'punishment that was not in the least ashamed of being "atrocious" was replaced by

[148] Žižek, *Less*, p. 866; Žižek acknowledges his debt here to Catherine Malabou, *La chambre du milieu* (Paris, 2009).
[149] William V. Spanos, *Heidegger and Criticism: Retrieving the Cultural Politics of Destruction* (Minneapolis MN, 1993), p. 153.
[150] Žižek, *Less*, p. 869.
[151] Michel Foucault, *Discipline And Punish. The birth of the prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London, 1991), p. 7.
[152] Heidegger, *Sein*, §26/p. 48.
[153] Foucault, *Discipline*, pp. 32-69 and 231-256.

punishment that was to claim the honour of being "humane"'.[154] 'It would not be true', Foucault stresses, 'to say that the prison was born with the new [legislative] codes.'[155]

> The prison form antedates its systematic use in the penal system. It had already been constituted outside the legal apparatus when, throughout the social body, procedures were being elaborated for distributing individuals, fixing them in space, classifying them, extracting from them the maximum in time and forces, training their bodies, coding their continuous behaviour, maintaining them in perfect visibility, forming around them an apparatus of observation, registration and recording, constituting on them a body of knowledge that is accumulated and centralized. The general form of an apparatus intended to render individuals docile and useful, by means of precise work upon their bodies, indicated the prison institution, before the law ever defined it as the penalty *par excellence*.

And yet we should rigorously set what we understand to be Foucault's intentions with the logical likelihood of his attaining it (which is to say nil); he has properly thought the Heideggerian problem (which is to his credit) – he has properly assimilated the uncertainty of the relationship between temporality and emergent ontology. What he has decidedly *not* thought, is that the abyssal tear which structures this uncertainty (*and, indeed, whatever formal truth does exist about this relationship*) is not a positive feature. This abyssal tear (what Lacan helpfully called 'the Real') is just that: *a tear*, of which nothing can be said.[156] To truly think the character and formal implications of such a void is, I claim, impossible. This is hardly some kind of worthless mysticism; it takes great effort and patience to even begin to demonstrate that something exists which cannot be seen except by its libidinal reverberations, and the effort to do so (encompassing, as Foucault believed, Nietzsche and Heidegger) has been long and arduous. I repeat Žižek's injunction;

> The intersection between reason and drive is best signalled by the fact that Freud uses the same formulation for both: the voice of reason or of the drive is often silent, slow, but it persists forever. This intersection is our only hope.[157]

'What separates dialectics proper from its cognitivist [Heideggerian] version', seemingly, 'is the way the subject's position of enunciation is included, inscribed, into the process: the cognitivist [falsely] speaks from the safe position of the excluded observer who knows the relativity and limitation of all human knowledge, including his own.'[158]

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[154] ibid., p. 57.
[155] ibid., p. 231.
[156] Žižek, *Less*, p. 782; 'Reality is a semblant in the sense that its structure already materializes a certain fantasy which obfuscates the Real of social antagonism.'
[157] ibid., p. 1010.
[158] Slavoj Žižek, *The Fright of Real Tears. Krzysztof Kieślowski Between Theory and Post-Theory* (London, 2001), p. 15; we get a little taste of the cognitivist brand of dialectics in Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 1997), pp. 252-3; 'It is right and proper', Evans begins, 'that postmodernist theorists and critics should force historians to rethink the categories and assumptions with which they work, and to justify the manner in which they practise their discipline. But post-modernism it itself one group of theories among many, and as contestable as all the rest. For my own part, I remain optimistic that objective historical knowledge is both desirable and attainable. So when Patrick Joyce tells us that social history is dead, and Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth declares that time is a fictional construct, and Roland Barthes announces that all the world's a text, and Hans Kellner wants historians to stop behaving as if we were researching into things that actually happened, and

'In his *Histoire de la folie* [*à l'âge classique*]', Žižek tells us, 'Foucault dedicated three or four pages to the passage in the *Meditations* in which Descartes arrives at *cogito ergo sum*.'[159]

> Searching for the absolutely certain foundation of knowledge, Descartes analyses the main forms of delusion: delusions of the senses and sense perception, the illusions of madness, dreams. He ends with the most radical delusion imaginable, the hypothesis that everything that we experience is not true, but a universal dream, an illusion staged by an evil genius (*malin genie*). From here, he arrives at the certainty of the *cogito* (I think): even if I can doubt everything, even if all I see is an illusion, I cannot doubt that I think all this, so the *cogito* is the absolutely certain starting point for philosophy. Foucault's objection here is that Descartes does not really confront madness, but rather avoids thinking it: he *excludes* madness from the domain of reason. In the Classical Age, Reason is thus based on the exclusion of madness: the very existence of the category "madness" is historically determined, along with its opposite "reason"; that is, it is determined through power relations. Madness in the modern sense is not directly a phenomenon we can observe, but a discursive construct which emerges at a certain historical moment, together with its double, Reason in the modern sense.

Pivoting off from demonstrating Foucault's failure as a consequence of his Phenomenological influence, Žižek shows us how Jacques Derrida did, at least, manage to think more innovatively (though still inconsistently, as I shall argue). 'In [Derrida's] reading of *Histoire de la folie*', we hear, 'Derrida focused on these four pages on Descartes which, for him, provided the key to the entire book.'[160]

Diane Purkiss says that we should just tell stories without bothering whether or not they were true, and Frank Ankersmit swears that we can never know anything at all about the past so we might as well confine ourselves to studying other historians, and Keith Jenkins proclaims that all history is just naked ideology designed to get historians power and money in big university institutions run by the bourgeoisie, I will look humbly at the past and say despite them all: it really happened, and we really can, if we are very scrupulous and careful and self-critical, find out how it happened and reach some tenable though always less than final conclusions about what it all meant.'

[159] Žižek, *Less*, pp. 328-9; Michel Foucault, *Madness And Civilization. A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (London, 1999), p. 108; 'To say that madness is dazzlement is to say that the madman sees the daylight, the same daylight as the man of reason (both live in the same brightness); but seeing this same daylight, and nothing but this daylight and nothing in it, he sees it as a void, as night, as nothing; for him the shadows are the way to perceive daylight. Which means that, seeing the night and the nothingness of the night, he does not see at all. And believing he sees, he admits as realities the hallucinations of his imagination and all the multitudinous population of night. That is why delirium and dazzlement are in a relation which constitutes the essence of madness, exactly as truth and light, in their fundamental relation, constitute classical reason.

In this sense, the Cartesian formula of doubt is certainly the great exorcism of madness. Descartes closes his eyes and plugs up his ears the better to see the true brightness of essential daylight; thus he is secured against the dazzlement of the madman who, opening his eyes, sees only night, and not seeing at all, believes he sees when he imagines.'

[160] ibid., p. 329; Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London, 2009), pp. 39-40; 'In writing a history of madness', Derrida says, 'Foucault has attempted−and this is the greatest merit, but also the very infeasibility of his book−to write a history of madness *itself*. Of madness itself. That is, by letting madness speak for itself, Foucault wanted madness to be the *subject* of his book in every sense of the word: its theme and its first-person narrator, its author, madness speaking about itself. Foucault wanted to write a history of madness itself, that is madness speaking on the basis of its own experience and under its own authority, and not a history of madness described from within the language of reason, the language of psychiatry *on* madness−the agonistic and rhetorical dimensions of the preposition *on* overlapping here−on madness already crushed beneath psychiatry, dominated, beaten to the ground, interned, that is to say, madness made into an onject and exiled as the other of a language and a historical meaning which have been confused with logos itself. "A history not of psychiatry," Foucault says, "but of madness itself, in its most vibrant state, before being captured by knowledge."'

> Through a detailed analysis, he tries to demonstrate that, far from excluding madness, Descartes pushes it to the extreme: universal doubt, where I suspect that the entire world is an illusion, is the greatest madness imaginable. Out of this universal doubt the *cogito* emerges: even if everything is an illusion, I can still be sure that I think. Madness is thus not excluded by the *cogito*: it is not that the *cogito* is not mad, but the *cogito is true even if I am totally mad*. Extreme doubt, the hypothesis of universal madness, is not external to philosophy, but strictly internal to it, a hyperbolic moment, the moment of madness, which grounds philosophy. Of course, Descartes later "domesticates" this radical excess with his image of man as a thinking substance, dominated by reason; he constructs a philosophy which is clearly historically conditioned. But the excess, the hyperbole of universal madness, is not itself historical; it is the excessive moment which grounds philosophy in all its historical forms. Madness is thus not excluded by philosophy, it is internal to it. Of course, every philosopher tries to control this excess, to repress it–but in repressing it, it represses its own innermost foundation: "Philosophy is perhaps the reassurance given against the anguish of being mad at the point of greatest proximity to madness."

Though Derrida made this fundamental step that Foucault did not, we should be similarly wary of swallowing Derrida too directly; there is so much of value in, for example and among many other things, his 1988 essay *Signature Event Context*, yet he fails to give his observations the delicate twist that would allow us to deploy them in interesting ways. 'Every sign', he suggests, 'linguistic or nonlinguistic, spoken or written (in the current sense of this opposition), in a small or large unit, can be *cited*, put between quotation marks; in so doing it can break with every given context, engendering an infinity of new contexts in a manner which is absolutely illimitable.'[161] 'This does not imply', so the analysis goes, 'that the mark is valid outside of a context, but on the contrary that there are only contexts without any center or absolute anchoring [*ancrage*].' All this is utterly convincing; the dictatorship implied by the common notion of authorship is precisely what can structure opportunity (though of course it may also do the opposite).[162] The problem with Derrida's point, though, is that *we precisely never experience our reality as fetishistic, esoteric or artificial, despite the fact that this is simply what it formally is*.[163] Those notions to which we arrive by a process of cataclysmic loss, fluctuation and contingency are universalized by us into something concrete; we are prone (condemned by our psychology) to de-temporalize

[161] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston IL, 1988), p. 12.
[162] Žižek, *Sublime*, pp. 88-9; 'Let us take the Laclau/Mouffe project of radical democracy: here, we have an articulation of particular struggles (for peace, ecology, feminism, human rights, and so on), none of which pretends to be the "Truth", the last Signified, the "true Meaning" of all the others; but the title "radical democracy" itself indicates how the very possibility of their articulation implies the "nodal", determining role of a certain struggle which, precisely as a particular struggle, outlines the horizon of all the other struggles. This determining role belongs, of course, to democracy, to "democratic invention": according to Laclau and Mouffe, all other struggles (socialist, feminist …) could be conceived as the gradual radicalization, extension, application of the democratic project to new domains (of economic relations, of the relations between sexes …). The dialectical paradox lies in the fact that the particular struggle playing a hegemonic role, far from enforcing a violent suppression of the differences, opens the very space for the relative autonomy of the particular struggles: the feminist struggle, for example, is made possible only through reference to democratic-egalitarian political discourse.'
[163] Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology. and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt (London, 1977), p. 115; 'Metaphysics grounds an age, in that through a specific interpretation of what is and through a specific comprehension of truth it gives to that age the basis upon which it is essentially formed.'

intermediate metaphysical conclusions which are inherently temporal in constitution.[164] Admittedly, Derrida does account for this *in part*; 'If we take the notion of writing in its currently accepted sense', he outlines, 'it can only be seen as a *means of communication*'.[165]

> The meaning or the contents of the semantic message would thus be transmitted, *communicated*, by different *means*, by more powerful technical mediations, over a far greater distance, but still within a medium that remains fundamentally continuous and self-identical, a homogenous element through which the unity and wholeness of meaning would not be affected in its essence. Any alteration would therefore be accidental.
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> The system of this interpretation (which is also, in a certain manner, *the* system of interpretation, or in any case of all hermeneutical interpretation), however currently accepted it may be, or inasmuch as it is current, like common sense, has been *represented* through the history of philosophy. I would even go so far as to say that it is the interpretation of writing that is peculiar and proper to philosophy.

He gets closer still with his poetic, deconstructive means of writing (exemplified in the 1993 *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning & the New International*), certainly influenced by and paralleling Heidegger's later inclination towards poetic forms. He does not, however, (and this is crucial) *represent or re-assess his own project in light of the merits of his own analysis*. He gives us no effective sense of a trajectory for future writing.

We can, instead, turn to a new group of thinkers for help in characterising what the best kind of philosophy that we can do is, how it should function and where it might go. This new group of thinkers is that described in Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman's 2011 edited book *The Speculative Turn. Continental Materialism and Realism*. The editors present their findings (as I have in this first introductory chapter) as the product of a Heideggerian *moving-through* of previous philosophy, as the Holmes to the initial Watson.[166]

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[164] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 60; 'Hegel developed his theory of repetition apropos of the case of Julius Caesar's death: when Caesar consolidated his personal power and strengthened it to imperial proportions, he acted "objectively" (in itself) in accordance with historical truth, historical necessity – the Republican form was losing its validity, the only form of government which could save the unity of the Roman state was monarchy, a state based upon the will of a single individual; but it was still the Republic which prevailed formally (for itself, in the opinion of the people) – the Republic "was still alive only because she forgot that she was already dead", to paraphrase the famous Freudian dream of the father who did not know he was already dead: "*His father was alive once more and was talking to him in his usual way, but* (the remarkable thing was that) *he had really died, only he did not know it*" (Freud, 1977, p. 559).' We need only look to the way Hobbes and Locke are represented commonsensically in the English tradition of political thought. We know that the basis on which Hobbes stressed the need for strong interventionist government (the observation that 'the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short') was, if true, reflective of a series of contingent excesses which necessarily crystallized eventually into firm formal notions. Locke's notion of property has been so firmly and effectively challenged by thinkers like Marx, Bakunin (or by Robert Nozick, who desired a minimal state 'limited to the narrow functions of protection against force, theft, fraud, enforcement of contracts, and so on') that I will not repeat that all here.

[165] Derrida, Limited, p. 3.

[166] Žižek, *Less*, p. 1; 'One should mention at least the "stupid" common-sense partners of the great detectives: Sherlock Holmes's Watson, Hercule Poirot's Hastings … These figures are there not only to serve as a contrast to and thus make more visible the detective's grandeur; they are indispensable for the detective's work. In one of the novels, Poirot explains to Hastings his role: immersed in his common sense, Hastings reacts to the crime scene the way the murderer who wanted to erase the traces of his act expected the public to react, and it is only

'The first wave of twentieth century continental thought in the Anglophone world', the contributors instruct, 'was dominated by phenomenology, with Martin Heidegger generally the most influential figure of the group.'[167]

> By the late 1970's, the influence of Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault had started to gain the upper hand, reaching its zenith a decade or so later. It was towards the mid-1990's that Gilles Deleuze entered the ascendant, shortly before his death in November 1995, and his star remains perfectly visible today. But since the beginning of the twenty-first century, a more chaotic and in some ways more promising situation has taken shape. Various intriguing philosophical trends, their bastions scattered across the globe, have gained adherents and started to produce a critical mass of emblematic works. While it is difficult to find a single adequate name to cover all of these trends, we propose "The Speculative Turn," as a deliberate counterpoint to the now tiresome "Linguistic Turn". The words "materialism" and "realism" in our subtitle clarify further the nature of the new trends, but also preserve a possible *distinction* between the material and the real.

'It has long been commonplace', as we have seen in this chapter (and I have dated this innovation from Kant and Hegel onwards, with genuine inconsistency introduced by Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Marx), 'to focus on discourse, text, consciousness, power, or ideas as what constitutes reality.'[168] 'Without deriding the significant contribution of these philosophies', I claim, 'something is clearly amiss in these trends.'

> In the face of the looming ecological catastrophe, and the increasing infiltration of technology into the everyday world (including our own bodies), it is not clear that the anti-realist position is equipped to face up to these developments. The danger is that the dominant anti-realist strain of continental philosophy has not only reached a point of decreasing returns, but that it now actively limits the capacities of philosophy in our time.

What, then, is my claim to knowledge regarding the vicissitudes of twentieth-century science and, in particular, its' most recent bright young thing (the metaphysical Theory-of-Everything) String Theory? The preceding paragraphs have exemplified the extreme anxiety that accompanies the doing of philosophy. We willingly incorporate a variety of inconsistencies, in the Althusserian sense, so that we may fight what seems to need to be fought. The inconsistency I willingly allow into my argumentation is the adherence to an Hegelian programme, on the wager that his insight (the 'species which is its own universal kind') may shine productive light on all the rest. I confront contemporary science, then, not as a Deconstructivist might, with suspicion on the mind.[169] Instead, I confront it *to damage it*.

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in this way, by including in his analysis the expected reaction of the common-sense "Big Other," that the detective can solve the crime.'

[167] Levi Bryant, Nick Srnicek and Graham Harman, 'Towards a Speculative Philosophy', in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn. Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne, 2011), pp. 1-2.

[168] ibid., pp. 2-3; On the ecological conundrum the three contributors highlight, see Timothy Cooper, 'The politics of environmental history', *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 36, no. 3 (2010), pp. 349-352; On the bio-political issue, see Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: the Protection and Negation of Life* [*Immunitas: Protezione e negazione della vita*], trans. *Segretariato Europeo Per Le Pubblicazioni Scientifiche* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 1-20 and Roberto Esposito, *Terms of the Political: Community, Immunity, Biopolitics* [*Termini della Politica. Communità, immunità, biopolitica*], trans. Rhiannon Noel Welch (New York NY, 2012), pp. 57-66.

[169] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 89.

I conclude my delving into post-Hegelian ontology by i) raising a fundamental problem of *being a Hegelian* in the post-modern constellation raised by Žižek and ii) foregrounding the Speculative philosophy of Quentin Meillassoux as a means to answer this particular problem. 'For we Hegelians', Žižek teaches, 'the crucial question … is this: where does Hegel stand with regard to [the] distinction between potentiality and virtuality?'[170] Potentiality, for me, implies the Hegelian vision as just the beginning; if *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (1807) represented some kind of 'tarrying' with abyssal negativity (the Lacanian Real) as such, we need not then somehow utilize Hegel's work as a blueprint by which to subsequently work.[171] 'Let us develop this point apropos of Gérard Lebrun's posthumously published *L'envers de la dialectique*, one of the most convincing and forceful attempts to demonstrate the impossibility of being a Hegelian today – and, for Lebrun, "today" stands under the sign of Nietzsche.'[172]

> Lebrun accepts that one cannot "refute" Hegel: the machinery of his dialectics is so all-encompassing that nothing is easier for Hegel than to demonstrate triumphantly how all such refutations are inconsistent, to turn them against themselves ("one cannot refute an eye disease," as Lebrun quotes Nietzsche approvingly). Most ridiculous among such critical refutations is, of course, the standard Marxist-evolutionist idea that there is a contradiction between Hegel's dialectical method – which demonstrates how every fixed determination is swept away by the movement of negativity, how every determinate shape finds its truth in its annihilation – and Hegel's system: if the destiny of everything is to pass away in the eternal movement of self-sublation, does the same not hold for the system itself? Is not Hegel's own system a temporary, historically relative formation which will be overcome by the progress of knowledge? Anyone who finds such a refutation convincing is not to be taken seriously as a reader of Hegel.
>
> How, then, can one move beyond Hegel? Lebrun's solution goes by way of Nietzschean historical philology: one should bring to light the "eminently infra-rational" lexical choices which are grounded in how living beings cope with threats to their vital interests. Before Hegel sets in motion his dialectical machinery, which "swallows up" all content and elevates it to its truth by destroying it in its immediate being, a complex network of semantic decisions has already been taken imperceptibly. In uncovering these, one begins to "unveil the obverse of the dialectics. Dialectics is also partial. It also obfuscates its pre-suppositions. It is not the meta-discourse it pretends to be with regard to the philosophies of Understanding." Lebrun's Nietzsche is decidedly anti-Heideggerian: for Lebrun, Heidegger re-philosophizes Nietzsche by way of interpreting the Will to Power as a new ontological First Principle. More than Nietzschean, Lebrun's approach may appear Foucauldian: what he aims at is an "archaeology of the Hegelian knowledge," its genealogy in concrete life-practices.

[170] Žižek, *Less*, p. 231.

[171] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §32/p. 19; 'Death, if that is what we want to call this non-actuality, is of all things the most dreadful, and to hold fast what is dead requires the greatest strength. Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do. But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being. This power is identical with what we earlier called the Subject, which by giving determinateness an existence in its own element supersedes abstract immediacy, i.e. the immediacy which barely is, and thus is authentic substance: that being or immediacy whose mediation is not outside of it but which is this mediation itself.'

[172] Žižek, *Less*, p. 194.

Lebrun becomes cynical about the current possibility of being a Hegelian (and does as much understanding to a potentially productive reading of Hegel as the Marxist-evolutionists), because (unlike Meillassoux) he fails to adequately come to terms with the necessity, when attempting a revival of Hegel, of being *simultaneously a thinker of potentiality and virtuality*. *Because* dialectics is always partial, *because* it always obfuscates its own presuppositions, it is worthless to attempt archaeologies of the Hegelian knowledge; the German Idealist achievement was not in determining how things *are*, but *how things are when they simultaneously are not*. Meillassoux is optimistic about giving Hegel a contemporary post-modern reading because he understandings that potentiality is only ever a kind of virtuality. 'Meillassoux's uniqueness', Bryant, Srnicek and Harman tell, 'lies in showing how correlationism (the idea that being and thought are only accessible in their co-relation) is self-refuting – that if we take it seriously, it already presupposes a knowledge of the absolute.' 'Yet unlike the other Speculative Realists', ominously, exhilaratingly, 'Meillassoux is not dismissive of correlationism, but seeks to radicalize it from within. From the facticity of our particular correlation, Meillassoux derives the necessity of contingency or "hyperchaos": the apparently counterintuitive result that anything is possible from one moment to the next.'[173]

> The notion of virtuality permits us, then, to reverse the signs, making of every radical irruption the manifestation, not of a transcendent principle of becoming (a miracle, the sign of a Creator), but of a time that nothing subtends (an emergence, the sign of the non-All). We can then grasp what is signified by the impossibility of tracing a genealogy of novelties directly to a time before their emergence: not the incapacity of reason to discern hidden potentialities, but, quite on the contrary, the capacity of reason to accede to the inffectivity [sic] of an All of potentialities which would pre-exist their emergence. In every radical novelty, time makes manifest that it does not actualize a germ of the past, but that it brings forth a virtuality which did not pre-exist in any way, in any totality inaccessible to time, its own advent.[174]

'In other words', Žižek says, 'we should turn around the usual historicist perspective of understanding an event through its context and genesis.'[175]

> Radical emancipatory outbursts cannot be understood in this way: instead of analysing them as part of the continuum of past and present, we should bring in the perspective of the future, taking them as limited, distorted (sometimes even perverted) fragments of a utopian future that lies dormant in the present as its hidden potential. According to Deleuze, in Proust "people and things occupy a place in time which is incommensurable with the one they have in space": the famous madeleine is here in place, but this is not its true time. In a similar way, one should learn the art of recognizing, from an engaged subjective position, elements which are here, in our space, but whose time is the emancipated future, the future of the Communist Idea.
>
> …
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> Signs from the future are not constitutive but regulative in the Kantian sense; their status is subjectively mediated; that is, they are not discernable from any neutral "objective" study of history, but only from an engaged position – following them involves an existential wager in Pascal's sense.

[173] Bryant, Srnicek and Harman, 'Speculative', p. 8.
[174] Quentin Meillassoux, 'Potentiality and Virtuality', trans. Robin Mackay, in L. Bryant, N. Srnicek and G. Harman (eds.), *The Speculative Turn. Continental Materialism and Realism* (Melbourne, 2011), p. 235.
[175] Slavoj Žižek, *The Year Of Dreaming Dangerously* (London, 2012), pp. 128-9.

2. 'One divides into two'; Twentieth Century science as aporia.[176]

There was a period, around the time of the Cultural Revolution, that Mao emerged as perhaps the brightest and most exciting revivalist of Hegel (and Žižek acknowledges this, as I will show); the Chinese philosopher Yang Xianzhen, in 1964, resuscitated the old Marxist 'overcoming' (so-called) of the Hegelian dialectical mode, recasting it in materialist terms. The idea with which he disagreed was formulated by Lenin in his *Philosophical Notebooks*, which went as follows: 'the splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts … is the essence', Lenin believed, 'of dialectics'.[177] Lenin (the assiduous student of Hegel who in 1914-15 released the notebook *Abstract of Hegel's Science of Logic*) had turned on its head, in these years, the lazy summary of Hegelian dialectics propagated by Rosenkranz (the 'thesis, antithesis, synthesis' model which in fact never appears in Hegel).[178] It was to Rosenkranz (and Rosenkranz's sense of resolution as an inherent feature of dialectics) that Xianzhen returned, sparking a backlash from the Maoist faction (led by Ai Siqi) who took Xianzhen to mean that, in a completed Marxist future, capitalism and socialism could merge. Žižek shows us how Mao remained a much more interesting thinker than all this; 'with regard to politics', he writes, 'Freud's ultimate position is the same as Lacan's: psychoanalysis does not provide new positive political programs for action;'[179]

> its ultimate achievement, the "bottom line" of analysis, is to have discerned the contours of a "negativity," a disruptive force, which poses a threat to every stable collective link. Since a political act

[176] Žižek, *Less*, p. 5.
[177] Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, 'On the Question of Dialectics, Lenin's *Collected Works*, 4th Edition, Moscow, 1976, Volume 38, pp. 357-361, trans. Clemence Dutt', *Marxists.org https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/cons-logic/summary.htm* (29 November 2013).
[178] Gustav E. Mueller, 'The Hegel Legend of "Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis"', in J. Steward (ed.), *The Hegel Myths and Legends; Northwestern University Studies in Phenomenology & Existential Philosophy* (Evanston IL, 1996), pp. 301-5; Mueller's article lists, to name just a few, W. T. Stace, Hermann Glockner, Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus (Professor of Philosophy at the University of Kiel in 1835-6) and Marx (so importantly), as perpetuators of what Richard Kroner calls 'a poor and not even helpful abstraction of what is really going on in Hegel's logic'. 'Well', Mueller asks, 'shall we keep this "poor and not helpful abstraction" in our attic because "some historians" have used it as their rocking-horse?' 'We rather agree', he repeats, 'with the conclusion of Johannes Flugge: "Dialectic is *not* the scheme of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis imputed to Hegel."' 'Other left-Hegelians', Mueller tells us, 'such as Arnold Ruge, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Max Stirner use "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" just as little as Hegel', and even 'in the first important book about Hegel by his student, intimate friend and first biographer, Karl Rosenkranz (*Hegels Leben*, 1844), "thesis, antithesis, synthesis" are conspicuous by their absence'. 'We should not neglect the fact', Derrida said in Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman's 2002 film *Derrida*, 'that some biographies – written by people that have authority in the academy – finally invest this authority in a book, which for centuries, sometimes after the death of an author, represents the truth. The "truth". Say someone interested in biography writes: *The Life and Works of Heidegger*, well documented, apparently consistent, and it's the only one, published under the authority of a good press, okay, and then Heidegger's image, Heidegger's life image is fixed and stabilized for centuries. That's why would say that sometimes the one who reads a text by a philosopher, for instance, one tiny paragraph, and interprets it in a rigorous and inventive and powerfully deciphering fashion, is more of a real biographer than the one who knows the whole story.'
[179] Žižek, *Less*, pp. 963-4

> intervenes in a state of things, simultaneously creating instability and trying to establish a new positive order, one can say that psychoanalysis confronts us with the zero-level of politics, a pre-political "transcendental" condition of possibility of politics, a gap which opens up the space for the political act to intervene in, a gap which is saturated by the political effort to impose a new order. In Lacanian terms, psychoanalysis confronts us with the zero-level at which "nothing is taking place but the place itself," while politics proper intervenes in this place with a new Master-Signifier, imposing fidelity on it, legitimizing us in "enforcing" on reality the project sustained by this Master-Signifier.
>
> Consequently, one can say that, with regard to the gap or antagonism which defines the human condition, the relationship between psychoanalysis and politics is that of a parallax split, of a missed encounter between a "not yet" and a "too late": psychoanalysis opens up the gap before the act, while politics already sutures the gap, introducing a new consistency, imposing a new Master-Signifier. But does every politics, every political act, necessarily involve a self-blinding cover-up of the gap? What if there is no pure experience of the gap, what if every version of the gap is already viewed from the standpoint of a certain political engagement? So there is a conservative-tragic celebration of the gap (we are ultimately doomed to fail, heroic acts can only temporarily postpone the final fall, the most we can do is fall in an authentic way), a liberal pragmatic assertion of the gap (democracy admits the imperfection of our societies, there is no final solution to our woes, just a more or less successful pragmatic tinkering), and the radical-leftist externalization of struggle (Mao: "class struggle will go on forever"). Each of these positions can also be formulated in terms of its own specific denial of the antagonism: the conservative organic harmony, the liberal balancing of conflicts through the translation of antagonism into agonistic competition, the leftist post-revolutionary paradise-to-come.
>
> But, again, are these three versions of the gap equal? Is not the leftist version to be privileged, insofar as it is the only one to conceive the gap not only as struggle but as an immanent antagonism or discord constitutive of the social dimension itself? This means that here, too, we should posit the coincidence of opposites: the gap is visible "as such" only from the standpoint of extreme leftist engagement. Is this parallax gap, this extreme coincidence of opposites (pure form and the contingent material excess which gives body to it, wave and particle in quantum physics, universality and full partisan engagement, etc., up to and including fidelity to a universal Cause and intimate love), the dead-point of the "dialectic in suspense" (as Benjamin put it), a case of pure "contradiction" (or, rather, antinomy) which no dialectical mediation or reconciliation can overcome? The parallax gap is, on the contrary, *the very form of the "reconciliation" of opposites*: one simply has to recognize the gap. Universality is "reconciled" with partisan political engagement in the guise of the engagement which stands for universality (then proletarian emancipatory engagement); pure form is "reconciled" with its content in the guise of the formless excess which stands for form as such; or, in Hegel's political vision, the universal Rational State is "reconciled" with particular content in the guise of the Monarch, whose legitimization is simultaneously purely symbolic (his title) and "irrational" (biological: his birth alone justifies his being a monarch).

Badiou rightly pillories Deleuze for his basic failure to come to terms with the properly Hegelian insight that dialectics is forever formally-inconsistent; in his and Guattari's insistence on an essential 'surface-plane' from which all things rhizomatically ascend, Badiou contends, Deleuze provides (in professed diversity) a monotonous insistence on *the same*.[180] Žižek makes a similar argument in *Organs without Bodies. On Deleuze and Consequences.*[181]

[180] Badiou, *Logiques*, pp. 386-7; 'Like all the philosophers of vital continuity', Badiou begins his criticism, 'Deleuze cannot maintain the gap between sense, the transcendental law of appearing, and truths as exceptions.' 'At times', Badiou says, 'he even seems to equate the two terms. … Deleuze strongly underscored the nature of the philosophical combat in which the fate of the world "event" is played out: "A twofold struggle has as its object to stop every dogmatic confusion of the event with essence, but also every empiricist confusion of the event with the accident". There's nothing to add. Except that, when he thinks the event as the intensified and contentious result of becoming, Deleuze is an empiricist (which after all he always claimed to be). And that, when he reabsorbs the event into the One of the "unlimited *Aiôn*, of the Infinitive in which it subsists and insists", in the always-there of the Virtual, he has a tendency to dogmatism.'

[181] Slavoj Žižek, *Organs without Bodies. On Deleuze and Consequences* (London, 2004), pp. 45-6, 48; 'In his autobiography', Žižek begins, 'Somerset Maughan reports how he was always an avid reader of great philosophers and found in all of them something interesting to learn, a way to get in contact with them – in all of

Having foregrounded what I consider to be the appropriate and useful memorialization of Hegel, I want now to historicize the emergence of Superstring Theory in the sense that it reflected/expressed a wish similar to that of Yang Xianzhen to resolve two into one. Greene sets a tone here for the critical aporia which constituted much of Twentieth Century science; 'for more than half a century – even in the midst of some of the greatest scientific achievements in history – physicists', he says, 'have been quietly aware of a dark cloud looming on a distant horizon.'[182]

> The problem is this: There are two foundational pillars upon which modern physics rests. One is Albert Einstein's general relativity, which provides a theoretical framework for understanding the universe on the largest of scales: stars, galaxies, clusters of galaxies, and beyond to the immense expanse of the universe itself. The other is quantum mechanics, which provides a theoretical framework for understanding the universe on the smallest of scales: molecules, atoms, and all the way down to subatomic particles like electrons and quarks. Through years of research, physicists have

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them *except Hegel*, who remained totally foreign and impenetrable to him. The same figure of Hegel as the absolute Otherness, the philosopher from whom one has to differentiate oneself ("whatever this means, it is clear that it is incompatible with Hegelian absolute knowledge"), persists in contemporary philosophy up to Deleuze. Besides Hegel, there are three other philosophers who are obviously hated by Deleuze: Plato, Descartes, and Kant. However, with the last three, he nonetheless finds a way to read them "against the grain," to discover in their very theoretical practice procedures (of conceptual invention, of "staging" concepts) that offer a way to undermine their "official position. … However, there is no such operation with Hegel; Hegel is "thoroughly bad," unredeemable. Deleuze characterizes his reading of philosophers as guided by the tendency

> to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself as taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed.

Perhaps this unexpected reference to the *philosophical* practice of buggery provides the best exemplification of what Deleuze is effectively aiming at through his insistence on the univocity of Being: an attitude of perceiving disparate and incompatible events or propositions ("immaculate conception," "buggery," "philosophical interpretation") as occurring at the same ontological level. It is therefore crucial to perceive how the proper attitude towards propositions like "taking a philosopher from behind" is not one of an obscene, condescending, and dismissive sneer but one of completely naïve seriousness.

…

Why should we not', Žižek asks, 'risk the act of taking from behind Deleuze himself and engage in the practice of the *Hegelian buggery of Deleuze?* Therein resides the ultimate aim of the present booklet. What monster would have emerged if we were to stage the ghastly scene of the spectre of Hegel taking Deleuze from behind? How would the offspring of *this* immaculate conception look? Is Hegel really the one philosopher who is "unbuggerable," who cannot be taken from behind? What if, on the contrary, Hegel is the greatest and unique self-buggerer in the history of philosophy? What if the "dialectical method" is the one of permanent self-buggering? Sade once wrote that the ultimate sexual pleasure is for a man to penetrate himself anally (having a long and plastic enough penis that can be twisted around even when erect, so that it is possible to do it) – perhaps this closed circle of self-buggery is the "truth" of the Hegelian Circle. (There is, nonetheless, a distinction between Deleuze and Hegel-Lacan with regard to practising philosophy as buggery: while Deleuze himself does the act of buggery, Hegel and Lacan adopt the position of a perverse observer who stages the spectacle of buggery and then watches for what the outcome will be. Lacan thus stages the scene of Sade taking Kant from behind – this is how one has to read "Kant *with* Sade" – to see the monster of Kant-Sade being born; and Hegel also is the observer of a philosophical edifice buggering itself, thus generating the monster of another philosophy.)'

[182] Greene, *Elegant*, p. 3.

> experimentally confirmed to almost unimaginable accuracy virtually all predictions made by each of these theories. But these same theoretical tools inexorably lead to another disturbing conclusion: As they are currently formulated, general relativity and quantum mechanics *cannot both be right*. The two theories underlying the tremendous progress of physics during the last hundred years – progress that has explained the expansion of the heavens and the fundamental structure of matter – are mutually incompatible.

'Can it really be', Greene sets up his straw-man, 'that the universe at its most fundamental level is divided, requiring one set of laws when things are large and a different, incompatible set when things are small?'[183]

> Superstring theory, a young upstart compared with the venerable edifices of quantum mechanics and general relativity, answers with a resounding no. Intense research over the past decade by physicists and mathematicians around the world has revealed that this new approach to describing matter at its most fundamental level resolves the tension between general relativity and quantum-mechanics. In fact, superstring theory shows more: Within this new framework, general relativity and quantum mechanics *require one another* for the theory to make sense. According to superstring theory, the marriage of the laws of the large and the small is not only happy but inevitable.

Superstring theory, Greene alleges, grew out of three crises (from which a scientific wholeness resolved itself into two then, apropos Xianzhen, homogenized into one again).[184]

There is simply no other place to start, either chronologically or ideologically, than the Swiss patent clerk Albert Einstein. 'During the last thirty years of his life', Brian Greene tells us, 'Einstein sought relentlessly for a so-called unified field theory–a theory capable of describing nature's forces within a single, all-encompassing, coherent, framework.'[185]

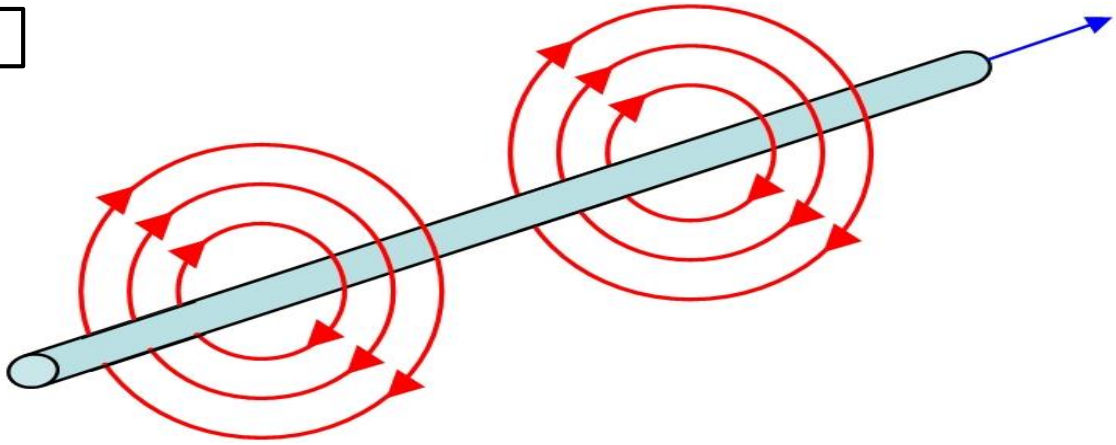
> Einstein was not motivated by the things we often associate with scientific undertakings, such as trying to explain this or that piece of experimental data. Instead, he was driven by a passionate belief that the deepest understanding of the universe would reveal its truest wonder: the simplicity and power of the principles on which it is based. Einstein wanted to illuminate the workings of the universe with a clarity never before achieved, allowing us to stand in awe of its sheer beauty and elegance.

The search for a unified field theory, of course, is decidedly nothing new, and this brief prelude traces the trajectory of attempts at its detection; as early as 1820, Kierkegaard's contemporary and fellow countryman Hans Christian Ørsted (*fig.* 16) realised that electric currents exerted forces on magnets. During (of all things) a lecture, he realised that the needle on a compass which was sitting on a table in front of him

[183] ibid., p. 4.
[184] ibid., p. 5.
[185] ibid., p. ix.

was deflecting. As part of his demonstrations, Ørsted was rapidly switching a battery on and off. Rushing back to his study after the lecture, Ørsted put together notes on the first conceptions of the electromagnetic force. Initially, he assumed that magnetic effects radiated in fractals from all sides of a wire carrying electric current (as with light and heat), but after further scrutiny, managed to show that electric current on a wire produces a circular magnetic field on its flowing trajectory (*fig*. 17).

17.



Yet electricity and magnetism were still thought, in the most important sense, to be completely unrelated phenomena. By 1831, though, Michael Faraday had already begun challenging this assumption; he observed that time-varying magnetic fields could autonomously induce electric current. In 1864, the scientific giant James Clerk Maxwell released a famous paper arguing a dynamical theory of the electromagnetic field. This was, impressively, the first example of a model able to encompass previously separate field theories into something more totalizing. Maxwell's 1861 paper *On Physical Lines of Force* had already introduced the notion of displacement, and this was used to derive the electromagnetic wave equation. 'The most obvious mechanical phenomenon in electrical and magnetical experiments', Maxwell began his paper, 'is the mutual action by which bodies in certain states set each other in motion while still at a sensible distance from each other.'[186]

> The first step, therefore, in reducing these phenomena into scientific form, is to ascertain the magnitude and direction of the force acting between the bodies, and when it is found that this force depends in a certain way upon the relative position of the bodies and on their electric or magnetic condition, it seems at first sight natural to explain the facts by assuming the existence of something either at rest or in motion in each body, constituting its electric or magnetic state, and capable of acting at a distance according to mathematical laws.
>
> In this way mathematical theories of statical electricity, of magnetism, of the mechanical action between conductors carrying currents, and of the induction of currents have been formed. In these theories the force acting between the two bodies is treated with reference only to the condition of the bodies and their relative position, and without any express consideration of the surrounding medium.
>
> These theories assume, more or less explicitly, the existence of substances the particles of which have the property of acting on one another at a distance by attraction or repulsion. The most complete

[186] James Clerk Maxwell, *A Dynamical Theory of the Electromagnetic Field*, Phil. Trans. R. Soc. London. January 1, 1865 – 155 459-512; doi:10.1098/rstl.1865.0008, p. 459.

> development of a theory of this kind is that of M.W. WEBER, who has made the same theory include electrostatic and electromagnetic phenomena.
> In doing so, however, he has found it necessary to assume that the force between two particles depends on their relative velocity, as well as on their distance.
> This theory, as developed by MM. W. WEBER and C. NEUMANN, is exceedingly ingenious, and wonderfully comprehensive in its application to the phenomena of statical electricity, electromagnetic attractions, induction of current and diamagnetic phenomena; and it comes to us with the more authority, as it has served to guide the speculations of one who has made so great an advance in the practical part of electric science, both by introducing a consistent system of units in electrical measurement, and by actually determining electrical quantities with an accuracy hitherto unknown.
> (2) The mechanical difficulties, however, which are involved in the assumption of particles acting at a distance with forces which depend on their velocities are such as to prevent me from considering this theory as an ultimate one though it may have been, and may yet be useful in leading to the coordination of phenomena.

'I have therefore', Maxwell said, 'preferred to seek an explanation of the fact in another direction, by supposing them to be produced by actions which go on in the surrounding medium as well as in the excited bodies, and endeavouring [sic] to explain the action between distant bodies without assuming the existence of forces capable of acting directly at sensible distances.' The significance of these arcane sentences is easy to miss; it is nothing less, than evidence of particularly the kind of scientific 'happening' to which Heidegger might respond. Until Faraday built on Maxwell's discoveries, electromagnetism was purely theoretical; once Faraday *did* build on it, however, the world literally did turn upside down.[187] By the period 1885-1890, Galileo Ferraris in Italy, Nikola Tesla in the United States, and Mikhail Dolivo-Dobrovolsky were competing furiously with each other to produce the first practical applications; the eventual result was the Alternate-Current induction motor. The result (this world turned upside down) was what historians now call the Second Industrial Revolution (first termed as such by Patrick Geddes in his 1910 work *Cities in Evolution*, but standardized for our mind today by David Landes in a 1966 essay and his 1972 *The Unbound Prometheus*).[188] Europe suddenly encountered early factory electrification, making possible

[187] Christopher Hill, *The world turned upside down: radical ideas during the English Revolution* (London, 1991), p. 384; 'There are two ways of looking at a revolution. We can observe the gestures which symbolize and focus whole ages of struggle – Sir John Hotham shutting the gates of Hull in the white face of Charles I; the women bringing up the ammunition at Lyme Regis; an axe flashing in the January sun outside Whitehall; Nayler riding into Bristol on his ass, with women strewing palms in his path. But there are also the longer, slower, profounder changes in men's ways of thinking, without which the heroic gestures would be meaningless. These elude us if we get too immersed in detail; we can appreciate the extent of the change only if we stand back to look at the beginning and the end of the revolution, if we can use such inaccurate terms about something which is always beginning and never ends. From the longer range we can appreciate the colossal transformations which ushered England into the modern world. And we can, perhaps, extend a little gratitude to all those nameless radicals who foresaw and worked for – not our modern world, but something far nobler, something yet to be achieved – the upside-down world.'

[188] Patrick Geddes, 'Cities in evolution: an introduction to the town planning movement and to the study of civics', *Archive.org* *http://www.archive.org/stream/citiesinevolutio00gedduoft/citiesinevolutio00gedduoft_djvu.txt* (1 November 2013); David Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge, 2003).

Fordist mass production and the physical production line itself. We should (as so often) go to the movies for the best history of what the totalizing dreaming of electromagnetic theoreticians *meant*; Christopher Nolan's 2006 *The Prestige* fictionalized Nikola Tesla (who, in the course of the movie, harnesses electromagnetic power to duplicate matter, *fig*. 18). In one stirring scene, Tesla (played by David Bowie) tries desperately to communicate to an obsessed admirer how fiercely the new totality he is trying to bring about is being resisted;

> You're familiar with the phrase "Man's reach exceeds his grasp"? It's a lie. Man's grasp exceeds his *nerve*. The only limits on scientific progress are those imposed by society. The first time I changed the world, I was hailed as a visionary. The second time I was asked politely to retire.[189]

And well the world might protest, perhaps; one thing Lacan teaches us is that (through the underhand operation of a few 'nodal signifiers'), the positive content of socialized ideology is sustained as long as it can be, before it is subsumed by one for which the conceptual work has 'always-already' been taking place.[190]

By 1905, Einstein had extracted one aspect of Maxwell's research (Maxwell's observation of the constancy of the speed of light) to essentially *unify* popular notions of the previously-dichotomised notions of space and time into 'spacetime'. 'In June 1905', Greene writes, 'twenty-six year old Albert Einstein submitted a technical article to the German *Annals of Physics* in which he came to grips with a paradox about light that had first troubled him as a teenager, some ten years earlier.'[191]

> Upon turning the final page of Einstein's manuscript, the editor of the journal, Max Planck, realized that the accepted scientific order had been overthrown. Without hoopla or fanfare, a patent clerk from

[189] *The Prestige*. Dir. Christopher Nolan. Warner Bros. 2006.
[190] Žižek, *Sublime*, pp. 56 & 95-97; a motif the interested historian often encounters in studying urban history (or at least histories of Western European 'modern'/Weberian states), is the extent to which such totalizing shifts of the Master-Signifier are most often resisted by those from lower social orders. A good example is the 'drive for cleanliness' in Nineteenth Century Britain. We might infer a popular sense of hierarchical justice among those lower orders, as in E. P. Thompson, 'The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century', *Past & Present*, No. 50 (1971), pp. 76-136; Thompson certainly seems to deploy Lacanian formulas.
[191] Greene, *Universe*, p. 23.

> Bern, Switzerland, had completely overturned the traditional notions of space and time and replaced them with a new conception whose properties fly in the face of everything we are familiar with from common experience.

How did Einstein problematize Maxwell's research? Greene can help us to understand here;

> In the mid-1800's, after a close study of the experimental work of the English physicist Michael Faraday, the Scottish physicist James Clerk Maxwell succeeded in uniting electricity and magnetism in the framework of the *electromagnetic field*. If you've ever been on a mountaintop just before a severe thunderstorm or stood close to a Van de Graaf generator, you have a visceral sense of what an electromagnetic field is, because you've felt it. In case you haven't, it is somewhat like a tide of electric and magnetic lines of force that permeate a region of space through which they pass. When you sprinkle iron filings near a magnet, for example, the orderly pattern they form traces out some of the invisible lines of magnetic force. When you take off a wool sweater on an especially dry day and hear a crackling sound and perhaps feel a momentary shock or two, you are witnessing evidence of electric lines of force generated by electric charges swept up by the fibers in your sweater. Beyond uniting these and all other electric and magnetic phenomena in one mathematical framework, Maxwell's theory showed – quite unexpectedly – that electromagnetic disturbances travel at a fixed and never-changing speed, a speed that turns out to equal that of light. From this, Maxwell realized that visible light itself is nothing but a particular kind of electromagnetic wave, one that is now understood to interact with chemicals in the retina, giving rise to the sensation of sight. Moreover (and this is crucial), Maxwell's theory also showed that all electromagnetic waves – visible light among them – are the epitome of the peripatetic traveller. They never stop. They never slow down. Light *always* travels at light speed.
>
> All is well and good until we ask, as the sixteen-year-old Einstein did, what happens if we chase after a beam of light, at light speed? Intuitive reasoning, rooted in Newton's laws of motion, tells us that we will catch up with the light waves and so they will appear stationary; light will stand still. But according to Maxwell's theory, and all reliable observations, there is simply no such thing as stationary light: no one has ever held a stationary clump of light in the palm of his or her hand. Hence the problem.[192]

'Think', Greene suggests, 'about a light beam as composed of tiny "packets" or "bundles" known as photons (a feature of light …).'[193]

> When we turn on a flashlight or a laser beam we are, in effect, shooting a stream of photons in whatever direction we point the device. … let's consider how the motion of a photon appears to someone who is moving. Imagine that your crazed friend has … a powerful laser. If she fires the laser toward you – and if you had the appropriate measuring equipment – you would find that the speed of approach of the photons in the beam is 670 million miles per hour. But what if you run away …? What speed will you now measure for the approaching photons? To make things more compelling, imagine that you can hitch a ride on the starship *Enterprise* and zip away from your friend at, say, 100 million miles per hour. Following the reasoning based on the traditional Newtonian worldview, since you are now speeding away, you would expect to measure a *slower* speed for the oncoming photons. Specifically, you would expect to find them approaching you at (670 million miles per hour [minus] 100 million miles =) 570 million miles per hour.
>
> Mounting evidence from a variety of experiments dating back as far as the 1880's, as well as careful analysis and interpretation of Maxwell's electromagnetic theory of light, slowly convinced the scientific community that, in fact, this is *not* what you will see. *Even though you are retreating, you will still measure the speed of the approaching photons as 670 million miles per hour, not a bit less*. Although at first it sounds completely ridiculous, unlike what happens if one runs from an oncoming baseball, grenade, or avalance, the speed of approaching photons is always 670 million miles per hour. The same is true if you run toward oncoming photons or chase after them – their speed of approach or recession is completely unchanged; they still appear to travel at 670 million miles per hour. Regardless

[192] ibid., pp. 23-4; 'It is perhaps surprising that the essential concern of special relativity is to understand precisely how the world appears to individuals, often called "observers," who are moving relative to one another. At first, this might seem to be an intellectual exercise of minimal importance. Quite the contrary: In the hands of Einstein, with his imaginings of observers chasing after light beams, there are profound implications to grasping fully how even the most mundane situations appear to individuals in relative motion.'
[193] ibid., p. 32.

> of relative motion between the source of photons and the observer, the speed of light is always the same.

'Technological limitations are such', of course, 'that the "experiments" with light, as described, cannot actually be carried out.'[194]

> However, comparable experiments can. For instance, in 1913 the Dutch physicist Willem de Sitter suggested that fast-moving binary stars (two stars that orbit one another) could be used to measure the effect of a moving source on the speed of light. Various experiments of this sort over the past eight decades have verified that the speed of light received from a moving star is the *same* as that from a stationary star – 670 million miles per hour – to within the impressive accuracy of ever more refined measuring devices. Moreover, a wealth of other detailed experiments has been carried out during the past century – experiments that directly measure the speed of light in various circumstances, as well as test many of the implications arising from this characteristic of light, as discussed shortly – and all have confirmed the constancy of the speed of light.
> If you find this property of light hard to swallow, you are not alone. At the turn of the century physicists went to great length to refute it. They couldn't. Einstein, to the contrary, embraced the constancy of the speed of light, for here was the answer to the paradox that had troubled him since he was a teenager. No matter how hard you chase after a light beam, it still retreats from you at light speed. You can't make the apparent speed with which light departs one iota less than 670 million miles per hour, let alone slow it down to the point of appearing stationary. Case closed. But this triumph over conflict was no small victory. Einstein realized that constancy of light's speed spelled the downfall of Newtonian physics.

All this, then, was the root for Special Relativity – the acceptance (on Einstein's part at least, if not his contemporaries) that measurements of physical reality differ in the sense of their *differential frames of reference* moving relative to one another. Einstein originally published in the 1905 paper *On the Electrodynamics of Moving Bodies*. The affected measurements that we need to think about, Einstein insisted, were such things as distance, time, energy, momentum, acceleration and inertia; differential frames of reference are structured by the constancy of the speed of light.

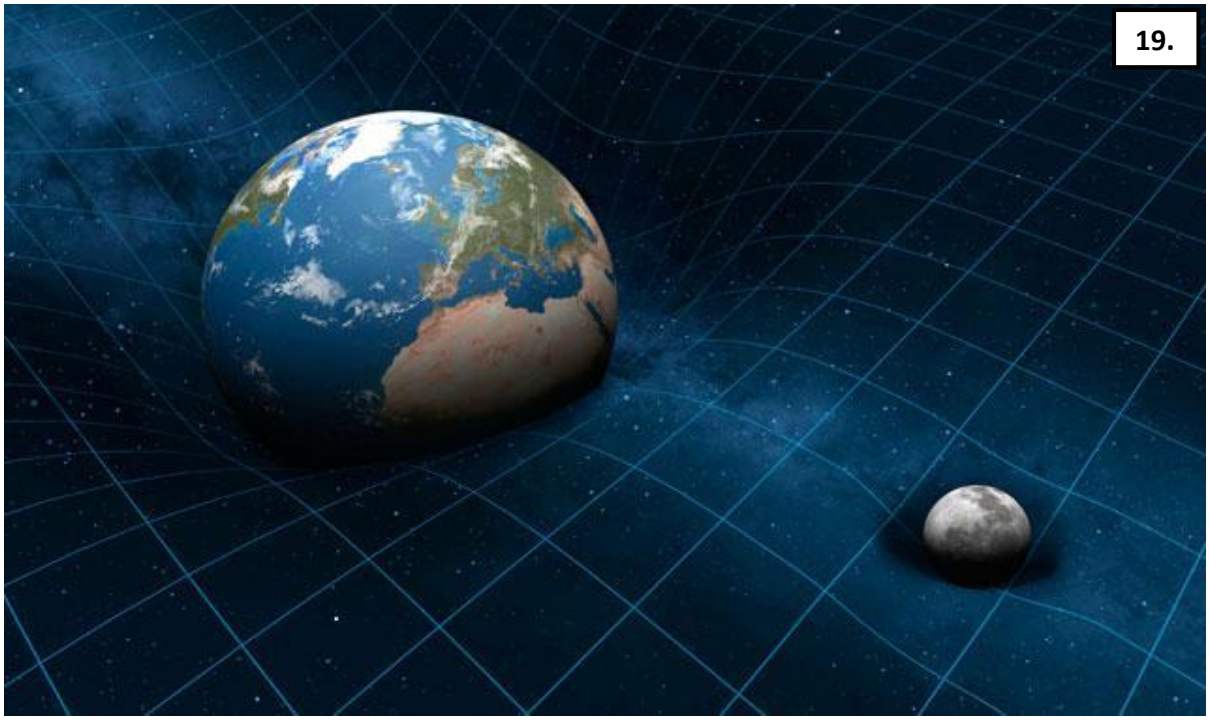
And yet, Greene tells us, the development of Special Relativity to combat the inconsistencies of James Clerk Maxwell simply engineered the second crisis of modern theoretical physics; 'one [central] conclusion of Einstein's work', *The Elegant Universe* insists, 'is that no object – in fact, no influence or disturbance of any sort – can travel faster than the speed of light.'[195]

> But [, and here's the rub,] Newton's experimentally successful and intuitively pleasing universal theory of gravitation involves influences that are transmitted over vast distances of space *instantaneously*. It was Einstein, again, who stepped in and resolved the conflict by offering a new conception of gravity with his 1915 general theory of relativity. Just as special relativity overturned previous conceptions of space and time, so too did general relativity. Not only are space and time influenced by one's stage of motion, but they can warp and curve in response to the presence of matter or energy. Such distortions to the fabric of space and time, as we shall see, transmit the force of gravity from one place to another. Space and time, therefore, can no longer to be thought of as an inert backdrop on which the events of the universe play themselves out; rather, through special and then general relativity, they are intimate players in the events themselves.

[194] ibid., pp. 32-3.
[195] ibid., pp. 5-6.

'A massive body like the sun', Greene begins his explanation, 'and indeed any body, exerts a gravitational force on other objects.'[196] Because 'gravitational forces are indistinguishable from accelerated motion', and 'a mathematical description of accelerated motion *requires* the relations of curved space', 'these links between gravity, accelerated motion, and curved space led Einstein to the remarkable suggestion that the presence of mass, such as the sun, causes the fabric of space around it to *warp*' (*fig*. 19).

A useful, and oft-quoted, analogy is that much like a rubber membrane on which a bowling ball has been placed, the fabric of space becomes distorted due to the presence of a massive object like the sun. According to this radical proposal, space is not merely a passive forum providing the arena for the events of the universe; rather, the shape of space *responds* to objects in the environment.



This warping, in turn, affects other objects moving in the vicinity of the sun, as they now must traverse the distorted spatial fabric. Using the rubber membrane-bowling ball analogy, if we place a small ball-bearing on the membrane and set it off with some initial velocity, the path it will follow depends on whether or not the bowling ball is sitting in the center. If the bowling ball is absent, the rubber membrane will be flat and the ball bearing will travel along a straight line. If the bowling ball is present and thereby warps the membrane, the ball bearing will travel along a curved path. In fact, ignoring friction, if we set the ball bearing moving with just the right speed in just the right direction, it will continue to move in a recurring curved path around the bowling ball – in effect, it will "go into orbit." Our language presages the application of this analogy to gravity.

The sun, like the bowling ball, warps the fabric of space surrounding it, and the earth's motion, like that of the ball bearing, will move in orbit around the sun if its speed and orientation have suitable values. This effect on the motion of the earth is what we normally would refer to as the gravitational influence of the sun … [but] the difference, now, is that unlike Newton, Einstein has specified the *mechanism* by which gravity is transmitted: the warping of space. In Einstein's view, the gravitational tether holding the earth in orbit is not some mysterious instantaneous action of the sun; rather, it is the warping of the spatial fabric caused by the sun's presence.

This picture allows us to understand the two essential features of gravity in a new way. First, the more massive the bowling ball, the greater the distortion it causes in the rubber membrane; similarly, in Einstein's description of gravity the more massive an object is, the greater the distortion it

[196] ibid., pp. 68-9.

> causes in the surrounding space. This implies that the more massive an object, the greater the gravitational influence it can exert on other bodies, precisely in accord with our experiences. Second, just as the distortion of the rubber membrane due to the bowling ball gets smaller as one gets farther from it, the amount of spatial warping due to a massive body such as the sun decreases as one's distance from it increases. This, again, jibes with our understanding of gravity, whose influence becomes weaker as the distance between objects becomes larger.
>
> An important point to note is that the ball bearing itself warps the rubber membrane, although only slightly. Similarly, the earth, being a massive body in its own right, also warps the fabric of space, although far less than the sun. This is how, in the language of general relativity, the earth keeps the moon in orbit, and it is also how the earth keeps each of us bound to its surface. As a skydiver plunges earthward, he or she is sliding down a depression in the spatial fabric causes by the earth's mass. Moreover, each of us – like any massive object – also warps the spatial fabric in close proximity to our bodies, although the comparatively small mass of a human body makes this a miniscule indentation.[197]

'In summary then', Greene offers, 'Einstein fully agreed with Newton's statement that "Gravity must be caused by an agent" and rose to Newton's challenge in which the identity of the agent was left "to the consideration of my readers."' 'The agent of gravity, according to Einstein, is the fabric of the cosmos', yet even General Relativity left some feeling bereft.

'Once again', seemingly, 'the pattern repeated itself: The discovery of general relativity, while resolving one conflict, led to another.'[198] Einstein's contemporaries, for example Niels Bohr at Copenhagen, found that the universe when observed microscopically did not correspond even slightly to the grandiose predictions that Einsteinian Relativity could make – matter behaves erratically and inconsistently, especially in terms of its spatiality. In 1927, the German physicist Werner Heisenberg called this the *uncertainty principle*.

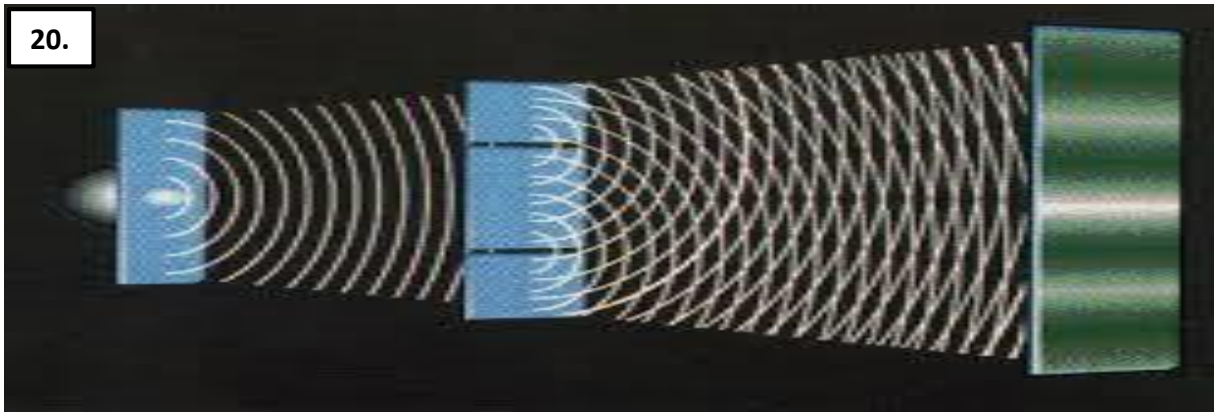
> Just as we can assure ourselves of someone's presence either by gently touching them or by giving them an overzealous slap on the back, why can't we determine the electron's position with an "ever gentler" light source in order to have an ever decreasing impact on its motion? From the standpoint of nineteenth-century physics we can. By using an ever dimmer lamp (and an ever more sensitive light detector) we can have a vanishingly small impact on the electron's motion. But quantum mechanics [the dominant model we use today against General Relativity] illuminates a flaw in this reasoning. As we turn down the intensity of the light source we now know that we are decreasing the number of photons it emits. Once we get down to emitting individual photons we cannot dim the light any further without actually turning it off. There is a fundamental quantum-mechanical limit to the "gentleness" of our probe. And hence, there is always a minimal disruption that we cause to the electron's velocity through our measurement of its position.
>
> Well, that's almost correct. Planck's law tells us that the energy of a single photon is proportional to its frequency (inversely proportional to its wavelength). By using light of lower and lower frequency (larger and larger wavelength) we can therefore produce ever gentler individual photons. But here's the catch. When we bounce a wave off of an object, the information we receive is only enough to determine the object's position to within a *margin of error equal to the wave's wavelength*. …
>
> And so we are faced with a quantum-mechanical balancing act. If we use high-frequency (short wavelength) light we can locate an electron with greater precision. But high frequency photons are very energetic and therefore sharply disturb the electron's velocity. If we use low-frequency (long wavelength) light we minimize the impact on the electron's motion, since the constituent photons have comparatively low energy, but we sacrifice precision in determining the electron's position. Heisenberg quantified this competition and found a mathematical relationship between the precision with which one measures the electron's position and the precision with which one measures its velocity. He found

[197] ibid., pp. 69-70.
[198] ibid., p. 6.

> … that each is inversely proportional to the other: Greater precision in a position measurement necessarily entails greater imprecision in a velocity measurement, and vice versa. … Heisenberg showed that the trade-off between the precision of position and velocity measurements is a fundamental fact that holds true regardless of the equipment used or the procedure employed. Unlike the framework of Newton or even of Einstein, in which the motion of a particle is described by giving its location and its velocity, quantum mechanics shows that at a microscopic lebel *you cannot possibly know both of these features with total precision*.[199]

Everyone is today familiar with Young's experiment (the 'double-slit' experiment); in 1909, G. Taylor performed, for the first time, an experiment with Greene's 'ever dimmer lamp', firing the smallest units of light he was able to isolate against panelling with two slits in it. The expectation, of course, were we to predict where detections would occur on a light sensor behind the panelling using more linear theoretical-physical models (namely those lacking Heisenberg's 'uncertainty principle'), would be that detections would occur in places understandable relevant to the location of the slits (the light would travel in roughly straight lines through them). What Taylor found, paradoxically (as well as every subsequent replicator of the experiment), was that detections occurred in diffused patterns across the sensor behind the slits, even and especially in places where those linear models of prediction would seemingly guarantee us light could not possibly reach (*fig*. 20 shows this clearly).

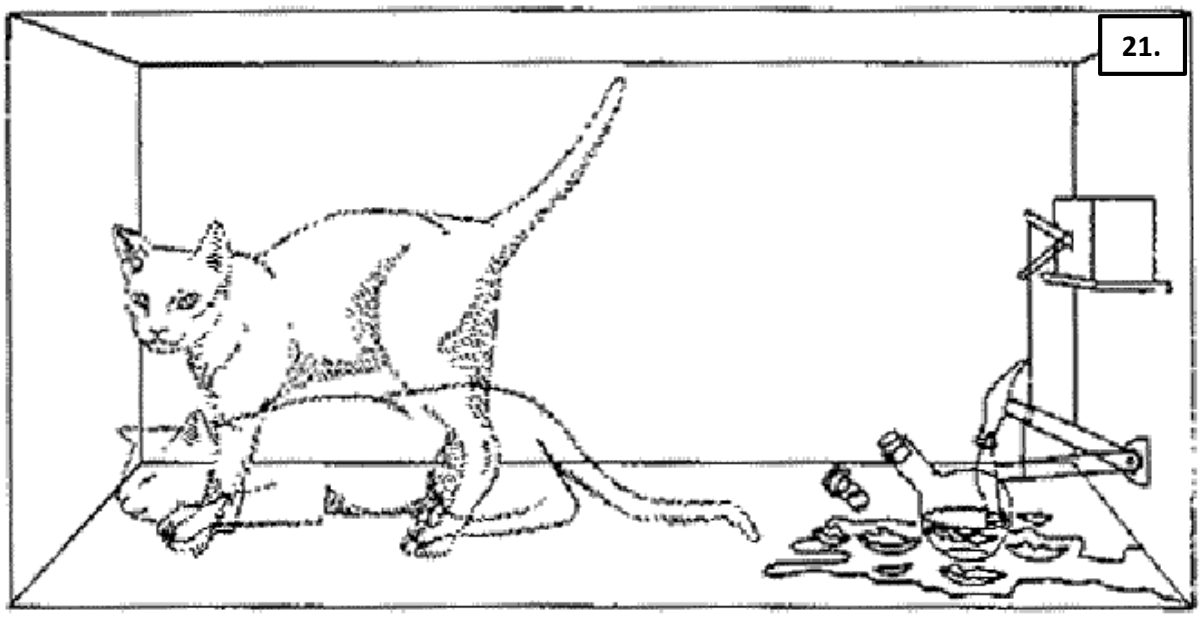
20.



It had long been thought, since Young's original 'double-slit' experiments in the early 1800's, that the constitution of light was wave-like (in that it fluctuated as in *fig*. 20) rather than particle-like. The significance of Taylor's experiment (apart from the modern sophistication of light receptors he used which gives us the diagrams Greene uses today to illustrate the 'uncertainty' paradoxes of quantum mechanics) *was all in its timing*; by 1909, quantum physicists were beginning to seriously consider the possibility that all matter behaved wave-like rather than particle-like, in that its behaviour simply could not be predicted beyond the level of microscopy scientists could then examine. Don Howard quotes part of a speech by Niels Bohr in Como in 1927 that nicely sums up the Copenhagen ethos:

[199] ibid., pp. 113-4.

> The quantum postulate implies that any observation of atomic phenomena will involve an interaction with the agency of observation not to be neglected. Accordingly, an independent reality in the ordinary physical sense can neither be ascribed to the phenomena nor to the agencies of observation. . . .
> This situation has far-reaching consequences. On one hand, the definition of the state of a physical system, as ordinarily understood, claims the elimination of all external disturbances. But in that case, according to the quantum postulate, any observation will be impossible, and, above all, the concepts of space and time lose their immediate sense. On the other hand, if in order to make observation possible we permit certain interactions with suitable agencies of measurement, not belonging to the system, an unambiguous definition of the state of the system is naturally no longer possible, and there can be no question of causality in the ordinary sense of the word. The very nature of the quantum theory thus forces us to regard the space-time co-ordination and the claim of causality, the union of which characterizes the classical theories, as complementary but exclusive features of the description, symbolizing the idealization of observation and definition respectively.[200]



In 1935, the Austrian Erwin Schrödinger devised a thought experiment intended to illustrate the systemic problems engendered by Eisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' in matter (*fig*. 21).

> A cat is penned up in a steel chamber, along with the following device (which must be secured against direct interference by the cat): in a Geiger counter, there is a tiny bit of radioactive substance, so small, that perhaps in the course of one hour one of the atoms decays, but also, with equal probability, perhaps none; if it happens, the counter tube discharges and through a relay releases a hammer that shatters a small flask of hydrocyanic acid. If one has left this entire system to itself for an hour, one would say that the cat still lives if meanwhile no atom has decayed. The psi-function of the entire system would express this by having in it the living and dead cat (pardon the expression) mixed or smeared out in equal parts.
> It is typical of these cases that an indeterminacy originally restricted to the atomic domain becomes transformed into macroscopic indeterminacy, which can then be resolved by direct observation. That prevents us from so naively accepting as valid a 'blurred model' for representing reality. In itself, it would not embody anything unclear or contradictory. There is a difference between a shaky or out-of-focus photograph and a snapshot of clouds and fog banks.[201]

More interesting than either the 'official' Copenhagen interpretation (a system stops being a superposition of coterminous potential states when observation takes place, the cat is revealed

[200] Niels Bohr, *Atomic Theory and the Description of Nature* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 54-5, cited in Don Howard, 'Who Invented the "Copenhagen Interpretation"? A Study in Mythology', *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 71:5 (2002), p. 671.
[201] Franck Laloë, *Do We Really Understand Quantum Mechanics?* (Cambridge, 2012), p. 22.

either as dead or alive), or Hugh Everett's 1957 'Many-worlds' interpretation (the coterminous superposition persists even after the box is opened, *the two pathways simply become decoherent from one another*) is the single position that makes either viable;[202] belief in the uncertainty principle means, in real terms, that even in Copenhagen terms, *another world will persist within the only world that exists* - even if the wave function collapses, the box is opened and the cat is dead, believing Eisenberg means we will be haunted by the retroactive potential of its being alive (we can return here to the earlier example of Anna Akhmatova's *muove* and her 'imagined community' opposed to Stalinism).[203] Žižek portrays ideology as operating in just this sense; in terms of the objectification of Hegel engineered by Marx ('the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle', and this objectification becomes, for example for Gareth Steadman-Jones, the dominant narrativising motif for Western popular culture after 1848), certain social groups are either unable to or miss their chance to meaningfully contribute to the Marxist teleology.[204] The memory of these missed

[202] Werner Heisenberg, *The Physical Principles Of The Quantum* Theory, trans. Carl Eckart and F. C. Hoyt (Mineola NY, 1949), pp., ix & 10; 'The purpose of the book seems to me to be fulfilled if it contributes somewhat to the diffusion of that "*Kopenhagener Geist der Quantentheorie*," if I may so express myself, which has directed the entire development of modern atomic physics'; 'both matter and radiation possess a remarkable duality of character, as they sometimes exhibit the properties of waves, at other times those of particles. Now it is obvious that a thing cannot be a form of wave motion and composed of particles at the same time – the two concepts are too different. It is true that it might be postulated that two separate entities, one having all the properties of a particle, and the other all the properties of wave motion, were combined in some way to form "light." But such theories are unable to bring about the intimate relation between the two entities which seems required by the experimental evidence. As a matter of fact, it is experimentally certain only that light sometimes behaves as if it possessed some of the attributes of a particle, but there is no experiment which proves that it possesses all the properties of a particle; similar statements hold for matter and wave motion. The solution of the difficulty is that the two mental pictures which experiments lead us to form – the one of particles, the other of waves – are both incomplete and have only the validity of analogies which are accurate only in limiting cases. It is a trite saying that "analogies cannot be pushed too far," yet they may justifiably used to describe things for which our language has no words. Light and matter are both single entities, and the apparent duality arises in the limitations of our language'; *Hugh* Everett III, '"Relative State" Formulation of Quantum Mechanics', *Reviews of Modern Physics*, 29 (1957), pp. 454-62.

[203] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 2006), pp. 5-6; 'Part of the difficulty', Anderson comments, 'is that one tends unconsciously to hypostasize the existence of Nationalism-with-a-big-N (rather as one might Age-with-a-capital-A) and then to classify "it" as *an* ideology. (Not that if everyone has an age, Age is merely an analytical expression.) It would, I think, make things easier if one treated it as if it belonged with "kinship" and "religion", rather than with "liberalism" or "fascism".

In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.'

[204] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Communist Manifesto. A Modern Edition* (London, 2012), p. 34; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of class. Studies in English working class history 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 236; Žižek, *Desert*, pp. 23-4; 'Is not the ultimate cause of *Ostalgie* (nostalgia for the Communist past)', Žižek poses, 'a longing – not so much for the Communist past, for what actually went on under Communism, but, rather, for what *might have happened* there, for the missed opportunity of another Germany? Consequently, are not post-Communist outbursts of neo-Nazi violence also a negative proof of the presence of these emancipatory chances, a symptomatic outburst of rage displaying an awareness of missed opportunities?' 'We should not', Žižek says, 'be afraid to draw a parallel with individual psychic life: just as the awareness of a missed "private" opportunity (say, the opportunity of engaging in a fulfilling love relationship) often leaves its traces in the guise of "irrational" anxieties, headaches, and fits of rage, the void of the missed revolutionary chance can explode in "irrational" fits of destructive rage. . . .'

opportunities manifests as frustrated 'acting outs' (and here Žižek raises the 2011 examples in *The Pervert's Guide To Ideology* of Anders Breivik's race murders and the London Riots).[205]

We return, then, to the contemporary problem, *our problem* – what Greene calls 'the central Gordian knot of contemporary theoretical physics'.[206] 'Our understanding of the physical universe', assuredly, 'has deepened profoundly during the past century.'[207]

> The theoretical tools of quantum mechanics and general relativity allow us to understand and make testable predictions about physical happenings from the atomic and subatomic realms all the way through phenomena occurring on the scales of galaxies, clusters of galaxies, and beyond to the structure of the whole universe itself. This is a monumental achievement. It is truly inspiring that beings confined to one planet orbiting a run-of-the-mill star in the far edges of a fairly ordinary galaxy have been able, through thoughts and experiment, to ascertain and comprehend some of the most mysterious characteristics of the physical universe. Nevertheless, physicists by their nature will not be satisfied until they feel that the deepest and most fundamental understanding of the universe has been unveiled. This is what Stephen Hawking has alluded to as a first step toward knowing "the mind of God."
>
> There is ample evidence that quantum mechanics and general relativity do not provide this deepest level of understanding. Since their usual domains of applicability are so different, most situations require the use of quantum mechanics *or* general relativity, but not both.

Superstring theory gestured (and gestures) to resolve this problem by returning to the question that most troubled Einstein: why are the masses of the so-called 'fundamental particles' around which the large-scale calculations of General Relativity revolve as they are? 'Why', Einstein asked, 'are there so many fundamental particles [*fig*. 22], especially when it seems that the great majority of things in the world around us need only electrons, up-quarks, and down-quarks? Why are there three families? Why not one family or four families or any other number? Why do the particles have a seemingly random spread of masses – why, for instance, does the tau weigh about 3,520 times as much as an electron? Why does the top quark weigh about 40,200 times as much as an up-quark? These are such strange, seemingly random numbers. Did they occur by chance, by some divine choice, or is there a comprehensible scientific explanation for these fundamental features of our universe?'[208] String Theorists after the first Golden Age of 1984-6 realized, quickly, that the answer owed

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[205] *The Pervert's Guide To Ideology*. Dir. Sophie Fiennes. Zeitgeist Films, 2012; this is also the basic premise to Žižek, *Dreaming*, p. 1; 'There is a wonderful expression in Persian, *war nam nihadan*, which means "to murder somebody, bury his body, then grow flowers over the body to conceal it." In 2011, we witnessed (and participated in) a series of shattering events, from the Arab Spring to the Occupy Wall Street movement, from the UK riots to Breivik's ideological madness. It was the year of dreaming dangerously, in both directions: emancipatory dreams mobilizing protesters in New York on Tahrir Square, in London and Athens; and obscure destructive dreams propelling Breivik and racist populists across Europe, from the Netherlands to Hungary. The primary task of the hegemonic ideology was to neutralize the true dimension of these events: was not the predominant reaction of the media precisely a *war nam nihadan*? The media killed the radical emancipatory potential of the events or obfuscated their threat to democracy, and then grew flowers over the buried corpse. This is why it is so important to set the record straight, to locate the events of 2011 in the totality of the global situation, to show how they relate to the central antagonism of contemporary capitalism.'

[206] Greene, *Universe*, p. 14.

[207] Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time* (New York NY, 1988), p. 175, cited in ibid., p. 117.

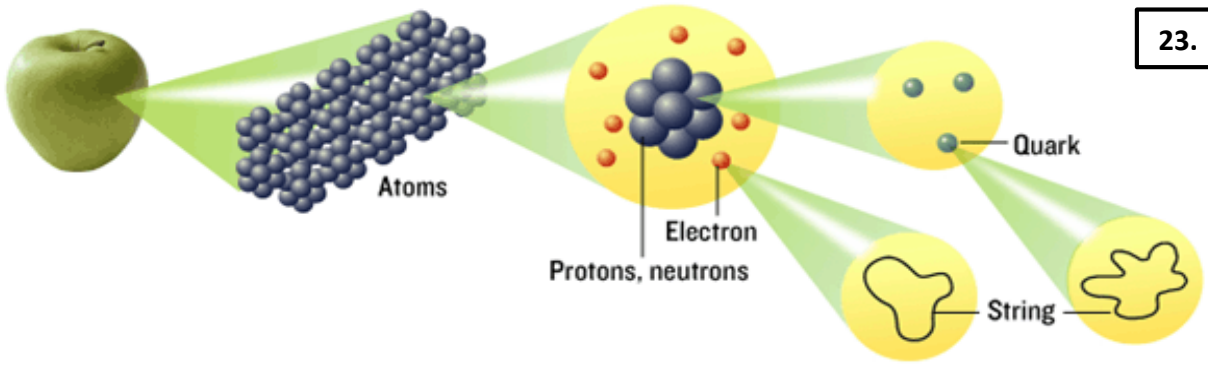
[208] Greene, *Universe*, pp. 9-10.

both to General Relativity's emphasis on patterning and the Quantum 'uncertainty' principle. We need first, however, to grasp what String Theorists mean by the term 'String (*fig.* 23);

22.

FAMILY 1		FAMILY 2		FAMILY 3	
Particle	**Mass**	**Particle**	**Mass**	**Particle**	**Mass**
Electron	.00054	Muon	.11	Tau	1.9
Electron-neutrino	$<10^{-8}$	Muon-neutrino	<.0003	Tau-neutrino	<0.33
Up-quark	.0047	Charm Quark	1.6	Top Quark	189
Down-quark	.0074	Strange Quark	.16	Bottom Quark	5.2

23.



'The particles in [*fig*. 22] are the "letters" of all matter', Greene says.[209]

> Just like their linguistic counterparts, they appear to have no further internal substructure. String theory proclaims otherwise. According to string theory, if we could examine these particles with even greater precision – a precision many orders of magnitude beyond our present technological capacity – we would find that each is not pointlike, but instead consists of a tiny one-dimensional *loop*. Like an infinitely thin rubber band, each particle contains a vibrating, oscillating, dancing filament that physicists … have named a *string*. … String theory adds the new microscopic layer of a vibrating loop to the previously known progression from atoms through protons, neutrons, electrons and quarks.

'Each such string', String Theorists say, 'can undergo a huge variety (in fact, infinite in number) of different vibrational patterns known as *resonances* [and] these are the wave patterns whose peaks and troughs are evenly spaced and fit perfectly between the string's two fixed endpoints.'[210]

> Our ears sense these different resonant vibrational patterns as different musical notes. The strings in string theory have similar properties. There are resonant vibrational patterns that the string can support by virtue of their evenly spaced peaks and troughs exactly fitting along its spatial extent. … Here's the central fact: Just as the different vibrational patterns of a violin string give rise to different musical notes, *the different vibrational patterns of a fundamental string give rise to different masses and force charges*. As this is a crucial point, let's say it again. According to string theory, the properties of an elementary "particle" – its mass and its various force charges – are determined by the precise resonant pattern of vibration that its internal string executes.

The formal curvature of 'spacetime' Einstein identified, then, is mutually reciprocated by the 'uncertain' spatial configurations of microscopic matter, by virtue of these oscillating strings.

[209] ibid., pp. 13-4.
[210] ibid., pp. 143-4.

3. ‘If God did not exist, nothing would be permitted’

‘There can no longer’, Sartre said in a 1946 lecture entitled *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, ‘be any good *a priori*, since there is no infinite and perfect consciousness to think it.’[211]

> It is nowhere written that “the good” exists, that one must be honest or must not lie, since we are now upon the plane where there are only men. Dostoyevsky once wrote: “If God did not exist, everything would be permitted”; and that, for existentialism, is the starting point. Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself. He discovers forthwith, that he is without excuse.

‘The first problem with this statement’, Žižek insists forlornly in *The Pervert’s Guide To Ideology*, ‘is that Dostoyevsky, of course, never made it.’[212] ‘But the main point’, he goes on, ‘is that this statement is simply wrong - even a brief look at our predicament today clearly tells us this.’

> It is precisely if there *is* God, that “everything is permitted.” To those who not only believe in God, but who perceive themselves as … direct instruments of the divine will. If you posit or perceive or legitimize yourself as a direct instrument of the divine will, then of course all narrow, petty, moral considerations disappear. How can you even think in such narrow terms when you are a direct instrument of God? This is how so-called religious fundamentalists work, but not only *them*; every form of so-called totalitarianism works like that. Even if it is presented (or if it presents itself) as atheist. Let’s take Stalisnism; officially, Stalinism was based on atheist Marxist theory, but if we look closely at the subjective experience of a Stalinist political agent (leader), we see that it’s not a position of an arrogant Master who can do whatever he wants: it’s on the contrary the position of the perfect servant. In the Stalinist universe [*figs*. 24 & 25], there definitely is what in Psychoanalytic Theory we call the Big Other [*le grand Autre*].


24.


25.

‘If you watch old documentary movies’, Žižek grins in Astra Taylor’s widely-popular 2005 documentary, ‘you will see a big difference between the Fascist and the Stalinist leaders: the Fascist leader, when he is applauded, he just accepts it. A Stalinist leader *applauds himself*; the message being: “It’s not at me: I’m just your tool, we are all just serving history…”’.[213]

> This big Other in the Stalinist universe has many names; the best-known of them are: the necessity of historical progress towards Communism, or simply History – History itself is the big Other (History as the necessary succession of historical stages. A Communist experiences himself as simply an instrument whose function is to actualize the historical necessity. [214]

[211] Stephen Priest (ed.), *Jean-Paul Satre: Basic Writings* (London, 2001), p. 32.
[212] *The Pervert’s Guide To Ideology*. Dir. Sophie Fiennes. Zeitgeist Films, 2012.
[213] *Žižek!*. Dir. Astra Taylor. Zeitgeist Films, 2005.
[214] *The Pervert’s Guide To Ideology*. Dir. Sophie Fiennes. Zeitgeist Films, 2012.

Correcting Sartre's mistake, we can therefore decide that Twentieth Century science is categorically not the set of Enlightenment praxes remaining once all antigquated theology 'melts into air'.[215] Rather, it is (after Adorno and Horkheimer) better understood as a new kind of theology, saturated with material entrenchments (Heidegger) and satirical distanciations (Lacan). The Universalist 'All' distinction contemporary-science interpellates for itself is anything but: it is a distinctly esoteric, particularistic (even fetishistic) 'non-All'. 'What dies on the cross', Žižek says in a discussion of Scorsese's 1988 *The Last Temptation of Christ* (*fig*. 26), 'is precisely [the] guarantee of the big Other – the message of Christianity is here radically atheist.'[216] Here, we return to the reflexivity of belief present in Kierkegaard;

26.

> It's the death of Christ, is not any kind of redemption or commercial affair in the sense of "Christ suffers to pay for our sins" (pay to whom, for what, and so on…); it's simply the disintegration of the God which guarantees the meaning of our lives. And that's the meaning of that famous phrase "*Eli Eli lama sabachthani?*": "father why have you forsaken me?" Just before Christ's death, we get what in Psychoanalytic terms we call "subjective destitution", stepping out totally of the domain of symbolic identification – cancelling or suspending the entire field of symbolic authority, the … big Other.

The only truly effective way towards what Psychoanalysts call 'the zero-level of politics, a pre-political "transcendental" condition of possibility of politics, a gap which opens up the space for the political act to intervene in, a gap which is saturated by the political effort to impose a new order', is not around or behind theology but through it;[217] only when our thoughts and actions originate from somewhere outside of us, in the name of a God-idol, is everything truly permitted, because only a God can cleave open the universal notion itself.

[215] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 38.
[216] *The Pervert's Guide To Ideology*. Dir. Sophie Fiennes. Zeitgeist Films, 2012.
[217] Žižek, *Less*, p. 963.

Post-modern ideology buttressed by the kinds of post-modern science (Superstring theory) I have outlined, therefore, has not been a story of Two (Quantum Mechanics and General Relativity) resolving into one, as Yang Xianzhen thought – both i) in the obvious sense that if one ideology has become hegemonic (however temporarily and contingently, as I maintain) *it is capitalism*, but ii) that the synthesis (so-called) of Superstring theory is fragile approached dialectically, as all things are; *Superstring theory relies, in the Althusserian sense, on a necessary series of mis-recognitions regarding its own functioning that makes it fragile.*[218]

> everyone possesses and uses the wholly abstract category of *being*. The sun *is* in the sky; these grapes *are* ripe, and so on *ad infinitum*. Or, in a higher sphere of education, we proceed to the relation of cause and effect, force and its manifestation, etc. All our knowledge and ideas are entwined with metaphysics like this and governed by it; it is the net which holds together all the concrete material which occupies us in our action and endeavour. But this net and its knots are sunk in our ordinary consciousness beneath numerous layers of stuff. This stuff comprises our known interests and the objects that are before our minds, while the universal threads of the net remain out of sight and are not explicitly made the subject of our reflection.[219]

Einsteinian Relativity and Quantum Mechanics developed together (as Greene shows), conterminously, interdependently. We should be unafraid to read these interrogative forays into the physical world and the developments of new languages to regulate it as fundamentally analogous to early Twentieth-Century post-Nietzschean Phenomenology, which relied on Hegel's reworking of Kant as its pivot, as the *point de caption* which (for a scholar who accepts Laclau and Mouffe's idea of nodal struggle) made it possible. The numerous attempts to overcome Hegel (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida) have only ever succeeded, despite whatever apparent successes they garnered, in raising the ghastly spectre of properly Hegelian dialectics.[220] Why, firstly, is Einsteinian Relativity (as I claim it

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[218] Louis Althusser, *Pour Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London, 2005), pp. 170-1; 'it is not enough', Althusser states, 'to reject the dogmatism of the *application* of the forms of the dialectic in favour of the *spontaneity* of existing theoretical practices, for we know that there is no *pure* theoretical practice, no perfectly transparent science which throughout its history as a science will always be preserved, by I know not what Grace, from the threats and taints of idealism, that is, of the *ideologies* which besiege it; we know that a "pure" science only exists on condition that it continually frees itself from the ideology which occupies it, haunts it, or lies in wait for it. The inevitable price of this purification and liberation is a continuous struggle against ideology itself, that is, against idealism, a struggle whose reasons and aims can be clarified as Theory (dialectical materialism) and guided by it as by no other method in the world. What, then, should we say for the *spontaneity* of those triumphant *avant-garde* disciplines devoted to precise pragmatic interests; which are not strictly sciences but claim to be since they use methods which are "scientific" (but defined independently of the specificity of their presumed objects); which think, like every true science, that they have an *object*, when they are merely dealing with a certain given reality that is anyway disputed and torn between several competing "sciences": a certain domain of phenomena not yet constituted into scientific facts and therefore not *unified*; disciplines which in their present form cannot constitute true theoretical practices because most often they only have the unity of a *technical practice* (*examples*: social psychology, and sociology and psychology in many of their branches)?'

[219] T. M. Knox and A. V. Miller (eds.), *Hegel's Introduction To The Lectures On The History* (Oxford, 1987), §27-8, cited in Robert Stern, *The Routledge Guidebook to Hegel's Phenomenology Of Spirit* (London, 2013), p. 23.

[220] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (Abingdon, 2006), p. xviii; 'It is necessary to speak of the ghost, indeed to the ghost and with it, from the

is) pleasingly analogous to Hegel's philosophical gestures? It is hard not to identify the connection between the German Idealist evolution (between the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1781 and Hegel's 1807 *Phenomenology of Spirit*) and Einstein's internal *Aufhebung* of Special Relativity in favour of a Relativity transposed into generality. Of course, just as Kant's thought contains insights of genuinely epochal significance that preserves his own status independently of some imagined role as a precursor to Hegel (Kant's scepticism about the noumenon in favour of phenomenological *Erscheinung* is probably more operative in Žižek's art than anything in Hegel), Special Relativity was not entirely naïve;[221] the connection here is how both Hegel and then Einstein (Hegel's scientific conduit) succeeded in transposing observations specifically concerning the fragility of the human observer into those things which the human observer observes. Just as nobody really wanted to or could think with Einstein in the early Twentieth Century, nobody really wanted to or could think with Hegel after his Idealist apogee (hence Žižek's notion of the false-break). Let's take the simple case of ecology; in 1776, Adam Smith argued in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* for the existence of 'an invisible hand' at work within and behind seemingly incongruous free trade events, engineering harmonious order.

> By pursuing his own interest [*homo economicus*] frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it.[222]

By 1798, Thomas Malthus (in a similarly 'natural-theological' vein, the notion that the Christian God is juridically-operational within notionally-'natural' spatiality) was writing

> That the increase of population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence,
> That population does invariably increase when the means of subsistence increase, and,
> That the superior power of population is repressed, and the actual population kept equal to the means of subsistence, by misery and vice.[223]

Timothy Cooper demonstrates how the Victorian 'everyday cultural laborer' P. L. Simmonds naturalistically conceived the material resources potentially afforded by untapped colonial

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moment that no ethics, no politics, whether revolutionary or not, seems possible and thinkable and just that does not recognize in its principle the respect for those others who are no longer or for those others who are not yet there, presently living, whether they are already dead or not yet born.'

[221] Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham NC, 1993), p. 5; '*everything*, from the fate of so-called "Western civilization" up to the survival of humanity in the ecological crisis, hangs on the answer to this related question: is it possible today, apropos of the postmodern age of new sophists, to repeat *mutatis mutandis* the Kantian gesture?'; Even Greene seems silently to accept that Generalized Relativity would be too great a step for us to make as a step beyond more static kinds of positivism, lamenting that 'Special Relativity is not in our bones – we do not feel it. Its implications are not a central part of our intuition.'

[222] Adam Smith and David Buchanan (ed.), *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations; Vol. II* (Edinburgh, 1817), p. 186.

[223] Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (Oxford, 1999), p. 61.

theatres 'in the context of a mid-Victorian economic controversy'.[224] 'The politics of free trade and global economic competition', Cooper argues, 'was of longstanding importance to [Simmonds's] conceptualization of the globe as a "waste space" awaiting [useful] restitution'.

> In consequence of the recent liberal policy of Great Britain, the competition of foreign countries, the want of cheap and abundant labour, and other causes, those chief staples Sugar and Coffee, which for a series of years formed the principal and most exclusive articles of production in our colonies, and which had met with a ready and remunerative sale in the British markets, have either fallen off to an alarming extent, or become so reduced in price as scarcely to repay the cost of cultivation.[225]

'It was therefore necessary, Simmonds concluded, to "direct attention to . . . those indigenous or exotic products of the soil in tropical regions" that had previously been neglected and could be adapted to new uses by complementing the old staples of colonial agricultural production.'[226] '*Simmonds's Colonial Magazine*', Cooper tells us, 'encouraged colonial planters to seek to compete with their European counterparts not in existing organic products, but in new and as yet undeveloped materials', for example the shank bones from South African giraffes (which, Simmonds assured, were 'in extensive demand as fertilisers').[227]

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[224] Timothy Cooper, 'Peter Lund Simmonds and the Political Ecology of Waste Utilization in Victorian Britain', *Technology and Culture*, 52:1 (2011), pp. 24 & 29.

[225] Peter Lund Simmonds, *Commercial Products of the Vegetable Kingdom* (London, 1854), p. 1, cited in Cooper, 'Simmonds', p. 29.

[226] ibid., p. 2, cited in Cooper, 'Simmonds', p. 29.

[227] Peter Lund Simmonds, *Waste Products And Undeveloped Substances, or Hints For Enterprise In Neglected Fields* (London, 1862), p. 352; Simmonds's 1862 work also extols the benefits of restituting bread crusts (pp. 14-7), exhausted tea-leaves (pp. 18-36), tuberous roots as edible (pp. 36-44) and as a tobacco substitute (p. 45), forgotten silk cottons (pp. 54-64), Indian corn (pp. 75-7), the chestnut (pp. 94-7), acorns (pp. 98-102), 'the marc, or husk, of the grape in wine-making (p. 102), 'the bran or exterior husk of wheat' (p. 106), 'Lime-juice, prepared in a concentrated form for the manufacture of citric acid' (p. 107), 'cocoa-nut-oil' (p. 108), 'old vulcanized india-rubber' (p. 109), 'crude caoutchouc' gum (p. 110), 'new raw materials for paper' (p. 111) including 'vegetable fibres … consisting of straw deglutinated and fibred, but not bleached' (p. 112) and 'old jute bleached and partially pulped' (p. 112), 'sugar-cane trash' (p. 113), 'Brewers' grains, the spent malt of the brewery, … for feeding milch-cows and swine' (p. 174), 'Malt commings, the acrospire or shoot of the barley after being kiln-dried, … as a coffee substitute' (p. 174), 'eat[ing] the pods [of peas], as they do in France' (p. 174), 'the mixture of fibre and gluten left in the separators or tanks, in the process of starch-making from rice' (p. 175), 'the ashes of the cauto-bark (*Hirtella silicea,* or *Moquilea sp.*) … used to mix with clay to make the Indian pottery in Trinidad' (p. 176), 'the leaves of the potato-plant … roasted … for thickening mordants in dyeing' (p. 176), 'vinegar … made from numerous tropical juices in abundance' (p. 177), 'a … refreshing [Mexican] beverage, known as *tepache*, … compounded of pineapple juice, parched corn, and sugar' (p. 178), 'economic applications of sea-weed' (pp. 180-261), 'lichens' (pp. 261- 270), 'the uses of peat … from the bogs in Ireland and some parts of Scotland' (pp. 270) as 'Sulphate of Ammonia' (p. 272), 'Acetate of Lime' (p. 273), 'Naphtha, or "Wood Spirit."' (p. 273), 'Paraffin' (p. 273), 'Hydro-carbon solvent' (p. 274) and 'Fixed Oil' (p. 274), 'the greasy cotton wads with which engineers wipe their machinery' (p. 326), 'waste arising in the preparation of skins, which consists of lime, oil, and hair, … for manure'(p. 328), 'coprolites [which are] the exuviæ of extinct animals' (pp. 329-33), 'commercial products of the porpoise' ('an animal which, though once considered a royal-food delicacy, had long since passed into neglect, at least for the table, has lately been utilized again by man', pp. 333-9), 'prussiate of potash' (p. 339), 'gelatine and glue' (pp. 344-6), 'bladders of oxen, pigs, calves and sheep … prepared for holding lard, tying down bottles and jars, &c.' (p. 347) and 'for cleaning cotton' (p. 349), 'reindeer-sinew for lashing or binding purposes on implements, &c.' (pp. 351-2), 'the blood when animals are slaughtered in large cities and towns, on the farm, or by village butchers' (p. 360), 'bile, the bitter principle secreted by the liver, … employed with advantage in medicine, when dissolved in alcohol or inspissated' (p. 361), 'stray dogs[']' carcasses … taken to the offal-boats, which convey them to Barren Island [in New York], where every part of them is turned to some useful account' ('the fat', Simmonds says, 'is rendered out; the skins are sold to glovers; and of the bones an excellent compost for fertilizing land is made', p.

What happens to all this, if we perform a Platonic 'vacillat[ing of] the semblances' (*fig.* 27)?[228]

27.

Hypothesis	**If …**	**Consequences for …**	**Result**
1	There is One	the One	negative
2	One *is*	the One	positive
3	One *is*	the Others	positive
4	There is One	the Others	negative
5	One is *not*	the One	positive
6	There is no One	the One	negative
7	One is *not*	the Others	positive
8	There is no One	the Others	negative

What happens if we accept, as Althusser did, 'that a certain cleft, a certain fissure, misrecognition, characterizes the human condition as such: … the thesis that the idea of the possible end of ideology is an ideological idea *par excellence*'?[229] We get to V. N. Voloshinov's simple definition of ideology as 'essentially a matter of "fixing" the otherwise

362), 'a dead horse … from 672 lb. to 1,138 lb, the average being therefore 950 lb.' (p. 363), 'walrus hide … tanned for leather' (p. 367), 'dogs'-dung and pigeons'-dung … employed in the processes of tanning leather' (p. 368), 'camels'-dung ... largely used for making sal-ammoniac, in Egypt, and … moulded into cakes and sold for fuel in several countries' (p. 368), 'Guano, the dung of sea-fowls [as] valuable fertilizers of land' (p. 369), 'Night-soil … sold as an article of commerce throughout the Chinese empire, in the form of cakes, mixed up with one-third of their weight of marl' (p. 369), 'the waste of the fisheries' (pp. 369-95), 'coating glass globules on the outside with a varnish made with the scales of a kind of fish' ('with the query attached, "Which are the artificial?"', p. 395), 'Dog-fish … for the oil obtained from their livers, a large fish yielding about a barrel of oil' (p. 397), 'eel skins … used in America … for twisting into ropes and whip lashes, and to form the thongs connecting the swiple and hand-staff of the thrashing-flail' (pp. 397-8), 'sole skins, and some other fish skins, … used to refine liquors, clear coffee, &c.' (p. 398), ice 'to dispel malaria; … to generate, in hospitals, depots, and soldiers' quarters, and institutions of every kind, a cool atmosphere under high natural temperatures; to render the atmosphere of dwellings incompatible with the existence of the thousand noxious insects incident to hot climates' (pp. 398-9), 'snow preserved in the caverns of Etna' (p. 399), 'coal tar [which] furnishes a chief ingredient of printers' ink, … also made into asphalt for pavements, and mixed with red-hot clay becomes a charcoal that acts as a powerful disinfectant' (p. 413), 'coal dust or slack ground in a mill … pressed into cakes of artificial fuel' (p. 416), 'the ashes and small cinders sifted from the ash-pits and dust-holes … used for making bricks' (p. 416), 'tons of cream of tartar' (p. 417), 'glass bottles' (p. 417), 'the scraps and dust remaining in silversmiths and jewellers' workshops, gold pen manufacturers, &c., which are brought by persons who smelt it over again to separate the gold and silver from the refuse' ('even the clothing, waistcoats, jackets, &c., of gold beaters and other workers in the precious metals', Simmonds assures us, 'are eagerly brought up for the recovery of the fragments accumulated in them', p. 417), 'Horse-shoe nails, kicked about the world by horses innumerable' (p. 418), 'old copper from ships' bottoms, copper bolts, &c., … always very saleable for reconversion' (p. 419) and 'the shells from the shell banks on parts of the Chillian coast' (p. 421). Simmonds also delights in telling the tale of one particularly industrious Parisian who varnished the feet of slaughtered pigeons to make them more desirable at market (pp. 12-3).

[228] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *L'anti Œdipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* [*Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*], trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (Minneapolis MN, 1983), p. 260, cited in Žižek, *Less*, p. 47.

[229] Žižek, *Sublime*, p. 2.

inexhaustible process of signification around certain dominant signifiers, with which the individual subject can then identify'.[230] 'Without signs', Voloshinov wrote in the 1929 work *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 'there is no ideology';[231] 'everything ideological possesses *meaning*: it represents, depicts, or stands for something lying outside itself'.

> The individual consciousness is nurtured on signs; it derives its growth from them; it reflects their logic and laws. The logic of consciousness is the logic of ideological communication, of the semiotic interaction of a social group. If we deprive consciousness of its semiotic, ideological content, it would have absolutely nothing left. Consciousness can harbour only in the image, the word, the meaningful gesture, and so forth. Outside such material, there remains the sheer physiological act unilluminated by consciousness, i.e., without having light shed on it, without having meaning given to it, by signs.[232]

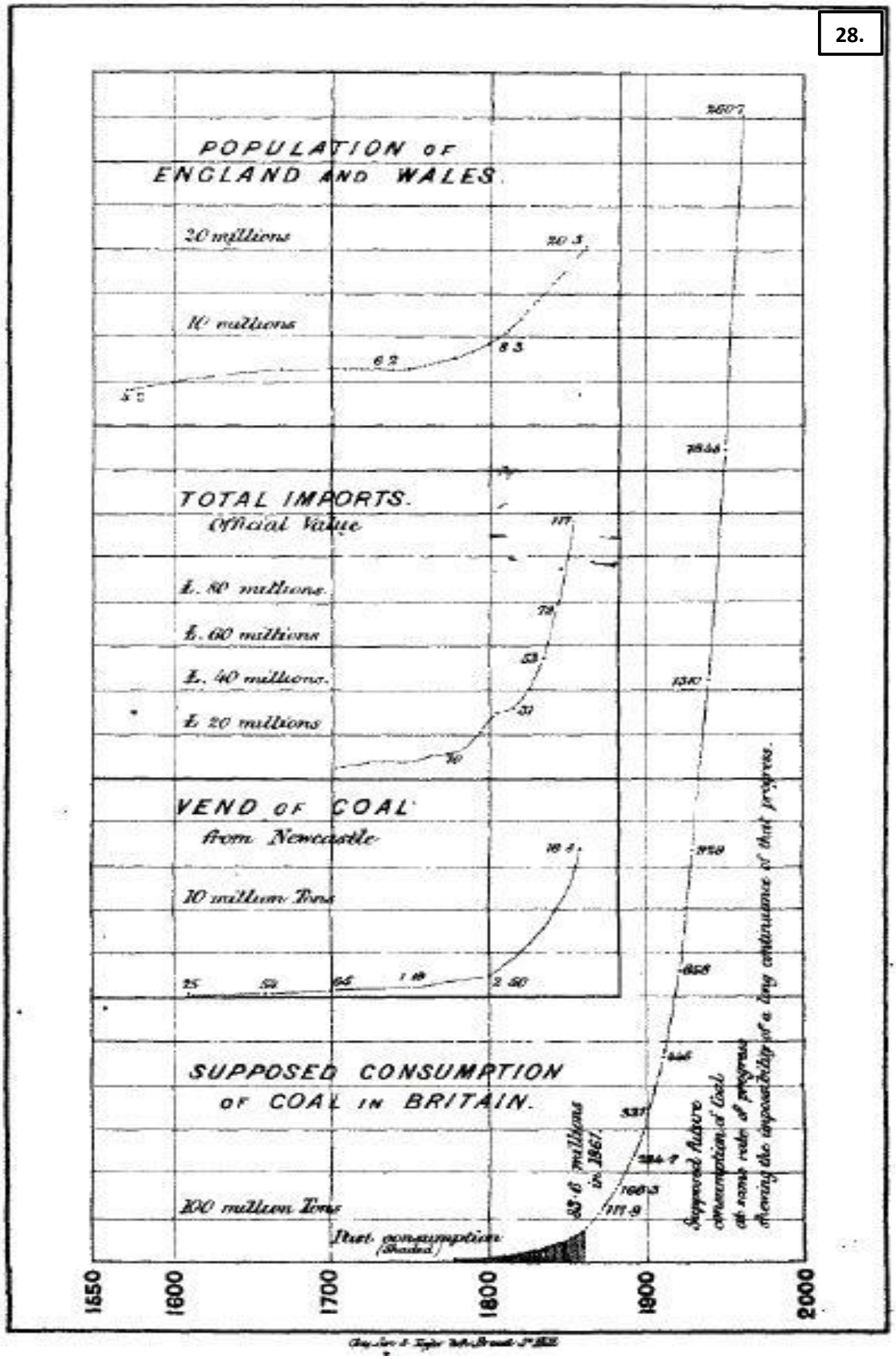
The British economist and logician William Stanley Jevons made the beginnings of this self-reflexive turn in *The Coal Question; An Inquiry Concerning the Progress of the Nation, and the Probable Exhaustion of Our Coal Mines* (1866) – a book that called attention to the limitations of exploitative, capitalist 'waste' categories as a feature of their Althusserian origin; 'I must point out', Jevons bristled, 'the painful fact that such a rate of growth will before long render our consumption of coal comparable with the total supply [*fig*. 28]'.[233] The hysterical paradox Jevons identified (which has since become known as the 'Jevons Paradox') was that the kinds of logics P. L. Simmonds encouraged (restituting as enthusiastically as possible all 'wasted' materiality so as to allow the hysterical productive-cycle to continue, in the case of coal using the 1776 Watt steam engine to excavate previously inaccessible stores) would precisely not exorcise the spectre of depletion; '*it is*', Jevons said, '*wholly a confusion of ideas to suppose that the economical use of fuel is equivalent to a diminished consumption*.'[234] '*The very contrary*', he worried, '*is the truth*'. 'In the increasing depth and difficult of coal mining' (and this was the really difficult Gothic thing for Victorians to understand) Jevons concluded, 'we shall meet that vague, but inevitable boundary that will stop our progress.'[235]

> We shall begin as it were to see the further shore of our Black Indies. The wave of population will break upon that shore, and roll back upon itself. And as settlers, unable to choose in the far inland new and virgin soil of unexceeded fertility, will fall back upon that which is next best, and will advance their tillage up the mountain side, so we, unable to discover new coal-fields as shallow as before, must deepen our mines with pain and cost.

Schelling's *Naturphilosophie* explains better than Hegel what Jevons is approaching here

[230] Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London, 1991), p. 196; Žižek, *Sublime*, pp. 87-100.
[231] V. N. Voloshinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Cambridge MA, 1973), p. 9, cited by Eagleton, *Ideology*, p. 194.
[232] Voloshinov, *Language*, p. 13.
[233] W. Stanley Jevons, *The Coal Question; An Inquiry Concerning the Progress of the Nation, and the Probable Exhaustion of Our Coal Mines* (London, 1866), p. 177.
[234] ibid., p. 123.
[235] ibid., pp. 177-8.

28.


POPULATION OF
ENGLAND AND WALES.
20 millions
10 millions
5·5
6·2
8·3
20·5
TOTAL IMPORTS.
Official Value
£. 80 millions.
£. 60 millions
£. 40 millions.
£ 20 millions
7·0
5·3
7·8
11·7
VEND OF COAL
from Newcastle
10 million Tons
2·50
1·65
·50
·25
10·4
SUPPOSED CONSUMPTION
OF COAL IN BRITAIN.
100 million Tons
Nat. consumption
(Shaded)
83·6 millions
in 1861.
111·9
Supposed future
consumption of Coal
at same rate of progress
shewing the impossibility of a long continuance of that progress.
1650
1600
1700
1800
1900
2000

(and why even Jevons's assessment must necessarily be reencountered to determine that for which he fails to account); 'the whole point of [Schelling's] *Identitätsphilosophie*', Žižek suggests, 'is that subjective idealism (transcendental philosophy) and objective idealism (philosophy of nature) are two approaches to the Third, the Absolute beyond or beneath the duality of spirit and nature, subject and object, underlying and manifesting in both.'[236] 'We are dealing here', seemingly, 'with the inherent constitution of the emergence of a formal structure – in short, with the *condition of the structure's consistency:* but for this exclusive base in a One – but for this partiality and distortion sustained by a minimum of Egotism – the structure disintegrates, loses its consistency in the dispersed plurality.'[237]

> When we repeat after Schelling that every Order arises on the basis of and has its roots in a general Disorder, we are therefore not making the usual relativist point that man's ordering activity is limited to local attempts to introduce a minimum of Order into the wide ocean of primordial chaos – to attempts which, as such, are ultimately doomed to fail; our point is, rather, that the very imposition of an Order is an act of supreme violence – *Order is a violent imposition which throws the universe out of joint*. Disorder is the condition of possibility of Order not only in the sense that the very notion of Order is conceivable only against the background of general Disorder, as a series of local attempts to limit the Disorder – *the highest Disorder, the highest violation of "natural balance", is the very imposition of a (biased) Order*.

What 'imposition of a (biased) Order' was Jevons engineering? The replacement of the natural-theological ecological model (with its internal accession to Nietzsche's maxim that 'God is dead') was not as radical a break as it may appear, or perhaps barely a break at all; despite coming to believe that God was not actively-interventionist in and through 'nature', modern European societies coped with industrialization by retaining a belief in inherently 'natural' spaces; in our contemporary anxiety about the depletion of oil, for example, we forget that oil only emerged as the result of abyssal, cataclysmic Schellingian catastrophes! In

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[236] Žižek, *Less*, p. 144; for Hegel '*there is no need for a Third element*, the medium or Ground beyond subject and object-substance. … When, in Hegel's dialectics, we have a couple of opposites, their unity is not a Third, an underlying medium, but *one of the two*: a genus is its own species, or, a genus ultimately has only one species, which is why specific difference coincides with the difference between genus and species'.

[237] Žižek, *Indivisible*, p. 76; F. W. J. Schelling, *Die Weltalter. Fragmente. In den Urfassungen von 1811 und 1813* (Manfred Schröter ed.), (Munich, 1946; reprint 1979), p. 4, cited by Žižek, *Indivisible*, pp. 14-5; 'Is not the primordial vortex of drives', Žižek asks, 'the ultimate ground which nothing can precede? Schelling would be in entire agreement with this, adding only that the point in question is precisely the exact status of this "nothing": prior to *Grund*, there can be only an abyss [*Ungrund*] – that is to say, far from being a mere *nihil privativum*, this "nothing" which precedes Ground stands for the "absolute indifference" *qua* the abyss of pure Freedom which is not yet the predicate-property of some Subject but, rather, designates a pure impersonal Willing [*Wollen*], which wills nothing. How can we, finite, mortal humans, find access to this abyss of freedom which is the primordial origin of all things? Schelling's fundamental premiss here is radically "anthropocentric": man is not merely an epiphenomenon in the universe, a negligible grain of dust – among all created things, he is the only one to possess the "power of the centre", and stands as such in direct contact with the abyss of primordial freedom:

> "One must allow to man a principle which is outside and above the world; for how could he alone of all creatures follow back the long path of developments from the present into the deepest night of the past, he alone ascend to the beginning of times, if there were not in him a principle before the beginning of times? Poured from the source of things and the same as the source, the human soul has a conscience/co-knowledge [*Mitwissenschaft*] of creation."'

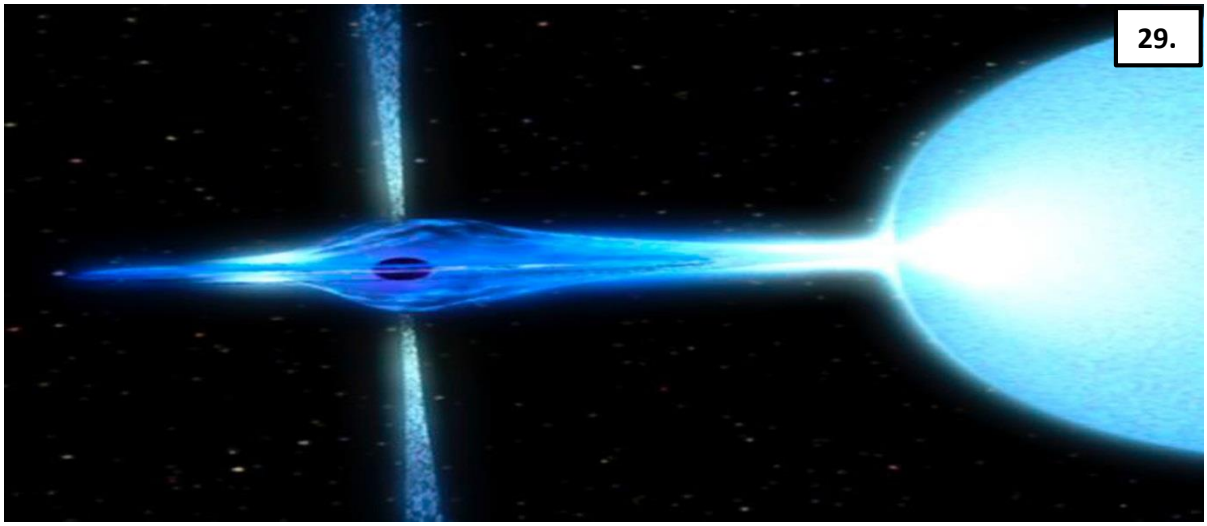
just the same way, the impact of Einstein's qualitatively new insights was frightening, destabilizing. 'The principle of relativity', Greene reminds us, 'rests on a simple fact: Whenever we discuss speed or velocity (an object's speed and its direction of motion), we must specify precisely who or what is doing the measuring.'[238]

> Imagine that George, who is wearing a spacesuit with a small, red flashing light, is floating in the absolute darkness of completely empty space, far away from any planets, stars, or galaxies. From George's perspective, he is completely stationary, engulfed in the uniform, still blackness of the cosmos. Off in the distance, George catches sight of a tiny, green flashing light that appears to be coming closer and closer. Finally, it gets close enough for George to see that the light is attached to the spacesuit of another space-dweller, Gracie, who is slowly floating by. She waves as she passes, as does George, and she recedes into the distance. This story can be told with equal validity from Gracie's perspective. It begins in the same manner with Gracie completely alone in the immense still darkness of outer space. Off in the distance, Gracie sees a red flashing light, which appears to be coming closer and closer. Finally, it gets close enough for Gracie to see that it is attached to the spacesuit of another being, George, who is slowly floating by. He waves as he passes, as does Gracie, and he recedes into the distance.
>
> The two stories describe one and the same situation from two distinct but equally valid points of view. Each observer feels stationary and perceives the other as moving. Each perspective is understandable and justifiable. As there is symmetry between the two space-dwellers, there is, on quite fundamental grounds, no way of saying one perspective is "right" and the other "wrong." Each perspective has an equal claim on truth.
>
> This example captures the meaning of the principle of relativity. The concept of motion is relative. We can speak about the motion of an object, but only relative to or by comparison with another. There is thus no meaning to the statement "George is travelling at 10 miles per hour," as we have not specified any other object for comparison. There *is* meaning to the statement "George is travelling at 10 miles per hour past Gracie," as we have now specified Gracie as the benchmark. As our example shows, this last statement is completely equivalent to "Gracie is travelling at 10 miles per hour past George (in the opposite direction)." In other words, there is no "absolute" notion of motion. Motion is relative.[239]

Motion is relative, remember, as a characteristic of its relationship to the unvarying speed of light (299, 792, 458 metres per second), which is why Einstein eschewed the 'relativity' label, asking fellow practitioners and the world-at-large to talk instead about 'invariance'.[240] Special Relativity assumes many things we as a species could potentially do to experience temporality dramatically differently, even intuitively harnessing these different experiences; in the stellar association Cygnus OB3 [*fig*. 29], about 6,070 light years away from our Sun, there is a black hole whose mass is about 14.8 times the mass of our Sun. It was discovered in 1964 during a sub-orbital flight, which is where a spacecraft reaches space but its ascent is not so steep that it completes one orbital revolution. Like all black holes, Cygnus X-1 (the name of the black hole) was formed by the expiration of a progenitor star. We know this long-departed star at some point shed the majority of its mass, most likely as a stellar wind. It would then have entered what we call the 'supernova' stage, where a rapidly-dying star suddenly explodes in an unimaginably large burst of radiation. These bursts can often

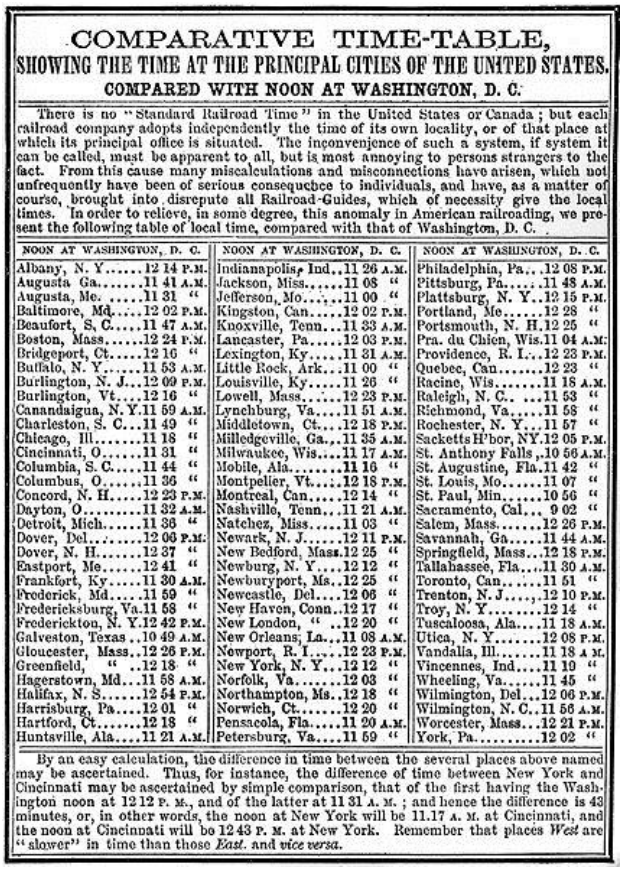
[238] Greene, *Universe*, p. 28.
[239] ibid., pp. 28-9.
[240] ibid., p. 51.

overshadow their galaxy for weeks or even months, and the predecessor of Cygnus X-1 could have emitted as much energy in this short spell as our Sun ever will in the course of its life. The burst expels at roughly 10% of light-speed, so quick that we can barely visualize this. At some point, the remnants collapsed in on themselves, creating the seeming-void in spacetime that we call a black hole. This void swallows all light hitting the edge we call 'event horizons'. By any standards, these things *are* frightening; there are plenty of them out there and it would be a brave astronaut indeed who would ever pilot futuristic space-craft near one. Were we to do so, however, tilting a space-craft so that its motion took it around the black hole without getting engulfed, we would experience time dramatically slower than others; after one year of circling, the space-craft would return to an Earth older than it should be (Schaffner's 1968 *Planet of the Apes* fleshed out Hawking's 'worm-hole' concept, *fig.* 30).[241]



[241] Just as Einstein suffered tremendously with the spiralling, excessive (*in precisely the Lacanian sense*) implications of his theory ('God doesn't play dice with the world', he once said to the prominent Holocaust-survivor William Hermanns who lost a sister, 35 other relatives and 200 friends in Nazi concentration camps), Hawking revolts against his own 'worm-hole' theory continuously; 'God might have created such a warped universe', Hawking concedes in an updated-*A Brief History Of Time*, 'but we have no reason to believe he did.'

All this was absolutely, intrinsically antithetical to the way agents of early Twentieth-Century Weberian states would have preferred their interpolated subjects conceptualize temporality; in October 1884, at the request of U.S. President Chester A. Arthur, forty-one delegates representing twenty-six nations convened in Washington, D. C. 'to adopt a single prime [temporal] meridian for all …, in place of the multiplicity of initial meridians which now exist'.[242] The industrializing United States was tumultuous without 'absolute' time (*fig*. 31 [unnumbered to avoid overlap]). Per Resolution 4, 'that the Conference proposes the adoption of a universal day for all purposes for which it may be found convenient, and which *shall not interfere with the use of local or standard time where desirable* [my emphasis] (Ayes, 23; abstaining, 2.)', the events of October were specifically and interestingly *not* the imposition of a particular conceptualization of temporality on an unwilling globe (though this may describe the position of the French who, finding only Brazil and San Domingo as co-conspirators against London's projected-hegemony, clung to Paris time as long as was feasible: 1911); that most European countries *willingly*, *enthusiastically* aligned themselves with Greenwich Mean Time within ten years (Sweden and North America doing so immediately), testifies to the capitalistically-seductive gravitation of unified conceptualizations of temporality.[243] F. T. Marinetti's 1909 *The Futurist Manifesto* ('We declare that the splendor [sic] of the world has been enriched by a new beauty: the beauty of speed. A racing automobile with its bonnet



COMPARATIVE TIME-TABLE,

SHOWING THE TIME AT THE PRINCIPAL CITIES OF THE UNITED STATES.

COMPARED WITH NOON AT WASHINGTON, D. C.

There is no "Standard Railroad Time" in the United States or Canada; but each railroad company adopts independently the time of its own locality, or of that place at which its principal office is situated. The inconvenience of such a system, if system it can be called, must be apparent to all, but is most annoying to persons strangers to the fact. From this cause many miscalculations and misconnections have arisen, which not unfrequently have been of serious consequence to individuals, and have, as a matter of course, brought into disrepute all Railroad-Guides, which of necessity give the local times. In order to relieve, in some degree, this anomaly in American railroading, we present the following table of local time, compared with that of Washington, D. C.

NOON AT WASHINGTON, D. C.	NOON AT WASHINGTON, D. C.	NOON AT WASHINGTON, D. C.
Albany, N. Y.....12 14 P.M.	Indianapolis, Ind..11 26 A.M.	Philadelphia, Pa...12 08 P.M.
Augusta Ga.....11 41 A.M.	Jackson, Miss.....11 08 "	Pittsburg, Pa.....11 48 A.M.
Augusta, Me. .....11 31 "	Jefferson, Mo.....11 00 "	Plattsburg, N. Y..12 15 P.M.
Baltimore, Md.....12 02 P.M.	Kingston, Can.....12 02 P.M.	Portland, Me.....12 28 "
Beaufort, S. C.....11 47 A.M.	Knoxville, Tenn...11 33 A.M.	Portsmouth, N. H.12 25 "
Boston, Mass.....12 24 P.M.	Lancaster, Pa.....12 03 P.M.	Pra. du Chien, Wis.11 04 A.M.
Bridgeport, Ct.....12 16 "	Lexington, Ky.....11 31 A.M.	Providence, R. I...12 23 P.M.
Buffalo, N. Y.....11 53 A.M.	Little Rock, Ark...11 00 "	Quebec, Can.....12 23 "
Burlington, N. J...12 09 P.M.	Louisville, Ky.....11 26 "	Racine, Wis.....11 18 A.M.
Burlington, Vt....12 16 "	Lowell, Mass.....12 23 P.M.	Raleigh, N. C.. ...11 53 "
Canandaigua, N. Y.11 59 A.M.	Lynchburg, Va....11 51 A.M.	Richmond, Va.....11 58 "
Charleston, S. C...11 49 "	Middletown, Ct....12 18 P.M.	Rochester, N. Y...11 57 "
Chicago, Ill.....11 18 "	Milledgeville, Ga...11 35 A.M.	Sacketts H'bor, NY.12 05 P.M.
Cincinnati, O.....11 31 "	Milwaukee, Wis....11 17 A.M.	St. Anthony Falls..10 56 A.M.
Columbia, S. C.....11 44 "	Mobile, Ala.....11 16 "	St. Augustine, Fla.11 42 "
Columbus, O.....11 36 "	Montpelier, Vt.....12 18 P.M.	St. Louis, Mo.....11 07 "
Concord, N. H.....12 23 P.M.	Montreal, Can.....12 14 "	St. Paul, Min.....10 56 "
Dayton, O.....11 32 A.M.	Nashville, Tenn...11 21 A.M.	Sacramento, Cal... 9 02 "
Detroit, Mich.....11 36 "	Natchez, Miss.....11 03 "	Salem, Mass.....12 26 P.M.
Dover, Del.....12 06 P.M.	Newark, N. J.....12 11 P.M.	Savannah, Ga.....11 44 A.M.
Dover, N. H.....12 37 "	New Bedford, Mass.12 25 "	Springfield, Mass...12 18 P.M.
Eastport, Me.....12 41 "	Newburg, N. Y....12 12 "	Tallahassee, Fla....11 30 A.M.
Frankfort, Ky.....11 30 A.M.	Newburyport, Ms..12 25 "	Toronto, Can.....11 51 "
Frederick, Md.....11 59 "	Newcastle, Del....12 06 "	Trenton, N. J.....12 10 P.M.
Fredericksburg, Va.11 58 "	New Haven, Conn..12 17 "	Troy, N. Y.....12 14 "
Frederickton, N. Y.12 42 P.M.	New London, " ..12 20 "	Tuscaloosa, Ala....11 18 A.M.
Galveston, Texas ..10 49 A.M.	New Orleans, La...11 08 A.M.	Utica, N. Y.....12 08 P.M.
Gloucester, Mass..12 26 P.M.	Newport, R. I.....12 23 P.M.	Vandalia, Ill.....11 18 A.M.
Greenfield, " ..12 18 "	New York, N. Y...12 12 "	Vincennes, Ind.....11 10 "
Hagerstown, Md...11 58 A.M.	Norfolk, Va.....12 03 "	Wheeling, Va.....11 45 "
Halifax, N. S.....12 54 P.M.	Northampton, Ms..12 18 "	Wilmington, Del...12 06 P.M.
Harrisburg, Pa.....12 01 "	Norwich, Ct.....12 20 "	Wilmington, N. C..11 56 A.M.
Hartford, Ct.....12 18 "	Pensacola, Fla.....11 20 A.M.	Worcester, Mass...12 21 P.M.
Huntsville, Ala....11 21 A.M.	Petersburg, Va.....11 59 "	York, Pa.....12 02 "

By an easy calculation, the difference in time between the several places above named may be ascertained. Thus, for instance, the difference of time between New York and Cincinnati may be ascertained by simple comparison, that of the first having the Washington noon at 12 12 P. M., and of the latter at 11 31 A. M.; and hence the difference is 43 minutes, or, in other words, the noon at New York will be 11.17 A. M. at Cincinnati, and the noon at Cincinnati will be 12 43 P. M. at New York. Remember that places *West* are "slower" in time than those *East*. and *vice versa*.

[242] 'International Conference Held at Washington for the Purpose of Fixing a Prime Meridian and a Universal Day. October, 1884. Protocols of the proceedings.', *Project Gutenberg http://www.gutenberg.org/files/17759/17759-h/17759-h.htm* (13 December 2013).

[243] Žižek is of use here in determining, vis á vis John Carpenter's *They Live* (2008), the dictatorship in democracy, the violence which structures what we recognize as violence ('the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems', Žižek 2008b); the modern parent demands of a child that they visit their grandmother – the functioning of hegemonic power here is at least explicit: the child is conscious of their ability to refuse, accepting the physical or emotional punishment that may result. The post-modern parent, by contrast, appeals to the child: "you should only go and see your grandmother *if you really want to*". The intelligent child knows very well that behind this apparent freedom lurks an implicit demand: in the post-modern scenario, not only must the child visit its grandmother - it must actively internalize its choice.

adorned with great tubes like serpents with explosive breath … a roaring motor car which seems to run on machine-gun fire, is more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace') was destabilizing (culminating in Gabrielle D'Annunzio and two-thousand irredentists seizing Fiume, now the Croatian port Rijeka, on 12th September 1939, holding it sixteen months).[244] As something implicitly eliding and imploding entrenched hegemonic conceptual praxis (that, by the way, had taken a century to develop), Einsteinian Relativity has no equal. This, I repeat my thesis, is because *it did scientifically what Hegel had achieved philosophically – it introduced formal curvatures into those conceptualizations it had been assumed were linear*.

> It is as if time has leapt outside itself: … because, in a certain sense, and as Blanchot wrote recalling a title of Ernst Jünger, our age is in the process of breaking the "time barrier." Following the analogy with the breaking of the sound barrier, to break the time barrier would be to go faster than time. A supersonic device, quicker than its own sound, provokes at the breaking of the barrier a violent sonic boom, a sound shock. What would be the breaking of a time barrier if this meant going faster than time? What *shock* would be provoked by a device going quicker than its "own time"? Such a shock would in fact mean that speed is older than time. For either time, with space, determines speed, and there could be no question of breaking the time barrier in this sense, or else time, like space, is only thinkable in terms of speed (which remains unthought).[245]

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[244] F. T. Marinetti, 'The Futurist Manifesto', *The University of Michigan; Centre for the Study of Complex Systems http://vserver1.cscs.lsa.umich.edu/~crshalizi/T4PM/futurist-manifesto.html* (13 December 2013).

[245] Bernard Stiegler, *Technics And Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, trans. Richard Beardsworth and George Collins (Stanford CA, 1998), p. 15; Michel Foucault, '*Des Espace Autres* [Of Other Spaces].', *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité*, 5 (1984), pp. 46-7; 'The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermaldynamics- The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment. I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. … Yet it is necessary to notice that the space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems, is not an innovation; space itself has a history in Western experience, and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space. One could say, by way of retracing this history of space very roughly, that in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane plates: protected places and open, exposed places: urban places and rural places (all these concern the real life of men). In cosmological theory, there were the supercelestial places as opposed to the celestial, and the celestial place was in its turn opposed to the terrestrial place. There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability. It was this complete hierarchy, this opposition, this intersection of places that constituted what could very roughly be called medieval space: the space of emplacement. … As an example I shall take the strange heterotopia of the cemetery. The cemetery is certainly a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces. It is a space that is however connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery. In western culture the cemetery has practically always existed. But it has undergone important changes. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the cemetery was placed at the heart of the city, next to the church. In it there was a hierarchy of possible tombs. There was the charnel house in which bodies lost the last traces of individuality, there were a few individual tombs and then there were the tombs inside the church. These latter tombs were themselves of two types, either simply tombstones with an inscription, or mausoleums with statues. This cemetery housed inside the sacred space of the church has taken on a quite different cast in modern civilizations, and curiously, it is in a time when civilization has become 'atheistic,' as one says very crudely, that western culture has established what is termed the cult of the dead. Basically it was quite natural that, in a time of real belief in the resurrection of bodies and the immortality of the soul, overriding importance was not accorded to the body's remains. On the contrary, from the moment when people are no longer sure that they have a soul or that the body will regain life, it is perhaps necessary to give much more attention to the dead body, which is ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language. In any case, it is from the beginning of the

Quantum Theory is analogous to Phenomenology, specifically Heidegger's succession of Husserl ('Husserl is often reproached for trying to cling onto the "abstract" Cartesian subject, that is, for failing to fully grasp *In-der-Welt-Sein*, the subject's active engagement in his life world – only Heidegger, it is said, was able to make this move, in *Sein und Zeit*');[246] 'Within the transcendental approach' Žižek explains, 'the ultimate horizon of subjectivity is that of our finitude, for we cannot reach beyond (or abstract from) our engagement with the world …: "I often ask myself – this has for a long time been a fundamental question for me – what nature would be without man – must it not resonate through him in order to attain its ownmost potency."'[247] Heidegger and the Copenhagen School mutually resonate, not only because Heidegger was attentive to minutiae, but because like the Copenhagen School (and unlike Husserl), Heidegger was able to think *Verschränkung* ('entanglement') – the idea that it was the minutiae structuring the discovery of the minutiae. Correlationism, Meillassoux defines, is 'the idea according to which we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other'.[248] Here we can return to Nietzsche's critique of Hegel (Hegel inadequately incorporates rhizomatic modes of 'becoming' that, in and by themselves, implode relationships between 'being' and 'becoming') to see Quantum Theory as Critical;[249] Eisenberg's 'uncertainty principle' applied just as well to the anxious urban environment in the early Twentieth Century as it did matter particles, and we can probably trace scrupulously radical attention to the particularly-specific back to Blake's 1803 *Auguries of Innocence*:

> TO see a World in a Grain of Sand /
> And a Heaven in a Wild Flower /
> Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand /
> And Eternity in an hour….[250]

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nineteenth century that everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay, but on the other hand, it is only from that start of the nineteenth century that cemeteries began to be located at the outside border of cities. In correlation with the individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery, there arises an obsession with death as an 'illness.' The dead, it is supposed, bring illnesses to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the houses, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself. This major theme of illness spread by the contagion in the cemeteries persisted until the end of the eighteenth century, until, during the nineteenth century, the shift of cemeteries toward the suburbs was initiated. The cemeteries then came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place.'; Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 16; 'our daily life, our psychic experiences, our cultural languages are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding … high modernism'.

[246] Žižek, *Less*, p. 139.

[247] Letter from October 11, 1931, in *Martin Heidegger/Elisabeth Blochmann: Briefwechsel 1918-1969* (Marbach: Deutsches Literatur-Archiv 1990), p. 44; as quoted in Quentin Meillassoux, *Après la finitude. Essai sur la nécessité de la contingence* [*After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*], trans. Ray Brassier (London: Continuum 2008), cited by Žižek, *Less*, p. 625.

[248] Meillassoux, *Après*, p. 5.

[249] Nietzsche, *Will*, §531/pp. 288-9.

[250] James Rovira, *Blake and Kierkegaard: Creation and Anxiety* (London, 2010), p. 148/n. 22.

'The great danger of life in Germany has always been emptiness and boredom', wrote Sebastian Haffner in 1939 (remembering specifically the microcosmic turbulence accompanying the machine-gunning of Weimar-Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau).[251]

> The menace of monotony hangs, as it has always hung, over the great plains of northern and eastern Germany, with their colorless towns and their all too industrious, efficient, and conscientious business and organizations. With it comes a *horror vacui* and the yearning for "salvation": through alcohol, through superstition, or, best of all, through a vast, overpowering, cheap mass intoxication.

'If you read ordinary history books', Haffner lamented, 'you get the impression that no more than a few dozen people are involved, who happen to be "at the helm of the ship of state" and whose deeds and decisions form what is called history [whereas] we anonymous others seem at best to be the objects of history … who may be pushed forward or left standing, sacrificed or captured, but whose lives, for what they are worth, take place in a totally different world, unrelated to what is happening on the chessboard, of which they are quite unaware.'[252] Haffner cynically anticipates the reaction of the reader Žižek terms 'the moron: … those who fully identify with common sense, who fully stand for the "big Other" of appearances';[253] 'We should not be fobbed off', Haffner imagines his moronic reader (unacquainted with Eisenberg) as saying, 'with the private experiences of a young man who was not much better informed than we are, even if he was closer to the scene of these events and had no influence on them, who was not even a particularly well-placed witness.'[254] Haffner clearly realised his ability to think *Verschränkung*, realised that 'History' only arises apropos *Verschränkung*.[255]

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[251] Sebastian Haffner, *Defying Hitler: A Memoir*, trans. Oliver Pretzel (London, 2003), pp. 58-9.

[252] ibid., p. 7; 'Official, academic history', Haffner states, 'has … nothing to tell us about the differences in intensity of historical occurrences. To learn about that, you must read biographies, not those of statesmen but the all too rare ones of unknown individuals. There you will see that one historical event passes over the private (real) lives of people like a cloud over a lake. Nothing stirs, there is only a fleeting shadow. Another event whips up the lake as if in a thunderstorm. For a while it is scarcely recognisable. A third may, perhaps, drain the lake completely.

I believe history is misunderstood if this aspect is forgotten (and it usually is forgotten). So before I reach my proper theme, let me tell you my version of twenty years of German history – the history of Germany as a part of my private story. It will not take long, and it will make what follows easier to understand. Besides, it may help us get to know each other a little better.'

[253] Žižek, *Less*, p. 1.

[254] Charles Taylor, '"Defying Hitler" by Sebastian Haffner. A newly discovered memoir by a German classified as "Aryan" describes the insidious early spread of Nazism and how hard it was to resist', *Salon.com http://www.salon.com/2002/09/03/haffner/* (15 December 2013); 'The most powerful dictators, ministers, and generals', Taylor cites Haffner, 'are powerless against the simultaneous mass decisions taken individually and almost unconsciously by the population at large', evoking Hannah Arendt's 1963 notion of 'the Banality of Evil'.

[255] Heidegger, *Sein*, §21/p. 43; 'Tradition', Heidegger professes, 'takes what has come down to us and delivers it over to self-evidence; it blocks our access to those primordial "sources" from which the categories and concepts handed down to us have been in part quite genuinely drawn. [In this passage Heidegger juxtaposes a number of words beginning with the prefix "über-"; "übergibt" ("transmits"); "überantwortet" ("delivers over"); "das Überkommene" ("what has come down to us"); "überlieferten" ("handed down to us").] Indeed it makes us forget that they have had such an origin, and makes us suppose that the necessity of going back to these sources is something which we need not even understand. Dasein has had its historicality so thoroughly uprooted by tradition that it confines its interest to the multiformity of possible types, directions, and standpoints of

philosophical activity in the most exotic and alien of cultures; and by this very interest it seeks to veil the fact that it has no ground of its own to stand on. Consequently, despite all its historiological interests and all its zeal for an Interpretation which is philologically "objective" ["sachliche"], Dasein no longer understands the most elementary conditions which would alone enable it to go back to the past in a positive manner and make it productively its own.' By 'tradition', Heidegger has in mind the commonsensical Lyotardist grand-narratives given us by 'History' (what Gramsci termed the 'chaotic aggregate of disparate conceptions', 1971a: 422, 424). Phenomenological *Ideologiekritik* was, Terry Eagleton argued to Roger Scruton at the Royal Institution in London on 13th September 2012, the time when Marxist ideas became truly operational - for example through the exertions of the Frankfurt School, exertions Eagleton summarises apropos four observations on 'culture'; 'the first is', he begins, that 'in the early Twentieth Century, something very dramatic happens to "culture": namely, it becomes for the first time, really, a full-blooded "industry"; … the so-called "culture industry" (as people like Adorno will later call it) … gets off the ground. In other words, "culture" really for the first time in a very big way, becomes part of commodity production in general. … Second momentous development (which is really in line with this, and extends it): several decades later, perhaps in the 1970's – the era of so-called "Postmodernism" – now not only is "culture" *itself* a huge industry (enormously profitable), but *other industries*, other parts of society, begin increasingly to assimilate and integrate it (become as-it-were "culturalized" or "aestheticized") in style, design, packaging, advertising, public relations and so on. What happens then, is an intensifying integration of "culture" and other kinds of social practice, which has the advantage … that it brings "culture" down-to-earth from its' rather-rarefied status, … otherwise, but has the distinct *dis*advantage that it means that "culture" gradually ceases to operate *as critique*. That one of the great traditional, humanistic functions of culture was, as it were, to open up some daylight between itself and the rest of our social practices and institutions so that it could actually operate as a critique of them. … That distance as it increasingly narrows between culture and society, … means that critique is increasingly muted and blunted, and that happens just in our own period at the same time as another dramatic event (a historic event), which is that the universities finally more-or-less cease to be centres of humane critique, and capitulate (almost without a struggle) to the priorities of late-Capitalism. Those two things, … culture ceasing to be a critique and the universities increasingly capitulating …, I think can be seen together. … The third momentous development … is when culture ceases to be … a surrogate for religion. … You can write the history of Modernity … in terms of a whole series of botched-attempts by various things ("the nation", "the state", "culture" and so on) to *stand in for* a failing-religion. "Culture" is in a way a very plausible candidate - both "culture" in the narrow artistic sense and "culture" in the broader way-of-life anthropological sense. What happens … over the Twentieth Century … is that this [idea] becomes less and less plausible: the idea that *the arts* will save us (which in some ways is a theme of Modernism, a theme of High Modernism) is as-it-were gradually discredited. … In a rather dramatic way, "culture" made a bid for power – a bid … to *oust God*, to oust theology and religion. And that … wasn't a stupid idea, because "culture" is concerned with deep fundamental values, … that are kind of transcendence, as well as with everyday practices like religion; it was in some ways a very plausible candidate to replace religion but it didn't work, for all kinds of reasons. The fourth dramatic development over that century [was] that … at a certain point "culture" ceased to be part of the *solution* and became part of the problem. … One rather generous-minded (but somewhat hopelessly-Idealist) version of "culture" had seen "culture" as the common-ground on which we could *all* meet in our fundamental shared humanity, regardless of our rather-trivial differences of "gender", "nationality", "ethnicity", "class" and so on. That', Eagleton says, 'was a rather abstract concept and you needed to concretize it - you needed something [which] you could … hold in your hand and say "*this* crystallizes, this distils those deep shared-values". And the name of that was literature; literature was a marvellously portable way … of carrying this deep consensus of values around with you. That was in many ways a very generous-minded and progressive idea *in its' time* - what happens from the mid-Twentieth Century onwards, is that *that too* becomes increasingly unviable, and the reason for that ... is this: the greatest, most wildly-successful revolutionary movement of the Modern period was "revolutionary-Nationalism", which in the mid-decades … of the Twentieth Century transfigured the earth. … For "revolutionary-Nationalism" (and for the various kinds of "identity politics", so-called, that came after it), "culture" was now … part of the problem, *not part of the solution*. "Culture" … in the broad sense of "identity", "language", "symbol", "daily practice", "kinship", "tradition", "affiliation", "community" - all of these things were now politically problematic. … They were the very language of conflict and contention, whereas "culture" traditionally (sometimes I think rather spuriously) had been an attempt to paper-over those cracks and say "… those divisions are not really as important as our shared humanity". … What happened then, was that "culture" became … the *very language* in which political-demands were framed and articulated. "Culture" and politics became much closer together, and *that meant* that "culture" could no longer … take the high-ground in-relation to a politics which it had always been rather … disdainful of (or rather suspicious of). In a word, … "culture" was *now* (and is for us today) *what people are ready-to-kill-for* (or if-you-like to die for). … Nobody (as far as I know) is prepared to kill for the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, … but they're *most*

If Einsteinian Relativity is analogous to Hegelian *métanarrations* and Quantum-uncertainty to Heideggerian *Phänomenologie*, then, contemporary-Superstring Theory is analogous to the (*I believe flawed*) conjoined reading of both so esoterically popular today; this reading I find hard to disassociate from Western, capitalist post-(or late-)modernity. How easily we sneer nowadays at a Yang Xianzhen-type who believes (or, as an historical figure, is 'supposed to have known' [*sujeto al que se supone saber/ sujet-supposé-savoir*]) that the dialectical-Two of capitalism and communism inevitably resolves into a communist One.[256] Willing inheritors of the pan-Russian vanguardist-Leninist tradition (for example the CPRF

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certainly prepared to kill for questions of "religion", "identity", "community", "ethnicity", "lineage" and so on. … That, now, I think, is what has happened in the long trek from the beginning of the Twentieth Century to the present: "culture" is what people are prepared to kill for.'; It was in relation to Eagleton's third observation, that Heidegger famously commented to *Der Spiegel* magazine in 1966 that 'philosophy will not be able to bring about a direct change of the present state of the world'. 'This is true not only of philosophy', Heidegger said, 'but of all merely human meditations and endeavors. Only a god can still save us. I think the only possibility of salvation left to us is to prepare readiness, through thinking and poetry, for the appearance of the god or for the absence of the god during the decline; so that we do not, simply put, die meaningless deaths, but that when we decline, we decline in the face of the absent god.' It was in relation to Eagleton's second observation (and specifically the capitulation of universities to Capitalism) that Heidegger described to *Spiegel* his attempt as early as April 21st 1933 – the day he was elected rector of Freiburg, replacing von Möllendorff, as part of *Gleichschaltung* ('political realignment') – to 'try to counterbalance the coming development [National Socialism's rise had culminated that January] with those of the constructive powers that are still really vital'.

[256] Marcus Pound, *Žižek: A (very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids MI, 2008), pp. 23-4; 'The basis of Žižek's theology', Pound writes, 'is to be found in his repeated reference to Christ's cry of dereliction on the cross (OB, 106-51; PD, 171; PV, 106; FTKN, liii). This theological shift is in marked contrast to Freud. Freud sets in opposition to religion his own science of psychoanalysis. Žižek follows Lacan, who opposed psychoanalysis to science itself, arguing that the latter remained within the orbit of "theism." In other words, Lacan claimed that science, unlike psychoanalysis, was still *too* religious. What Lacan had in mind was the way science often and implicitly depends upon a notion of a big Other – be it God, Spirit, or Nature – that has a preexisting plan of the cosmos that it is the scientist's task to discover. Consider, for example, Stephen Hawking's question "Does God play dice?" or more generally the claim that science helps us uncover nature's secrets. This big Other or *subject supposed to know* anticipates all our knowing such that in the end all learning is but a rediscovery of what is already known in the mind of the creator. Said otherwise, the *subject supposed to know* acts in terms of a fundamental deadlock, securing the subject, nature, or the universe as a whole, such that if it were to be unlocked, all other terms in the field of reference would lose their meaning. … In his opposition to science, Lacan took it to be the task of psychoanalysis to put into question this big Other.'; Roberto Harari, *Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: An Introduction*, trans. Judith Filc (New York NY, 2004), p. 148; Bruce Fink, *A Clinical Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis: Theory and Technique* (Cambridge MA, 1997), pp. 231-2/n. 4; Jacques-Alain Miller, 'The Financial Crisis', *Lacan.com http://www.lacan.com/symptom/?page_id=299* (22 December 2013), cited in Slavoj Žižek, *First As Tragedy, Then As Farce* (London, 2009), pp. 28-9; 'The monetary signifier is one of semblance, which rests on social conventions. The financial universe is an architecture made of fictions and its keystone is what Lacan called a "subject supposed to know", to know why and how. Who plays this part? The concert of authorities, from where sometimes a voice is detached, Alan Greenspan, for example, in his time. The financial players base their behaviour on this. The fictional and hyper-reflexive unit holds by the "belief" in the authorities, i.e. through the transference to the subject supposed to know. If this subject falters, there is a crisis, a falling apart of the foundations, which of course involves effects of panic. However, the financial subject supposed to know was already quite subdued because of deregulation. And this happened because the financial world believed itself, in its infatuated delusion, to be able to work things out without the function of the subject supposed to know. Firstly, the real state assets become waste. Secondly, gradually shit permeates everything. Thirdly, there is a gigantic negative transfer vis-à-vis the authorities; the electric shock of the Paulson/Bernanke plan angers the public: the crisis is one of trust; and it will last till the subject supposed to know is reconstructed. This will come in the long term by way of a new set of Bretton Woods accords, a council enjoined to speak the truth about the truth.'

[*Коммунистическая Партия Российской Федерации; КПРФ*], founded on the 14th of February 1993 as the successor organisation of the Communist Party of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic and, indirectly, the historical-Communist Party of the Soviet Union [*Коммунистическая партия Советского Союза; КПСС*]) still continue to meet regularly in Red Square, obeying such traditions as meaningfully connect them to their past (*fig*. 32). Through the 1990's, the CPRF and its' affiliates drew support from the so-called Red Belt – 'a zone of impoverished farm villages and decrepit defense plants stretching west of the Volga River' (*fig*. 33); these included, for the psephologist Rostislav Turovsky in 1999, regions around and within the cities of Smolensk, Bryansk, Kaluga, Oryol, Kursk, Belgorod, Ryazan, Lipetsk, Tambov, Voronezh, Penza, Ulyanovsk, Saratov, Volgograd and Astrakhan.

33.

Are Yang Xianzhen-types Žižek's '(occasionally) hyper-intelligent subject who just doesn't "get it," who understands a situation logically, but simply misses its hidden contextual rules'?[257]

> For example, when I first visited New York, a waiter at a café asked me: "How was your day?" Mistaking the phrase for a genuine question, I answered him truthfully ("I am dead tired, jet-lagged, stressed out …"), and he looked at me as if I were a complete idiot … and he was right: this kind of stupidity is precisely that of an idiot.

What 'hidden contextual rules' does a Yang Xianzhen-type process incorrectly? If their error is misconceiving what Hegel calls 'The Spirit of this world [which] is a spiritual *essence* that is permeated by a *self*-consciousness which knows itself, and knows the essence as an actuality confronting it', *we are guilty of the same error*; we cannot sneer at a Yang

[257] Žižek, *Less*, p. 1.

Xianzhen-type, because *we hardly read Hegel conjoined with Heideggerian Phänomenologie correctly either* – why? Our readings of these philosophers today is a Liberal, negative one: Hegel successively condemned as a thinker of 'Absolute Knowing' (from which Heidegger could begin marking Continental distance), and Heidegger himself (when he is thought of at all) condemned as tainted by the Nazi project and forgotten for a logician like Wittgenstein. *We cannot sneer at a Yang Xianzhen-type <u>because we have made exactly the same error</u> – we retain some stake, to our doom, in some big Liberal Other working on our behalf* (*fig*. 34). Post-Nietzschean anticlericalism was so triumphalist ('we marvelled at our own magnificence…') that we never bothered to remember that we might *actually* be alone.[258] *In the immediate future we are alone, because the Capitalist One will divide irresistibly in Two.*

[258] *The Matrix*. Dirs. Andy Wachowski and Larry Wachowski. Warner Bros. Pictures. 1999.

'It was Kant who introduced the difference between ontic reality and its ontological horizon', so argues the Liberal-nativity fable: 'the *a priori* network of categories which determines how we understand reality, what appears to us as reality', then Hegel's transposition of the Idealist quotient back into externality means the abject possibility of Liberalism, because of the way German Idealism was co-opted by statist, securitizing, ultimately-Liberal forces.[259] 'In his *Human Touch*', Žižek tells us, 'Michael Frayn noted the radical relativity of our notion of the universe: when we talk about the micro-dimensions of quantum physics, so small as to be unimaginable, or about the vastness of the universe, so large that we are an imperceptible speck within it, we always presuppose our gaze, our "normal" measure of greatness: quantum waves are small, the universe is large, with regard to our standards.'[260] 'The lesson' for those forgetting Hegel's insistence that 'knowing is the activity of the *universal self*'' (*that knowing anything at all connects us irrevocably with Universality*), then, logically becomes 'that *every* notion of "objective reality" is bound to a subjective point.'[261]

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[259] Žižek, *Less*, p. 9; David J. Gunkel, 'Žižek and the Real Hegel'. *International Journal of Žižek Studies*, Vol. 2:2 (2008), http://zizekstudies.org/index.php/ijzs/article/view/137/210 (24 December 2013), pp. 2 & 20-1; 'So it appears', Gunkel offers, 'that Žižek is … the turd in the Hegelian punch bowl – a terrible and potentially embarrassing excrescence that effectively spoils the party for everyone involved', because 'instead of asking the somewhat naïve and direct question "will the real Hegel please stand up?" his inquiry would be something like "why, how, and on the basis of what authority does a particular articulation of Hegelian philosophy already present itself as and claim to be the real Hegel?"' '"One can", as Žižek (2004) argues, "only remain faithful to an author by way of betraying him (the actual letter of his thought)" (13). This betrayal, however, is not mere infidelity with regards to some original thing. "Infidelity" is not adequate insofar as it remains the mere negative and inverse of "fidelity" – a word that has metaphysical, technical, and even conjugal connotations. Instead this "betrayal," in a way that is similar to Donna Haraway's (1991: 49) deployment of the concept of "blasphemy," is generated through a kind of excessive and unrestrained faithfulness. "One can," Žižek (2004) continues, "only truly betray an author by way of repeating him, by way of remaining faithful to the core of his thought" (13). "Productive misreading," then, is not simply a mistake, an error, or a kind of infidelity. It is a deliberately blasphemous form of excessive faithfulness that follows an author's text carefully and literally, even to the point, as Derrida (1978) says of George Bataille, "of agreeing with him against himself" (260).

This does not mean, however, that anything goes and everything is permitted. Žižek is as allergic to postmodern relativisms as he is to pre-modern dogmatism.'

[260] ibid., p. 808.

[261] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §29-30/pp. 17-8; 'Since the Substance of the individual, the World-Spirit itself, has had the patience to pass through … shapes over the long passage of time, and to take upon itself the enormous labour of world-history, in which it embodied in each shape as much of its entire content as that shape was capable of holding, and since it could not have attained consciousness of itself by any lesser effort, the individual certainly cannot by the nature of the case comprehend his own substance more easily. Yet, at the same time, he does have less trouble, since all this has already been *implicitly* accomplished; the content is already the actuality reduced to a possibility, its immediacy overcome, and the embodied shape reduced to abbreviated, simple determinations of thought. It is no longer existence in the form of *being-in-itself* – neither still in the original form [of an abstract concept], nor submerged in existence – but is now the *recollected-in-itself*, ready for conversion into the form of *being-for-self*. How this is done must now be described more precisely.

[§]30. We take up the movement of the whole from the point where the sublation of *existence* as such is no longer necessary; what remains to be done, and what requires a higher level of cultural reorientation, is to represent and to get acquainted with these forms. The existence that has been taken back into the Substance has only been *immediately* transposed into the element of the self through that first negation. Hence this acquired property still has the same character of uncomprehended immediacy, of passive indifference, as existence itself; existence has thus merely passed over into *figurative representation*. At the same time it is thus something

> How, then, do we pass from the totally "flat" and incommensurable or de-focalized Real to a focused World, to a field constituted through a transcendental measure?[262]

Because, regrettably, 'Heidegger refuses this problem as, precisely, metaphysical: for him, the horizon of appearing is the ultimate horizon, there is nothing beyond it, only the abyssal play of *Ereignis*, and if we try to reach beyond, we become involved in a nonsensical endeavour to deduce the very ontological horizon of ontic reality from this reality', we are left with the harmonious interplay of the established formal curvature with chaotic minutiae. This harmony (so-called) is what is so perfectly rendered by recent-Superstring Theory; because the hegemony of a Liberal-statist determination of Hegelian ideas has been successively re-established, emergent minutiae seems only to confirm our correctness. 'So why', Žižek asks, 'was Heidegger not ready to go to the end here?'[263] 'One distinguishing feature' of that which Heidegger was unable to grasp (the primarily-traumatic Idealist insight)

> is that … negativity is a subordinate moment in the movement of the Idea's self-mediation, in the game that the Absolute plays with itself, merely giving its opposite-other enough rope to hang itself. In Hegel, according to Davis
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> "Spirit reaches out to – or indeed posits out of itself – the other than itself only to cunningly bring this other back into its original sameness. Spirit needs this reincorporation of the other even at the risk of alienating itself from itself, sacrificing its initial solitary immediacy for the sake of the incorporative transformation of all otherness into a mediated and thus self-consciously self-identical totality".[264]

'What we confront here', Žižek insists, 'is the problem of historicity at its most radical: a historicity which goes "all the way down" and cannot be reduced to the deployment/revelation in history of a non-historical Absolute.'[265] 'In a way', he continues, 'the true *Kehre* from *Sein und Zeit* to the late Heidegger is the shift from ahistorical formal-transcendental analysis to radical historicity.[266]

> To put it in (the not quite appropriate) terms of German Idealism, Heidegger's achievement is to elaborate a radically historicized transcendentalism: Heideggerian historicity is the historicity of transcendental horizons themselves, of the different modes of the disclosure of being, with no agent regulating the process – historicity happens as an *es gibt* (*il y a*), the radically contingent abyss of a world-game.
>
> This radical historicity reaches its definitive formulation with the shift from Being to *Ereignis*, which thoroughly undermines the idea of Being as a kind of super-subject of history, sending its messages or epochs to man. *Ereignis* means that Being is *nothing but* the *chiaroscuro* of these messages, *nothing but* the way it relates to man. Man is finite, and *Ereignis* also: the very structure of

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familiar, something which the existent Spirit is finished and done with, so that it is no longer active or really interested in it. Although the activity that has finished with existence is itself only the movement of the particular Spirit, the Spirit that does not comprehend itself, [genuine] knowing, on the other hand, is directed against the representation thus formed, against this [mere] familiarity; thinking is the activity of the *universal self*, the concern of *thinking*.'

[262] Žižek, *Less*, p. 808.

[263] ibid., p. 888.

[264] Bret W. Davis, *Heidegger and the Will: On the Way to Gelassenheit* (Evanston IL, 2007), p. 171, cited in Žižek, *Less*, p. 888.

[265] Slavoj Žižek, 'Heidegger in The Foursome of Struggle, Historicity, Will … and *Gelassenheit*', in Martin Heidegger, *Nature, History, State: 1933-1934*, trans. Gregory Fried and Richard Polt (London, 2013), p. 160.

[266] Alain Badiou, *Second manifeste pour la philosophie* (Paris, 2009), p. 39, cited by Žižek, *Less*, pp. 890-1.

> finitude, the play of Clearing or Concealment with nothing behind it. "It" is just the impersonal it, a "there is." There is an un-historical dimension at work here, but what is un-historical is the very formal structure of historicity itself. …
>
> What Heidegger calls *Ereignis* is the event-arrival of Truth, of a new "hermeneutic" horizon within which beings appear as what they are – Being *is*, for Heidegger, the "Sense of Being." Heidegger's ontological difference is the difference between beings and their non-ontic horizon of meaning. Some readers interpret ontological difference in terms of essence versus existence – as the difference between *what* things are and the mere fact *that* they are – and point out that metaphysics overlooks this difference when it subordinates being to some essential entity (Idea, God, Subject, Will …) But, as Heidegger makes clear in his "Letter on Humanism," such a Sartrean reversal which asserts the priority of existence over essence (recall Sartre's disturbing description of the inertia of senseless existence in his *Nausea*) remains within the confines of a metaphysics. For Heidegger, the point of ontological difference is precisely that to draw such a cline of separation between mere existence and its horizon of sense is impossible: radical historicity means that being is always already disclosed in a horizon of meaning, never as pure neutral being. So when Badiou writes that "a poem is not a guardian of being, as Heidegger thought, but the *exposition* in language of the resources of appearing," he is, from the Heideggerian standpoint, constructing a false and meaningless opposition: what Heidegger calls "Being" *is* the "truth of Being," the specific disclosure of a world as the horizon of appearing.

Hegel squares the Heideggerian circle, and we can approach his programmatic (expressed most directly vis à vis 'Science', which Hegel capitalized to indicate his encompassing of Cartesian-reason as such and not just physics, biology, chemistry and so on, in the preface to *Phenomenology of Spirit*) by way of a surprising admission by Brian Greene; 'physicists such as myself', Gunkel reports Greene as saying, 'are acutely aware that the reality we observe – matter evolving on the stage of space and time – may have little to do with the reality, if any, that is out there.'[267] 'Greene, who is an advocate of a brand of physics called "string theory"', Gunkel explains, 'argues that physical reality is actually comprised of vibrating filaments of energy called "strings."'[268]

> The strings, which are estimated to be "some hundred billion billion times smaller than a single atomic nucleus" (Greene 2004: 345), cannot be observed with any conceivable instrument or tested through any currently available form of experiment. Instead their existence is calculated as the hypothetical resolution of a fundamental conflict between the equations of general relativity and quantum mechanics. For string theorists, then, the real of physical reality exists beyond the realm of human perception, and what we call "reality" is only a derived effect and apparition. Like the Platonic forms, the real of string theory is located outside the scope of direct experience and what is given to perception is little more than an apparitional phenomenon that is, strictly speaking, illusory.
> "If superstring theory is proven correct," Greene (2004) concludes, "we will be forced to accept that the reality we have known is but a delicate chiffon draped over a thick and richly textured cosmic fabric" (19).

'This point', Gunkel continues, 'is emphasized by recently published critiques, which specifically target and question [string] theory's provability'.[269]

> According to its critics, like Lee Smolen (2006) and Peter Woit (2006), string theory, although mathematically elegant and undeniably popular in the academy, lacks one of the basic requirements of science—an empirically verifiable experiment. String theory, on this account, appears to be situated just outside the threshold of what is traditionally considered to be the proper test of scientific truth.

[267] Brian Greene, *The Fabric of the Cosmos: Space, Time, and the Texture of Reality* (New York NY, 2004), p. ix, cited in Gunkel, 'Hegel', p. 6.
[268] ibid., pp. 19 & 345, cited in Gunkel, 'Hegel', p. 6.
[269] Gunkel, 'Hegel', p. 6.

This critique (if pursued seriously), however, is a Positivist one, and not the line Hegel takes; for Hegel, *epistemology is such that true experimental proof never arises and is unnecessary* (Heidegger's 'event-arrival of Truth' is, then, simply an historically-constituted epistemological feature of dialectics as such, not the 'zero level' he surely thought it was).[270] '"True" and "false"', Hegel is at pains to say, 'belong among those determinate notions which are held to be inert and wholly separate essences, one here and one there, each standing fixed and isolated from the other, with which it has nothing in common'[271] 'Against this view', the Preface continues, 'it must be maintained that truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made.'

> Nor *is* there such a thing as the false, any more than there *is* something evil. The evil and the false, to be sure, are not as bad as the devil, for in the devil they are even made into a particular *subjective agent*; as the false and the evil, they are mere *universals*, though each has its own essence as against the other.
>
> The false (for here it is only of this that we speak) would be the other, the negative of the substance, which as the content of knowledge is the True. But the substance is itself essentially the negative, partly as a distinction and determination of the content, and partly as a *simple* distinguishing, i.e. as self and knowledge in general. One can, of course, know something falsely. To know something falsely means that there is a disparity between knowledge and its Substance. But this very disparity is the process of distinguishing in general, which is an essential moment [in knowing]. Out of this distinguishing, of course, comes their identity, and this resultant identity is the truth. But it is not truth as if the disparity had been thrown away, like dross from pure metal, not even like the tool which remains separate from the finished vessel; disparity, rather, as the negative, the self, is itself still directly present in the True as such. Yet we cannot therefore say that the false is a moment of the True, let alone a component part of it. To say that in every falsehood there is a grain of truth is to treat the two like oil and water, which cannot be mixed and are only externally combined. It is precisely on account of the importance of designating the moment of *complete otherness* that the terms "true" and "false" must no longer be used where such otherness has been annulled. Just as to talk of the *unity* of subject and object, of finite and infinite, of being and thought, etc. is inept, since object and subject, etc. signify what they are *outside* of their unity, and since in their unity they are not meant to be what their expression says they are, just so the false is no longer *qua* false, a moment of truth.

'Without such articulation', Hegel pleads, 'Science lacks universal intelligibility, and gives the appearance of being the esoteric possession of a few individuals: an esoteric possession, since it is as yet present only in its Notion or in its inwardness; of a few individuals, since its undiffused manifestation makes its existence something singular.'[272]

> Only what is completely determined is at once exoteric, comprehensible, and capable of being learned and appreciated by all. The intelligible form of Science is the way open and equally accessible to everyone, and consciousness as it approaches Science justly demands that it be able to attain to rational knowledge by way of the ordinary understanding; for the understanding is thought, the pure "I" as

[270] Žižek, *Less*, p. 891; Slavoj Žižek, 'King, Rabble, Sex, and War in Hegel', in Jamil Khader and Molly Anne Rothenberg (eds.), *Žižek Now. Current Perspectives in Žižek Studies* (Cambridge, 2013), p. 203; 'The function of what Hegel conceptualizes as the necessity of war is precisely the repeated untying of the organic social links. When, in his *Group Psychology*, Freud outlined the "negativity" of untying social ties (*Thanatos* as opposed to *Eros*, the force of social link), he (in his liberal limitation) all too easily dismissed the manifestations of this untying as the fanaticism of the "spontaneous" crowd (as opposed to artificial crowds: Church and Army). Against Freud, we should retain the ambiguity of this movement of untying: it is a zero level that renders open the space for political intervention.' It is precisely this 'untying' which Heideggerian phenomenology fails at.
[271] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §39/pp. 22-3.
[272] ibid., §13/pp. 7-8.

> such; and what is intelligible is what is already familiar and common to Science and the unscientific consciousness alike, the latter through its having afforded direct access to the former.

Are these acquisitive-agglomerating characteristics of the pragmatic functioning of science (even and especially at its theoretical plane) not precisely those regretfully identified by Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar in *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts* (1979)?[273] For them, the qualitative character of what Eagleton would call 'culture' determines the Positivist simulacrum itself – society and laboratory rhythmically copulating.

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[273] Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts* (Princeton NJ, 1986), pp. 86-8; 'an anthropologist visits the laboratory' and finds that 'a laboratory is constantly performing operations on statements; adding modalities, citing, enhancing, diminishing, borrowing, and proposing new combinations. Each of these operations can result in a statement which is either different or merely qualified. Each statement, in turn, provides the focus for similar operations in other laboratories. Thus, members of our laboratory regularly noticed how their own assertions were rejected, borrowed, quoted, ignored, confirmed, or dissolved by others. Some laboratories were seen to be engaged in the frequent manipulations of statements while elsewhere there was thought to be little activity. Some groups produce almost at a loss: they talk and publish, but no one operates on their statements. In such a case, a statement can remain cast as a *type 1*, a claim lingering in an operational limbo. By contrast, other assertions can be seen to change their status rapidly, following a kind of alternate dance, as they are proven, disproven, and proven again. Despite the large number of operations performed on them, they rarely change their form radically. These statements represent a mere fraction of the hundreds of artefacts and half-born statements which stagnate like a vast cloud of smog. Commonly, attention shifts from these to other statements. In some places, however, we can discern a clearer picture. One or other operation irrevocably annihilates a statement never to be taken up again. Or, by contrast, in situations where a statement is quickly borrowed, used and reused, there quickly comes a stage where it is no longer contested. Amidst the general Brownian agitation, a fact has then been constituted. This is a comparatively rare event, but when it occurs, a statement becomes incorporated in the stock of taken-for-granted features which have silently disappeared from the conscious concerns of daily scientific activity. The fact becomes incorporated in graduate text books or perhaps forms the material basis for an item of equipment. Such facts are often thought of in terms of the conditioned reflexes of "good" scientists or as part and parcel of the "logic" of reasoning.

By pursuing the notion of literary inscription, our observer has been able to pick his way through the labyrinth. He can now explain the objectives and products of the laboratory in his own terms, and he can begin to understand how work is organised and why literary production is so highly valued. He can see that both main sections (A and B) of the laboratory are part of the same process of literary inscription. The so-called material elements of the laboratory are based upon the reified outcomes of past controversies which are available in the published literature. As a result, it is these same material elements which allow papers to be written and points to be made. Furthermore, the anthropologist feels vindicated in having retained his anthropological perspective in the face of the beguiling charms of his informants: they claimed merely to be scientists discovering facts; he doggedly argued that they were writers and readers in the business of being convinced and convincing others. Initially this had seemed a moot or even absurd standpoint, but now it appeared far more reasonable. The problem for participants was to persuade readers of papers (and constituent diagrams and figures) that its statements should be accepted as fact. To this end rats had been bled and beheaded, frogs had been flayed, chemicals consumed, time spent, careers had been made or broken, and inscription devices had been manufactured and accumulated within the laboratory. This, indeed, was the very raison d'être of the laboratory. By remaining steadfastly obstinate, our anthropological observer resisted the temptation to be convinced by the facts. Instead, he was able to portray laboratory activity as the organisation of persuasion through literary inscription. Has the anthropologist himself been convincing? Has he used sufficient photographs, diagrams, and figures to persuade his readers not to qualify his statements with modalities, and to adopt his assertions that a laboratory is a system of literary inscription? Unfortunately, for reasons which will later become clear (see Chapter 6), the answer has to be no. He cannot claim to have set forth an account which is immune from all possibility of future qualification. Instead, the best our observer has done is to create a small breathing space. The possibility of future réévaluation of his statements remains. As well shall see in the next chapter, for example, the observer can be forced back into the labyrinth as soon as questions are posed about the historical evolution of any one specific fact.' 'Participants', Latour and Woolgar conclude, 'made sense of their juxtaposition of literatures by reference to a world of literature published outside the laboratory. To the extent

4. Molly Bloom gets the last word.[274]

we havent 1 atom of any kind of expression in us all of us the same 2 lumps of lard

'What, therefore, is important in the *study of Science*', Hegel triumphantly concludes his Preface, 'is that one should take on oneself the strenuous effort of the Notion.'[275] The 'refusal to intrude into the immanent rhythm of the Notion, either arbitrarily or with wisdom obtained from elsewhere, constitutes a restraint which is itself an essential moment of the Notion.'

> 59. There are two aspects of the procedure of argumentation to which speculative [*begreifende*] thinking is opposed and which call for further notice. First, such reasoning adopts a negative attitude towards the content it apprehends; it knows how to refute it and destroy it. That something is *not* the case, is a merely negative insight, a dead end which does not lead to a new content beyond itself. In order to have a content once again, something new must be taken over from elsewhere. Argumentation is reflection into the empty "I", the vanity of its own knowing.−This vanity, however, expresses not only the vanity of this content, but also the futility of this insight itself; for this insight is the negative that fails to see the positive within itself. Because this reflection does not get its very negativity as its content, it is never at the heart of the matter, but always beyond it. For this reason it imagines that by establishing the void it is always ahead of any insight rich in content. On the other hand, in speculative [*begreifenden*] thinking, as we have already shown, the negative belongs to the content itself, and is the *positive*, both as the *immanent* movement and determination of the content, and as the whole of this process. Looked at as a result, what emerges from this process is the *determinate* negative which is consequently a positive content as well.[276]

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that such literature represents the scriptures (Knorr, 1978) from which participants take the sense of their activities, we can only begin to understand what the literature is about by close inspection of the mythology which informs their activities. Our use of the term mythology is not intended pejoratively. Rather, it refers to a broad frame of reference within which can be situated the activities and practices of a particular culture (Barthes, 1957).' The animal stares at the animal, trying to work out what (if anything) is going on (*fig*. 35).

[274] James Joyce and Seamus Deane (ed.), *Ulysses* (London, 1968), p. 925.

[275] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §58/pp. 35-6.

[276] ibid., §59/p. 36.

‘The manner of study in ancient times’, Hegel comments, ‘differed from that of the modern age in that the former was the proper and complete formation of the natural consciousness.’[277] ‘Putting itself to the test at every point of its existence’, he purrs, ‘and philosophizing about everything it came across, it made itself into a universality that was active through and through.’ ‘In modern times’, he laments instead, ‘the individual finds the abstract form ready-made; the effort to grasp and appropriate it is more the direct driving-forth of what is within and the truncated generation of the universal than it is the emergence of the latter from the concrete variety of existence.’ ‘In keeping with [Hegel’s] demand is the strenuous, almost over-zealous and frenzied effort to tear men away from their preoccupation with the sensuous, from their ordinary, private [*einzelne*] affairs, and to direct their gaze to the stars; as if they had forgotten all about the divine, and were ready like worms to content themselves with dirt and water.’[278]

> The Spirit shows itself as so impoverished that, like a wanderer in the desert craving for a mere mouthful of water, it seems to crave for its refreshment only the bare feeling of the divine in general.

‘By the little which now satisfies Spirit’, seemingly, ‘we can measure the extent of its loss.’ As an answer to the questions posed above about the inter-(or extra-)connectivity between temporality, ideology and scientific presentations of the world at their most theoretical level, is the Wachowskis’ 2012 film *Cloud Atlas* not totally analogous to Hegel’s ‘dirt and water’? Six-and-a-half interlocking stories (*A*: ‘a journal, written in 1849 by a dying lawyer during a voyage from a Pacific isle to San Francisco’ - which becomes in retrospect a Post-colonial struggle;[279] *B*: the demiurgic adolescence of a bisexual amanuensis in Cambridge in 1936 - which becomes in retrospect a Queer struggle as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, Adrienne Rich and Diana Fuss would define the term;[280] *C*: a meddling San Francisco-

[277] ibid., §33/p. 19.
[278] ibid., §8/p. 5.
[279] *Cloud Atlas*. Dirs. Lana Wachowski and Andrew Wachowski. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2012; The lawyer, Adam Ewing, visits the Chatham Islands (an archipelago roughly 420 miles southeast of New Zealand) to conclude some commercial business with Reverend Gilles Horrox - a member of the colonial establishment - on behalf of his father-in-law. On the return voyage, a doctor professing to be saving him with regular administrations of medicine from a vial is, in fact, slowly poisoning him in order to steal his valuables. Ewing is ultimately only saved because a stowaway slave perceives what is happening and manages to act in time. Returning to San Francisco, Ewing burns the contract in front of his father-in-law and announces his intention to move with his wife to New England in order to work with the anti-slavery Abolitionist movement. The author of the original 2004 book, David Mitchell, situated Ewing’s arrival on Chatham at a time when indigenous slave-hierarchies were rife and flourishing there. On the 19th of November 1835, 900 Māori (of the Ngāti Tama and Ngāti Mutunga tribes), from elsewhere, had arrived on the brig *Lord Rodney* and begun enslaving the native Moriori tribe. At the beginning of both novel and film, Ewing witnesses a Moriori recidivist-slave being savagely lashed over his back in the hot sun. It is this individual who stows away and ultimately rescues Ewing; David Mitchell, *Cloud Atlas* (London, 2004), pp. 6-7.
[280] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (Chichester, 1985), pp. 21-7; Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley CA, 1990), pp. 1-26; Judith Butler,

journalist investigating Capitalist eco-terrorism with help from a mature character from *B*; *D*: the comedic attempts of a spry 65 year-old publisher to escape premature institutionalization; *E*: a genetically-engineered 'fabricant' waitress resisting material and ideological entrapment in an austerely-ruthless Neo Seoul, ROK in 2144, aided by a renegade-egalitarian General;[281] *F*: the post-apocalyptic barbarisms of a 'Valley'-people '106 winters after' on the faraway-planet Big Island, haunted by an instinctive fidelity to a political radio-broadcast received from *E*[282]; *G*: one of the characters from *F* narrativizing humanity as a-kind-of-Tiresias[283]) existentially wager together in some vague presentation of Hegel's 'master-slave' dialectic.[284]

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (Abingdon-on-Thames, 1990); 'Gender', Butler says, 'can be rendered ambiguous without disturbing or reorienting normative sexuality at all. Sometimes gender ambiguity can operate precisely to contain or deflect non-normative sexual practice and thereby work to keep normative sexuality intact. Thus, no correlation can be drawn, for instance, between drag or transgender and sexual practice, and the distribution of hetero-, bi-, and homo-inclinations cannot be predictably mapped onto the travels of gender bending or changing.'; Adrienne Cecile Rich, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* (London, 1980); Diana Fuss, 'Inside/Out', in D. Fuss (ed.), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* (London, 1991), pp. 1-13; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, 1: The Will to Knowledge* [*Histoire de la sexualité, 1: la volonté de savoir*], p. 46 provided, in 1976/78, the conceptual basis for Queer Theory. 'We must', Foucault wrote, 'abandon the hypothesis that modern industrial societies ushered in an age of increased sexual repression. We have not only witnessed a visible explosion of unorthodox sexualities; but – and this is the important point – a deployment quite different from the law, even if it is locally dependent on procedures of prohibition, has ensured, through a network of interconnecting mechanisms, the proliferation of specific pleasures and the multiplication of disparate sexualities. [*Nous devons abandonner l'hypothèse que les sociétés industrielles modernes introduits à une époque de l'augmentation de la répression sexuelle. Nous avons non seulement assisté à une explosion visible des sexualités non orthodoxes, mais-et c'est le point important - un déploiement très différente de la loi, même si elle dépend localement sur les procédures d'interdiction, a assuré, à travers un réseau de mécanismes d'interconnexion, la prolifération des plaisirs spécifiques et la multiplication des sexualités disparates*.]' 'With Habermas', Žižek contrasts, 'we have the ethics of the unbroken communication, the Ideal of the universal, transparent intersubjective community; the notion of the subject behind this is, of course, the philosophy-of-language version of the old subject of transcendental reflection. With Foucault, we have a turn against that universalist ethics which results in a kind of aestheticization of ethics: each subject must, without any support from universal rules, build his own mode of self-mastery; he must harmonize the antagonism of the powers within himself – invent himself, so to speak, produce himself as subject, find his own particular art of living. This is why Foucault was so fascinated by marginal lifestyles constructing their particular mode of subjectivity (the sadomasochistic homosexual universe, for example: see Foucault, 1984).'

[281] *E* owes more than a little thematically and symbolically to Phillip K. Dick's 1968 novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, as well as the 1982 film *Blade Runner* directed by Ridley Scott that it ultimately spawned.

[282] Mitchell, *Cloud*, p. 250; 'Ten–twelve of them painted savages was 'ready risin'n' reachin' for their whips'n'blades, yellin' war-cries at me! O, now I legged it back downgulch the way I'd come, yay, the hunter was the hunted. The nearest Kona was runnin' after me, others was leapin' on their horses an' laughin' with the sport. Now panickin' wings your foot but it muddies your thinkin' too, so I rabbited back to Pa. I was only a niner so I jus' followed my instinct without thinkin' thru what'd happen.'

[283] Mikhail I͡Ampolʹskiĭ, *The Memory of Tiresias: Intertextuality and Film*, trans. Harsha Ram (Berkeley CA, 1998), p. 3; 'The blind androgyne Tiresias has come out of antiquity to our own time. He figures in the procession of immortal seers in Apollinaire's *L'Enchanteur pourrissant* and resurfaces in the play *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*, also by Apollinaire. He also enjoys a central place in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*:

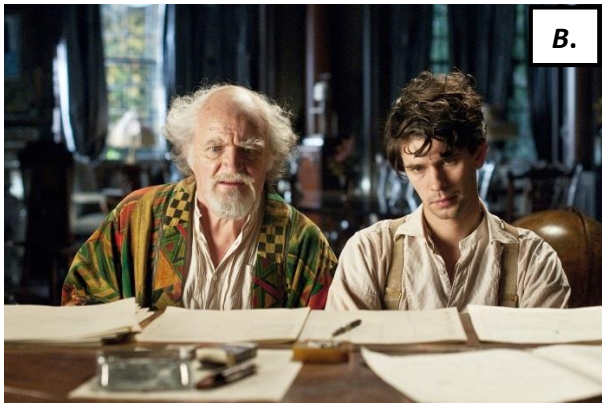
> ["]At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
> Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
> Like a taxi throbbing, waiting,
> I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
> Old Man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
> At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
> Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,

The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins.
Out of the window perilously spread
Her drying combinations. …[”]

What is Tiresias doing in this “film” of modern life (and some critics have in fact suggested that Eliot’s poetry is directly linked to cinematic montage)? He brings together these montage fragments of life as other people have lived them, using his limitless memory to make them one:

[“]I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest–[”]

Eliot himself”, I͡Ampol′skiĭ says, ‘had noted: “Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a *character* [my emphasis], is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest.” Eliot is here making an essential observation. His point is that only the viewer or the reader can unite a text, using his cultural memory to make it one. The androgynous Tiresias is the ideal reader of any text, as one Eliot critic notes: “Thus, all the men, though individually identified, are one man; all the women one woman; and man and woman meet in Tiresias, the blind seer, who … is at the same time pivotal and peripheral.’ So it is with Tom Hanks’ one-eyed character Zachary here; we should not forget that Neo ends *The Matrix Revolutions* with his eyes gouged out. Early in the first film (1999), Neo is acclaimed as omniscient: ‘my savior, man. My own personal Jesus Christ’. [284] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §178-96/pp. 111-9; David McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx. selected writings* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 254-5; ‘Hitherto, every form of society has been based, as we have already been seen, on the antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes. But in order to oppress a class, certain conditions must be assured to it under which it can, at least, continue its slavish existence. The serf, in the period of serfdom, raised himself to membership in the commune, just as the petty bourgeois, under the yoke of feudal absolutism, managed to develop into a bourgeois. The modern labourer, on the contrary, instead of rising with the progress of industry, sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class. He becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than population and wealth. And here it becomes evident, that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him. Society can no longer live under this bourgeoisie, in other words, its existence is no longer compatible with society.’; Michael Duffy, ‘Working notes: Marx as defender of the dialectic’, *Working notes http://mikejohnduff.blogspot.co.uk/2008/02/marx-as-defender-of-dialectic.html* (1 January 2014); Paradoxically, then, Marx faithfully and wilfully resuscitates Hegel’s dialectic of master and slave by overturning it completely; ‘what is going on’ in capitalism, writes Princeton NJ blogger Michael Duffy, ‘is the attempt to dissolve the dialectic into a relationship where there will be no conflict, no dialectical conflict, between the master and the slave. A critique of capitalism, then would be the reassertion of the conflict or antagonism between the worker/slave and the master, and furthermore the assertion that the bourgeoisie is not a proper master. In other words, it would be a defense of the dialectic-not in order to resolve it again in the abstractions of Hegel, but to then direct it from this false escape from the dialectic into a socialist, and then communist, actual escape.’; ‘Marxists warranting Soviet State power’, we read in Khader and Rothenberg (eds.), *Now*, ‘turned Hegelian dialectics into a developmental narrative of the course of history – from feudalism to capitalism and then to socialism – which was then used by the bureaucracy to judge when things go too far too fast, and psychotherapy turns Hegel’s account into one which leads to reconciliation. Žižek, in contrast, insists that his Hegel is the one who always says no, who is the philosopher of negativity. But – and this is what has come to the fore in Žižek’s explicit engagement with anti-capitalist politics in recent years – something can come of nothing in impossible ruptures and what Alain Badiou (2007) will call an “event,” what Žižek will name an “act.” Hegel is thus the negative core of Žižek’s work’, imploding the Marxist schematic from within.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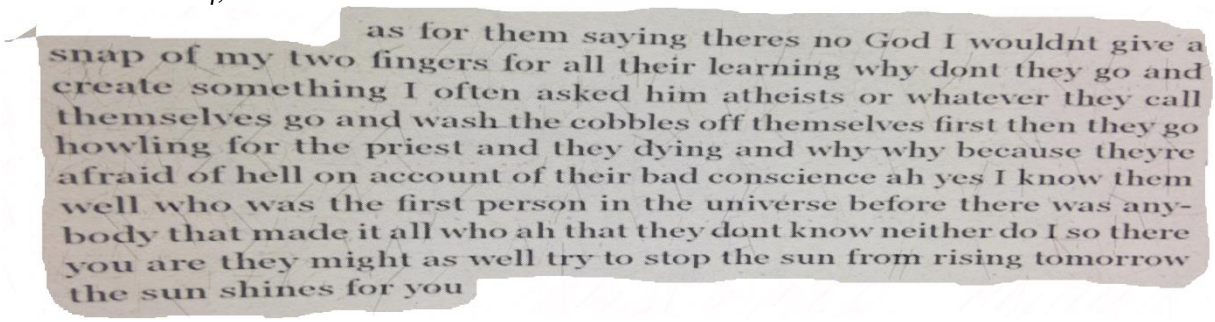
Cloud Atlas's problem is String Theory's problem; it assumes a particular (and, thinking the non-existence of *le grand Autre*, completely arbitrary) formulation as forever consummated, a lesson hard-won to which homage is performed by monotonous repetition not reflection. The film makes my job as analyst ridiculously simpler, by making the comparison obliquely.

> Belief, like fear or love, is a force to be understood as we understand the theory of Relativity, and principles of uncertainty: phenomena that determine the course of our lives. Yesterday, my life was headed in one direction; today, it is headed in another. Yesterday, I believe I would never have done what I did today. These forces that often remake time and space, they can shape and alter who we imagine ourselves to be, begin long before we are born, and continue after we perish. Our lives and our choices, like quantum trajectories, are understood moment to moment, at each point of intersection, each encounter, suggest a new potential direction.
> ...
> To be is to be perceived. And so to know thyself is only possible through the eyes of the Other. The nature of our immortal lives is in the consequences of our words and deeds that go on and are pushing themselves throughout all time. Our lives are not our own - from womb to tomb, we are bound to others, past and present, and by each crime and every kindness, we birth our future.

The Enlightenment sense of temporality was of a formal curvature informed by Cartesian reason and its symbiosis (I would prefer to say parasite) democratic-capitalist-liberty (*fig*. 36). The correlationist turn instituted by Heidegger (and reaching a particular apogee in Deleuze) thought it overturned the formal curvature by stressing emergent minutiae (*fig*. 37). What we are left with, I am sorry to say, in our apparent 'incredulity towards metanarratives' is a more potent more powerful metanarrative than ever, powerful because it hides behind emergent minutiae.[285] When we talk of 'a new potential direction', we never yet mean 'new'. *Cloud Atlas* and String Theory retroactively posit a metanarrative of human freedom itself, or rather a metanarrative of human *un*freedom precisely because it obscures its capitalist debt (*figs*. 38 and 39; 39 being Lacan's famous charting of the temporal signifier which we should always bear in mind when re-watching something like *Cloud Atlas*). What revolution would overturn, from outside, our bourgeois, cloyingly-limited notion of temporal-revolution itself?

> The unification of all laws in *universal attraction* expresses no other content than just the *mere Notion of law itself*, which is posited in that law in the form of *being*. ... The Understanding imagines that in this unification it has found a universal law which expresses universal reality *as such*; but in fact it has only found the *Notion of law itself*, although in such a way that what it is saying is that *all* reality is *in its own self*, conformable to law.[286]



[285] Lyotard, *Condition*, p. xxiv.
[286] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, §150/p. 91; C. K. Ogden, *Bentham's Theory of Fictions* (London, 1932), pp. xvii-iii.