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Kazalo

Badiou

Matjaž Ličer*

Temporality in Badiou's Ontology and Greater Logic

Alain Badiou has often remarked that the single most central question of his philosophy is the following: How does a novelty inscribe itself into a specific situation? What are the strategies for delineating, within a given situation, within a given world, the new from the old? What are the necessary and sufficient conditions for the possibility of a novelty in a world? These questions hold a very specific meaning within Badiou's system of thought and in reference to his terminology. One can partly localize this meaning by an overview of Badiou's conceptualization of ontology as mathematics – should one choose to accept it[1] – in *Being and Event*[2] and partly by his construction of the Greater Logic (the logic of the transcendental) in *Logics of Worlds*.[3] This, however, does not seem to suffice. Within Badiou's work there exists an underlying theme of temporality, which seems relevant to the topic of novelty, change, and historicity, but is, as far as we can tell, never dealt with in detail.

It is difficult to conceive a thought of change without a certain immersion in time, into the before and after. An event, this paradoxical and momentary lapse of reason (in all the nuances of the word), splits the world into before and after, not into here and there. Event is, to use the language of *Being and Event*, a historical rather than, for lack of a better word, a spatial term. We are therefore tempted to ask: Why is historicity rather clearly exposed in *Being and Event*, but temporality is not? There are two possible answers to this question: either there is no need for the concept of temporality within Badiou's work or, alternatively, historicity, temporality, and the Greater Logic are indeed intertwined and we might benefit from finding a concept of temporality that sheds more light on Badiou's thought of change. In this text, we opt for the latter. We will attempt to

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[1]   Roland Bolz, "Mathematics is Ontology? A Critique of Badiou's Ontological Framing of Set Theory", *Filozofski vestnik*, 41 (2/2020), pp. 119–142.

[2]   Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham, Continuum, New York, 2005.

[3]   Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*, trans. A. Toscano, Continuum, New York, 2009.

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present a specific concept of temporality that seems immanent to – or at least compliant with – Badiou's thought of change.

In order to do this, however, we must take a detour and sketch a brief overview of what we understand to be the key features of change and novelty in *Being and Event* and *Logics of Worlds*. Let us begin with a situation. A situation is defined, in the broadest sense of the term, as a consistent multiple, as a structured multiple, namely a multiple for which there exists a specific and specifiable criterion of counting its elements as one. A specific situation is always structured by the count-as-one according to a specific predicate of the situation language. Any situation can be constructed as a multiple of elements (which are themselves multiples) that can be subsumed to a specific predicate or a specific set of predicates. All other multiples, not counted-as-one by the situation's criterion of the count, are said to be subtracted from this particular situation. This subtractive multiplicity, this inconsistent multiplicity (of multiples) not counted-as-one by the situation, is where all potential novelties reside. Any potential novelty exists within a situation, but is not counted-as-one by the situation's regime of the count (*sans-papiers* in a political state are an example). Subsets, free from all specific predicates of the situation's regime of the count, are denoted (following Paul Cohen) as *generic* subsets. In *Being and Event*, this existence-without-recognition is presented in the situation with the proper name, the name of the void: ø. This generic inconsistent multiple, marked by the symbol ø, is a subset of every situation but it is not an element of every situation. This tension between inclusion and belonging provides an ontological base for the appearance of a novelty and leads to the following question: What are the conditions of the possibility of the inscription of the existent-within-the-situation in the language of the situation that does not count this existing entity as one of its elements? Obviously, one cannot fulfil these conditions within the existing language of the situation, within the existing regime of the count – otherwise the entity would already have been counted as one within the situation.

The possibility of a novelty can therefore only stem from an extension of the situation to its generic base. In other words, any possibility of a novelty depends on the possibility of the extension of the regime of the count to multiples subtracted from the current regime of the count. Novelty depends on the possibility of forcing the recognition of certain generic subsets of the situation as its elements. This, however, cannot be done without changing the regime of the

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count. If the situation's regime of the count cannot change, then what is counted as one within the situation also cannot change. In such (constructible) situations there can be no novelty. Or to put it differently: any situation defined by an immutable regime of the count is incapable of novelty.

Situations with an immutable regime of the count can be very simply illustrated: these are the multiples with no tension between inclusion and belonging. Whatever belongs to such a situation is always already included in it. (Note that this property cannot be reversed since it can be shown that each multiple has at least one subset that does not belong to it as an element.) In *Being and Event* such situations are called *natural* (i.e. not *historical*). An example of a natural situation is a human cell: everything included in this specific biological multiple also belongs to a human cell as one of its elements. A cell's nucleus is, for example, a subset and an element of the cell. Furthermore, the cell's nucleus is in itself a natural situation: everything included in the nucleus also belongs to it as one of its elements. The same holds for the DNA in the nucleus – and for the phosphates and sugars in the DNA backbone, etc. This property of 'naturalness' therefore transfers from a subset to *its* subsets – for this reason such sets are called *transitive* or *normal* sets. Normal sets are, to quote Badiou, "the schema of the maximum equilibrium of presented-being".[4]

This remark is as interesting as it is unclear. It is by no means obvious what is meant here by "equilibrium". In order to proceed, we need to establish some sort of grasp of what an equilibrium might be. As we will see, introducing a strict concept of equilibrium will bring us one step closer to the concept of temporality at work in *Being and Event*. First notice that the above quote signifies a shift from a mathematically and logically dense vocabulary into physics. Equilibrium is primarily a dynamical, physical term. Furthermore, "maximum equilibrium" seems to be a pleonasm – anything less than "maximum" equilibrium is by definition not an equilibrium at all. This pleonasm does, however, give some further substantiation, perhaps inadvertently, to what will become our description of temporality within Badiou's work.

Let us begin our illustration – and not much more – of this specific notion of time with an observation that the laws of physics are time-reversible, which

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4   Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 130.

means that the equations describing these laws retain their mathematical form if we reverse the sign of the time variable. This does, however, not mean that all physical processes are easily reversable. As an illustration, imagine recording a planet circling a star for a few orbital cycles. We can now play this recording either forward or backward in time. The time-reversibility of planetary mechanics is illustrated by the fact that we cannot, in general, distinguish whether the recording of a planet circling a star was played forward or backward in time. Another similar sketch: imagine recording a collision of two billiard balls, one bouncing off the other. Like before, one cannot determine from the recording alone whether the collision was played forward or backward in time. The laws of mechanics are invariant to time-reversal, they are symmetrical under the operation of changing the direction of time. So how can the arrow of time be determined in classical systems? If fundamental laws of the world are time-reversible, why do we, macroscopic beings, perceive the flow of time at all? Why is the past so fundamentally different from the future? Why do we see traces of the former but not of the latter? How does the irreversibility related to the arrow of time arise from the essentially reversible laws of classical physics?

To illustrate how these two demands are not inconsistent requires slightly stricter definitions of reversibility and irreversibility. Imagine a droplet of ink dropped in a bowl of water. As the droplet enters the water, the molecules of water randomly collide with the molecules of ink. Mixing between the ink and water occurs. The density of the ink molecules drops and ink molecules spread over a larger and larger area in a process known as diffusion. If, however, we were to record *this* process, there could be no doubt whether the recording is being played forward or backward in time. If the ink area shrinks, the recording is being played backwards in time. If the ink area spreads, the recording is being played forward in time. Time flows forward as the ink spreads. Time flows backward if the ink shrinks (i.e. it does not).

From this dictum alone it is clear that, in the classical realm, the *direction of time* becomes reasonably well-defined only in "large-enough" macroscopic systems that contain enough particles to allow for some sort of measure of *order and disorder*. How large is "large enough"? An infinite system would be ideal but a bowl of water and a droplet of ink suffice. At the other extreme, one ink molecule and one water molecule are clearly not enough. In other words, the arrow of time is a *statistical* property of a system and not a property of its basic constituents. Time

flows in the direction in which the disorder of an isolated system increases. In an isolated system of an ink droplet in a bowl of water, the most *ordered* state of the system is the initial state where all of the ink molecules are still confined within the droplet and no mixing has yet occurred. As the diffusion mixes molecules of ink and water, the *disorder* in the system increases. If the system is left to itself, ink molecules will gradually spread over the entire volume of the bowl, reaching a state of maximum possible disorder. This, essentially, is the second law of thermodynamics, also known as the law of entropy. Its status is a bit different from other physical laws because it is, by its nature, a statistical law. Entropy is not a fundamental but rather a statistical quantity that measures the amount of disorder in a system. More precisely, the entropy of a particular state of the system can be computed from the number of ways in which we can rearrange the interchangeable constituents (ink molecules, on one hand, and water molecules, on the other) of the system and still get essentially this same system state. The law of entropy states that the entropy (the level of disorder) of an isolated system cannot decrease over time. Indeed, the entropy of the initial state (a self-contained droplet of ink in a bowl of water) of any isolated system will always be (equal to or) lower than the entropy of the final state (the fully mixed bowl of ink and water molecules). This follows from the fact that we can *construct* the initial state in *fewer ways* than the final state.

In thermodynamics, the state of a system with maximum possible entropy (maximum disorder) is defined as *a state of equilibrium*.[5] In other words: a state of equilibrium is defined as the state that can be realized in the largest number of different ways. This is a statistical definition: if left to itself, any isolated system will, through random fluctuations and basic probability, end up in the most probable state, i.e. the state that can be realized in the maximum number of ways – in a state of equilibrium. Once an isolated system reaches its equilibrium state, it will be extremely unlikely that it will ever depart far from equilibrium, simply because random fluctuations in the system will push it back towards the most probable state, which can be realized in the largest number of ways (and therefore exhibits maximum entropy) – a state of equilibrium.

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[5]   This definition is only viable at high enough temperatures, but this need not concern us here.

Note that there is no *physical* law which prevents the system from leaving equilibrium. There is no law which makes it apodictically *impossible* for all the molecules of ink to reverse their velocities and migrate back through the bowl of water and condense themselves in the initial droplet. This reversal of diffusion is not impossible, it is merely highly improbable – one would have to wait several ages of the universe for this process to occur randomly. On the other hand, a fully mixed state of equilibrium is so probable (i.e. it can be achieved in a large number of ways / has high entropy / exhibits maximum disorder) that the system may end up in equilibrium quite rapidly.

The point of this digression was twofold: first, to show that a state of equilibrium, casually mentioned by Badiou, can be defined in relation to order and disorder; and second, to show that the arrow of time can also be defined in relation to *changes* in order and disorder. There is a connection between temporality and order. Note that even though this illustration of temporality stems from classical physics, it is profoundly un-Newtonian in nature. Time, related to a change in order, is quite different from "true and mathematical time," which in Newton's own words (from the famous Scholium to the Definitions in *Philosophiae Naturalis Principia Mathematica*) "flows equably without regard to anything external."

So, what happens with the arrow of time when an isolated system reaches equilibrium? In short: since equilibrium implies maximum disorder, *no change in the order* within the system is any longer possible (i.e. probable). In other words: the state of equilibrium is *stable*. Consequently, the arrow of time can no longer be defined in equilibrium. Equilibrium is timeless. If undisturbed, any system already in equilibrium will persist in equilibrium. A recording of a droplet of ink in a bowl of water allows for a sense of temporality only as long as the disorder in the system *increases*, i.e. as long as the ink *spreads*. Once the ink is fully mixed with the water, playing this recording forwards or backwards no longer makes any difference – there can be no meaningful introduction of the arrow of time in such a system.

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Let us now return to the above-mentioned normal (transitive) sets, to "the schema of the maximum equilibrium of presented-being." One can now read this statement as the statement that natural sets are essentially timeless. They are timeless in the sense that *they do not allow for a change in order*, they are *stable*. Badiou's wording is completely consistent with our line of argument: "The

ontological criterion for natural multiples is their *stability*, their homogeneity; *that is,* as we shall see, *their immanent order.*"[6] This connectedness of "maximum equilibrium" and order in natural sets can be reformulated as the following statement (which seems to be true, as far as we can tell): physical laws do not change over time. (One is almost tempted to evoke here the Leibniz criterion of the best possible world being the one with the simplest laws which allow for maximum complexity, i.e. maximum entropy – and hence stability.)

Another important consequence of the stability of natural sets, specifically of their structure, according to which every element is also a subset, directly implies that an event is not possible in natural situations. In order for an event to be *possible* in a situation, the situation must allow for the inclusion of a set whose elements do not belong to the situation. Such a situation is by definition not a transitive (normal) set. Badiou denotes such situations as *historical*, and only historical sets, with their distinction between inclusion and belonging, are those that allow for the generic extensions necessary for the occurrence of a novelty, of an event. Once one agrees to temporality as a measure of the change in a situation's order, the connection between historicity and temporality becomes quite clear: historicity is the potentiality of temporality.

Following Badiou, a novelty can only occur in a historical situation if an event, being an element of an eventual site, becomes an element of the situation through an undecidable axiomatic decision of the faithful subject. This leads us to an interplay of *temporality* and *fidelity*. This interplay is not entirely unexpected: if one understands temporality in terms of a *change* in the situation's *order* and if, similarly, subjective action primarily appears as a *disruption* of this order – then temporality and subjective fidelity must be somehow related. A relation between time and fidelity is indeed mentioned (and not much more) by Badiou in the following, somewhat infamous passage:

> The real difficulty is to be found in the following: the consequences of an event, being submitted to structure, cannot be discerned as such. I have underlined this undecidability according to which the event is only possible if special procedures conserve the eventual nature of its consequences. This is why its sole foundation

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[6]   Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 130. Emphasis added by M. L.

lies in a *discipline* of time, which controls from beginning to end the consequences of the introduction into circulation of the paradoxical multiple, and which at any moment knows how to discern its connection to chance. I will call this organised control of time *fidelity*.[7]

The above lines perhaps become a bit more comprehensible if they are read under the assumption of the relationship between the flow of time and rising disorder. It is not the situation that unfolds *in time* – it is rather time itself that gets co-determined by the structural changes in the situational order: if the situational order does not change, the situation, even if it is itself historical, is effectively timeless. Structural changes in the situational order appear as the consequences of an event, this paradoxical presented multiple that lacks representation. The very practise of controlling the consequences of an event, and of preserving the eventual nature of these consequences, is also the practise of the disruption of the situational order, of its regime of the count. Of its presentation and representation – and thus its temporality.

This operation of fidelity is twofold. First, it consists of claiming axiomatically (and undecidably) that the disorder of the situation has increased, and second, it demands that this increase in disorder, manifested as the appearance of the generic extension of the situation, must be recognized by the situation's regime of the count. The fidelity of the subject to an event is a wager that history has *already* unfolded within the situation; something undecidable has *been* decided (an event *did* happen) and this decision will now have to be formalized *retroactively* by a change in the situational order, by a change in what *will have been* admitted, anew, to the representation within the situation. In other words, the operation of the subject (the forcing) is to sustain the situation's subtraction as *belonging* to a situation, to sustain the subtraction as it will have been presented *and represented* within the situation itself. This 'will-have-been' *future anterior* structure of the work of the subject, this intervention of subjective urgency into objective impossibility, is what Badiou identifies as the fundamental law of the subject. The work of the subject is therefore closely coupled with any possible emergence of temporality within a given situation.

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[7]   Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 211. Emphasis in original.

One of the key tasks of *Logics of Worlds* is precisely to establish in more depth how this post-evental work of the faithful subject plays out in a *particular* situation or a *world*. Note that on the level of ontology nothing particular can be attributed to any situation. *Being and Event* does not deal with particular situations. It rather attempts to derive, from a specific minimal set of assumptions, an ontological base for the appearance of truths in *any* situation. A world, on the other hand, is a situation equipped with a *transcendental*, which must be understood as a general logical form of the objectivity of appearing[8] or, more specifically, as a hierarchical scale of the intensities of the appearance of the multiples of a particular world. The task of deriving conditions of the appearance of truths in a world is therefore focused not so much on the event itself, but rather on how evental consequences appear, through the work of the subject, as a *material* novelty in a *particular* world. Badiou's shift from the ontology of pure multiples in *Being and Event* to their localization in a particular world in *Logics of Worlds* is demanded by the fact that being itself is only thinkable insofar as it belongs to a world, i.e. a *specific* world[9], a world with a specific hierarchy of intensities of appearance, a world with a specific transcendental. Whereas a situation is a pure multiple of multiples, a world, through its transcendental, allows for a relational network of appearances. One of the driving questions behind *Logics of Worlds* is, to quote Badiou directly, a simple one[10]: "Why and how are there worlds rather than chaos?"

As remarked above, a transcendental is a specific set. More precisely: it is a set of intensities of appearances (hereinafter marked with the letters $a,b,c,...p,q,...$) in a situation. There are, of course, certain requirements that have to be met in order for a transcendental to have any specificity at all. These requirements are the formal properties required for a transcendental to be a *specific* set. We list them formally below, but in their essence they are quite literally mundane and elementary:

- A transcendental must be a partially ordered set, i.e. it needs to be reflexive (for any intensity of appearance a, $a \leq a$), anti-symmetric (if $a \leq b$ and $b \leq a$ then $a=b$), and transitive (if $a \leq b$ and $a \leq c$ then $a \leq c$). The property of tran-

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[8]   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 233.

[9]   *Ibid.*, p. 113.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

sitivity, for instance, can literally be read simply as: if tea appears warmer than coffee, and coffee appears warmer than juice, then tea appears warmer than juice. Similar examples can be found for all other properties on this list.

- A transcendental must allow for the existence of a minimum intensity of appearance (of all appearances, one appears with the least intensity). The minimum intensity of appearance μ signifies inexistence, or, in the language of *Being and Event*, inclusion in (as a subset) but not belonging to a situation (as an element). This demand is a logical translation of an empty set being a subset of every set. *Sans-papiers* belong to the French situation, but particular people without papers do not form a subset of the situation of France, they do not *appear* formally in the citizen register or as tax payers. They do not *formally* exist.
- A transcendental must allow for a conjunction ∩ (appearances can overlap (intersect) into a new appearance) and for an envelope (appearances can combine into a union of appearances, amounting to a new appearance) of intensities of appearance.
- A transcendental must be a distributive set (an overlap of appearance *p* with an envelope of other appearances *E(q)* is an envelope of overlaps of appearance *p* with each member *q* of *E*).

Any set with this minimum set of properties is called a *Heyting algebra*. If a transcendental is to be a specific set, it must be a Heyting algebra. These properties of a transcendental are the ones which allow for a specific hierarchy, a specific network of intensities of appearances, and are thus guarantors of a specific world.

A shift from ontology to logics further requires the extension of the theory of the subject from the domain of being to the domain of appearance. The subject, as introduced in *Being and Event*, is, strictly speaking, a local state of some *specific* (local) generic procedure. The latter amounts to a finite series of evaluations that some multiples, tied to a *specific* event, belong to – and should be represented in – a *specific* situation. What has no *place here*, *should* have a place *here*. In other words: the subject is introduced strictly as a *localized* entity, but the theory of the subject in *Being and Event* does not seem to be able to respond to its own demands. It is far from clear how and through what mechanisms the localization of the subject of *Being and Event* can take place. Frank Ruda points out that *Being and Event* elaborates somewhat on the subjective process, "but it

does not give us all the conceptual tools needed to think subjectivisation proper."[11] Ruda rather describes Badiou's approach as "genericism" to emphasize the dominant role of ontology over logical localization. Consequently, an attempt was made in *Logics of Worlds* to develop formal theories of change[12] and subjective bodies.[13] These passages might to some extent address Sam Gillespie's objections in his discussion of *Being and Event*, i.e. that "Badiou's mathematical formalism, which is perfectly capable of weaving complex multiplicities and rules out of nothing, is simply an empty game of manipulating symbols. The problem is not just that of giving the operation of presentation the same ontological validity as sets; rather, what is needed is an analysis of why being must depend upon presentation as its material support, and what sort of framework may be necessary for such a dependency."[14] The importance of the translation of the theory of subject into the domain of logic was fundamental enough that *Logics of Worlds* opens precisely with a new definition of the subject: a singular subject is a material, corporeal "bearer of the dialectical overcoming of simple materialism."[15] In *Logics of Worlds*, the work of the subject therefore acquires a new signifier, materialist dialectic, which keeps affirming the following axiom: "There are only bodies and languages, except that there are truths."[16] In other words: the subject is an exception to the logic of the world. It is not difficult to locate dialectical trademarks already in what has been said above.

Firstly, we note the thought of contradiction within a single framework of unifying opposites (and also the consequences of an event through the subjective operation of fidelity). The thought of contradiction is imperative since an event is defined as a paradoxical entity that belongs to itself as an element. Secondly, the transformation of quantity into quality, which occurs through the work of the subject when a subjective body persists in fidelity to the event until a change in the regime of the count is established.

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[11]   Frank Ruda, "To the End: Exposing the Absolute", *Filozofski vestnik,* 41 (2/2020), pp. 311–340.

[12]   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 357.

[13]   *Ibid.*, p. 451.

[14]   Sam Gillespie, *The Mathematics of Novelty: Badiou's Minimalist Metaphysics*, Melbourne, re.press, 2008.

[15]   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 45.

[16]   *Ibid.*, p. 4.

And thirdly, the negation of negation. Whenever the transcendental representation of a world is restructured, whenever a change in the regime of the count is achieved, a specific negation within this world has been itself negated. It is, however, not at all unambiguous what the negation of a specific appearance might be. As pointed out by Badiou,[17] one can define negation in relation to three fundamental principles of thought: i) the principle of identity, $p = p$; ii) the principle of the excluded middle or *tertium non datur*, $p \cup \ulcorner p$; and iii) the principle of non-contradiction, $\ulcorner(p \cap \ulcorner p)$. An operation of negation that obeys the last two principles is a classical negation. Negation can, however, violate the principle of the excluded middle and obey the principle of non-contradiction – such a negation is part of the so-called intuitionistic logic (developed by Brower and Heyting). Finally, negation can also violate both the principle of the excluded middle and the principle of non-contradiction – such a negation is a paraconsistent negation. Since the logic of appearing allows for a continuous spectrum of transcendental degrees of appearance p, the same must hold for the negation of p. In other words: while the ontology is itself classical, the logic of appearance violates the principle of the excluded middle and is therefore intuitionistic.

The crucial point regarding the possibility of any dialectic is, however, that, within intuitionistic logic, the negation of negation does not, in general, lead back to the beginning but rather signifies a transgression of the original situation. This shift from the key principle of classical logic,

$$\ulcorner\ulcorner p = p,$$

to the new principle,

$$\ulcorner\ulcorner p \geq p,$$

turns out to be a differentiating property of the intuitionistic logic of the transcendental, the Greater Logic. In order to see that this shift is immanent to Badiou's logic of appearing, we need to describe in more detail the concept of the negation on the level of appearance – or, as Badiou calls it, *a reverse*. What is, in other words, a reverse $\ulcorner p$ of a specific appearance p? Let's jump straight to the definition[18] and state it in non-technical terms first: the reverse of a specific appearance is defined as a union of all appearances that have nothing in com-

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17   Alain Badiou, "The Three Negations", *Cardozo Law Review*, 29 (5/2007), pp. 1877–1883.
18   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 168.

mon[19] with the appearance undergoing reversal. Or, in the terminology of the logic of the transcendental: the reverse $\neg p$ of the specific appearance is an envelope of all (transcendental degrees of) appearances that have minimal conjunction with the (transcendental degree of) appearance undergoing reversal. Since each member of the envelope $\neg p$ has minimal conjunction (i.e. has nothing in common) with p, the conjunction of p with the envelope also has a minimal degree of appearance: $p \cap \neg p = \mu$.

Now remember that the envelope of p is defined as a union of conjunctions of p with the members of any subset of appearances of the same world.[20] Therefore, the transcendental degree of appearance of the envelope is always equal to or larger than p: $E(p) \geq p$. The envelope $E(p)$ of p equals p if and only if each member q of the subset has nothing in common with p, or $p \cap q = \mu$. Otherwise $E(p) > p$. Let us now return to the negation of negation, or the reverse of reverse, $\neg\neg p$. The reverse of the reverse of p is a (double) envelope: an outer envelope over a subset of appearances q such that $q \cap \neg p = \mu$, where q stems from an inner envelope of p over a subset of appearances r such that $r \cap p = \mu$. Now, according to the definition of the reverse, $p \cap \neg p = \mu$. Therefore, p itself is also among the appearances q over which the outer envelope operates. Therefore the outer envelope, or the reverse of reverse, $\neg\neg p$, is greater than or equal to p:

$$\neg\neg p \geq p.$$

Thus, the logic of appearance, through its violation of *tertium non datur*, allows for the dialectical transgression through negation.

What about the materialistic part of materialist dialectic? The core of Badiou's demonstration of this aspect of the work of the subject resides in his proof of the *second constitutive thesis of materialism.*[21] This thesis implies, to use his words, *that the ontological closure of the world implies its logical completeness.* The ontological closure of the world is the starting point of the proof, and consists of the following statement: if x and y are, in the ontological sense of the word, multiples, then their union and intersection are also multiples. From this, the

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19   *Ibid.*, p. 107.
20   *Ibid.*, p. 163.
21   *Ibid.*, p. 345.

following consequence can be derived[22] within the logic of the transcendental: if x and y appear in a world (with, say, intensities of appearance p and q), then all ordered pairs of their respective elements also appear in the world. In other words: if x and y appear in a world (with, say, intensities of appearance p and q), then their union and all their subsets also appear in this world. Whatever appears in a world is therefore, as proven by Lemma 1, ontologically grounded within the world. This sweeps away any possibility of transcendence and hence implies materialism. (It needs to be noted that this route from ontological closure to logical completeness is only possible if one accepts that ontology is mathematics and that a transcendental has the structure of a Heyting algebra.) So, whatever appears has an ontological ground, but the reverse is not true: being does not necessarily appear.

The logical aspect of the proof[23] requires the establishment of relations between the *objects* of a particular world. An object of a world is a multiple, appearing in that world, along with an envelope of conjunctions between this multiple and all other multiples appearing in that world. This envelope essentially measures how similar this multiple appears to all other appearing multiples of that particular world. Vaguely speaking: an object is a multiple, *localized* in a particular world through a set of similarities between itself and other multiples, appearing in that same world.[24] The logical completeness of a world is synonymous with the fact that given the relations between the *already-appearing* objects of that world, the relations between *these* objects and any *newly appearing* object are already completely determined by an existing network of relationships.

The second constitutive thesis of materialism, which establishes a connection between ontology and the logic of appearance, consequently indicates that an interruption of representation at the ontological level interrupts the consistency of relations on the level of appearance. A true change occurs as a transformation of the transcendental hierarchy on the level of appearance. The relation between temporality and order that we tried to establish at the level of ontology must therefore translate somehow also to the level of appearance. This translation takes the form of the negation of negation we referred to above: the nega-

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 345.
[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 345–352.
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 245.

tion of a specific inexistent minimal appearance is itself negated to yield a new appearance in the world through a shift of the transcendental order – which gives rise to a temporality within the world:

> The intensities of objects and relations are measured according to a singular temporal transcendental, which objectivates in their appearing multiplicities such as 'the firm stance of the group of anarchists from one end to the other', or 'the organizing role of the rail workers' union', or 'the growing isolation of the Kurdish communists' and so on. In other words, the object absorbs, as elements of the multiplicity that it is, the modifications which include it within the time of the world, through which it only 'changes' to the extent that this 'change' is its appearing-in-the-world.[25]

If time is to exist in a world, it exists only insomuch as the transcendental of the world experiences a disruption of its order by an event, by an appearance of inexistent objects that need to be integrated, through changes in the transcendental hierarchy, into a new transcendental of the world, thus leading to a new order, a *new present*:

> The event cannot be the undivided encroachment of the past on the future or the eternally past being of the future. On the contrary, it is a separating evanescence, an atemporal instant which disjoins the previous state of an object (the site) from its subsequent state. We could also say that the event extracts from one time the possibility of another time. This other time, whose materiality envelops the consequences of the event, deserves the name of new present. The event is neither past nor future. It presents us with the present.[26]

An event presents us with the present, with what is presented but not represented, with what exists but does not appear. An event disjoins the *previous* state of an object from its *subsequent* state. It splits the world into the before and after, each with its own transcendental ordering. It is then up to the faithful subject to decide the undecidable dilemma: Did an event take place or not? Did the possibility of another time open up or not? Did the order of the world change

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[25]   *Ibid.*, p. 359.
[26]   *Ibid.*, p. 384.

or not? Now we can follow Badiou[27] by asking: What is the outcome, for the in-existent, of this negation of negation? What is the intensity of the appearance of the inexistent in the post-evental world? There are only three possibilities: the post-evental intensity of appearance can be either maximal, intermediate, or minimal.

In the first possibility, the world experienced what Badiou calls a true event. There is no doubt that the transcendental of the world has changed and a spe-cific temporality has emerged. In the second possibility, the post evental inten-sity of the inexistent is intermediate: "something happens, but without radical effects, and in the general respect of the hierarchy of degrees of appearing in the world".[28] In this case, we cannot speak of any reordering of the transcendental in any fundamental sense. The change itself was not a true event, but rather what Badiou denotes as a weak singularity. This post-evental world remains timeless. The same holds for the last possibility, where the inexistent remains inexistent. Such a change is referred to as a false event, or a simulacrum of an event, and the post-evental world is exactly the same.

Which of these three scenarios manifests itself depends ultimately on a purely subjective decision, a purely subjective choice. The assertion of the existence of this *choice* opens up a new path that leads far beyond this paper – here we can only briefly sketch one possible approach. The existence of this choice is guaranteed by the early axiomatic decision to use the axiomatic system of the Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory, supplemented by the axiom of choice.[29] The axiom of choice guarantees, informally speaking, that for any set of nonempty sets, it is possible to choose one element from each set. (This seems trivial for finite sets, but is not obvious for infinite sets.) The existence of choice is, however, guaranteed by the axiom of choice also for infinite sets. Note that the axiom says nothing about *how* the choice should be performed, it merely guarantees that there *is* a choice. Of course, one might object that the validity of the axiom of choice by definition holds over any set of *nonempty* sets (i.e. having at least one element, hence being constructible via the operation of the count) and is

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[27]   Badiou, "The Three Negations", pp. 1877–1883.

[28]   *Ibid.*, p. 1882.

[29]   See also: Oliver Feltham, "One or Many Ontologies? Badiou's Arguments for His Thesis 'Mathematics is Ontology'", *Filozofski vestnik,* 41 (2/2020), pp. 37–55.

thus inapplicable in the case of an event, which presents precisely subtracted, non-constructible, *empty* sets, for elements of which the faithful subject chooses to assert existence or not. The short answer to this objection lies in the fact that this choice is made from the position of the subject and *from the subjective position* the generic extension is not void, it is constructible.

The possibility of choice is perhaps one of the clearest demarcation lines between natural and historical situations. Choice is only given in historical situations that are capable of reinventing their own time. Out of this reordering of the world there emerges a new temporality, sustained by subjective fidelity – outside of a subjective body, there is no right or wrong answer to this choice and thus no temporality. Outside of a subjective body, there is not even any necessity for an answer to the question of whether the world can change or not – not answering this question is already an answer. But there is always a choice.

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Magdalena Germek*

The Dialectic of Formalization

The English translation of Alain Badiou's *The Concept of Model*, published forty years after its original French release, includes an interview with the author in which Zachary Luke Fraser and Tzuchien Tho take the opportunity to systematically discuss Badiou's philosophical opus, spanning four decades, focusing on the continuities and discontinuities in his writing. Tho emphasizes the theme of formalization, which seems to have been at the centre of Badiou's philosophy since his early understanding of formalization and mathematics as a process without a subject, an idea that he analyses in *The Concept of the Model* (1969) and the two acclaimed articles "Infinitesimal Subversion" (1968) and "Mark and Lack" (1969).[1] Tho locates the theme of formalization in Badiou's later works as well: in *The Century,* in which Badiou writes about the philosophical duty to think formalized in-humanism, and in *Logic of Worlds,* where we find the concept of *subjective formalism* or the "subject-form." The theme of formalization, therefore, holds a central place in Badiou's work. It connects his early work with his mature work and also represents a recurring theme, through which we can follow the changes in the most significant concepts of Badiou's philosophy. Badiou strongly advocates for the relevance of mathematical formalization, but it is evident from his answers in this interview that the theme of formalization has a wider reach: art, politics, science (mathematics), and love, understood by Badiou as truth procedures, can also be thought of as some sort of formalizations. Badiou's doctrine of truths relies on the idea that truths are evental by nature and that in the realization of a truth the subject participates as its agent. In the aforementioned interview, the scheme event – truth – subject, typical of Badiou's mature work, is reformulated as event – new formalization – subject as an effect of formalization.

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[1] *Cf.* Alain Badiou, Zachary Luck Fraser, and Tzuchien Tho, "The Concept of Model, Forty Years Later: An Interview with Alain Badiou", trans. Z. L. Fraser and T. Tho, in A. Badiou, *The Concept of Model*, Melbourne, re.press, 2007, p. 87.

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If formalization can take the place that, within Badiou's philosophy, is usually reserved for truths, then the concept of formalization must be considered from a wider perspective than the one offered by mathematical and logical discourse. Badiou assures us that the dialectic of formalization can indeed be found at work in truth procedures. Referring to his early concept of model, he claims that what was at stake at the time was "the *dialectic of formalization*," which is to say "a *dialectic of the truth procedure as such*."[2] The dialectic of formalization therefore presents the dialectical procedure of the realization of a new, true form in the world. This realization is based on subjective activity, whereas the body of the subject-form is seen as the bearer of true formalization.

Dialectic versus formalization

We have to point out that the dialectic of formalization combines two problematic concepts of Badiou's philosophy: the concept of dialectic and the concept of formalization. These two concepts are problematic because it seems that Badiou did not define them completely and thoroughly. Namely, Badiou does not have a systematic "theory" of formalization but only offers the reader scattered, fragmentary comments that resemble impromptu allusions rather than a clearly elaborated position. Regarding the concept of formalization, we are, therefore, faced with a lack of a clear conceptual definition. On the other hand, the concept of the dialectic may be too burdened with complex theoretical (Marxist and Maoist) history, which Badiou followed mostly in his younger years. In another interview, Badiou explained his ambivalent position:

> You could almost say that my entire enterprise is one giant confrontation [*démêlé*] with the dialectic. That is why sometimes I declare myself a dialectician and write in defense of the great dialecticians (but I mean the French dialecticians, which is not exactly the same as the Hegelian dialectic), while at other times I declare myself an antidialectician. You are absolutely right to perceive a certain confusion in this whole business.[3]

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[2] *Ibid*., p. 91, italics added.

[3] Alain Badiou, Peter Hallward, and Bruno Bosteels, "Beyond Formalization: An Interview", trans. B. Bosteels and A. Toscano, in B. Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 331.

We dare say that this "confusion" is not an inconsistency in Badiou's philosophy, but rather an uneasiness of a structural nature. Formalization and dialectic have had a conflicted relationship in a long line of philosophies long before that of Badiou. Hegel's philosophy provides a good example of this conflict; it finds mathematical formalization to be lacking in speculation exactly because it is an anti-dialectical method. A well-known critique of mathematical formalization can be found in Hegel's "Preface" of *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* where Hegel condemns mathematics for not proceeding dialectically and thus coming up with fixed, dead, lifeless propositions and results. Mathematics presents results without the movement that led to these results: the mathematical process does not manifest itself in the result as its inner moment.

If we accept Hegel's position on the anti-dialectical method of formalization, then our insistence on Badiou's "dialectic of formalization" is conceptually unacceptable, if not even contradictory. The question is also to what extent Badiou himself stands behind his own formulation, because the only time he mentions it, as far as we know, is in this one interview. Could it be that it was all just a witty provocative remark?

If we turn to Badiou's interpreters, we can notice that they do not consider the dialectic of formalization to be a solid concept that would allow us to seriously analyse Badiou's philosophy. It seems that most of them prefer to hold both concepts – dialectic and formalization – at the utmost distance from each other. A symptomatic case of this is Paul Livingston's interpretation, which is focused on the political effects of a specific mathematical formalization, and yet he does not include nor debate the concept of dialectic in his book, aptly titled *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the Consequences of Formalism*.[4] Coming from the opposite direction is Bruno Bosteels's interpretation, which lowers the conceptual value of mathematical formalization and emphasizes the importance of dialectic within Badiou's philosophy. Thus, Bosteels declares his understanding of Badiou with metaphorical, yet explicit words: "For the purpose of what follows, this means above all to size up the iceberg of emancipatory politics that

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[4]   Paul Livingston, *The Politics of Logic: Badiou, Wittgenstein, and the Consequences of Formalism*, London and New York, Routledge, 2012.

is all but hidden – if it has not already suffered a complete meltdown as a result of global warming – below the arctic waters of mathematical formalization."[5]

We can conclude that there is an evidently disproportionate relation between formalization and dialectic, which leads to an obvious and mutual non-relationship. We could say that *an emphasis on formalization leads to the disappearance of dialectic, and an emphasis on dialectic leads to the diminishing of the role of formalization.*

If we take a moment longer to discuss Bosteels's interpretation, it becomes apparent that Bosteels openly addresses the importance of mathematical formalization for the interpretation of Badiou's philosophy and the actual role that mathematics plays therein. Given that he considers mathematics to be an ontology and by its logical extension a phenomenology, Badiou's explanation of being and the world heavily relies on mathematical methods and formalisms, which he, according to Bosteels, excessively applies also to the conceptualization of categories such as truth, subject, and change. Bosteels uses Sam Gillespie's reading of Badiou as an example of the excessive use of mathematics. Gillespie, on the other hand, criticizes Bosteels's (and also Žižek's and Critchley's) non-mathematical interpretation of the concept of generic multiplicity, which according to Gillespie cannot be understood without adequate use of mathematics.[6] Bosteels replies that despite Badiou's application of the mathematical concepts of "the generic" and "forcing" to the concept of truth, both concepts work in a completely different way in a philosophical discourse than in mathematics. Mathematics operates only in an ontological situation and its domain is very limited outside of ontology, especially when dealing with the relation between philosophy and politics:

> Not only are we placed in a non-ontological domain where the equation "mathematics = ontology" no longer really applies, but to understand this other domain, we should always come back to the principle that "ontology ≠ politics" since politics, like the events that punctuate the historicity of mathematics as a truth proce-

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[5]   Bruno Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2011, p. 43.

[6]   *Cf.* Sam Gillespie, *The Mathematics of Novelty: Badiou's Minimalist Metaphysics*, Melbourne, re.press, 2008, p. 72, and Bosteels' extended response in Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, pp. 33–34.

dure, involves that which is not being qua being. In other words, there is no such thing as a political ontology.[7]

Even though all mathematical concepts have a meta-mathematical or meta-ontological status in philosophy, it is politics, as per Bosteels, that overdetermines the meta-ontological use of mathematics. The latter is true especially because being-qua-being becomes visible only after contingent events and subjective interventions. In this respect, the order of meditations in *Being and Event* should be reversed, says Bosteels: Badiou should first introduce the theory of event, the truth, and the subject, and then the theory of being-qua-being, since the inconsistency of the situation becomes apparent only after subjective action.

According to Bosteels, the suturing of philosophy with the mathematical procedure can be easily noticed in the symptomatic disappearance of the concept of dialectic. Badiou's return to mathematics at the end of the 1980s, following his research on the political (this research is usually placed in Badiou's Maoist phase in secondary literature), is so important for some interpreters that they call it Badiou's *mathematical turn*.[8] Bosteels objects to this interpretation and does not find any definitive confirmation of a mathematical turn.[9] He insists on the continuation of the theme of dialectical materialism, which ties together Badiou's early texts with his later ones, including *Logic of Worlds*. According to Bosteels, "mathematical interpretations" are guilty of a violent takeover of Badiou's philosophy by means of an anti-dialectical mathematical method. "Mathematics, briefly put, is thought to have replaced dialectics in the more recent and more widely read works by Badiou."[10] For Bosteels, this is highly misleading and may lead to a wrong interpretation of the complicated relation between being and event. Only the dialectical modus of thought can disable the illegitimate division between being and event. The word "and" in Badiou's magnum opus *Being and Event* should be complemented by a string of intermediary elements, developed especially in *Logic of Worlds* (the typology of change, the concept

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[7] Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, p. 40.

[8] *Cf*. Peter Hallward, *Badiou: A Subject to Truth*, London, University of Minnesota Press, 2003, p. 49; Burhanuddin Baki, *Badiou's Being and Event and the Mathematics of Set Theory*, London, Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 19 and 250; Jason Barker, *Alain Badiou: A Critical Introduction*, London, Pluto, 2002, p. 40.

[9] *Cf*. Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, pp. 157 and 183.

[10] *Ibid*., p. 8.

of the body, etc.), according to Bosteels. These mediations between being and event remain invisible if the concept of dialectic is pushed aside.

We agree with some of the points Bosteels makes. Mathematical turn may indeed be too strong a term and thus creates an unduly and unnecessary divide between some parts of Badiou's philosophy. We also welcome and acknowledge Bosteels's work as pioneering; he is among the first interpreters of Badiou's work who conducted a systematic analysis of the concept of dialectic from the perspective of the connection between Badiou's mature work and his early writing. Thus, we agree with Bosteels that the theoretical set of Badiou's major works should consist not only of *Being and Event* and *Logic of Worlds*, but also *Theory of the Subject*, which is mostly neglected by Badiou's interpreters. But still, we would like to point out that Bosteels's approach is not without risk. His focus is specifically on the political procedure of truth. Yet, it is an open question whether this focus means that Bosteels only confines himself to this area in his analysis or whether this "limitation" actually favours and gives a conceptual privilege to politics ahead of the other three truth procedures (especially the scientific-mathematical).

In Bosteels's interpretation, we can notice that there is not only a methodological clash between the two methods, dialectic and formalization, but that there is also a tension between the two truth procedures – the mathematical and the political. As two independent truth procedures, mathematics and politics are two philosophical conditions (besides love and art) that participate in the process of conditioning philosophy. It is exactly in this place of conditioning that it seems as if in some interpretations one condition has a larger conditioning value for Badiou's philosophy than the other three. It should be noted, however, that Badiou's definition of "conditioned philosophy" forbids that an excessive conditioning value is assigned to any of the individual conditions, since the whole idea of philosophy under conditions arises from the principle of the equality of all four conditions. If it so happens that a certain truth procedure is neglected due to some other overly dominant truth procedure, the conditioning mechanism breaks and philosophy becomes sutured to one of the conditions. Truth procedures are the conditions of philosophy *only when* they equally, simultaneously, and systematically participate in a philosophical configuration.

Badiou's concept of philosophy under conditions comes from the idea that philosophy is not the source of all thought and that there are historical events that are thinkable through some *other order of thought*. This other order of thought is the truths, which are autonomous and independent of philosophy. In this sense, if we return to Hegel again, it has to be said that Hegel's disdain for mathematical formalization and preference for dialectical speculative thought is not the only thing that Badiou's philosophy goes against.[11] Badiou's issue with Hegel lies mostly in Hegel's speculative gesture, which Badiou describes as a *romantic speculative gesture*. This romantic gesture implies that mathematics and philosophy are kept in a *strong non-relation*. The premise of romanticism is that mathematics is not a thought.[12] Romanticism sees mathematics as *an adversary*, due to the use of certain concepts in mathematics, such as the concept of infinity, which is also used in philosophy. Philosophy and mathematics therefore are not sufficiently and clearly demarcated, which means they have to be separated in some other way, for instance by philosophy declaring that it holds the power and the advantage of philosophical conceptual thought over the conceptual uselessness of mathematical technicalism.

We can clearly see this in Badiou's comparison of Plato's unromantic orientation with Hegel's romantic orientation. Just like Hegel, Plato sets dialectic over mathematics. But he does not place mathematics on the level of non-thinking. He only distinguishes mathematics and philosophy as two different types of thought: dialectic is *nous*, and mathematics is some other autonomous thought – *dianoia*. Philosophy and mathematics do not disrupt each other; they are not competitors and can co-exist next to each other. Plato therefore sees no problem in demanding knowledge of geometry from anyone who wants to pursue true matters of thought. Contrary to Plato, the romantic speculative gesture makes mathematics and philosophy compete over the same concepts. In this sense, philosophy and mathematics are rivals: if infinity is a true concept, then for Hegel it is a philosophical concept, while the mathematical notion of the infinite is just "a futile and crude approximation."[13]

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[11] If we understand formalization (as per Badiou) as the power of the realization of form as such, it could even be proven that a similar idea of the form-realization power of logic was in some way already present in Hegel's concept of the science of logic, which realizes the form of the form (namely, the absolute idea) itself.

[12] *Cf*. Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. S. Corcoran, London, Continuum, 2008, p. 95.

[13] *Ibid*., p. 109.

By claiming exclusive rights over thinking with true concepts, romantic philosophy degrades discourses like mathematics to a level of vulgar forms of thought. This implies that philosophy is not interested in autonomous forms of thought that are independent of philosophy. Badiou's concept of conditioned philosophy, on the contrary, is based on the idea that some other thought, autonomous and independent of philosophy, is able to produce real effects, which philosophy then reflects on, observes, and by so doing also contemplates the temporal being of truths.[14] This autonomous other thought draws its autonomy from nothing other than *the inner processes of its own production*.

The emphasis on the autonomy of the other order of thought is of crucial importance for our topic because it ties us to the theme of formalization. Our initial assumption is that Badiou uses formalization to describe procedures for the realization of autonomous, true, and subjective forms. This can be traced back to Badiou's early texts from the end of the 1960s. The idea of formalization, just like the concept of dialectic (according to Bosteels), thus gives us a common theme and connection between Badiou's early and mature philosophy.

Autonomous and homogenous procedures of formalization

The emphasis on the inner and homogenous procedures of truth production questions the historicist concept of dialectic. This is clearly demonstrated in the case of the political procedure of truth. In *Metapolitics*, Badiou, influenced by Sylvain Lazarus, condemns dialectic as obsolete, for it thinks politics from the outside and brings heterogenous elements into it. Bosteels notices that dialectic is the first victim of Badiou's metapolitical orientation: "Badiou does indeed seem to reject all forms of dialectical thinking as being inherently misguided – unable as they are to think politics *from within*, as would be the true task of the 'metapolitics'."[15] However, this does not mean that Badiou is against dialectic per se. As Bosteels further explains, Badiou only criticizes the historicist and positivist understanding of dialectic. This kind of concept of dialectic is unsuitable for describing the concept of politics as Badiou and Lazarus understand it, because politics *thinks from within*, and we have to understand it in terms of its

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[14]　*Cf.* Jelica Šumič Riha, "Filozofija kot vzgoja z resnicami", *Filozofski vestnik*, 31 (3/2010), pp. 151–152.

[15]　Bosteels, *Badiou and Politics*, p. 8.

homogenous singularity without the dialectical insertion of external relations: "Against the notion of dialectical synthesis, it is necessary to invoke here Sylvain Lazarus' thesis that a political sequence should be identified and thought on its own terms, as a homogeneous singularity, and not in terms of the heterogeneous nature of its empirical future."[16]

While Hegel criticizes the *mathematical result* as dialectically unmediated, we can now see that Badiou criticizes the *dialectic of the result* because it involves heterogeneity in political sequences and thus thinks it externally and empirically. This means that Badiou is searching for a method which can think its object rationally, "internally", and without bringing in external, heterogenous elements; in other words, a method that examines the object with regard to the *principle of homogeneity*. If dialectic carries the burden of historicism, then it is not capable of this inner protocol of derivation, and due to this inability, we have to leave it behind. However, another concept allows Badiou to defend the demand for an internal and homogenous protocol of production. It is the concept of formalization, which we can already observe in the philosophy of the young Badiou.

Badiou's first explicit example of an autonomous and homogenous process of production can be found in his early text "The Autonomy of the Aesthetic Process", first published in *Cahiers Marxistes-Léninistes*, 12-13 July 1966. In this essay, Badiou explicitly refers to Pierre Macherey, who, first in the article "Lenin, Critic of Tolstoy" and then in the book *A Theory of Literary Production* (1966), presents the idea of the autonomy of literary criticism. Macherey's idea is interesting because it shows how rational-materialist thought differs from empirical thought. Rational research does not hold the object of examination to be a pre-existing immediate given that stands *outside* of the production of knowledge, but as being produced by the knowledge itself. That is why rational knowledge can change reality (contrary to empirical knowledge): because its own mechanism is transformative. It is transformative solely by producing the object of knowledge, which did not exist beforehand. As an object of criticism, an artwork *changes*, because: "The work that the author wrote is not precisely

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16   Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. J. Barker, London, Verso, 2005, p. 127.

the work (the same work) that is explicated by the critic."[17] A critic produces knowledge about the laws of the artistic process of production and these laws enforce the autonomy of the artwork in relation to the artist-creator. Macherey, for instance, turns to Lenin's analysis of Tolstoy's work to show how complex social ambiguities can be traced in Tolstoy's work independently of the author's intent, his understanding of Russian history and society, or personal ideology. For Lenin, Tolstoy's literature is a mirror of the Russian revolution (of 1905), which remained concealed from the author's eyes: "What is seen in the mirror of the work is not quite what Tolstoy saw, both in himself and as an ideological spokesman."[18]

Following Macherey, we should attribute a certain power of transformation to the process of literary production, which can never be reduced to ideology. But Badiou wonders how great this power of transformation really is if something that enters the process remains unchanged: literary production works with "ideological generalities," which remain untransformed by the process and function as a heterogeneity in relation to the literary economy of the work.[19] Macherey keeps the ideological heterogeneity inside of the work of art and by doing so enables the work to function as a *contradictory multiplicity*. Badiou's theory of the aesthetic modus of production, on the contrary, establishes itself by rejecting the formula of heterogeneity: "More generally, we must clearly understand that what the aesthetic practice 'belabours' – the generalities that it transforms – *cannot be heterogeneous elements*: the 'raw material' of the process of production is itself 'already' aesthetic."[20] So the key point of disagreement between Badiou and Macherey is that the latter *keeps a moment of heterogeneity* (otherness) in the heart of the artwork, which, if we follow the former, radically *compromises the autonomy* of aesthetic production. We should therefore conclude that Badiou insists on a homogeneous and autonomous process of production within the aesthetic realm.

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[17] Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. G. Wall, London, Routledge, 2006, p. 8.

[18] *Ibid*, p. 135.

[19] *Cf*. Alain Badiou, "The Autonomy of the Aesthetic Process", trans. B. Bosteels, in A. Badiou, *The Age of the Poets: And Other Writings on Twentieth-Century Poetry and Prose*, London and New York, Verso, 2014, p. 121.

[20] *Ibid*., p. 125, italics added.

With the second example we move from art to science. Badiou introduces his conceptualization of science by using the same emphasis on the autonomy and homogeneity of the rational-materialist process of production. Timewise, we are still in the period of the late 1960s, when Badiou published a text entitled "The (Re)commencement of Dialectical Materialism" (1967), a review of some of Althusser's works, the essay "Mark and Lack" (1969), and the seminar booklet *The Concept of Model* (1969). In these epistemological works, Badiou views science as a stratified, self-sufficient, impersonal, mechanical, and strictly homogenous process of production. Mathematics and logic do not bring anything into their practice that they have not produced themselves. In his critique of Jacques-Alain Miller, who understands the logic of the signifier as a more fundamental logic than the logician's logic, Badiou responds that nothing comes into logic that has not been produced by the logical machine. All of the external elements (suture, signifier, subject) that Miller introduces into his theorization of the very foundations of logic are nothing but metaphysical inputs, according to Badiou. The science of logic is a rational apparatus, an objective formalization that functions mechanically, disciplinarily, like a Turing machine. Badiou compares it to a psychosis, but it is worth noting that what he has in mind is not some kind of a formalist delirium about reality that would actually be devoid of reality. Contemporary scientific rationality operates within a highly specialized, experimental, and "artificial" practice that does not have much in common with our "natural" perception of reality. It is based on experience, but as the French word *expérience* implies, it is an experience as much as it is an experiment.

At this point, we should mention Badiou's debt to the French epistemologist Gaston Bachelard. One of the most important principles of Bachelard's epistemology was that "science has no object outside its own activity."[21] The object of scientific practice "is therefore not an immediate given and does not pre-exist the process of its production."[22] This means that science produces its own norms and the criteria of its own existence via its own scientific practice. In contrast to positivist epistemology (such as that of Karl Popper or Thomas Kuhn), which sooner or later resorts to the problem of the foundation of objective knowledge, Bachelard establishes the objectivity of scientific knowledge without seeking

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[21] Dominique Lecourt, *Marxism and Epistemology: Bachelard, Canguilhem and Foucault*, trans. B. Brewster, London, NLB, 1975, p. 26.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

any outside guarantee for it. Scientific objectivity does not need a reason and proof of its objectivity, for it is already guaranteed by the process of scientific production.

Badiou aims at this form of scientific objectivity, too. The real as a completely exterior objectivity has no value for scientific discourse; the real, which science aims at, reveals itself only when placed into the framework of a homogenous formalized production, using specialized means of scientific formalization. This is also how we should perceive the mathematical concept of model, which Badiou introduced in *The Concept of Model*. The scientific concept of model is not an ideal type or scheme of something empirical, but an independent object of mathematical formalization. The theory of model is divided into the theory of syntax and the theory of semantics, both of which are *mathematical* and treated mathematically. This is particularly hard to grasp in semantics due to its interpretative value. Within an empiricist understanding of science, semantics is considered to be a theory that interprets and brings in meanings from outside the scope of mathematics. Badiou does not accept that, because for him there is no "outside", unless by "outside" we mean something that is already being produced *inside* of "a *mathematical envelopment*."[23] The concept of model is strictly dependent on mathematical set theory, which does not define the set as an empirical set of objects. Instead, an "object" only exists if it belongs to a *mathematical* set ("belonging" ($\in$) is a sign of "existence"). Just like vacuum tubes are the means of production of physics, formalized syntax is the means of mathematical production.[24] The scientific object is therefore an "artificial" object that is produced in a homogenous and internal protocol of scientific formalization.

This understanding of mathematical formalization remains the same in Badiou's radical ontological project, in which he equates mathematics with ontology. We can read this equation as a shortened form of the following description: mathematics = a mechanized machine that writes using the axiomatic language of formalization = an experimental scientific practice that produces its own object and operates with its own material, which does not come from the empirical exterior = ontology as a science that pronounces being-qua-being. We must emphasize that *the mathematical approach to being* is something that is internal

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[23]   *Cf.* Badiou, *The Concept of Model,* p. 42.

[24]   *Cf. ibid*, p. 43.

to mathematical production itself. There is no transcendence in mathematics that originates from the primary differentiation between "the internal" and "the external", and between the knowing subject and the known object. In contrast, any idea that considers the subject in relation to an external object is empiricist.[25] This entails the "co-belonging of the known and the knowing mind" in "ontological commensurability,"[26] which means that thinking and being are the same. Mathematics thinks being through its own internal and homogenous axiomatic presentation of set theory, which corresponds to Badiou's assertion that the axiomatic set is an immanent form of being-qua-being.

Nevertheless, there is a challenge to the principle of homogeneity that comes from Badiou's philosophy itself, namely its doctrine of truth procedures as productions of the new and universal, which impose a moment of discontinuity into the continuity of a world. Given that truth procedures are based on events, which appear as eruptions of something heterogenous that cannot be situated in the order of being, Badiou asks: "Does this being of the event require a theory of the multiple, which is heterogeneous to the theory explaining Being, that is, Being *qua* Being?"[27] According to Badiou, Deleuze's concept of event offers a positive answer to this question: "Thinking the event fold originally demands a double-edged manifold theory, one that pursues Bergson's legacy."[28] But, contrary to Deleuze, Badiou insists on maintaining the principle of homogeneity: "As for myself, I contend the contrary, namely, that multiplicity is axiomatically homogenous. That's when I have to explain the being of the event both as a breach of the law according to which manifolds spread out as well as something homogenous to this law."[29]

Badiou resolves this ambivalence in an elegant way. He removes one of the axioms of the ZF set theory – the axiom of foundation. This axiom forbids self-belonging, which is a feature Badiou uses to describe evental usurpation. If we remove the axiom of foundation, we can think of an event as an ontological anomaly, an instance of a set belonging to itself; this kind of presentation is not

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[25] *Cf*. Alain Badiou, *Briefings on Existence: A Short Treatise on Transitory Ontology*, trans. N. Madarasz, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2006, p. 90.

[26] *Ibid*.

[27] *Ibid*., pp. 60–61.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 61.

[29] *Ibid*.

durable and disappears within a moment. By temporarily removing the axiom of foundation, Badiou preserves the homogeneity of being, which means that "an event is nothing but a set, a manifold,"[30] which is ontologically "an un-founded manifold" [31] and not an ontologically *heterogeneous* manifold.

Up to this point, we have demonstrated Badiou's line of thought regarding the homogenous and autonomous processes of production in the political, aesthetic, and scientific (mathematical) areas. These are the areas in which truths can arise. Truth procedures as homogenous, autonomous, rational-materialist productions could also be characterized as specific truth formalizations. Truth procedures are formalizations, because they produce new and universal forms, which cause real effects in the world. Form is not an abstraction of its material, but its realization. The concept of formalization has a direct connection with the concept of form because inventing a new formalization entails inventing a new form: "I believe that if all creative thought is in reality the invention of a new mode of formalization, then that thought is the invention of a form."[32] That creative thought is expressed through the creation of a form can be confirmed with Badiou's statement from *The Century*: "Form is therefore an Idea as given in its material index, a singularity that can only be activated in the real grip of an act. Form is the *eidos* – this time in a Platonic sense – of an artistic act; it must be understood *from the side of formalization*."[33]

For Badiou, form is ἰδέα or *eidos* in a strong platonic meaning, which is apparent in his text "Art and Mathematics". In this text, Badiou states: "Plato exalts mathematics from a point of view that relates it to being in itself, the form of which is what he calls the Idea. [...] Plato is the first formalist, in the very precise sense of a theory of forms."[34] In the same text, Badiou introduces four tendencies of understanding mathematical and artistic forms in the history of philosophy, namely Platonic, Nietzschean, Aristotelian, and Wittgensteinian, and gives priority to a Platonic orientation. According to a Platonic orientation, mathe-

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[30]   *Ibid.*

[31]   *Ibid.*

[32]   Badiou, Fraser, and Tho, "The Concept of Model, Forty Years Later: An Interview with Alain Badiou", p. 102.

[33]   Alain Badiou, *The Century*, trans. A. Toscano, Cambridge, Polity, 2007, pp. 159–160.

[34]   Alain Badiou, "Art and Mathematics", trans. S. Corcoran, in F. Ruda, J. Völker (eds.), *Art and Contemporaneity*, Zürich-Berlin, Diaphanes, 2015, p. 163.

matical formalization is paradigmatic, because it offers a starting point for the definition of form as such, as Badiou explicitly confirms in the mentioned interview with Fraser and Tho:

> Thus if every creative thought is the invention of a new form, then it will also bring new possibilities of asking, in the end, "what is a form?" If this is true, then one should investigate the resources for this. As a resource, there is nothing deeper than that which the particularity of mathematics has to offer. This is what I think, I held this point of view and I hold it now. It is not that mathematics is the most important, not at all. Mathematics is very particular but in this, philosophically speaking, there is something that is specifically tied to mathematics in the very place of thought. Like Plato, who first thought this, thinking is the thinking of forms, something that he called ideas but they are also the forms. It is the same word, ἰδέα. [...] Mathematics holds something of the secret of thinking. It is that mathematics, while not the most important, is something which makes more transparent, or takes us closer to, this secret of thinking.[35]

In this article we cannot address the connection between onto-logical (onto-logical-phenomenological) and generic forms of truth in any detail, because this is a subject that would demand its own space for thorough analysis. We can only suggest that the source of the generic and creative power of truth is produced in an intimate connection between the truth form and the ontological form of being, which is a "form-multiple."[36] According to Badiou, truths are generic multiples, a typical form of multiples that generates the form-multiple as such, (the form of multiple *qua* multiple). The generic multiple is a typical multiple because there is no other predicate that could be applied to it except that it is a multiple: "While every truth procedure consists in infinitely deploying a purely generic multiplicity that necessarily collapses differences, this does not entail a destruction or annihilation of differences precisely because these fictitious beings, these opinions, customs, differences, are that to which universality is addressed."[37] The ontologically homogenous form-multiple hence does not relativize the truth. Each truth procedure has a specific relation to "[t]he

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[35]   Badiou, Fraser, and Tho, "The Concept of Model, Forty Years Later: An Interview with Alain Badiou", p. 102.

[36]   Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham, London, Bloomsbury, 2013, p. 70.

[37]   Jelica Šumič Riha, "Towards a Materialism of the Real: The One of the Same", *Filozofski vestnik*, 38 (2/2017), p. 77.

power of the multiple and its empty 'heart'."[38] Each truth procedure can recall this "empty heart" of the pure multiple: art "through the *creation of sensory forms*," politics "through the *axiomatization (or organization) of the resources of the collective*," love through "*the systematic play, carried to infinity, of pure difference*."[39]

This shows the specific rational-materialist motive in Badiou's definition of truth as a generic form of multiple. Truth procedures are not dependent on anything external because they receive their resources from their own generic form-multiple, which is a truth form of the being of a given multiple. "A truth contains the following paradox: it is at once something new, hence something rare and exceptional, yet, *touching the very being of that of which it is a truth, it is also the most stable, the closest, ontologically speaking, to the initial state of things*."[40] When a truth appears within a given situation, it reaches for something that the situation does not recognize and acknowledge as its own. The resources of a truth are not simply the already existing resources of a given situation. If they were, then the truth would simply refer to something that is already there and would therefore be reduced to knowledge. It would therefore merely regulate and classify existence without producing anything new. When a given situation accepts something as its own, it identifies, defines, determines, and represents it. The truth of the situation proceeds the other way around and recognizes elements that the situation does not represent. But what the situation will never recognize as its own is its inconsistency, which is its own being. The truth, on the other hand, relies precisely on the being of the situation. Based on inconsistency as the being of the situation, the truth procedure creates a new consistency, an extension of the situation, and thus establishes a new formalization of the existing.

All four truth procedures are post-evental formalizations or form-realizations of being. Mathematical post-evental formalization formalizes being as a pure multiple without-One (inconsistency); logical-mathematical post-evental formalization formalizes being as being-there, as a multiple in a world, i.e. in a

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[38] Alain Badiou, "Some Replies to a Demanding Friend", trans. A. Toscano, in P. Hallward (ed.), *Think Again. Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, London, Continuum, 2004, p. 234.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] Alain Badiou, *Manifesto for Philosophy*, trans. N. Madarasz, Albany, State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 36, italics added.

system of relations between multiples (consistency); political post-evental formalization formalizes being through a new form of the organization and axiomatization of the "resources of the collective" (it enforces a new consistency in the political world); artistic post-evental formalization formalizes being through the creation of sensory forms and thus enforces a new consistency in the art world; the post-evental formalization of love formalizes being and reaches infinity through the pure difference of the Two.

The dialectic of formalization

Each new formalization brings about an interruption of the *status quo* and introduces discontinuity into the existing logic of the world, which is a thought Badiou has insisted on since his early works. As a student of Althusser, Badiou primarily started from the assumption that subjectivity and truth are essentially ideological constructs, which have no place in mathematical and scientific procedures. In the 1960s, Badiou understood scientific and mathematical formalizations as automated processes (without the subject) that make cuts into ideological representation. The anti-ideological function of rational and autonomous formalizations will be preserved in his later concept of generic truth procedures. It is interesting, however, that the young Badiou sees dialectic as the operator of a cutting into the given. In *Theory of the Subject*, he offers a materialist understanding of Hegel's dialectic not as a synthesis or alienation, but as "[a] dialectical matrix whose operator is scission, and whose theme is that there is no unity that is not split."[41] We can find a similar thought in his text from the 1980s *Can Politics Be Thought?*, in which Badiou assigns an anti-representational role to dialectic: "First of all, we will recognize dialectical thinking by its conflict with representation. Such thinking tracks down the unrepresentable point in its field, which avers that we are touching upon the real."[42] This means that dialectic and formalization are both capable of the same function of cutting into the ideological categories of representation. From the perspective of their anti-representational function, dialectic and formalization are finally on the same side.

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[41]   Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. B. Bosteels, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 4.

[42]   Alain Badiou, *Can Politics Be Thought?*, trans. B. Bosteels, Durham and London, Duke University Press, 2018, p. 85.

The problem of the relation between the methods of formalization and dialectic in Badiou's philosophy is therefore not that they are so different from each other that they end up at opposite poles. On the contrary, a mutual exclusion happens because they are so close to one another. But if they have the same function, the function of the cut, is there even a need for both of them? Why this redoubling? The answer can be found by considering another property of dialectic.

While dialectic can be seen as serving sociologically-historicist ideological doctrines, mathematical formalization is a violent act of an uninterrupted interruption of the *doxa*. Formalization is therefore much more violent than dialectic. Badiou claims in *Conditions* that, despite its great value, the mathematic rupture with the *doxa* can appear forced and obscure. That kind of constrained obscurity "cannot be appropriated or elucidated from within mathematics itself."[43] For that reason, Socrates says in Badiou's translation of Plato's *Republic*: "however great they may be, mathematicians and scientists are not yet true dialecticians."[44] Mathematical formalization is a cutting machine, which never stops interrupting. But at the same time, due to its interrupting nature, formalization is a mode of creation that does not really create anything that would last.

The idea of continuation and duration is exactly what is crucial for Badiou: "Personally, I have always been interested in issues of duration and process, and not only starting-points."[45] Despite dialectic being the carrier of the cut, there is also something visionary and creative about dialectic, something that enables it to develop a "programme." Dialectic is a different kind of interruption, one that "*traverses* the ineluctable opacity" of mathematics.[46] This means that "every elucidation of a discontinuity serves to establish the idea of a continuity."[47] Contrary to the aggressive machine of formalization, dialectic can perform as the idea of a new continuity, duration, and vision. It is dialectic that must introduce duration into the minimal difference between the creative and the destructive force of formalization. We could say that dialectic "(dis)contin-

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[43]   Badiou, *Conditions*, p. 103.

[44]   Alain Badiou, *Plato's Republic: A Dialogue in Sixteen Chapters, with a Prologue and an Epilogue*, trans. S. Spitzer, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012, p. 235.

[45]   Alain Badiou and Nicholas Truong, *In Praise of Love*, trans. P. Bush, London, Serpent's Tail, 2012, p. 29.

[46]   Badiou, *Conditions*, p. 103.

[47]   *Ibid.*, p. 104.

ues the discontinuity".[48] Therefore, we have to think dialectic in Plato's sense *as a project and an idea* that introduces a longer span of duration into the instantaneousness of interruption.

The latter is evident in Badiou's analysis of the 20th century. Badiou shows that there is something symptomatic in the relation between dialectic and formalization, because the vanishing of dialectical categories in the 20th century was replaced by a proliferation of the categories of formalization. The 20th century was pervaded by the passion to realize the dialectical project of the 19th century under the imperative of the "here and now", but did so at the expense of any vision of a lasting project. An exemplary case of this violence is avant-garde art, an art form that is obsessed with new beginnings, the constant creation of new forms, and impatience that leads to the manic production of the new.[49] What is missing in such experimental formalizations is the sole power of duration or persistence in the consequences of the new.

To counter the violent power of formalization, Badiou proposes a special version of dialectical subtraction or minimal difference. The idea of subtraction, Badiou claims,

> is not just an idea that comes 'after' antagonism and revolution. It is an idea that is *dialectically articulated with those of antagonism, the simplifying formalization, the absolute advent of the new,* etc. [...] There is something like an ideological decision involved here, one that gives priority to subtraction (or minimal difference) rather than to destruction (or antagonistic contradiction).[50]

If dialectic therefore appears in the guise of subtraction, it can reverse the violent effects of impatient formalization and thus enable the creative process of the production of a new form.

Even though we have not yet reached the bottom of the complex relation between dialectic and formalization, we have reached a point where we can place

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[48] I would like to thank Rok Benčin for this thought.

[49] *Cf.* Jan Voelker, "Obrniti in afirmirati avantgarde: nova paradigma politike", trans. R. Benčin, *Filozofski vestnik*, 34 (3/2013), p. 166.

[50] Badiou, Hallward, and Bosteels, "Beyond Formalization: An Interview", p. 326, italics added.

both concepts on the same page, which means that from here on we can think of them together under the banner of the *dialectic of formalization*. Simply put, the dialectic of formalization is a *procedure of the realization of any truth procedure in the world*. Each creative thought is the invention of a new formalization. Each new formalization begins with an event and is a singular establishment of its own form. The process itself is rational-materialist because the form is produced by the realization of a homogenous and autonomous truth procedure. The material or "content" of the truth production comes from within its own process, which makes truth an "inner thought", as Lazarus calls it. Truth is, therefore, never a discovery of the hidden, analysis of the existing complicated and multi-layered reality, a revelation of the enigmatic: "the not-all multiplicity is not discovered, rather it is produced."[51] This is because, for Badiou, the truth is a rational-materialist concept, which (similar to Macherey's concept of rational knowledge) does not have anything to do with the empirical logic of "discovery", where something has to already exist in order for us to gain knowledge of it. The rational-materialist logic of invention, on the contrary, stems from the "non-existing". True invention, therefore, occurs when something is found that has not previously existed, something that comes into existence during the truth production of form-realization itself. It is about the production of form that has not existed before and is only being produced and realized through the process of the production of truth. The truth forms the non-existent in the existent and thus brings something new to the world.

In the rational-materialist procedure of form-realization there is already an imprinted mechanism of transformation. Truths transform worlds already by producing their own true and universal forms that had not existed before. The dialectic of formalization highlights the thought that every creation entails a project of a certain duration in which a new consistency and a new continuity are established. The procedure of inventing a new formalization "enforces" a previously "missing" or non-existent possibility on the world. At the same time, this creative process proceeds dialectically as a visionary project and as the *affirmation of affirmation*.

To conclude: the idea of the dialectic of formalization not only leads to a better understanding of Badiou's concept of truth as a dialectical production, and

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[51]   Šumič Riha, "Towards a Materialism of the Real: The One of the Same", p. 77.

consequently to a dialectical form-realization of a new form in the world, which transforms and brings radical changes to the given. It also prompts us to think Badiou's entire philosophical opus from the perspective of continuity and synthesis. As Badiou himself elucidates:

> It is necessary always to begin with continuity because it is more important. The author of a work always likes to say that they have constantly evolved but I would like to pose the idea of Bergson that a philosopher only has one idea. If we suppose only one idea, it is this idea. I believe that if all creative thought is in reality the invention of a new mode of formalization, then that thought is the invention of a form. Thus, if every creative thought is the invention of a new form, then it will also bring new possibilities of asking, in the end, "what is a form?" If this is true, then one should investigate the resources for this.[52]

We took these words as the guiding principle for this article. The idea of formalization and the question of form invite reflection on creative thought as the invention of a new form. For the mature Badiou, creative thought is autonomous thought. This should be understood in terms of the rational-materialist matrix, according to which the object of production coincides with the protocol of homogenous production. As we have shown, the beginnings of this thought are present in the original understanding of autonomous, homogenous production that the young Badiou analysed in the 1960s with regard to the aesthetic and the scientific modes of production. We can conclude that this is the same thought that can be found in Badiou's concept of truth procedures.

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[52] Badiou, Fraser, and Tho, "The Concept of Model, Forty Years Later: An Interview with Alain Badiou", p. 102.

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Jana Ndiaye Berankova*

Breaking the Mirror: Alain Badiou's Reading of Jacques Lacan

> "The philosopher is inscribed (in the sense that one speaks of a circumference of a circle) in the discourse of the master. He plays the role of the fool there. That does not mean that what he says is foolish; it is even more than useful. Read Shakespeare. [...] The court fool has a role: the one of being the place-holder for truth."[1]
> Jacques Lacan, "L'Étourdit" (1972)

In the late 1960s, Louis Althusser asked the young Alain Badiou to report on Jacques Lacan's seminars and he invited him to give a lecture on Lacan in the framework of his seminar at the École Normale Supérieure. This assignment was the origin of Badiou's rich and fruitful confrontation with psychoanalytical concepts, which can be traced throughout his whole philosophical career. Badiou has striven, in multiple books, to come to terms with the inheritance of Lacan: his early 1982 book *Theory of the Subject* was heavily indebted to Lacan's formalism, and the first two volumes of *Being and Event* (published in 1988 and in 2006) included a chapter on Lacan. In addition, Badiou published a series of texts on Lacan in *Conditions* (1992), and in 1994 he wrote a brief essay on Lacan's *L'Étourdit* and dedicated an entire seminar to Lacan's relation to philosophy. In the following article, I will attempt to elucidate Badiou's idiosyncratic interpretation of Lacan as well as his conceptual points of divergence with the psychoanalyst, which touch upon the relationship between philosophy and antiphilosophy, the different localization of the void in relation to the subject and the notion of eternal and universal truths.

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[1]   Jacques Lacan, "L'Étourdit" in: *Autres Écrits*, Seuil, Paris, 2001, p. 453. I am quoting here the unpublished translation by R. Klein, http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=221, accessed 25 July 2021.

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What is (anti)philosophy?

Alain Badiou's interest in Lacan has always been grounded in philosophy rather than in psychoanalysis. In most of his comments on Lacan, Badiou does not propose a synchronic perspective of Lacan's conceptual system, he rather focuses on specific and concrete points of intersection between psychoanalysis and philosophy. Badiou portrays Lacan as an *antiphilosopher*. The term "antiphilosophy" began to appear in Badiou's writings in 1988 along with the publication of the first volume of *Being and Event*. In fact, the progressive definition of antiphilosophy was parallel with Badiou's perception of himself as a philosopher. Although his early books such as *Theory of the Subject* were rooted in philosophical discourse and relied on mathematical formalizations, it was only with the publication of *Being and Event* in 1988 that Badiou began to see his task as renewing the philosophical tradition. He came to be convinced that philosophy could not survive in the future unless it confronted Lacanian psychoanalysis.

So what exactly does the term "antiphilosophy" mean for Badiou? Antiphilosophy constitutes a tension internal to philosophical discourse. Like sophistry, antiphilosophy negates the category of truth. Antiphilosophers include figures such as Blaise Pascal, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Jacques Lacan. Thus, Lacan, one of the antiphilosophers, would criticize philosophy for being a master discourse and reject philosophy's ambition to posit itself as a theory of the real. For Badiou, the antiphilosopher is someone who challenges philosophy from the side of the ungraspable real that the philosophical schematism is unable to comprehend. He claims that philosophy is too distant from the real and that philosophy's belief that "the One exists" forecloses the real. In antiphilosophical discourse, the inconsistency of the real disseminates and corrodes philosophy. For these reasons, antiphilosophers do not strive to produce a philosophical system as such, rather they seek a mode of expression that would be able to catch the real.

In general, antiphilosophical thought embraces fragmentary forms; it works as an apparatus whose goal is to demonstrate what cannot be said – Lacan's notion of the *matheme* might serve as a perfect example of such an apparatus. For Lacan sees the *matheme* as the only possible way to capture the real; it is the only form of transmissible knowledge of the real. However, in the Lacanian discourse, the *matheme* does not represent a rigorous mathematical formaliza-

tion, it resembles a one-way road of mathematics. *Matheme* is mathematics *ad absurdum*, mathematics that touches the limits of its own discourse. The failure of mathematics is what in the *matheme* exposes the real.

In Badiou's writings from the period of *Being and Event*, the signification of antiphilosophy remains ambiguous: in some cases, the word "antiphilosopher" refers to the figure of the sophist, in others, the antiphilosopher is described as someone who challenges the Master discourse of philosophy. Tzuchien Tho remarked that it is important to distinguish the antiphilosopher from the sophist, because "both the antiphilosopher and the sophist reject the access of the subject to truth, but the antiphilosopher provides a certain kind of 'cure' to the philosopher's pretentions, an act that orients the subject towards the real."[2] Unlike the sophist, the antiphilosopher makes philosophy undergo the 'cure' of the real. Thus, the antiphilosopher does not completely reject the field of philosophy, rather he challenges it from within. While the sophist negates the existence of truths by claiming, in accordance with *democratic materialism*, that "*there are only bodies and languages*"[3] and that no event is possible in a given reality, the antiphilosopher indexes the existence of the real, which exceeds bodies and languages. Thus, we might say that the sophist challenges philosophy from the side of the imaginary *reality*,[4] while the antiphilosopher challenges the philosopher from the side of the real. The sophist's reduction of all essences to bodies and languages might resemble the regime of the postmodern production of simulacra and the proliferation of the imaginary without any symbolic *point d'arrêt*. In contrast, the antiphilosopher highlights the excess of the philosopher's symbolization, the real that cannot be symbolized.

To put it differently, if the activity of the sophist relates to *non-sense (non-sens)*, that of the antiphilosopher relates to *ab-sense* (*ab-sens*). Antiphilosophy is *ab-philosophy*; it is the return of the extra-philosophical leftover (*excès*) into the philosophical discourse as such. In *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Rela-*

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[2]   Tzuchien Tho, "Antiphilosophy", in Steven Corcoran (ed.), *The Badiou Dictionary*, Edinburgh, The Edinburgh University Press, 2015, p. 13.

[3]   Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*, trans. A. Toscano, New York, Continuum, 2009, p. 1.

[4]   For Lacan, the category of "reality" pertains to the imaginary and we could argue that the sophist who rejects the notion of truth and the distinction between the real and the imaginary remains trapped by the imaginary.

tionship: Two Lessons on Lacan, Badiou comments on Lacan's obscure 1973 text *L'Étourdit* and his interpretation of the real. Badiou remarks that in *L'Étourdit*, the real can be defined as the absence of sense: "the real may be defined as *sense* qua *ab-sense*. The real is ab-sense, hence absence of sense, which obviously implies that there is such a thing as a sense."[5] According to Badiou, the real is the leftover of sense, but this also means that the real needs sense, otherwise there would be no real as such. This real, or *ab-sense*, is a void, an absence within sense and not its negation.

This implies that we must clearly distinguish between *non-sense*, which would be the true negation of sense, and *ab-sense*, the empty place within sense, a void that operates at the same level as sense. For this reason, Badiou emphasizes that Lacan's intention is not to declare the *non-sense* of the real. Lacan asserts "that an access to the real can be opened only if it is assumed that the real is like an absence in sense, an ab-sense, or a subtraction of, or from, sense. Everything hinges on the distinction between ab-sense and non-sense."[6] *Ab-sense* is not the pure negation of sense, it is rather the absence of a relation to sense that, in this case, also means the *absence of* a *sexual relation* or what Badiou calls with Lacan *sense ab-sex*. *Ab-sense* is a leftover, an excess, a void escaping the symbolization. *Ab-sense* prevents sense from being conceived as a totality, as the One – there will always be something escaping sense. In fact, Lacan despises philosophy because he is convinced that philosophy reduces everything to sense and to the homogeneous totality of the One. In order to attain the real, knowledge must *suture* itself affirmatively to its absence, to the void. Philosophy, at least in Lacan's perspective, cannot access the real.

If we accept the hypothesis that philosophy deals primarily with sense,[7] the antiphilosopher – for whom the real serves as the refutation of philosophy – can be interpreted as a figure connected with *ab-sense*. Antiphilosopher is an *ab-philosopher*, he or she is a kind of an exogenous dialectical presence within philosophy and does not oppose the existence of philosophy as such. The soph-

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[5]   Alain Badiou, Barbara Cassin, *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship: Two Lessons on Lacan*, trans. S. Spitzer and K. Reinhard, New York, Columbia University Press, 2017, p. 49.

[6]   *Ibid*., p. 50.

[7]   In one of his typical puns, Jacques Lacan mockingly called philosophy "*(h)ontologie*," combining the words "honte" (shame) and ontology.

ist, on the contrary, deals primarily with *non-sense* and stands outside of philosophy. This distinction could be summarized in a simple table:

philosophy	sophistry	antiphilosophy (Lacan's psychoanalysis)
sense	non-sense	ab-sense

Through the looking glass and what philosophy found there

So how does Badiou define philosophy's relationship to psychoanalysis? In *Conditions*, Badiou states that "[p]hilosophy is always the breaking of a mirror. This mirror is the surface of language, onto which the sophist reduces all the things that philosophy treats in its act. If the philosopher sets his gaze solely on this surface, his double, the sophist, will emerge, and he may take himself to be one."[8] This statement might be a subtle play with Lacanian vocabulary for it seems to allude to Lacan's two identifications constitutive of the subject: the mirror stage (and the related formation of the imaginary), and the Oedipus complex (and the formation of the symbolic). In "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in the Psychoanalytic Experience", Lacan remarked that "the specular image seems to be the threshold of the visible world."[9] When Badiou evokes the image of the broken mirror, he could be affirming that philosophy needs to go beyond the imaginary and deal with the symbolic, because philosophy as the *love of truth* is always related to the symbolic. And if philosophy loves truth, it also means that it loves weakness because castration sustains the emergence of the symbolic within the second identification of the Oedipus complex. Conversely, the gaze of the sophist can only slide on the surface of the mirror. Instead of *breaking the mirror*, the sophist remains confined to *doxa*. He is imprisoned within the imaginary and never crosses the threshold of the visible world because he rejects the possibility of any symbolic criteria that would enable it to see *through* and *beyond* this world. The universe of the sophist can be characterized by a proliferation of images; it is the world of the *spectacle*. Philosophy, on the other hand, is not spectacular – its goals are to break the mirror and index truths.

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8   Alain Badiou, *Conditions*, trans. S. Corcoran, New York, Continuum, 2008, p. 25.
9   Jacques Lacan, *Écrits, the First Complete Edition in English*, trans. B. Fink, New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 2006, p. 77.

Lacan is convinced that philosophy is trapped within the Master's discourse due to its close connection with the second identification and the symbolic. According to him, philosophy falsely pretends that metalanguage exists. By positing the existence of the One, it is unable to grasp the real, *ab-sense* of the sexual (non)relationship. Yet, such conception of philosophy sharply contradicts Badiou's own philosophical project, for Badiou's goal is precisely to show that philosophy cannot be reduced to its internal temptation to postulate the existence of the One. Badiou endeavours to prove that there can be a philosophy for which the One would (in)exist and which would be able to capture the real. Philosophy, by responding critically to psychoanalytical objections, can affirm that the One exists only as the result of a constructive count, of the *count-as-one*. In other words, philosophy can be *sutured* to the immanent multiplicity of the real. So, when Badiou criticizes the sophist for reducing all the things to the surface of language and affirms that philosophy treats things *in its act*, he refers to his own philosophical project of stitching philosophy and the real.

For this reason, Badiou focuses primarily on Lacan's late 1970s writings, which include occasional references to set theory. In his seminar *...or Worse*, given between 1971 and 1972, Lacan posited that the One does not exist. As Lacan puts it in the summary of this seminar, the One does not exist, *there is one*, or *Y'a d'l'Un*. Lacan claims: "as for the rest, I was fomenting no thought of the One, but on the basis of the fact of saying *Y'a d'l'Un*, I was going to the full terms that are demonstrated by its use, to make psychoanalysis thereof."[10] In other words, he is convinced that the existence of the One is purely imaginary; the One occupies the place of *semblance*[11] and the philosopher is someone who *s'...oupire à l'Un*.

But what exactly is the difference between saying that "the One exists" and that "there is one"? In *...or Worse*, Lacan refers to the ZFC set theory, in which a set with only one element is still considered a set because no set can be an element of itself. In set theory, the One appears as a singleton, that means as a set that has an empty set as its only element: $\{\emptyset\}$. This leads Lacan to the deduction that "the One begins on the level at which there is one missing,"[12] that the One is

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[10] Jacques Lacan, *...or Worse, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX*, trans. A. R. Price, Cambridge, Polity, 2018, p. 215.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 126.

[12] *Ibid.*

precisely the set containing an empty set. The One is a set containing the void and it is by counting this void that we can affirm that the One *(in)exists*. Thus, the One has no positive existence as such; it emerges as an effect of the lack. The One is an effect of the act of counting. The formula "there is one" refers to this notion of the One.

According to Lacan, the existence of the One would lead to the foreclosure of the real. In *L'Étourdit*, he claims that philosophy lacks *sens ab-sexe*, that philosophy is ashamed of the real and tries to veil it by *(h)ontologie*. In addition, he alludes to the link between the existence of the One and the notion of individuality. Lacan emphasizes: "when I say *Y'a d'l'Un*, this doesn't mean that there is something of the individual. [...] That is to say, *there is no other existence of the One but mathematical existence*."[13] Throughout his career, Lacan opposed North American ego psychology and the reduction of the subject to the ego. He interpreted the moralism of the superego in ego psychology and the effort to protect the ego from the instinctual id as an advanced form of alienation. Lacan saw ego psychology as a way to render Freud's teaching conformist and complacent to capitalism – such criticism might also have inspired Badiou's positive appraisal of the Lacanian legacy. In ego psychology, the notion of the subject-ego, of the individual, presupposes that the One exists. Yet, such a notion of the subject-One qua the individual would foreclose the inconsistency of the unconscious. For Lacan, the individual does not exist; the only thing that exists is the subject constituted by its immanent multiplicity of subsequent identifications.

If the One existed, how could we conceive the multiplicity and ephemerality of the phenomenal world? How would change be possible? The existence of the One might imply a conception of the world as a finite and closed totality, as *l'Un-Tout*. In contrast, if we posit that "there is one," we could see the world as a subtraction from being. We can imagine it as a more open, infinite system, a system that is *pas-tout*. These considerations might have inspired Badiou's discussion of the One in his seminar on Jacques Lacan. Badiou summarizes the difference between both statements as follows: while in *the One exists*, the One "subjugates the real at the very place of semblance,"[14] the sentence *there is one*,

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[13]   *Ibid.*, p. 165.
[14]   Alain Badiou, *Lacan, Anti-philosophy 3, The Seminars of Alain Badiou*, trans. K. Reinhard and S. Spitzer, New York, Columbia University Press, 2018, p. 55.

"doesn't require thinking the One in terms of its being but [is] simply noting that there may be some One in a realm of operations that's important, as Lacan says, 'to turn into psychoanalysis'."[15] On the ontological level, the One does not exist, it is a mere result of a count. However, if Lacan is convinced that philosophy thinks that *the One exists*, Badiou proves that there can be a philosophy for which *there is one*. The question of the One and its relation to the real is a crucial point that links Badiou's thinking to Lacan's investigations.

In *Being and Event*, Badiou clearly states that the One does not exist: "the One, which is not, solely exists as *operation*. In other words: there is no one, only the count-as-one."[16] The inexistence of the One is the key aspect of Badiou's ontology; for Badiou there is only the *count-as-one*. Everything that is presented presents itself as a multiplicity; the One is a mere result of mathematical operations, it has no immanent existence as such. The structure is "what prescribes, for a presented multiple, the regime of its count-as-one."[17] Being is composed of inconsistent and infinite multiplicities and ontology is the thought of these multiplicities qua multiplicities. But if these multiplicities are inconsistent, it also means that they cannot be described by language, for any language would count them as one and would abolish the inconsistent multiplicity.

For this reason, Badiou's ontological project relies heavily on mathematics. Mathematics, especially set theory, enables us to think multiplicities qua multiplicities and describe the actual infinite. This does not mean that being is composed of numbers; it means that mathematics is a discourse on being. Ontology qua mathematics is a way to describe being as such, to produce a *transmissible knowledge* of being. Yet, for this very reason, ontology no longer stands at the centre of philosophy; infinite multiplicities of being have something almost boring and banal about them. Badiou's understanding of being might remind us of Jacques Lacan's statement in *l'Étourdit* that "being *by itself* has no kind of sense."[18] Thus, being constitutes philosophical *ab-sense* for Badiou, or to put it

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[15] *Ibid*., pp. 55–56.

[16] Alain Badiou, *Being and Event*, trans. O. Feltham, New York, Continuum, 2008, p. 24.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 24.

[18] Jacques Lacan, *Autres Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 2001, 472. I am quoting here the unpublished translation by Richard Klein available at http://www.lacanianworks.net/?p=221, accessed 25 July 2021.

differently, being is the philosopher's real. The task of philosophy necessarily exceeds ontology, for it consists in indexing and localizing truths.

Thus, there seems to be a clear continuity between Lacan's late embrace of set theory and Badiou's ontology. While Lacan's reductionist point of view circumscribes philosophy to the existence of the One, Badiou proves that there can indeed be philosophy without the One, that there can be a philosophy of *Y'a d'l'Un*. Badiou's philosophy does not foreclose the real. We might argue that being plays a similar structural role for Badiou as the real does for Lacan. This is not to say that it would be possible to transfer terms between the discourses of philosophy and of psychoanalysis – both fields have their own specific sets of rules, procedures, and objectives. However, both the category of the real in psychoanalysis and that of the inconsistent multiplicities of being in Badiou's system point to the existence of something that clearly exhausts any structure of thought. They point to the existence of something that a thought might be able to partially capture (e.g. by relying on the *matheme*), but which it can never fully exhaust. Lacan thinks that the *matheme* is the only way to (*dé*)*montrer* (show) the real; likewise, for Badiou a certain knowable segment of the real of being can be described as mathematics qua set theory. It is as if Badiou's philosophy underwent the psychoanalytic cure and was now able to accept the existence of the real.

Philosophy *passe* again

For Badiou, mathematical ontology is the transmissible knowledge of being, while for Lacan, the *matheme* constitutes the transmissible knowledge of the real, of *ab-sense*. But what does the idea of transmissibility mean? In *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship: Two Lessons on Lacan*, Alain Badiou remarks that the analytical act always encounters the real that is situated between sense and non-sense.[19] The existence of the analytical act can be verified only *a posteriori*, after the act itself, when transmissible knowledge emerges. Transmissible knowledge represented by the *matheme* verifies that the act as such has happened. In order to prove that a psychoanalytical act took place, Lacan invented a procedure called "the pass" (*passe*) consisting of a set of or-

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[19]   See: Badiou, Cassin, *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship: Two Lessons on Lacan*, p. 58.

ganized interactions between the *passand* (the candidate), the *passers* (witnesses), and a deliberating jury. This procedure was to enable the psychanalyst to verify that the produced knowledge is transmissible. Although this method was often contested, Lacan remained convinced that, unlike philosophy, psychoanalysis had the ability to produce knowledge of the real (its mathematical formalization) that could be transmitted. In contrast, philosophy, by foreclosing the real, ignored mathematical formulae; philosophy *did not pass.* When Badiou commented on Lacan's criticism of philosophy, he highlighted that for Lacan mathematics is "a meaning-less saying that is realized as an absolute (integrally transmissible) said. And this is precisely what the philosopher fails to grasp."[20] He added that, according to Lacan, "philosophy is unaware of the register of ab-sense. It remains stuck in the opposition between sense and non-sense. Second, philosophy, being unaware of ab-sex, cannot reach a position of knowledge in the real. Third, all philosophy ever does is make sense and truth mirror images of each other, and that is its specular paralysis. The speculative is the specular."[21] Thus, Badiou's answer to Lacan's criticism was to reconnect philosophy to transmissible knowledge, i.e. with mathematics, which is able to propose at least partial knowledge of the ontological real. While Lacan denounced philosophy for being trapped on the surface of the mirror, Badiou broke the mirror and created a set-theoretical *pass* for philosophy. Badiou deeply appreciated the idea of Lacan that "in psychoanalysis it is a matter of raising powerlessness (the same that makes the fantasy hear reason) to logical impossibility (the same that incarnates the real)."[22] While Lacan criticized philosophy for being trapped within the powerlessness (*impuissance*) of the imaginary, Badiou's own project elevated the powerlessness of philosophy to logical impossibility. Instead of leaving philosophy powerless to acknowledge the immanent multiplicity of what is presented, Badiou transformed this multiplicity of what is presented into inconsistent multiplicities of being and stated that it is *logically impossible* to describe these multiplicities otherwise than through mathematics. In this manner, he was able to symbolize the very impossibility of describing these multiplicities and to reinvigorate philosophy's connection with truths.

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[20]   Badiou, *Lacan, Anti-philosophy 3. The Seminars of Alain Badiou,* p. 97.

[21]   *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90.

[22]   Lacan, *...or Worse. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX*, p. 219.

In Badiou's ontology, such *logical impossibility* appears in the distinction between consistent and inconsistent multiplicities. An inconsistent multiplicity cannot be counted as one, it cannot be transformed into a set. It is an ungraspable horizon of thinking. Being is composed precisely of such inconsistent multiplicities that – for they cannot be named, nor counted-as-one – appear as a void from the point of view of consistency. Badiou emphasizes that "void is the name of being – thus inconsistency – according to a situation"[23] and that "[d]issemination without limits is the presentative law itself."[24] A consistent multiplicity is a multiplicity that can be counted as one, that can become a set. A consistent multiplicity is a multiplicity that is thinkable. For Badiou, there is no thinking as such without a count-as-one: "all thought supposes a situation of the thinkable, which is to say a structure, a count-as-one, in which the presented multiple is consistent and numerable."[25] In other words, there is no thinking as such without the effect of the One. The existence of this One, however, is not immanent, it is a result of a count. In order to deliver a concept of multiplicity; a thinker has to decide that a certain number of multiplicities constitutes a set; he or she needs to count these multiplicities as one.

In a sense, thinking needs to act in a similar manner as set theory, which lacks a very definition of a set. At the beginning of any thinking, there is an affirmative decision stitched to the void; thinking begins with the void, with the empty set and it is precisely this *One as void* that enables us to think without limiting thinking due to the rigidity of the One. Badiou points out that "axiomatization is required such that the multiple, left to the implicitness of its counting rule, be delivered *without concept*, that is, *without implying the being-of-the-one*."[26] Language, whether formal or verbal, does not bring any new multiplicity to life; language merely retroactively separates a given multiplicity from inconsistent multiplicities and counts it as one. Or in Badiou's words, "[l]anguage cannot induce existence, solely a split within existence."[27] For Badiou, this affirmation is supported by the axiom of separation, which claims that for any given multiple, there exists a sub-multiple of terms which possesses the property expressed by the formula j. This implies that "what is induced by a formula of the language

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[23] Badiou, *Being and Event*, p. 56.
[24] *Ibid*., p. 33.
[25] *Ibid*., p. 34.
[26] *Ibid*., p. 43.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 47.

is not directly an existence, a presentation of multiplicity, but rather – on the condition that there is already a presentation – the 'separation', within that presentation, and supported by it, of a subset constituted from the terms (thus the multiplicities, since every multiple is a multiple of multiples) which validate the formula."[28] In a move oriented against any sophistry, Badiou affirms that language merely separates a sub-multiple from an already existent multiple; language is an act of counting and naming and not of bringing to existence.

So how can philosophy account for the One and the multiple at the same time? If we consider Lacan's statement that "in psychoanalysis it is a matter of raising powerlessness (the same that makes the fantasy hear reason) to logical impossibility (the same that incarnates the real),"[29] we can divide it into two steps. The first step is the one of powerlessness and of fantasy; it is the step of the imaginary, within which philosophy is trapped, according to Lacan. Philosophy is powerless, it cannot account for the inconsistency of the real, and it forecloses multiplicities by subjugating them to the semblance of the One. For this reason, psychoanalysis is superior to philosophy: it can cure philosophy by demonstrating to it that the One is a mere semblance. The second step is the one of the logical impossibility, of the real, to which a successful cure leads. A psychoanalyst is not powerless, he or she knows that it is logically impossible to describe the inconsistency of the real, and can only rely on the *matheme*, which can show (*dé-montrer*) the real.

We can argue that Badiou adds a third step to these first two: the step of the axiom, of the count-as-one. The axiom operates a scission within uncountable inconsistency; it separates a part of it and counts it as one. Badiou's axiom does not abolish inconsistency; it acknowledges that it is *logically impossible* to make all multiplicities consistent. There will always be an excess of inconsistency over consistency. However, axiomatic thought can progressively expand its domain by separating larger multiplicities from the sphere of inconsistency. In other words, if Lacan's second step halts at the moment when multiplicity is preferred to the One, Badiou's third step proposes a dialectic between the One and the multiple. His third step is a dialectical one, for if there were only inconsistent and ever disseminating multiplicities, the dialectic could not exist. Badiou

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[28] *Ibid*., p. 46.
[29] Lacan, *...or Worse. The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XIX*, p. 219.

not only breaks the mirror of the sophistry, but he also refutes the scepticism of psychoanalysis, and revives the philosophical dialectic. He brings back a third element, which is the symbolic related to the existence of universal and eternal truths. In *Being and Event*, Badiou describes a truth procedure as an infinite series of enquiries – each of these enquiries contains, in a finite number, positive indications x(+) that the multiple x is connected to the name of an event, as well as negative indications y(-).[30] Thus, a truth procedure might be described as an elementary procedure of symbolization, with the only difference being that it does not relate to the Name-of-the-Father but to the *Name-of-the-Event*, or the name of one of the events, to be more precise. By making philosophy go through the first two steps of powerlessness and of *logical impossibility*, Badiou gives militant power back to philosophy. Philosophy *passe* again.

Divided into fragments, the three steps could like this:

1.	*powerlessness*	phantasm of the existence of the One	*faufilosofie* according to Lacan	imaginary
2.	*logical impossibility*	there are only multiplicities of multiplicities	psychonalysis	real
3.	*axiom (affirmation) = power*	the dialectic of the count-as-one and inconsistent multiplicities	Badiou's philosophy	symbolic

By staying trapped or *bouché* within the second step, Lacan seems to embrace the position of multiplicities of multiplicities, which can also be characterized as a sceptical position. Lacan's removal of the One is the reason why Alain Badiou asks, during a dialogue with Jean-Claude Milner concluding his 1994-1995 seminar, whether *there is thought* (*pensée*) in Lacan's work. This question refers to Lacan's attempt to create non-unifying thought. According to Badiou, thought needs the One, it needs the count-as-one; otherwise it would become a mere ontological inconsistency. Badiou affirms: "a thinking that is not unifying is not even a thinking, if by thinking, once again, is meant something that

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[30]   Badiou, *Being and Event*, pp. 333–334.

unifies theory and practice in an effective process."[31] In a sense, thinking that is *pas-tout* is not thinking at all. Thus, at the end of the seminar, Alain Badiou and Jean-Claude Milner play with the assertion that "there is thinking in Lacan" and this "there is" (*il y a*) functions in the same way as *there is one* (*Y'd'l'Un*). If there is thought in Lacan, it is a thought that must be constructed *a posteriori*, for there are multiple possible readings of Lacan. Lacan is a protean figure: he can be seen as a reactionary sceptic as well as a critical analyst of capitalism. In spite of all his criticism, it is the latter that Badiou tries to rediscover.

An idiosyncratic trait of Lacan which complicates this rediscovery is that he argues from the side of the real. And the contemporary real, as Badiou points out, is the real of Capital: "the real of Capital is the real of universal dispersal, circulation, and absolute atomization. Furthermore, it's a certain regime of *jouissance*, hence of the real."[32] To speak only from the side of the inconsistency and of dissemination would be to deprive thinking of its capacity to construct the One and to effectively resist the real of Capital. Thought based only on dissemination would end up becoming complacent with the capitalist system. A truly resistant thought must also affirm; it must be grounded in an axiom stitched to the inconsistency of the real.

In addition, Lacan criticized Marx for being a philosopher. According to him, Marx instilled sense into the proletariat; he restored order by transforming the proletariat into a group while the proletariat was supposed to be a hole of the real.[33] Lacan lambasted Marx for transforming the inconsistent void into a set called "the proletariat", which he counted-as-one. He saw this counting as a return of conservatism, a restoration of order. In "Responses to Students of Philosophy Concerning the Object of Psychoanalysis" from 1966, he refuted the Marxist idea that a subject could overcome his or her alienation. According to Lacan, the subject is always alienated by the desire of the Other and by its relation to the object. Alienation constitutes a fundamental existential condition of the subject and it would be naive to believe that we can overcome it otherwise than in a purely imaginary manner. Such imaginary overcoming would turn

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[31] Badiou, *Lacan, Anti-philosophy 3. The Seminars of Alain Badiou*, p. 196.

[32] *Ibid*., p. 110.

[33] Quoted in: Badiou, *Lacan, Anti-philosophy 3. The Seminars of Alain Badiou*, p. 112.

into a planetary *embourgeoisement*.[34] When confronted by students asking him about the relationship between psychoanalysis and Marxism, Lacan proposed a non-interventionist approach: on the one hand, "psychoanalysis does not have the slightest right to interpret revolutionary practice,"[35] but on the other hand, "revolutionary theory would do well to hold itself responsible for leaving empty the function of truth as cause, when therein lies, nevertheless, the first supposition of its own effectiveness."[36] Thus, in a rather twisted paradoxical formulation, Lacan simultaneously suggests that revolutionary theory should embrace inconsistency and give up on the function of truth as cause, and he also acknowledges that without truth, revolutionary theory would be powerless. He calls for the abolishment of the notion of truth as cause (which he might have seen as a *faufilosofical* fantasy of the existence of the One), but he is also aware that this abolishment would put the final nail in the coffin of leftist thinking. In fact, his position seems to oscillate between a critical analysis of the capitalist real and a certain scepticism. And Badiou remarks that such a position can be interpreted in political terms only with difficulty; one can hardly extract from Lacan's thought an answer to the question "What is to be done?". He observes that maintaining the proletariat as the hole of the real would resemble in praxis only some form of "tyrannical anarchism."[37] In other words, Badiou realizes that to preserve philosophy as a resistant praxis, it is necessary not to give up on philosophy's desire for truth.

Subject of truth(s)

The key point of divergence between the philosopher and the analyst concerns the notion of the subject. Badiou deeply appreciates Lacan's renewal of the category of the subject, which eluded both the structuralist discourse on the death of the subject and the phenomenological dissolution of the subject within consciousness. He generally considers Lacan's reformulation of the notion of the subject, in line with mathematical formalization, to be an important and singular intellectual investigation. He notes, for instance, that Lacan "takes part in

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[34] See: Jacques Lacan, "Responses to Students of Philosophy Concerning the Object of Psychoanalysis", in *Television: a Challenge to Psychoanalytic Establishment*, trans. D. Mollier et al., New York, W. W. Norton & Company, 1990, p. 111.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] Badiou, *Lacan, Anti-philosophy 3. The Seminars of Alain Badiou*, p. 129.

the break with phenomenology, all the more so to the extent that he knew well the thought of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty. He inserts himself into the structuralist galaxy not only because he had recourse, much more than many others, to logico-mathematical formalisms, but also because he renounced the reflexive subject as the center of all experience."[38] He praises the fact that Lacan decentred the subject and abolished the subject's presumed transparency to itself. In contrast to Foucault or Derrida, Lacan's revealing of the internal contradictions of the subject enabled him to preserve this category and place it at the centre of clinical experience.

So how does Lacan's notion of the subject compare to Badiou? Unlike in Badiou's work, where the subject is a result of the process of the incorporation of a truth, in Lacan's work, the subject often appears as a generic name of the human being. It is important to note that Lacan's subject cannot be restricted to the ego, or as Lorenzo Chiesa remarks: "the ego is not the subject *tout court*; on the contrary, it corresponds to the subject's *identifying alienation* in the imaginary other (an other that initially corresponds to the subject's specular image): in parallel, psychoanalysis does not aim at strengthening the ego but instead at realizing the subject of the unconscious through the overcoming of imaginary alienation."[39] The ego is a false unity, a false *semblance* of the One, it is "an imaginary identification, or more exactly, an enveloping series of such identifications."[40]

The subject is composed of multiplicities, of the triad of the ego, superego, and id; it contains multiple strata of subsequent individuations and knots together the symbolic, the imaginary, and the real. It is always defined by its relation to the imago (in the mirror stage) and by its relation to the Other (in the Oedipus complex). Lacan describes the subject as *clivé*, divided. He develops the Freudian idea of the *Ich-Spaltung* by showing that the subject is always divided between the subject of the statement and the subject of enunciation. He also stresses the false unity of the Cartesian statement *cogito ergo sum*. He affirms,

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[38]   Alain Badiou, Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan, Past and Present: A Dialogue*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2014, p. 8.

[39]   Lorenzo Chiesa, *Philosophy and Otherness. A Philosophical Reading of Lacan*, Cambridge, MIT Press, 2007, p. 14.

[40]   Lacan, "Responses to Students of Philosophy Concerning the Object of Psychoanalysis", p. 110.

for instance: "I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not think-ing,"[41] *ubi cogito, ibi sum*, or "I am the plaything of my thought; I think about what I am where I do not think I am thinking."[42] In this way, Lacan strives to demonstrate that the Cartesian "I" is always split between thinking and its pres-ence, *where I think, I am not, I am absent. Where I am present, I do not think.* The subject is split between the enunciation (the deictic I) and the statement itself. The subject that talks not only conveys the message, but also hears itself speaking. The subject's unity is merely illusory, for there is always an excess of the unsymbolizable real. Thus, the subject is a retroactive effect. According to Lacan, "the subject of the 'I think' reveals what it is: the being of a fall. I am that which thinks: 'Therefore I am,' as I have commented on elsewhere, noting that the 'therefore,' the causal stroke, divides inaugurally the 'I am' of existence from the 'I am' of meaning."[43] The subject is divided between the existence – *I am* – and the effect of the signifier which follows it – *I think*. It is split into two parts by the fall of the signifier.

The scission of the subject also appears in Lacan's quote of the famous Freudian sentence: "*wo es war, soll ich werden*," or "*where id was, ego shall be.*" Lacan uses this quote in order to show that the place of the subject is always determined by the unconscious, by the Other. The ego emerges where the id has already been; it follows the id. The "I" is shifted outside of itself. There is no transparency of the self because when the "I" speaks, the id speaks in my place: *ça pense*. I re-main divided between the subject of my message and the subject of enunciation.

This split (*Spaltung*) makes the Lacanian subject empty, *béant*. For Lacan, the subject is a point containing a void; it resembles an empty set. Although Lacan suppresses the Cartesian transparency of the *cogito* by dividing it between the "I" of the thinking and the "I" of the enunciation, he does not repeal the idea that *cogito* is somehow empty. While for Descartes the subject as cogito is an empty category defined by nothing other than the very reflexive act, for Lacan the subject is an abyss, a void separating thinking and enunciation. Lacan's for-malizations are rather complex; however, the subject seems to be the void that

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[41] Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 430.

[42] *Ibid.*

[43] Lacan, "Responses to Students of Philosophy Concerning the Object of Psychoanalysis", p. 108.

results from a mathematical operation. While Descartes's subject can be compared to zero, Lacan's might resemble a simple count such as 1 + (-1) = 0.

Badiou had been progressively demarcating his notion of the subject from Lacan. In *Theory of the* Subject, from 1982, a book that was still very much indebted to Lacanian formalism, Badiou sympathizes with Lacan's denunciation of "*l'idéallinguisterie.*" However, he also stresses that the subject cannot be defined from the point of view of the structure; it is always an exception within the structure. In other words, "any subject is a forced exception, which comes in second place."[44] Badiou realizes that the subject is not something given; it is an *a posteriori* name of a procedure. He denounces the existential and limitative function of what he calls the *classical* idealist subject (such as the one of Immanuel Kant), which is generally posited as something from which one departs, not where one arrives. He claims that "the classical subject is thus an operator endowed with a double function. On one hand, it assignates an irreducible being of the existent; on the other, it limits that which, from the 'remainder' of being, is accessible to knowledge. It partitions that which is *immediately* given and that which is *mediately* refused to experience."[45] The *classical* subject is a point of departure of the correlation between "I" and the exterior world. It creates a scission between the immediacy of what is given to the subject, of what the subject perceives, and the impossibility of knowing the a-subjective, objective reality. This subject is split between the phenomenal perception and the impossibility of knowing the *thing-in-itself*. In contrast, Badiou affirms that "a subject is nowhere given (to knowledge). It must be found."[46] The subject is neither a place within the structure, nor a generic name of a human being. It is an exception from the law, for it necessarily exceeds the structure.

It might be for this reason that, in *Theory of the Subject*, he denounces Lacan's extreme algebrization of the subject and some of the notions from his 1966 rewriting of "Seminar on 'The Purloined Letter'", published in *Écrits*. Badiou disagrees with Lacan's statement that "subjectivity has no relation to the real, but rather to a syntax that is engendered by the signifying mark there."[47] He reads

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[44] Alain Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*, trans. B. Bosteels, New York, Continuum, 2009, p. 84.
[45] *Ibid.*, p. 278.
[46] *Ibid*.
[47] Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 38.

this statement as an extremely structural conception of the subject that fore-closes the real. In Badiou's perspective, the subject is a knot tying together the place (the structure) and what is *out-of-the place*, what exceeds the place. He links subjectivation with *clinamen*, a deviating atom that does not follow any law. *Clinamen* is an exception from the law, from the structure, and as such, it maintains a close relation to the void. *Clinamen* is the name of the void, an empty set. Or, as Badiou puts it: "if an atom relates to the void in a manner that is not the general rule for all atoms, it may function as [an] *atomistic designation of the void itself*."[48] He remarks, however, that it would be more precise to think of *clinamen* as subjectivation, but not as the subject. Thus, the subject relates to the void and to inconsistency, but the subject as such *is not a void*. In fact, it is not the category of the void *per se*, but a question of the localization of the void in relation to the subject that is at the origin of Badiou's dissent with Lacan. Although Badiou is convinced that the subject somehow relates to the void, he refuses to see the subject as *voided*, empty.

In *Being and Event*, Badiou affirms that being is composed of inconsistent mul-tiplicities of multiplicities and that thinking can separate certain multiples from the inconsistency and count them as one. Badiou, in line with an elementary set theoretical symbolization, distinguishes two possible kinds of relations between sets: *belonging* and *inclusion*. To *belong to a situation* means "to be presented by that situation, to be one of the elements it structures,"[49] in philosophical terms, this can be translated as *presentation*. When we say that *a belongs to b*, it simply means that a is present within b, but we cannot infer from that that *a* would be a part of *b* because there is no count-as-one. *To be included* in a situation means "to be counted by the state of the situation,"[50] and inclusion is equivalent to *representation* by the state. *a is included in b* means that *a* is a part of *b*, it is counted-as-one. Badiou distinguishes the situation and the state-of-the-situa-tion (*l'état de la situation*). He adds that every situation is structured twice: the state-of-the-situation is doubled, there is no presentation of the inconsistency, of the void, or of being-qua-being. The void qua being is universally included; it constitutes an excess of any situation.

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[48]   Badiou, *Theory of the Subject,* p. 58.
[49]   Badiou, *Being and Event,* p. 102.
[50]   *Ibid*.

Badiou describes the event as the reshuffling of belonging and inclusion. During the event, what previously only belonged to the situation is counted by the state-of-the-situation. For instance, during the event called "revolution", a precarious mass of workers that constituted the void of the situation can be counted-as-one and receive the name of *proletariat*; it becomes conscious of its destiny and of its political rights. The event is a moment in which the ontological inconsistency intrudes into the consistency and radically modifies the terms of the situation. What Badiou names an "evental site" is a founding set, a set that is "*on the edge of the void*,"[51] for none of the elements of this set is included in the situation. The evental site is a founding inconsistency that cannot be divided into smaller elements, it is a hotbed of the event.

In a given situation, how can we decide whether an event happened or not? An event is the *a posteriori* name of a process during which a new set came into existence. It is never a part of the state; it exceeds the state. For an event to exist, a subject must intervene, it must name the event as such and follow its consequences. The subject makes the event exist by remaining faithful to it and by organizing its consequences in time. A subject's defining quality is fidelity; without fidelity, there would be no subject as such. Badiou remarks that "a fidelity is the apparatus which separates out, within the set of presented multiples, those which depend upon an event. To be faithful is to gather together and distinguish the becoming legal of a chance."[52] The subject connects the event and fidelity; it is "the process itself of liaison between the event (thus the intervention) and the procedure of fidelity (thus its operator of connection)."[53]

For Badiou, subjectivation is supported by the existence of infinite and universal truths. A truth is "an infinite part of the situation,"[54] or in mathematical terms, a generic set. "*A truth groups together all the terms of the situation which are positively connected to the event*."[55] It appears in the world via four generic truth procedures: art, love, politics, and science. To say that a truth is infinite means simply that "its procedure contains an infinity of enquiries."[56] Human

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[51]   *Ibid*., p. 175.
[52]   *Ibid*., p. 232.
[53]   *Ibid*., p. 239.
[54]   *Ibid*., p. 333.
[55]   *Ibid*., p. 335.
[56]   *Ibid*., p. 333.

being can become subject only through the incorporation of these universal and infinite truths and fidelity to an event. A subject is "any local configuration of a generic procedure from which a truth is supported."[57] One is not born a subject; one can only become a subject through the embodiment of truth(s). Truths and subject are like communicating vessels – one cannot exist without the other. A truth is always transcendent to the subject; it is an "un-presented part of the situation."[58] In Badiou's words: "every truth is transcendent to the subject, precisely because the latter's entire being resides in supporting the realization of truth. The subject is neither consciousness nor unconsciousness of the true."[59] In a truth procedure, the subject incorporates its excess; a finite subject embodies infinite truths. The subject is a finite occurrence of truth.

In the lecture from 1967, "On Psychoanalysis in its Relation to Reality," Lacan remarks that "the body makes the bed of the Other through the operation of the signifier,"[60] and that the body is always divided, voided by the signifier. The body is the place of the Other. Badiou approves this idea of the body as the place of the Other, but for him the body is transformed by a universal and infinite truth: "we can also grant Lacan that the body is the place of the Other, since for us it is only the eventally becoming-Other of the site which commands the possibility of a body of truth."[61] Yet, if the divisive action of the signifier makes the body voided for Lacan, for Badiou, the subject's body is rather *filled by truths*. In his works, the subject, instead of being empty, is often described as full. The body is transformed, it incorporates truths.

Badiou locates the void in being, whereas for Lacan, the void is situated in the subject. Badiou affirms: "the place at which philosophy localizes the void as the condition of thought is being, *qua* being. The place at which psychoanalysis localizes the void is the Subject, *its* subject, the Subject as the unconscious that occupies the gap between signifiers in which the metonymy of its being

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57 *Ibid*., p. 391.
58 *Ibid*., p. 396.
59 *Ibid*., p . 397.
60 Jacques Lacan, "De la psychanalyse dans ses rapports avec la réalité", in: *Autres Écrits*, Paris, Seuil, 2001, p. 357 [my translation].
61 Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 479. [The English version translates "lit de l'Autre" as "the place of the Other" and not as "the bed of the Other", but this expression refers to Lacan.]

proceeds."[62] By placing the void outside of the subject, Badiou is able to avoid falling into the classic idealist notion of the subject. His subject is not empty: it is simultaneously filled by local particularities (such as gender, race, and any personal complexities that can constitute material for psychoanalysis) and by truth procedures exceeding these particularities and pointing at something infinite outside of the subject. Badiou's subject is neither empty, nor particular; the subject is singular and traversed by truth(s). Truth is not the cause of the subject, but material from which the subject is composed: "if it were necessary to identify a cause of the subject, one would have to return, not so much to truth, which is rather its stuff, nor to the infinity whose finitude it is, but rather to the event. Consequently, the void is no longer the eclipse of the subject; it is on the side of being, which is such that its errancy in the situation is convoked by the event, via an interventional nomination."[63] If there were a cause of the subject, it would be the event, since it constitutes a starting point of any procedure of subjectivation.

In his confrontation with Lacan, Badiou tried to respond to two contradictions: philosophy's relation to the real and the question of the subject's internal division and of its relation to the void. Such interrogation might have been motivated by certain ethical and political implications. For by moving the subject away from its internal aporias, Badiou created the possibility of a renewed militancy. The subject follows an infinite and transcendent truth. If the capitalist procedure consists in reorienting human desire, it might be much easier to place an alternate, alienating desire in an empty, voided subject. However, if the subject is already "filled" by truth, it can better resist the temptation to *give up on one's desire*. The ultimate desire of the finite subject is the infinity of truth. Thus, the subject's ethical imperative is to continue and to *demand the impossible*. In the tragic drama of life, the subject might be the hero, whose task is to overcome the logical impossibility and follow a truth.

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[62]   Badiou, *Conditions*, pp. 202–203.
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Magnitudes in Badiou's Objective Phenomenology and Economic Consumer Choice[1]

Since the dawn of human civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia, man has been concerned with measuring different quantities as part of his quest for continued existence and progress. By antiquity, humanity had already created numerous measuring systems, based on various units of standard, for concepts like length, surface, volume, mass, and time. Not much changed until the 4th century BC when Euclid in his *Elements* proposed the first systematic contribution to measurement by introducing the idea of ratios between different homogenous (numerical) magnitudes of attributes – the measure of one magnitude relative to another. This rekindled interest in measurement theory, since thinkers now needed different generalisations of qualities to quantities to cover the vast landscape of measurable phenomena, for example Aristotle's work on temperature. He observed it to be a qualitative phenomenon that can be described in quantitative intervals of hotness and coldness. Progress made in the Middle Ages demonstrated that certain objects can attain new homogenous additional parts. This means they can be lengthened or made heavier – supplied with an extensive attribution. It follows that we can then have "extensive magnitudes" – quantities of parts observed and ascribed in numerical form and used to perform basic operations, such as addition, subtraction, and multiplication. On the other hand, the human capacity for sense-perception and intuition also allows for interaction with external objects. This in turn gave birth to a set of "intensive magnitudes", which related various qualitative attributes to determinate objects. The concept was introduced as far back as the late 13th century by John Duns Scotus and stood the test of time, still being considered valid during the scientific revolutions of the 16th and 17th century and influencing the philosophers of the time. We see traces of it in Leibniz's assertion that "nature never makes leaps", pointing to the natural change occurring in degrees (The Prin-

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ciple of Continuity), a fact also later picked up by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason* as the Axioms of Intuition and the Anticipations of Perception.

On this point, early modern philosophy has been, in a very general sense, divided between two different lines of argument: (1) Descartes and Locke are associated with those who emphasize that secondary qualities, such as colour, taste or smell, vary according to the state of the experiencing subject, while the objects can objectively be determined solely by their primary qualities, such as size, shape, and weight. On the opposing side (2) are philosophers, such as Berkeley and Hume, who unify the primary and secondary qualities – maintaining that the primary qualities of objects can be experienced only through the mediation of secondary ones – "fusing" them into an entirely subjective act of cognition. In his Axioms and Anticipations, Kant attempted to reconcile this by attributing both aspects simultaneously to the subject; he ascribes primary qualities as *extensive* magnitudes to the first, denying the exclusive subjective perception of the second, rather choosing to define the object's correspondence (in space and time) to the subject's sensory qualities through *intensive* magnitudes. However, later scientific discoveries, notably in physics, electrical engineering, and chemistry, unambiguously undermined Kant's proposed unified extensive and intensive magnitudes. This spurred the search for new fundamentals in the philosophy of measurement, resulting in a branch of mathematics we now call Measurement Theory. Some fields in the social sciences, however, chose to retain the distinction. One such example is the merging of the economic theory of utility with *preference logic*[2] in the second half of the 20th century. It seems as though the issue has now once again been pushed to the forefront, this time in contemporary philosophy.

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In his phenomenological project, *Logics of Worlds* (*Being and Event II*), Alain Badiou proposes an entirely new way of thinking of an object. His separation of the *onto*-logical part of the first *Being and Event* (1988) from onto-*logy*, i.e. pure logics pertaining to the theory of appearing – the being's localization in a world – is now well established. Whereas the first project of pure being relied on the set-theoretic realm of (in)consistent multiplicities, the second project draws on

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2   For more on the (economic) logic of preference, see the seminal works of Sören Halldén, *On the Logic of Better*, Lund, Library of Theoria, 1957, and Georg H. von Wright, *The Logic of Preference*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1963.

a broader and richer area of mathematics – category theory (CT) – to explain the appearance of a multiple-being in the world. Badiou's reliance on category theory also required he introduce a different, purely relational conception of the object. This is where Badiou strays the farthest away from Kant's conception of the transcendental object. With Badiou, we instead get a subject-less objectivity, an *objective phenomenology* of being-there. However, what centripetally pulls the two back together is the immanence of "transcendental magnitudes" (degrees), attributes pertaining to the regimes of appearance. Although the transcendental subject is never present in Badiou's conception, the void is filled by the ubiquitous transcendental indexing of appearing in every particular situation (i.e. a world). He concedes: "In fact my conception fuses together, in the guise of a general algebra of order, 'extensive magnitude' and 'intensive magnitude'."[3] What is here referred to as the "general algebra of order" is actually an object of a category that complies with what mathematicians call a complete Heyting algebra, meaning it is a complete lattice, i.e. a partly ordered set (or *poset*), where each of its subsets has a supremum and an infimum. It allows Badiou to counter Kant on the grounds that the current advances in mathematics "justify enveloping the two notions in the single one of 'transcendental degree'[...]".[4] This implies a mode of existence, which, in the final instance, relies precisely on the concept of magnitude (quantum), measuring degrees of identities and differences.

When Badiou expressed his philosophical dispositive in terms of mathematical discourse, he had in fact opened up countless nexus points to various disciplines in the natural and social sciences. This article will focus on the contemporary scientificity of economics. We will focus on the transition from classical political economy, overcome by the subjective "marginalist revolution" (and the advent of preference logic), to the contemporary doctrine of methodological individualism and rational consumer choice theory.[5] The inculcation of subjective preference plans and its coextensive mathematical and logical apparatus lies at the centre of this epistemological break. It can also be understood as a kind of 'general algebra', in this case of an economic equilibrium, resting on the opti-

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[3] Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event, 2*, trans. A. Toscano, London, Continuum, 2009, p. 234.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] A theory that encompasses much more than simply economics. It is currently extensively used in sociology, the political sciences, and evolutionary theory.

mization functions of measured individual utilities (demand side) and marginal production costs (supply side) – all of which (conveniently) relies on pre-ordered or partly ordered sets and their formal conditions.

All of this has had significant repercussions. Once the "marginalist revolution" in economics had done away with the classics, i.e. with the labour theory of value of Smith, Ricardo, Malthus, and Marx's critique of it, the neoclassical economics of Alfred Marshall and his disciples proceeded to introduce an individual preference 'measurement' of value, making no attempt to establish a clear link to the previous classical preconceptions. The maximizing preference function simply became a universally established law of axiomatically defined ordered sets. We argue that the inserted discontinuity between the classical and neoclassical approach in economics rests on a fallacy, since it failed to convincingly (in)validate any synthesis of the labour theory of value and the subjectivist valuations. We will examine the classical period in political economy through the lens of Badiou's definition of a classical world – a world where a classical logic registers transcendental values, i.e. in the world of ontology. Put in terms of political economy, value must have some substance, or as Marx put it, there first has to be a value-forming substance – labour – in the form of "socially necessary labour-time" that has the capacity to create value. This fact (the objectification of human labour) is borne out each time merchandise arrives at the market for exchange in a Boolean-type logic evaluation. On the other hand, we assert that the current scheme for the subjectivist valuation of price-goods in terms of individual preference plans conforms to intuitionist logic – the logic that also underpins Badiou's theory of appearing. As this scheme is purely subjectivist, it has no 'primordial substance', meaning that its transcendental values, i.e. the 'existence' of goods on the market, represent an immediate function of appearing in a market-economy world. Put differently, the 'price tag' is the sole recognition of an object's existence in a world of commodities and it obeys the same (mathematical) structural, i.e. algebraic, protocols as Badiou's "minimum phenomenology of abstract appearing".

Our investigation includes the following provisional thesis that will also act as the proximate aim of this article: The "marginalist revolution" does not rise to the scale of a Copernican-type revolution, i.e. an absolute modification of the scientific field. The switch from classical to marginalist economics is by far and away closer to a shift in doctrines – it is an intra-theoretical parallax view from

production and distribution to exchange – and rooted in a formally dominant utilitarian philosophical worldview. According to our interpretation, Badiou's efforts offer a better and, more importantly, monolithic solution, precisely because of his upgrading from set-theory ontology to category theory. In doing so, he introduces a more robust logical framework that allows him to subsume the 'primitive' belonging-to-situations multiplicities to a logical and relational framework of categories in a world. This gesture crucially also calls for a continuous, unified, and coherent bottom-up framework – one with the potential of serving as a more suitable transitional scheme to a new economic doctrine, instead of opting for an apologetic rendition of the discipline. Put more concretely in the context of our present discussion: Critical economic science should seek to reintroduce Marx's "dialectics of the value form" when dealing with commodity exchange. The approach should ideally also consider the subjective aspirations and magnitudes of desired objects by means of an immanent structure capable of handling the categorical breadth.

In the introductory remarks, we touch on an array of different topics. To help establish some initial common ground, we list them below as either falling under classical or intuitionist logic:

	Characteristic property	Algebra type	Truth values	Badiou	Marx	Economics
Classical Logic	Law of identity Law of non-contradiction Law of excluded middle	Boolean algebra	$[0,1]$ (binary)	World of ontology	Value Form	Labour theory of value
Intuitionist Logic	Law of identity Law of non-contradiction	Heyting algebra	Ω – set (poset, pre-order)	World of phenomena	Price Form	Marginal utility

Badiou's algebra of appearing: a brief overview

Before delving into our topic, let us briefly but no less thoroughly examine Badiou's trajectory, connecting the first two volumes of the *Being and Event* project. The first volume was entirely devoted to indifferent multiplicities without any particular designated qualities. It focused on the internal composition of belonging elements that come to count-as-one, consequently forming sets of

consistent multiples in different situations. The set-theoretic connectors that constitute a non-relational framework, or rather situations and state-of-situations, are those of belonging ($\in$) and inclusion ($\subseteq$). For Badiou, this setting represents the entire world of ontology – everything proceeding/halting from/ on the null-set, the void ($\varnothing$). The second volume moves from being to beings, i.e. being-there, their localized appearing in a world. Indeed, if multiples are different beings, they must appear differently – hence, we are no longer in the world of ontology of indifferent beings, but rather in a world or worlds where beings are relationally brought together. For Badiou, worlds are logical representational spaces, or rather topological spaces, where different beings logically relate to one another based on their identities and differences expressed in transcendental degrees. Being's appearing is sutured to a determinate *logic* of a particular world. If ontology was built from the two primitive connectors mentioned above, phenomenology now rests on just one ordering function, ($\leq$). The step from ontology to phenomenology implies a tremendous upheaval in the underlying mathematical apparatus from axiomatic set-theory to conceptual category theory.

In simplified terms, appearance is a function determined according to a set of operations (an algebra) that constitute a transcendental. Say we have two multiples, a and b, in order for them to appear in a world, we also need a (differential) relation between them – so we can distinguish between them –, which also connects them to a third multiple (more on this multiple later on), the transcendental (T), to formalize a world. "*We will call 'transcendental' the operational set which allows us to make sense of the 'more or less' of identities and differences in a determinate world*"[6] Badiou says, and puts it formally as a function of appearance **Id** (a, b) = p; interpreted as multiplicities {a, b} $\in$ A are to a p-degree identical, p $\in$ T. The degree of identity, or inversely, difference, of two multiplicities in a world is measured according to the degree of belonging to transcendental algebra. It is worth noting here that the type of identity inferred here is a mathematical (CT) one – *isomorphism* – retaining both quantities in **Set** and the identity of structures (determinate algebraic operations). The transcendental algebra Badiou utilizes is the complete Heyting algebra that was designed as a model for intuitionistic logic (the law of excluded middle does not hold) and posits a specific type of Heyting-valued sets, known also as the Ω-valued sets. If

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6   *Ibid.*, p. 118.

we look closer, we see that Heyting-valued sets "regard an object in a topos as a 'set-like' entity consisting of *potentially* existing (partially defined) elements, only some of which possess *actual* existence (are totally defined)."[7] Such a Ω-valued set is then a set, say **A**, defined as a pair (A, **Id)**, where, as we have seen, **Id** is a function of assigning degrees of identity between every pair of elements a, b $\in$ A; **Id**(a, b) $\in$ Ω. As stated, the Ω-set is a partially ordered set (poset), an order structure where the order connector $\leq$ organizes a transcendental scale (called a *locale* in mathematics) obeying certain 'classical' axioms, such as: x $\leq$ x reflexivity; $[(x \leq y)$ and $(y \leq z)] \rightarrow (x \leq z)$ transitivity; $[(x \leq y)$ and $(y \leq x)] \rightarrow (x = y)$ antisymmetry. If it were simply a matter of Boolean algebra, we would encounter only non-existing or absolutely existing objects; however, dealing with an intuitionistic logic, we get a *minimum* ($\forall$x) ($\mu \leq$ x) or the greatest lower bound and a *maximal element or envelope* ($\sum$), defined as a set of degrees B, where B $\subseteq$ T – i.e., the smallest of all degrees that are greater than or equal to all the elements of B. Given the p and q degrees, we can always find a conjunction ($\cap$), written p $\cap$ q, so that it is the greatest of all those that are lesser than both p and q. Lastly, we have distributivity for attaining the completeness of a lattice, i.e. that all partial local conjunctions are in relation to the global envelope, making sure there are no gaps in the degrees scale via the infinite distributive law. Badiou puts it like this: $d \cap \sum B = \sum\{d \cap x \ / \ x \in B$; take d as a degree in conjunction with the envelope of a subset B; you have an envelope of a given degree in regards to an element x in B to which that degree from the envelope of degrees is assigned. For a simple example of how the transcendent scaling/indexing works, let us imagine a topological space S and a set of elements (in CT, this can be any mathematical object or structure; for our purposes, let us say these are functions) A, we can therefore determine to what extent a certain function exists in this space S. If we have two objects, say M, N $\subseteq$ S, where f $\in$ M and g $\in$ N, we need a Ω-set to evaluate a pair of functions from subsets M, N, with the function **Id**(x, y) being the degree of their identity/difference.[8] To recap the transcendental properties, we have an ordering structure obeying reflexivity, transitivity, antisymmetry, and distributivity; we then have the operations of conjunction, envelope, dependence, reverse and the minimal and maximal elements.
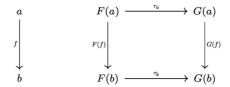
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7   Robert Goldblatt, *Topoi: The Categorial Analysis of Logic*, Mineola, NY, Dover Publications, 2006, p. 274.

8   Provided that they meet the two conditions: **Id**(x, y) = **Id**(y, x) (symmetry) and **Id**(x, y) $\cap$ **Id(**y,z) $\leq$ **Id**(x, z) (triangular inequality).

These are the transcendental operations of different elements related to their degrees of appearances when measured against each other. But how does an object actually come to fully exist? Or put differently, how does a phenomenon exist in a world? The answer is already partially contained in the preceding example above; once you have two elements, x and y, adding a third, z, for example in relation to y, you also get its relation to x, and so on, for all the elements in a given set – that is to a subset of a given world. On the other hand, for an element to properly appear, it has to have self-identity in a given space; put in Badiou's worlds of appearing, the function **Id**(x, x) does not necessarily return a Maximum value. As he says, the phenomenon is the set of the values in the function of appearing **Id**(a, x), for x that (co)appears along all the "a" in a set A. What does this operation accomplish? It ranks the 'internal' elements of a count-as-one set according to their individual transcendental degrees. So, if in the context of our function we substitute **Id**(x, a) for a an element x, we get **Id**(x, x), which measures the self-identity or the degree of existence of an element in a world. The more the element assumes the identity with the world, the more strongly it appears in it. We will not delve deeper into other algebraic operations of localizations, regionalizations, or atomic logic, as that would far exceed the scope of this paper and is not relevant in terms of the argument made in the present discussion. We do, however, have to modestly introduce certain key topological aspects of Badiou's objective phenomenology.

The first problem emerges directly from our preceding discussion: How does Badiou connect objects with the transcendental of a world? Specifically, how do all the elements as subsets come to be adjoined with their respective degrees? Here, Badiou introduces a CT concept called a *functor* – a transformational operation preserving both elements and object-structures from one category to another. Badiou formally expresses it as: "The 'transcendental functor' of the object (*A*, **Id**), written **F***A*, associates to every element *p* of *T* the part of *A* composed of *x*'s such that **E***x* = *p*. That is, **F***A*(*p*) = {*x*/*x* ∈ *A* and **E***x* = *p*}"[9] To aide us in grasping the immense operationability of the functor, consider the following diagram:

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9   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 289.

$$a \qquad\qquad F(a) \xrightarrow{\;\tau_a\;} G(a)$$

$$f \Big\downarrow \qquad\qquad F(f)\Big\downarrow \qquad\qquad G(f)\Big\downarrow$$

$$b \qquad\qquad F(b) \xrightarrow{\;\tau_b\;} G(b)$$

We have a category C: a → b with an arrow f. A functor is a function that assigns to objects a and b an operation F(a) and F(b), but also does the same for arrows, in our case F (f): F(a) → F(b), creating a category D. The remarkable thing about functors is that they also introduce natural transformations between the functors themselves, creating yet again a new category with functors as objects as well. Say we now have two categories acting as objects – C and D – and a functor F between them, which is actually an arrow that maps every object of category C to some F(A) in D object. We now need an arrow to go from one functor to another, while retaining the structure and mapping of C in D. We need to assign an arrow to every object a of C that leads to D, incorporating the F mapping of a to G mapping of a. This is expressed as τ_a : F(a) → G(a) and τ_b : F(b) → G(b). This operation becomes the driving motor of 'translating' various degrees of appearance, gathered into subsets, to correspond to different enveloped subobjects of phenomena and their atoms of appearing, now also connecting them at the ontological level. This is crucial, since it transforms the ontological and phenomenological into a unified categorical structure.

Category theory therefore allows for the retroactive positing of logical relations (appearing) onto indifferent multiplicities as objects (ontological strata) in the form of a real synthesis of atoms.

Badiou concludes his elaboration of the object in *Logics of Worlds* by stating that a structure of sheaves (a manifold of transcendental functors **F**A) coming from transcendental T to objects of the (A, **Id**) type is called a Grothendieck topos[10]. The latter is also the topologically defined site of being-there, a world. In *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, he provides a formal definition of a topos, seeing it as a "possible mathematical universe, which is both 'big' (existence of

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[10]   *Ibid*., p. 295.

limits) and centred, and which presents its own internal logic."[11] We will, for our part, skip the segments dealing with the existence of limits and co-limits that determine the 'adequate size' of a category – an universal object, which is either itself visible from every object in a category (limit) or is the one you can see from the farthest distant objects (co-limit). Instead, we will focus on another point, i.e. its centeredness, meaning that every topos, or world as it were, needs to have a central object. In CT, this central object is known as the subobject classifier or truth-value object. Badiou's version is presented in the diagram below:

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
a & \xrightarrow{\;f\;} & b \\
{\scriptstyle 1(a)}\Big\downarrow & & \Big\downarrow{\scriptstyle c(f)} \\
1 & \xrightarrow{\;T\;} & C
\end{array}
$$

What we have is an object C which has an element ($1 \to$ C) marked T(rue) – what Badiou calls an evaluation procedure –, such that for every monomorphism f : a $\hookrightarrow$ b there exists a unique characteristic arrow c(f) from b $\to$ C (centring) for the square to be a pullback. The centration (predicate characteristic) function c(f) is of prime importance for Badiou: in essence, it validates the values (degrees) found in C; p $\in$ C for every subobject a of a set b. As already indicated for sets, the logic is Boolean (bivalent, pertaining to a well-pointed topos), C = [0,1]. At the level of ontology, it simply verifies whether an element belongs or does not belong to a subset. What makes toposes truly remarkable is their versatility, which Badiou uses to full effect. Within them, the central object C can modify its "own internal logic"; instead of being just a two-element set for [True, False], it can be a Ω-set, e.g. a Heyting lattice, obeying intuitionistic logic and having the range of intensities p between minimum to maximal elements. Given two elements of *a* (x,y), which are also the elements of *b* via the monic arrow *f*, they are identical in *b* inasmuch as in *a* to the degree assigned by being an element of c(f) in C, i.e. some p $\in$ Ω. What we have arrived at is an evaluative structure for 'measuring' appearance in a world through assigning truth-values to elements, acting as degrees or intensities of appearing in a strictly logical setting.

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[11]   Alain Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, ed. and trans. A. J. Bartlett and A. Ling, London, Bloomsbury, 2014, p. 89.

With this demonstration, we conclude this very dense introduction to Badiou's objective phenomenology, which we hope will provide a minimal basis for juxtaposing this general outline of his calculable phenomenology with the preference logic of consumer and rational choice theory, established in mainstream economic theory. The next section will introduce the main tenets of this theory.

Logic of consumer preferences in economics

We are turning to a discipline that, when it came to measuring quantities and intensities, was very much confined to Berkeley and Hume – Economics.

It was the empiricism of Bacon and Locke, the writings of the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury on morality, and Hobbes on human nature and egoism, coupled with Hume's psychological accounts of the utility principle that, among others, left an indelible imprint on Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism. Rejecting any kind of idealism, Bentham claimed that matter is to be subjectively (and mathematically) quantifiable and therefore experienced based on direct *pains and pleasures*. Although Bentham's account of pains and pleasures was dismissed precisely because it precluded any attempt at measurement, the future course of economic theory was already settled upon and well under way. Utility was amalgamated as a tendency of an object to increase or decrease the degrees of happiness or similar feelings. This simple proposition had an immense influence on succeeding generations of economic thinkers, namely Bentham's student John Stuart Mill and the subjectivist marginalist revolution representatives, such as H.H. Gossen and W. S. Jevons, all of whom later influenced the thinking of A. Marshall and F. Y. Edgeworth. When Jevons wrote the preface to the first edition (1871) of *The Theory of Political Economy*, he affirmed that "In this work I have attempted to treat Economy as a Calculus of Pleasure and Pain, [...] I have endeavoured to arrive at accurate quantitative notions concerning Utility, Value, Labour, Capital, etc[...]".[12] After an enduring search and interplay of cardinal and ordinal measures of marginal and total utilities, of ratios between utilities and prices, of further axiomatization of sets and bundles of goods (by O. Morgenstern and J. von Neumann), the "utility calculus" finally became a universal law of textbook economics in the 20th century. In state-of-the-art research, it became the

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[12]   William S. Jevons, *The Theory of Political Economy*, (5th ed.), New York, Augustus M. Kelley [1871] 1965, pp. vi–vii.

ever-present underlying assumption of mainstream economic modelling. Rational choice theory, premised on almost intact utilitarian axioms, continues to be used as a general setting for modelling economic objectivity.

Modern preference logic, however, does differentiate between intrinsic and extrinsic preferences. They are distinguished in the following way: "A preference for x over y is extrinsic if a (non-circular) reason can be given for why x is preferred to y. Otherwise, the preference is intrinsic. That x is intrinsically preferred to y is sometimes expressed by saying that x is 'in itself' or 'for its own sake' preferred to y. Judgments of intrinsic preference, or at least many such judgments, express our likings. To say that we intrinsically prefer x to y is often the same as saying that we like x better (more) than y."[13] We can clearly see here the linguistic operation of immediate propositional predication when it comes to intrinsic preferences. But, just immediately after, we learn that "It seems plausible to think that all extrinsic preferences are ultimately founded on intrinsic ones."[14] Consequently, we get an assembled view of preferences, defined as a predicative evaluation of magnitudes experienced subjectively by individuals in a comparative manner.

Let us now see how preference logic is reproached by Gérard Debreu through his set-theory axiomatic analysis, presented in *Theory of Value* – the still seminal sourcebook for mathematical fundamentals of economic analysis. In chapter 4, which deals with "Consumers",[15] the task calls for preparing the foundations for drawing up a complete consumption plan. Instead of dwelling on budgetary constraints, we will instead concern ourselves with the formal depiction of these functions in relation to their logical assumptions on sets X_i. We will write them in italics and comment successively: (a) X_i *is closed* (the axiom of continuity); *an infinite sequence of consumptions*, (b) X_i *has a lower bound for $\leq$*, (c) X_i *is connected* (i.e. completeness or the axiom of order), (d) X_i *is convex* (A ~ B; the indifference relation). Another assumption, which is not on the immediate list, is the condition of *transitivity*. What these assumptions bring in terms of ordered relations are of course the characteristics of a pre-order ($\lesssim$). The choice of pref-

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[13]   Georg H. von Wright, "The Logic of Preference Reconsidered", *Theory and Decision*, 3 (1972), p. 142.

[14]   *Ibid*.

[15]   Gérard Debreu, *Theory of Value an Axiomatic Analysis of Economic Equilibrium*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1971, pp. 50–59.

erence algebra then comes down to the variant of a symmetry relation; if dealing with a symmetric relation A ~ B → B ~ A, we speak of the equivalence relation (the most usual preference relation); additionally, we either have asymmetry A > B → ¬(B > A) or antisymmetry A ≥ B ∧ B ≥ A → A = B, where we consequently speak of a total preorder that is also a partial order (a quasi-preference relation). Total orders are mostly used in economic modelling when presupposing consumer functions, although different options of partial orders are becoming more and more common. The above relations therefore impose an algebra of a total or a partial order. Again, we encounter a truth-value object Ω for indexing preferences that could just as possibly obey, as with Badiou, a complete Heyting algebra.[16] We interpret the basic preference order as follows: say we have a set X_i with the pair of elements a and b, both of which represent different combinations of two goods – these two combinations are also quantitatively defined, say a = {1 apple, 2 pears} or b = {3 apples, 1 pear}. Applying preference relations, we can order different and mutually exclusive combinations of bundles of goods into a range between a minimal and a maximal element.

The above characteristics provide a general outline of preference logic. We are now able to link it with utility theory. We saw that different pairings in our X_i set combine the elements a, b, where each is initially endowed with a given quantity as different quantitative distributions obviously yield different utilities. Take our initial example: we had in element b a combination of goods (x, y), where the bundle implied a number of 3 apples and 1 pear. There is a *utility function* $u : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$, for there ∃U(a, b) for ∀X_i(a, b) ranking every bundle u: (x, y) → U(x, y), x ≾ y iff u(x) ≾ u(y), where U is a total utility in a consumption plan of ordered preferences. Decomposing the total derivative U into partial derivatives $MU_x = \frac{\Delta U}{\Delta X}$ and $MU_y = \frac{\Delta U}{\Delta Y}$, we arrive at marginal utilities for each of the goods in a bundle – and to every economics student a very well known equation of:

$$\text{(Marginal rate of substitution) MRS} = \frac{MU_x}{MU_y} \ldots = \frac{P_x}{P_y} \ldots$$

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With most of the formalities introduced in this first analytical part, it is important to look at them in parallel to gain a broader view of our argument. The logical overlap between Badiou's transcendental algebra and preference logic (in economics) is immediately apparent, resting on either a poset or a totally ordered set. These measure the degrees of appearing and existence in the transcendental or ranking preferences of a particular bundle of goods – both of these measurements rely on an order-relation, either ≤ greater or equal or preferring or indifferent ≲, respectively. The only difference is that in economics, the symmetry/asymmetry/antisymmetry clause is invoked randomly, depending on the preference logic model employed, whereas Badiou strictly maintains the antisymmetric relation in the poset of the transcendental (neither x ≤ y or y ≤ x, they are incomparable). Both Badiou and preference logic, as used in economics, maintain conjunction, envelope, and distributivity operations. The relation A ≲ B, meaning that an individual wants B *at least* as much as A, as expressed in economics, corresponds to Badiou's formulation $p \cap q = p$. The envelope is, on the other hand, an entire bundle of goods chosen against all alternatives, i.e. all other subsets of combinatory bundles one can choose from, either a 2-element subset or a n-element subset bundle. But which one is chosen? It stands to reason that it should be the intersection bringing the highest degree of utility/satisfaction.

As already pointed out, the transcendental functor plays a key role in Badiou's theory of the object. Again briefly: observed from the point of view of an object, a functor takes the composite atomic logic of localizations and connects them with the transcendental indexation. It causes a decomposition of atoms (subobjects as count-as-ones, inferring they are singletons) in appearing in relation to the elements of the multiples on the ontological level, but as far as appearing goes, they are determined by their mutual co-belonging to the function of 'phenomenal components' – relating a given multiple A and the transcendental T. The atomic logic (localization, compatibility, ordering) is based on the existence of some x in conjunction with a degree p of the transcendental T, but moreover, it is also a combination of elements that relate to one another; therein lies the phenomenal characteristic of **Id**(a, x) and existence in terms of self-identity, **Id**(x, x) = **E**x. Without going into too much detail, we will state that every localization of elements (atoms) in an object is subject to belonging to the phenomenal component (π), which can be distributed more widely through the compatibility of other elements of the same multiple, i.e. they share the same degree of

appearing (p) and order that ranks all the combinations according to ≤. All this culminates in the transcendental functor operation "which associates to every degree of the transcendental the set of elements of the object whose common characteristic is that their existence is measured by this degree."[17] So we have the grouping of degrees ('degrees of the transcendental') associated with ('set of elements') subsets that are parts of a phenomenal component ('common characteristic').

We have thus far been concentrating on the structural correspondence between preference logic and transcendental algebra – in essence, they are both ordering relations, resting on total and partial ordering. However, more can be said about how the logic of preference formally relates to utility theory. It does so in much the same way through a functor relation, transcribing the category of preferences onto the category of utilities, and going even further by transforming utilities and reflecting them in prices. Say we have a set X_i of elements (a, b) that are first evaluated against their quantitative determination, (a, x) and (y, b), and find those combinations such that $(a, x) \cap (y, b) \leq U_{a,b}$, so that by applying the utility function u, we get a determinate utility for this particular bundle. By considering the whole range of X_i bundles, we can construct an entire consumption plan for all the combinations of these two elements. What does constructing an entire plan mean? It involves the decomposition of all the possible degrees of utilities by combining the two elements, or conversely, assigning to every individual combination a specific degree of utility. In other words, it takes each sub-part of the whole universe of bundles X_i, collecting them into new objects and subsuming them to the function with the corresponding degree of utility. In this sense, the utility function (or rather monotonic transformation[18]) has the same rank as the transcendental functor. Bearing all this in mind, one could facetiously say that Badiou's analysis of the columns in Robert Hubert's painting *The Bathing Pool* is an excellent example of what the microeconomists would enthusiastically analyse with their indifference curves.

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[17]   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 278.
[18]   In utility theory, a monotonic transformation is presupposed as a way of transforming one set of numbers into another set of numbers in a way that preserves the order of the numbers. The operation is homologous to the natural transformation in functors.

We can now diagrammatically represent the transformation of preferences to utilities:

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
p \in \Omega & \xrightarrow{\ \ u_p\ \ } & \begin{array}{c} \mathrm{F}_u(p) \subseteq X \\ \mathrm{U}_x = p \end{array} \\[2em]
{\scriptstyle q \preceq p}\Big\downarrow & & \Big\downarrow {\scriptstyle \frac{\partial u(x_1, x_2)}{\partial x_i} = MU_i(x_1, x_2)} \\[2em]
q \in \Omega & \xrightarrow{\ \ u_q\ \ } & \begin{array}{c} \mathrm{F}_u(q) \subseteq X \\ \mathrm{U}_y = q \end{array}
\end{array}
$$

Badiou's objects can therefore be said to be composed of atoms, i.e. subobjects, one by one linked to their phenomenal appearing through the "phenomenal component" function. The parts, assembled according to their degrees of appearing, are evaluated against the transcendental. The objects of a determinate consumer choice are similarly decomposed into bundles of elements to which we attribute different magnitudes of utility. The function that orders all the utilities is a partial derivative of the assigned utility to each element of the bundle against all assemblages with other elements. However, what is most striking in the above diagram is the categorical setting and structural correspondence between Badiou's theory of appearing and consumer choice theory. This is in effect because both degrees of appearance and ranking of preferences rely on the same mathematical ordering operations. At the same time, they also both operate on set-theoretical fundamentals when it comes to defining their objective disposition. Afterwards, they both face the identical problem of linking or 'transcoding' the 'objective' part to the 'transcendental' one – Badiou resolves it by using the concept of the atomic structure and phenomenal components to transcendental indexing, while consumer choice theory relies on consumer plans and marginal propensities for each object in a bundle to complete the consumer plan.

World of commodities – a possible synthesis?

We are now at a point where we can address our ulterior motive for imagining a coherent economic structure, capable of subsuming both the classical tradition and the subjectivist turn. This was one of the irritating prospective tendencies of political economy that Marx identified and sought to solve. The critique of political economy and its categories had much to say about the inadequate conceptual unfolding at the time and Benthamite utilitarianism was one of the driving

forces leading to the bourgeois delusion. Marx saw economic subjects standing before a "topsy-turvy" world of economic objectivity, bestowed with the reification process. Qualitatively determined subjects overturned into individualized quantifiable objects of commodity-like exchange and *vice versa*. Reification was notably scrutinized in the work of György Lukács and the proponents of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, as well as Herbert Marcuse. He made it clear that in order to *critically assess* the actual dimension of the reigning mode of production, we have to disentangle the actual social relations "as a totality of objective relations",[19] i.e. we have to decipher wages in relation to the value of labour, or prices and utilities in relation to production factors.

> Economic relations only seem to be objective because of the character of commodity production. As soon as one delves beneath this mode of production, and analyzes its origin, one can see that its natural *objectivity* is mere semblance while in reality it is a specific historical form of existence that man has given himself. Moreover, once this content comes to the lore, economic theory would turn into a *critical* theory.[20]

If economic science is itself caught in an estranged form – as the young Marx suggests[21] –, there has to be an alternative, critical science capable of demystifying this topsy-turvy world. To construct such a science is to answer Marx's call for the handling of a "true materialism [*wahren Materialismus*]" with a "real science [*reelle Wissenschaft*]". It must be able to deconstruct the structural relations of the apparent objectivity, decompose its laws and propositions, and, even more importantly, lay the foundations for a theoretical continuum – *a cumulative hierarchy of theoretical bodies*. It is here that Badiou's *objective phenomenology* can play a decisive role in the critical re-examination of current economic objectivity. Our introduction also implied a question: In a reified social exchange of commodities, how does one 'valuate' the objects brought for exchange? Put another way – If commodity fetishism is a mode of appearance,

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[19]   Herbert Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Ruse of Social Theory*, (2nd ed.), London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1955, p. 280.
[20]   *Ibid*., p. 281.
[21]   Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 / and the Communist Manifesto;* Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, Buffalo, NY, Prometheus Books, 1988, p. 44.

what is the transcendental structure of these objects, how do they come to exist on the market, in a world?

When Badiou introduced his theory of object, and appearing of objects in a world that-of, he asked them to be thought in "a world, as a site of being-there, is a Grothendieck topos."[22] Let us return once more to the *Mathematics of the Transcendental* and more formally say that a topos is a category which admits limits and co-limits for every finite diagram, i.e. that a diagram admits a universal property object, called a cone or co-cone; it has an initial object (0), a terminal object (1), admits pullbacks and pushouts for objects, as well as equalizers and co-equalizers for arrows. There must exist a power object, and lastly, there must also exist a Central Object C (of which we have already spoken, it being the subobject classifier). We have shown elsewhere that Marx's value form can be categorically and structurally represented as a configuration of a subobject classifier[23]. Before going into the structure itself, let us first see how Marx in *Capital* relates value, its magnitude as a function of money and transformation into prices through the lens of the value form:

> The magnitude of the value of a commodity therefore expresses a necessary relation to social labour-time which is inherent in the process by which its value is created. With the transformation of the magnitude of value into the price this necessary relation appears as the exchange-ratio between a single commodity and the money commodity which exists outside it. [...] The price-form, however, is not only compatible with the possibility of a quantitative incongruity between magnitude of value and price, i.e. between the magnitude of value and its own expression in money, but it may also harbour a qualitative contradiction, with the result that price ceases altogether to express value, despite the fact that money is nothing but the value-form of commodities. Things which in and for themselves are not commodities, things such as conscience, honour, etc., can be offered for sale by their holders, and thus acquire the form of commodities through their price. Hence a thing can, formally speaking, have a price without having a value. The expression of price is in this case imaginary, like certain quantities in mathematics. On the other hand, the imaginary price-form may also conceal a real val-

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22   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 295.
23   On CT analysis of the value form, see Uroš Kranjc, "Logics of the Value Form – Marx with Badiou" *Cosmos and History*, 14 (3/2018), pp. 72–102.

ue-relation or one derived from it, as for instance the price of uncultivated land, which is without value because no human labour is objectified in it.[24]

Hans-Georg Backhaus posits: "The content of Marx's form analysis is the genesis of price as price."[25] Michael Heinrich further succinctly points out that the relation between value and price is that "the magnitude of value of a commodity and its price are categories pertaining to different abstraction levels, so strictly speaking it makes no sense to posit their direct concurrence or divergence."[26] Marx has it all already there: the necessary social labour-time and the relation from labour to (the magnitude of) value (i.e. the so-called law of value) with the insurrection of the universal – money commodity, the *contradictory* transformation of value to price, and finally their objective and subjective character; all immanent to the value form unfolding. Marx, ever the 'dialectician', handles the conceptual interchange and unfolding with considerable ease, while the formal logic needs to be somewhat more imaginative when trying to reconstruct and accommodate the inner logical structure of the dialectic method. How does one start?
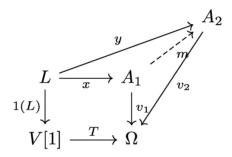
In our exposition of the value form[27], we propose a bivalent logic of value when it comes to the immediate relation between a commodity and the universal object. The inner dialectical move of "doubling" [*Verdopplung*] of commodity into commodity and money, or put differently, the "value-forming substance", labour, that comes to be expressed with a third object, in this categorical interpretation represents precisely the same function of evaluation as analysed above. What the products of labour achieve when entering the market exchange is precisely the binary evaluation, the Ω-valued set $= (0, 1)$ of being, a) a commodity for exchange or b) refused for exchange by market, hence no (exchange) value. This is the proposition on which the whole of classical economics and labour theory of value depend. Once this was done away with as part of the "revolutionary" shift from objectivist to subjectivist, or rather parallax view from production and distribution to exchange, the neoclassical school had simply altered the 'func-

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[24] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*, London, Penguin books 1993, pp. 196–197.

[25] Hans-Georg Backhaus, "On the Dialectics of the Value-Form", *Thesis Eleven*, 1 (1/1980), p. 105.

[26] Michael Heinrich, *Die Wissenschaft vom Wert*, Münster, Westfälisches Dampfboot, 2006, p. 243.

[27] *Cf.*, Kranjc, "*Logics of the Value Form*", pp. 84–86.

tion of phenomenal appearing', from average labour-time to marginal utilities as degrees of value. This process resembles Badiou's differentiation between classical (ontological) and non-classical (appearing) worlds. Whereas in the classical economical conception, the centrality of value is attested exclusively on the predicate *is/is not* (an exchanged product of labour – everything further is treated as an attribution to this basic principle), the neoclassical and mainstream orientations conform to the absolutization of values between the minimum μ and maximum element M, $\Omega = \mu \leq x \leq M$. Such interchangeability is a truly remarkable achievement of Badiou's philosophical project, for it opens up a new mode of thinking, capable of merging classical and subjective economics through its critical dispositive. If we look at the subobject classifier, which we have elsewhere called the "classification schema of exchange", one last time:

$$
\begin{array}{ccc}
& & A_2 \\
& \nearrow \!\!\! \nearrow & \\
& {\scriptstyle y} \quad {\scriptstyle m} \quad {\scriptstyle v_2} & \\
L \xrightarrow{\ x\ } A_1 & & \\
{\scriptstyle 1(L)}\Big\downarrow \qquad \Big\downarrow {\scriptstyle v_1} & & \\
V[1] \xrightarrow{\ T\ } \Omega & &
\end{array}
$$

Without going into too much detail, we have the following objects: L (labour) as an universal subobject of elements x and y composing commodities A_1 and A_2 ... A_n, respectively. Let T be a validation function pertaining to all subobjects: $V[1] \to \Omega$, which outputs to a given object from the co-domain Ω the value {true} for all those subobjects that meet the conditional evaluation v_1. The L-A_1-A_2 triangle represents what Badiou calls a triangular inequality, where the elements, say x and y, get expressed by a third (value-substance coming under elements v_1 and v_2 so that the triangle diagram commutes). The Ω-set is treated here as an algebra of the universal equivalent, to which all objects relate their mode of 'existence in exchange' and pulled back via v_1 and v_2 in degrees, i.e. going from value – magnitudes of value – prices.

Does Badiou offer a final and decisive answer to our problem, namely a transformation from value to price that would sublate the semblance of a break in economics? Indeed, he does! It is his theory of points, which in our case rep-

resents the model for a synthesis of the classical labour theory with the neo-classical subjectivist orientation. Badiou's point of view here is the following: "This triple determination of the concept of transcendental is what allows it to regulate appearing as localization (being-there), as cohesion (logical form of a being), and as situation (underlying multiple-being of being-there). There is an immanent onto-topo-logical (or 'ontopological') regulation."[28] Here, Badiou employs yet another CT operation – homomorphism (a structure-preserving mapping), which he uses to formalize "a structural homomorphism between the initial transcendental form T and the binary transcendental T_0",[29] where T is the non-classical transcendental of appearing [$\mu \leq x \leq M$] and T_0 a binary one [0, 1]. We will not go into details[30] for wont of space and will take Badiou for granted when he states that homomorphism $\emptyset$ indeed associates (is a surjective function) to every point $p' \in T'$, whenever there exists $q \in T$ such that $\emptyset(q) = p'$. The homomorphism therefore enables the continuous ascending and descending transformation from the ontological to the phenomenological plane and *vice versa*. This fact is simultaneously of crucial importance for our discussion of the commensurability between classical labour theory and marginalist subjectivist theory of value, as it implies congruence with economic objectivity, instead of a historically experienced break.

The notion of magnitude is, interestingly, one of those notions that concern practically all philosophical traditions of the modern period and beyond. Although they are casually employed in different natural and applied sciences, their philosophical grounding still remains an ambiguous matter. As for our part, we sided with Badiou against Kant in arguing for the confluence of extensive and intensive magnitudes when it comes to economic analysis. We believed it to be a productive starting point for our investigation into economic consumer choice theory. Hereon, we can also provide a generalised answer to the initial speculation of whether our juxtaposition of Badiou's *logics of worlds* and the logics of classical and neoclassical economics can be examined within a single framework, particularly the one underlying Marx's critique of economic categories. The thesis seems justifiably viable and in need of further analysis if any

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28   Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, p. 209.

29   Badiou, *Logics of Worlds*, p. 438.

30   For the complete formal algebra of points, see Badiou, *Mathematics of the Transcendental*, pp. 209–216.

serious attempt at bringing new critical insights into contemporary economic thought is to be anticipated.

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Politics and Action

Vlasta Jalušič*

Arendt, Koselleck, and *Begreifen*: Rethinking Politics and Concepts in Times of *Crisis*[1]

Hannah Arendt and Reinhart Koselleck are two of the most outstanding scholars of history and political thinking of the 20th century. While Arendt ushered in an unprecedented approach in political thinking, which is often misunderstood and accompanied by controversies, Koselleck created one of the most systematic opuses of the analysis of fundamental concepts in their historico-political dynamic and established conceptual history as a historical method. This article looks at some important intersections between Arendt's and Koselleck's thinking of political concepts and politics. At the forefront are both authors' respective thesis about the gap, rupture, or break in tradition (of political thinking and historical periods), the way they conceptualise concepts and the role thereof in thinking through times of crisis, and how this relates to their understanding of politics and the political. The inquiry has no ambition to carry out a "comparison" in a strict manner. The aspect of direct connections and influences between authors is rather one sided as only Koselleck refers to Arendt's work. However, there are commonalties (and differences) arising from their shared intellectual-historical horizon, study background, and individual experience, which inform their eventual mutual "thinking space."[2] Focusing on the question of both authors' *Begreifen* in times of crisis and breaks in the political tradition, I take into consideration the direct as well as indirect aspects.

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[1] This article is a result of the research project J5-1749 "The break in tradition: Hannah Arendt and conceptual change", https://www.mirovni-institut.si/en/projects/the-break-in-tradition-hannah-arendt-and-conceptual-change/ and the research programme P5-04133 "Equality and human rights in times of global governance", both financed by the Slovenian Research Agency.

[2] The expression is borrowed from the exhibition idea of Wolfgang Heuer and Sebastian Hefti, i.e. Hannah Arendt Denkraum, *cf*. Peter Funken, "Hannah Arendt's Denkraum: The Experience of an Experimental Exhibition", http://www.wolfgang-heuer.com/denkraum/eng/space.htm, accessed 24 April 2021.

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Bridging Arendt's and Koselleck's thinking space

Koselleck has long been regarded as a particularly eminent theorist of histori-
cal concepts, while Arendt had not been in focus as a conceptual author until
recent times. Studies and books that bring both authors' conceptual thinking
into a productive dialogue have been published only in the last decade.[3] They
identify their several common research topics: similar conceptions of time; the
exploration and critique of the philosophy of history; opposition to thinking in
terms of the history of ideas; a non-causal understanding of history and politics;
similar considerations about modern secular power; a critique of the notion of
progress as anti-political, etc. Barros, for example, tackles the common in histor-
ical thinking about the present, past, and future in the two authors, and shows
where their otherwise parallel thesis of the break in tradition differs but can be
brought into a dialogue. Hoffman identifies the points of contact and parallels
between Koselleck's *Historik* and Arendt's political "anthropology" (relying on
experience as one of the central categories) in some of their major works. Ma-
ria Pia Lara analyses how Arendt's and Koselleck's concepts of democracy, the
state, emancipation, revolution, and the notion of critique relate to the web of a
disclosive process of semantic transformation. She argues that conceptual his-
tory as a method was used by both authors "to explain the way specific notions
of political agency have undergone a change or a transformation."[4] Both Hoff-
man and Lara claim that Koselleck was – to quite an extent – directly influenced
by Arendt. Indeed, Koselleck either explicitly refers to her works[5] or sometimes
uses a similar line of argument, the same citations, etc. He started thinking of

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3   *Cf*. José D'Assunção Barros, "Perspectiva sobe o tempo em Hannah Arendt e Koselleck:
    duas leituras sobre a quebra entre o Presente e o Passado", *Argumentos*, 6 (12/2014), pp.
    169–189; Stefan-Ludvig Hoffman, "Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical
    Experience", *History and Theory,* 49 (2/2010), pp. 212–236, Maria Pia Lara, *The Disclosure
    of Politics: Struggles Over the Semantics of Secularization*, New York, Columbia University
    Press, 2013; Sebastian Huhnholz, *Von Carl Schmitt zu Hannah Arendt? Heidelberger Entste-
    hungsspuren und bundesrepublikanische Liberalisierungsschichten von Reinhart Kosellecks
    "Kritik und Krise"*, Berlin, Duncker & Humblot, 2019. I refer here to only those studies that
    have both authors at the core and not just their particular concepts.

4   Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics*, p. 31.

5   Niklas Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism: History in the plural in the work of Rein-
    hart Koselleck*, Florence, European University Institute, 2009, p. 46. Reinhart Koselleck,
    "Laudatio auf François Furet", in *Festschrift zur Vergabe des Hannah-Arendt-Preises für
    politisches Denken an François Furet*, Bremen, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 1996, pp. 9–12.

social and political concepts within the semantic web of their construction (and reconstruction). This was in fact similar to Arendt's view that political concepts are intrinsically related to the political experience of those actors or spectators who coined them. Meanwhile, a recent study by Huhnholz which questions the "standard" interpretation of Koselleck's understanding of politics and the "political" in relation to Schmitt, Hobbes, and political tradition, also relativises Koselleck's own claim about the early direct influence of Arendt on him.

These works touch upon several themes that are of interest here: the Western tradition, its crisis, and modernity; rupture, repetition, continuation, and conceptual transformation; both authors' approach to the possibility of historical and political thinking after the rupture, and what conditions and concepts are available/needed for such an endeavour. This last common point is particularly important for this article, as both Arendt and Koselleck express the need for a new kind of political theory or "political science,"[6] in which conceptual thinking plays a crucial role.

The importance of the concept

Apart from Koselleck's monumental work on concepts in their historical dynamic, several approaches to the basic concepts of politics, conceptual change, and history exist within the European research tradition. The differences notwithstanding, they all proceed from either Heidegger's temporal dimension (historical and existential position) or the so-called linguistic turn, and identify some kind of break between the "old" and "modern" world as the origin of modern concepts.[7] In this context, Koselleck has the status of an undisputed authority on *Begriffsgeschichte* and international fame as a distinctive and original schol-

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[6]   Hoffman, "Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical Experience", p. 234.

[7]   For an overview, see W. Steinmetz, M. Freeden, and J. Fernández-Sebastián (eds.) *Conceptual history in the European space*, New York and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2017. The most known and viewed as different from Koselleck's position is the Cambridge School of intellectual history, which focuses on changes in the relation between speech and action. For the relationship between Koselleck and the Cambridge School, see Melvin Richter, "Reconstructing the History of Political Languages: Pocock, Skinner, and the Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe", *History and Theory,* 29 (1/1990). See also Kari Palonen, *Die Entzauberung der Begriffe. Das Umschreiben der politischen Begriffe bei Quentin Skinner und Reinhart Koselleck*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2004 and *The Struggle with Time: A Conceptual History of 'Politics' as an Activity*, Münster, LIT Verlag, 2014.

ar.[8] At the centre of the research in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* lies the resolution of the old and the emergence of the (new) modern world through the lens of social and political conceptuality from 1700 to the 20th century.[9]

The heuristic framework of this work is Koselleck's hypothesis on *Sattelzeit* (saddle time) which explains the phase of transformation (between the 17th and 19th centuries) from the old paradigm to the formation of the modern paradigm of European concepts (in times of crisis) mostly in categories regarding the break in the traditional connections between the "experienced" (*Erfahrenes*) and the "expected" (*Erwartbares*).[10] The horizon of the "expected" (the future) starts to increasingly dominate the "experienced". The relation between the concept (*der Begriff*) and the conceptualised (*das Begreifene*) is inverted. The translocation from the topological into the temporal perspective and conscious de- or re-contextualisation helps to understand how the concept gains a constructive role in history.[11] Instead of one-meaningness, precisely historicity, politicalness, multi-meaningness, polemicalness, and conceptual change become preconditions for the study of politics, culture, and history.[12] The history of concepts is no longer an appendix to "social" history, but its driving force.

Koselleck's opus tackled a much wider range of topics than just the project of G*eschichtliche Grundbegriffe* and included philosophical and epistemological questions as to what history is. In his many essays he demonstrated the need for history and political science as two areas of scholarship to stay close together if we want to draw any "lessons" from the history of concepts (not from the "his-

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[8] The monumental work of Koselleck and his colleagues, accomplished over the course of several decades, comprises eight volumes of a dictionary of basic concepts (approximately 9,000 pages) covering 122 concepts or clusters of concepts such as revolution, state, rule, democracy, freedom, property, work, etc. See O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vols. 1–8, Klett-Cotta, Stuttgart, 1972–1997.

[9] *Cf.* Reinhart Koselleck, "Einleitung", in Brunner et al., *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Vol. 1, p. XIV.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. XV.

[11] Reinhart Koselleck, "Erfahrungswandel und Methodenwechsel. Eine historisch-anthropologische Skizze", in Christian Meier, Jörn Rüsen J. (eds.), *Historische Methode*, Munich, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988, pp. 13–61.

[12] Kari Palonen, "An Application of Conceptual History to Itself: From Method to Theory in Reinhart Koselleck's Begriffsgeschifte", *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought*, 1 (1/1997), pp. 39–69.

tory of ideas"). This close relationship that binds the history of concepts and their (socio-political) context represents one of the main points of intersection between Koselleck and Arendt.

A large portion of Hannah Arendt's work consists of conceptual considerations as well, although not systematically historically. Her accounts at first sight look almost anarchic, like a bricolage, "wandering thought", while rather "systematically" refusing traditional scientific methodology.[13] Arendt was, mainly for this reason, for a long time not seen as a "conceptual" author. Due to her exceptional knowledge of classical thought, the unusual liveliness of the argumentation in her texts, and the simultaneous intertwining of highly complex theories with a free style of writing, she was often perceived as a somewhat essayistic writer.[14] Arendt seems to make a similar move as Koselleck, who defines *Sattelzeit* and the crisis as decisive moments in the transformation of traditional conceptuality. Only that she puts forward a thesis about the "break in (political) tradition," which she historically locates in the total domination in the first half of the 20th century, while the break in theory preceded this. This becomes the negative starting point for thinking through the question of which modern concepts could frame an understanding of the new phenomena; whether these concepts still have a meaning at all, what consequences the break brings for our understanding of the basic concepts of politics (such as power, authority, violence, politics, bureaucracy, nation-state, imperialism, etc.) and how this affects our capacity for action. Arendt's understanding of politics (not of the "political") is

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[13] *Cf*. Antonia Grunenberg, "Arendt, Heidegger, Jaspers: Thinking through the Breach in Tradition", *Social Research,* 74 (4/2007), Hannah Arendt's Centenary: Political and Philosophical Perspectives, Part II, pp. 1003-1028. Steve Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Theory. Challenging the Tradition*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2011; Ernst Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking", *Social Research* (Summer 1977), pp. 160–182.

[14] Hans Jörg Sigwart, *The Wandering Thought of Hannah Arendt*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. It was, however, exactly this essayistic, experimental characteristic of her writing "style" that enabled her to translate the experiential dimension of her thought into meaningful conceptualisations and political thinking, taking into account the horizon of both actors and sufferers in political events. *Cf*. Wolfgang Heuer, "Verstehen als sichtbarmachen von Erfahrungen", in W. Heuer and I. von der Lühe (eds.), *Dichterisch denken. Hannah Arendt und die Künste,* Göttingen, Wallstein, 2007, pp. 243–257, and Ari-Elmeri Hyvönen, "The Janus face of political experience", *Arendt Studies*, 2 (2018), pp. 125–147. Not surprisingly, Koselleck's thinking of concepts too, apart from the Lexicon, is mostly written in the form of free style essays.

based on this retrospective view from the point of rupture (between past and future) and establishes a specific framework for the reformulation of other basic concepts.

In the following, I first elaborate on the importance of the break in tradition and crisis as an incentive for conceptual thinking in both authors. I note that in fact both Arendt and Koselleck consider multiple breaks in tradition and not just one. Then, I examine their understanding of *Begreifen*, how they link it to the experience of the rupture in tradition and how this relates to their understanding of politics and the political, i.e. to their specific political conceptuality. I conclude that there exists a common thinking space between Arendt and Koselleck concerning *Begreifen*: in spite of their different concepts of politics and the political, their thinking of the breaks in time and crisis can be read as complementary: especially their effort to return the responsibility for actions and concepts to the human sphere.

The break in tradition: thinking from the rupture in time

> *Totalitarian domination [...] which [...] cannot be comprehended through the usual categories of political thought, and whose 'crimes' cannot be judged by traditional moral standards or punished within the legal framework of our civilization, has broken the continuity of Occidental history. The break in our tradition is now an accomplished fact.*[15]

Both Arendt and Koselleck proceed from experience as a central category in their conceptual inquiries, and from there they both strive to understand the conditions for their respective subject of interest (primarily history in Koselleck and politics in Arendt).[16] Arendt's rethinking of concepts is based on her and others'

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[15] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future. Eight Exercises in Political Thought*, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1985, p. 26.

[16] Both authors base their considerations of politics and history on specific notion of experience related to the acting and suffering of human beings. In Arendt, "all thought arises out of experience" (Hannah Arendt, "On Hannah Arendt", in M. Hill (ed.)*, Hannah Arendt and the Recovery of the Public World,* New York, St. Martin's Press, 1979, p. 308). For Koselleck too, history is basically *Erfahrungswissenschaft*, the "science of experience," and deals with the experiences and expectations of those who act and suffer (Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2004, p. 256). On the notion of experience in both authors, *cf.* Hoffman; specifically re-

encounter with the totalitarian rule of the 20th century. After experiencing shock in the face of the atrocities committed by the German Nazi regime, she pointed to the difficulty in understanding totalitarian institutions with the means and concepts that were available in the social and political sciences. Her questions were: What kind of government is this? How to understand it? Do we have appropriate categories that can help us to think about it? The central phenomenon that prompted her thinking and attempt at an understanding (*Begreifen*) was the totalitarian institution of the extermination camp.[17] For Arendt, its organisation with the inversion of law and the total loss of meaning represents an ultimate novelty that marks the factual break in the Western political tradition. It provides a negative starting point for her questioning of political concepts. In the way this institution was set up, not only some groups became superfluous and were exterminated, but the human condition and crucial capacities themselves were at stake, such as plurality and capacity for action. That is why she considered such total domination to be "unprecedented", in spite of the fact that phenomena had previously existed that were similar and contained the elements that could lead thereto (such as colonial violence, racism, eugenics, genocide, etc.). Arendt noticed that, while the whole program of extermination involved an insane consistency, it could not be understood with the help of the given concepts and categories – that is to say, it eluded conceptualisations. It therefore represents the ultimate challenge to the social and political sciences and induces not only a crisis of understanding, but a crisis of the existing theories. While representing a "questionable accumulation of tradition," the avail-

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garding Koselleck, *cf.* Gennaro Imbriano, *Der Begriff der Politik. Die Moderne als Krisenzeit im Werk von Reihart Koselleck,* Frankfurt and New York, Campus Velag, 2018, specifically regarding Arendt, *cf.* Hyvönen, "The Janus face of political experience"; and Jonas Holst, "Retrieving Experience: On the Phenomenology of Experience in Hegel and Kierkegaard, Arendt and Gadamer", *Open Philosophy*, 2 (2019), pp. 480–490.

[17]   Arendt differentiated between concentration and extermination camps, which she considered "the most extreme form of concentration camps." Concentration camps "existed long before totalitarianism made them the central institution of government," and their specific was that they were not penal institutions intended for people who committed crime. Their inmates were those who "were deprived of their judicial person." This deprivation of the status was already the first step towards extermination which, according to Arendt, "happens to human beings who for all practical purposes are already 'dead'." Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, New York, San Diego and London, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994, p. 236. *Cf.* Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism,* London, André Deutsch, 1986, p. 286, pp. 300–302, pp. 437–459.

able political concepts (i.e. of power, authority, violence, etc.) start concealing instead of revealing the new phenomena and events.[18]

The reasons for this are twofold. First, there is a problem understanding what politics and the political were considered in the past, and what they became in the modern world – and this is connected with the way the whole tradition of Western political thought deals with political phenomena and events, while observing them from the point of view of the philosophical spectator (from Plato to Marx). That includes the question of whether the Western concepts of politics still reflect political experiences at all, or are just empty shells, and whether politics, from the point of view of political philosophy and the factual experience of extreme political violence in the 20th century could still be deemed to be an activity that can claim any meaning.[19] The break in tradition therefore took place in political philosophy, and in real history, while it is reflected in the crisis of conceptuality as well.

In political thinking, the break was, on the one hand, epitomised by those theories that turn the philosophical concept of the political (and historical) into the activity of social progress. Arendt devotes attention to the fact that traditional Western political thought very early turned away from the world of human affairs into the philosophical *vita contemplativa* and refused to take into account human plurality and the human potential for action – while modern philosophers returned to the political experience gained in the time of modern revolutions. That is why she deems Hegel's philosophy to be the most important consequence of the French Revolution and Hegel to be the author who "actually broke with the tradition, because he was the first thinker to take history [as a realm of human affairs, remark added by V.J.] seriously, that is, as yielding truth."[20] Meanwhile, when elaborating on the event of the French and subsequent revolutions, modern thinkers have again, according to Arendt, taken a step away from the concrete experiences of the acting people and revived the

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[18] For more on this, see Vlasta Jalušič, "Les éléments de la tradition en question: Hannah Arendt en ex-Yougoslavie et dans les États successeurs", *Tumultes*, 8 (30/2008), pp. 81–106. *Cf.* Arendt's early essays in German: Hannah Arendt, *Fragwürdige Traditionsbestände in politischen Denken der Gegenwart: vier Essays*, Frankfurt, Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1957.

[19] Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, New York, Schocken Books, 2005, pp. 93–204.

[20] Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Vols. I & II,* New York, Brace & Jovanovich, 1978, *Vol. II*, p. 45.

philosophical concept of the political. The result was the invention of the concept of world history as a single process in the philosophy of history, whereby they attempted to find "the law of history". This resulted in thinking about history in terms of (accelerated) processes and (social) progress.

Arendt therefore writes about several breaks: a) the gap that always existed between the past and the future as the existential human condition; b) the break that arose in the 18th century with modern political philosophy (already announced earlier by Machiavelli's political thinking) and took place in the occidental tradition together with the event of the modern revolutions (expressed in Hegel's philosophy); c) 19th century philosophy's break with authority, traditional values, and religion (in the works of Marx, Nietzsche, and Kierkegaard); and d) the break embodied by the 20th-century totalitarian event that she considered to be the "final" rupture and therefore the ultimate crisis. This last break can no longer be bridged by means of traditional concepts; it is irreparable and has become a tangible reality, an experience of confusion for everyone and therefore a politically relevant fact as well.[21] If politics, the state and its institutions, and so on, are capable of causing such horrors, and if the citizens are ready to participate, watching and/or ignoring it, what sense can these institutions make for the community at all?[22] How can people arrange political forms of living together after such break?

According to Arendt, this burden is the predicament of our time represented in the conceptual and political crisis, which will not disappear but remain with us.[23] This is not only a negative sign, but an opportunity as well, as it lays bare

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[21]   Arendt, *Between Past and Future*. She discusses the breaks in several other texts. i.e. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *On Revolution*, and Hannah Arendt, "Karl Marx and the Tradition of Western Political Thought", *Social Research*, 69 (2/2002), pp. 273–319, to mention just a few.

[22]   Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*.

[23]   Jerome Kohn, "Introduction", in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. xv. *Cf*. also Jakob Norberg, "Arendt in Crisis: Political Thought *Between Past and Future*", *College Literature*, 38 (1/2011), pp. 131–149. Not only Arendt, but also several other thinkers such as Walter Benjamin and Theodor W. Adorno noted that the 20th century wars and the emergence of totalitarianism with its culmination in Auschwitz represented a breaking point in history (*cf*. Barros, "Perspectiva sobe o tempo em Hannah Arendt e Koselleck", p. 185) and revealed problems that are inherent to Western modernity. Arendt, however, linked this break with the need to rethink how the whole tradition conceptualised politics and human action.

the automatic assumptions of the social sciences: "Every science is necessarily based upon a few inarticulate, elementary, and axiomatic assumptions which are exposed and exploded only when confronted with *altogether unexpected* phenomena which can no longer be understood within the framework of its categories."[24] For Arendt, the contemporary (conceptual) thinking about politics and existing institutions therefore needs to start from this rupture in the present and attempt to proceed "without banisters" (of tradition). It is worth noting here that Hannah Arendt – although she claimed that the tradition of political philosophy is responsible for our understanding of politics and political concepts (because it did not take seriously their key dimension of human action) – in her attempt to understand total domination focused primarily on concrete social and political analysis. This means, on the study of actual structures of power, apparatuses of rule, rather than deriving conclusions from theoretical models.[25]

Crisis, revolutions, and modern conceptuality

What in Arendt occurs as the rupture between past and future is represented in Koselleck by the phenomenon of crisis. Crisis originally implies a temporal dimension, and thus becomes a concept which, "in modern times, implicitly expressed a theory of time."[26] Moreover, crisis is one of the central concepts through which modern political conceptuality started to develop in the time between the 18th and 19th centuries (the so-called *Sattelzeit*), when the modern concept of time was born: "Crisis directs itself, as it were, toward the necessity of time to make itself comprehensible as a concept."[27]

In classical thought, crisis was connected with several domains (originating from medicine) and became a figurative expression for various kinds of uncertainty, risk, and the absence of continuity, which would provide a basis for explaining new events. With the *Neuzeit*, the concept becomes (together with some other sets of concepts) generalised and starts to crucially define an entire

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[24] Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 232.
[25] *Cf*. Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 98.
[26] Reinhart Koselleck, "Remarks on the History of the Concept of Crisis", in R. Lilly and J. Sallis (eds.), *The Ancients and the Moderns*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1996, p. 149.
[27] *Ibid*.

epoch and its events. Crisis articulates a growing consciousness of the existential difference between the way the world is experienced, and the expectations through which our intentions and anticipations about the world are formulated.[28] Despite the fact that this is a universal condition of active human agents, the gap between the experienced (past) and the expected (future) becomes even more pronounced during revolutions. To underline the situation of such a crisis of tradition, where one is all of a sudden confronted with an absolute novelty, Koselleck refers to the times of modern revolutions and cites Tocqueville: "I go back from age to age up to the remotest antiquity, but I find no parallel to what is occurring before my eyes; *as the past has ceased to throw its light upon the future, the mind of man wanders in obscurity*."[29] [Italics added by V. J.]

Arendt uses the same sentences of Tocqueville to emphasise the feeling of an absolute novelty and the rupture in historical time that occurred with the modern revolutions and the emergence of the concept of history. For both Arendt and Koselleck, revolution represents the key to understanding the modern experience of politics, history, and also to the novel perception of temporality. Like Arendt, Koselleck considers it a novelty that cannot be compared to any previous political event in written history. The keyword "revolution" represents a paradigmatic example for his study of the history of concepts (in addition to the very concept of "history") and it stands in his work as a kind of basis for his later monumental project *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.[30] In his elaboration of the notion of revolution, Koselleck relies on several authors, but also specifically refers to the book *On Revolution* by Hannah Arendt.[31] He too – like Arendt – summarises Karl Griewank's extensive study on the modern concept of revolution.[32] Despite the fact that they both proceed from the same moment of the break in

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[28]   Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 257.

[29]   Alexis de Tocqueville, *On Democracy in America*, cited in Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 31. These sentences are cited many times by both Hannah Arendt and Reinhart Koselleck when dealing with the phenomena and concept of time after the modern revolutions and the question of the tradition of political and historical thought. Arendt quotes it in her works *On Revolution*, *Between Past and Future*, *The Life of the Mind*, and Koselleck in *Vergangene Zukunft* (*Futures Past*) and *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*.

[30]   *Cf*. Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism*, p. 172 ff.

[31]   Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, Middlesex, 1990.

[32]   Karl Griewank, *Der neuzeitliche Revolutionsbegriff: Entstehung und Entwicklung*, Weimar, Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1955.

tradition (and the crisis that accompanies it), the understanding of this break and the role of the modern revolutions in it is different for each of the authors.

Koselleck treats the concept of revolution in the broader context of his conceptual investigations and connects it to a large extent with the results of his early reflection on the crisis.[33] There he attempted to explain the reasons for the crisis and therefore the rupture that occurred between the 18th and 19th centuries and which, according to him, continues to the present day. One of the key findings is that the deep crisis that took shape in the 18th and 19th centuries fuelled the tensions that arose within the absolutist state (from his viewpoint, already a typical modern state that pacified religious wars and introduced the principle of moral and religious neutrality, by which it dug its own grave, so to speak). It produced bourgeois society, understood as the "new world" and having global aspirations, while at the same time denying the old world, i.e. the absolutist state and its neutrality. The key political question of whether the apparatus of absolutism and its sovereign ruler will continue to rule, or whether the bourgeoisie of the new society will rule, is resolved by a revolution. Koselleck identifies two epochal events at the beginning and end of classical absolutism: at the beginning there were the religious civil wars that this state pacified, and at the end there was a different civil war, the French Revolution, which brought an end to the absolutist state.[34] The process of secularisation thus led to a specific dialectic, disastrous for the absolutist state. It was only with this event that the crisis became a constant companion of the modern age, and that European history, by pulling the whole world into a state of permanent crisis, became world history. In later writings, Koselleck analyses this spread and interaction of events in Europe and globally with Bloch's words: *Gleichzeitigkeit der Ungleichzeitigkeiten* (the simultaneity of the non-simultaneousnesses).[35]

In this constellation, a world of politics that is separated from morality becomes a constant object of criticism and, according to Koselleck, practically redundant. It is replaced by the critique developed by the philosophy of history and

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[33] Reinhart Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise: Ein Beitrag zur Pathogenese der Bürgerlichen Welt*, Munich, Pieper, 1973/1959. *Cf.* also Andrew Simon Gilbert, *The Crisis Paradigm. Description and Prescription in Social and Political* Theory, Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, 2019, pp. 61–103.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[35] Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism*, p. 159.

the constant revolutionisation of consciousness, and this becomes fatal to the political way of reasoning. This type of utopian political thought, due to a break in time, focuses on the future, and the imagined future increasingly begins to determine the way in which the political experience and thinking of the present takes place.[36]

Based on the split between politics (the corrupt absolutist state) and morality (the Enlightenment's philosophy of history, representing the ideology of the rising bourgeoisie), a specific "dialectic of the Enlightenment" and new historical and political terminology formed. Koselleck sees a connection between the critique of the Enlightenment that emerged and the growing crisis, and underlines that the critics were unaware of this connection: it was hidden from them in "images of the future" of the philosophy of history and the vision of the "single" history they adopted. The view of the possibility of a political solution to the crisis is therefore blurred: what obscures it is the Enlightenment concept itself. For Koselleck, therefore, the turning point that occurs with his version of the break in tradition represents the beginning of a kind of "ideal-type" of development that takes place from the Enlightenment and French Revolution onwards.[37] It is a historical movement of modernity, which only intensifies in the 19th century. Its characteristic is a critique with an exaggerated focus on the future, which produces the historical philosophical concepts which he later describes as *Bewegungsbegriffe* (movement concepts) such as "emancipation", "freedom", "revolution", and also "history". They are, on the one hand, connected with the idea that history and human development can be controlled and, on the other, with the belief in progress which went together with the then technological developments and the experience of temporal acceleration whereby experience and expectation increasingly diverge.

Koselleck understands this trend as dangerous and irresponsible political thought. He criticises political utopias due to their *Politikunfähigkeit* (inability for politics).[38] By focusing on the future, this "moralising" thought devalues the political present. He is also a sharp critic of the normativism of political theory,

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36 "In the crossfire of criticism, not only was the then current politics worn down, but in the same process politics itself, also politics as a constant task of human existence, dissolved itself into utopian future constructions." *Ibid*., p. 9.

37 Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism*, p. 98.

38 Huhnholz, *Von Carl Schmitt zu Hannah Arendt?*, p. 8.

which, according to him, makes a decisive contribution to pushing politics as an activity to the sidelines. From a different point of view, Koselleck then develops his conception of history as an open course that presupposes actors who contribute to its diversity, which consists of unpredictable elements. History cannot be "made" according to desires and utopian scenarios, but can only be "history in the plural."[39]

Arendt too, writes unfavourably about the philosophy of history, its "depoliticising" core and projections of world history developments – but not for the same reason as Koselleck. While being critical of projections of the philosophy of history and their utopian character, she maintains that, after the rediscovery of the human capacity for action in the French Revolution, the philosophers again turned away from the political experience. The event of revolution marks for her a different turning point regarding politics. She closely analyses several revolutions and discovers in them a temporary disclosure of politics and specific original political forms of power which usually disappear and which the spectator's gaze attempts to suppress ("the lost treasure").

Differently than Arendt, Koselleck remains profoundly critical/suspicious of any political revolution and rather rejects it as a civil war (with the necessary element of violence in it) – and instead further explores and re-describes other different uses of the concept.[40] Arendt re-describes revolution as a specific experience of action "in concert" and with a political foundation, and thus conceptualises it differently than other revolutionary thinkers (e.g. Marx, whom she sharply critiques). She warns against anti-political interpretations of revolution as merely a fight for power, and therefore civil war and violence.

This not only indicates the different attitude towards the concept and elaboration of the experience of revolution in both authors, but also a different understanding of political action and politics. While Koselleck understands revolution (in accordance with his analysis in *Kritik und Krise*) as occupying and the withering away of the state and politics,[41] Arendt sees the possibility of such

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39   See Koselleck, "On the disposability of history", in *Futures Past*, pp. 193-204, *cf*. Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism*.

40   Koselleck, "Historical criteria of the modern concept of revolution", in *Futures Past*, pp. 43–57.

41   *Cf*. Koselleck, *Kritik und Krise*, p. 101.

development only if revolution fails in the foundation of a new political constitution and for this reason takes the course of violence and ends up in terror. For her, revolutions are basically the foundations of new political communities (guaranteeing freedom) by acting in concert.

As a final point concerning thinking the break and crisis in both authors, it should be noted that Koselleck, unlike Arendt, and like many of his academic contemporaries in Germany, did not devote himself to research on war crimes, the Holocaust, and concentration camps until the 1970s. This perspective appeared only in his later work and is connected with his study of the dreams in concentration camps, researched by Hannah Arendt's close friend Charlotte Beradt.[42] His reflections turn out to be similar to Arendt's, at times even expressed in similar words; he speaks, for example, of a "loss of reality". Koselleck, like Arendt, maintains that the experience of terror cannot (really) be understood and sufficiently explained with the usual (causal) means and categories of interpretation. Due to the absurdity, extreme suffering, and loss of meaning experienced by the victims of terror, he, too, saw the Holocaust as a radical break in history which poses new, perhaps enormous, challenges to understanding and interpreting these experiences. Addressing this break by Koselleck could therefore, according to Olsen, be understood as a new *Sattelzeit*.[43]

Begreifen

"*To think history, remains a challenge, understanding (*Begreifen*) will always force us to rethink.*"[44]

Arendt and Koselleck relate their notion of concept (*Begriff*) to "understanding/comprehension" – and it is through this approach that their political and historical concepts are bound to the worldly (political and social) experiences. In

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[42] Charlotte Beradt, *Das Dritte Reich des Traums; mit einem Nachwort von Reinhart Koselleck*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1981. *Cf*. Koselleck, "Terror and Dream. Methodological Remarks on the Experience of Time During the Third Reich", in *Futures Past*, pp. 205–221.

[43] *Cf*. Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism*, pp. 265, 268.

[44] *Cf*. Reinhart Koselleck, "Begriffliche Innovationen der Aufklärungssprache", in R. Koselleck, U. Spree, and W. Steinmetz (eds.), *Begriffsgeschichten: Studien zur Semantik und Pragmatik der historischen und sozialen Sprache*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 2006, pp. 309–339, cited after Christian Geulen, "Reply", *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 7 (1/2012), p. 118.

German, they both use the term *begreifen* (to grasp) for what in English usually entails "to comprehend" or "to conceive". Yet the meaning of the concept of *Begreifen* gets lost in translation, especially its link to experience, if it is translated as "conceiving" while it is closer to "grasping" (*Be-greifen*).[45] What does the concept of *Begreifen* mean?

Arendt explains her basic notion of *Begreifen* that frames her "method" of political thinking in several texts, but the account is particularly condensed in the introduction to the *Origins of Totalitarianism*. It is closely related to her question of where one should start to think after the experience of the break in tradition, resulting in total domination and terror. She writes:

> Comprehension *(Begreifen)* does not mean denying the outrageous, deducing the unprecedented from precedents, or explaining phenomena by such analogies and generalities that the impact of reality and the shock of experience are no longer felt. It means, rather, examining and bearing consciously the burden which our century has placed on us – neither denying its existence nor submitting meekly to its weight. Comprehension, in short, means the unpremeditated, attentive facing up to, and resisting of, reality – whatever it may be.[46]

This explanation corresponds to what she said in different ways in several published texts and in her series of lectures "The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism",[47] the topic which became her main task when attempting to explain and differentiate the novelty of total domination (as she saw it) from tyranny. As stated above, Arendt's predicament was how to understand/conceptualise the novel phenomenon of total domination, which has, in her opinion, caused "the explosion of categories of thought and standards of judgement." Therefore, her main question was: "Where can appropriate categories be found to understand the nature of totalitarianism?" And her answer: "To understand the new form of government we have to understand anew, in the light of our

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[45] *Cf*. Geulen, *ibid*., Elías José Palti, "Reinhart Koselleck: His Concept of the Concept and Neo-Kantianism", *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, 6 (2/2011), pp. 1–20.

[46] Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. viii.

[47] Some of them are published in Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*; *cf*. Hannah Arendt, "The Great Tradition and the Nature of Totalitarianism", 1st lecture, New York, New School for Social Research, 1953 (Series: Speeches and Writings File, 1923-1975).

experience, the traditional forms and the experiences which they express. Experience of living together, of Men, not Man."[48]

In *Between Past and Future* and some other essays, Arendt presented her blueprint for understanding concepts as exercises in thinking that are strictly bound to events and phenomena in crisis (e.g. the crisis of education or culture, subsequently also the *Crisis of the Republic*). In *The Life of the Mind* she further worked on the notion of *Begreifen* from the perspective of thinking, willing, and judging – while asking the question of whether thinking could prevent evildoing – such as happened in the terror of a totalitarian regime. Concepts as "thought things" need to have the potential to find out the "sense" (*Sinn*, meaning)[49] of the matter and not just describe what and how a thing functions, etc. All concepts are linked to specific experiences and proceed therefrom (either worldly and sensible or the experience of thinking and understanding), and while they at the same time go beyond it, they also need to be referred back to it – in a different setting.

As the experience of action has special importance in Arendt's thought, her understanding – and therefore conceptualisation – of politics is in fact tied to it: one needs to take into account those particular moments in which politics as human action takes place. These events cannot be seen as "objects" of thought, but rather as temporal phenomena that appear as constituted by both those who are involved in them as well as by the "observers", those who are interested in political events and think, judge, and, finally, write about them. Therefore, political and historical science (both being closely related) are not merely "objective" sciences, but always already condition and "frame" political events both by narration about them and by their former conceptualisations. Thereby, they are in fact a part of the political phenomena. Arendt distinguishes between objectivity and impartiality. For her, political thinking, political science as she called it, is not just an "objective" weighing of events or measuring them according to pre-given concepts, but understanding and judging, which is never blindly bound to the existing criteria. It always to a certain extent "participates" in and belongs to the phenomenal nature of politics.[50]

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48 *Ibid.*
49 *Sinn* is usually translated into English as meaning, yet it relates to sense and senses.
50 *Cf.* Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking".

Arendt's notion of *Begreifen* is therefore specific: it is linked to formal conceptual questions, on the one hand, while on the other it is closely tied to rethinking concepts/events from the perspective of a specific experience. It is non-causal and inevitably linked to the capacity of imagination, which always comes to the forefront when we attempt to understand the actions and suffering of others (we can "think with" others and so practice what Arendt calls, with Kant, an enlarged mentality). Imagination helps us in "bridging the abyss" to others and is "part of the dialogue of understanding" while enabling us "to see things in their proper perspective."[51] Koselleck too – most vividly when writing on terror and dreams – underlines the role of the historian's imagination, who, in attempting to understand terror in the Third Reich, needs to use the means of fiction and not causal thinking or drawing on analogies.[52]

Political concepts need to disclose and re-construct the *Sinn*/meaning of a concrete event. If we look at one of the most difficult political concepts, the very concept of the political and politics, then understanding (*Begreifen*), if we follow Arendt, is definitely not a matter of establishing "truth" but of asking a question of *Sinn*/meaning (which is always temporal and concrete). Arendt, in her planned but never finalised book on politics (*Introduction to Politics*), looked into the *Sinn*/meaning of politics and not the "concept" of "the political" – although she reproaches the political tradition with never having a "concept" of the political due to thinking of Man in the singular and not the plural.[53] In this respect, Arendt's consideration is radically different from, for example, C. Schmitt advocating for the "essence" of the concept of the political, in which he then finds an emptied form of the "original" conflict between friend and foe, which is constantly repeated in various forms throughout history.

For Koselleck, concepts do not precede the way they appear in reality and are not defined *a priori*, without a link to the concrete, historical predicates that are attributed to them in concrete circumstances – therefore to what he terms "experience". Concept, differently than "idea", always contains a plurality of content.[54]

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51   Arendt, *Essays in Understanding,* p. 323.
52   Koselleck, "Terror and Dream".
53   Arendt, *Introduction to Politics*.
54   *Ibid.*, p. 11.

> A word can get one meaning [*eindeutig*] because it has many meanings [*mehr-deutig*]. A concept, on the contrary, must retain multiple meanings in order to be able to be a concept. The concept is tied to a word, but it is at the same time more than the word. According to our method, a word becomes a concept, when the full richness of social and political context of meaning, in which, and for which, a word is used, is condensed into one word.[55] [Translation by V.J.]

This description clearly shows Koselleck's distance from the legacy of the school of the history of ideas. Against the *aporia* between the clear content of the concept that enables an unambiguous definition and its changing discursive positioning within historical time, Koselleck accepted Nietzsche's maxim that "all concepts escape definition that summarize semiotically an entire process; only that which has no history is definable."[56] While they do not endure definition, concepts still – through their differentiation – bring about a certain unity of sense, and can, once they are generated, also be broadly employed and generalised. Through such process of differentiation, Koselleck arrives at a series of basic concepts and counter-concepts that are "purified" of sensuality and immediacy and are brought to a certain generality.[57]

For Arendt too, concepts are not definitions but reflect "living" judgements. To think conceptually is to differentiate. In *The Life of the Mind* she points to the fact that – from the perspective of thinking – concepts are linked to questions that arise out of lived experience. They refer, for example, to "What do we mean when we use this class of words, later called 'concepts'" – such as friendship, knowledge, courage, justice, etc.[58] With the help of the "answer of Socrates," she describes these concepts as "part and parcel of our everyday speech," yet "the most difficult for the mind to comprehend."[59] They get slippery when one attempts to define them, and their meaning is by no means stable. In fact, concepts are manifestations of thinking. When they are written down and defined,

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[55] Reinhart Koselleck, "Einleitung", in O. Brunner, W. Conze, and R. Koselleck (eds.), *Geschicht-liche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart, Ernst Klett Verlag, 1972, p. XXII; see also Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 85.

[56] Koselleck, "Einleitung", p. XXIII; Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 84, *cf.* Palti, "Reinhart Koselleck", p. 7.

[57] This still shows a considerable similarity with C. Schmitt's approach to concepts.

[58] Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Vol. I, p. 166.

[59] *Ibid.*, p. 176.

so that common opinion gets hold of them, they might become mere results of cognition – no longer related to experience, and therefore need to be treated in the light of new experience. When referring to language, Arendt writes: "All philosophical terms are metaphors, frozen analogies as it were, whose true meaning discloses itself when we dissolve the term into the original context."[60]

As stated by Palti, concept in Koselleck is "nothing but the very semantic web woven through the series of its changing definitions, which are deposited in it and become reactivated in the present uses of that concept."[61] While they have a contingent nature, concepts contain historical experience, and can, therefore, "make" concrete actions meaningful. They articulate and connect living experiences (and expectations) and also create new meanings. In order to grasp and think through long-term processes, conceptual history must therefore distance itself from social history. Concepts are "indexes of structural transformations" and retrospectively also "indexes of transformation in social experience."[62] Koselleck, like Arendt, avoided *Geistesgeschichte* either in the form of a history of ideas or in the form of a mirror history of material processes. His focus was the experience condensed in concepts and the theory invested therein.[63]

Both Arendt and Koselleck are (their criticism of philosophy of history notwithstanding) to a certain extent Hegelians when it comes to thinking of concepts and understanding/*Begreifen*.[64] Yet they are critical of any "system" and the immanent meaning contained in history, even if it discloses itself as a (dialectical) process.[65] The question they attempt to answer is: How can anything new in history emerge at all if there is pre-stabilised, also conceptual, harmony? How can

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[60]   *Ibid*., p. 104.

[61]   Palti, "Reinhart Koselleck", p. 11.

[62]   *Ibid*., p. 9.

[63]   "That the history is condensed/sedimented [*niederschlägt*] in specific concepts and it only becomes history in the ways it is grasped/understood/conceptualised at the time [*wie sie jeweils begriffen wird*] is the *theoretical premise* of the historical method that we use here." Koselleck, "Einleitung", p. XXIII [Translation 'compiled' by V. J.]

[64]   I do not have space for further discussion of this within the framework of this text. For an elaboration of Koselleck's concept of the concept of Hegel and neo-Kantianism, see Palti, "Reinhart Koselleck". For the Arendt-Hegel constellations, see Vlasta Jalušič, "G.W.F. Hegel", in W. Heuer et al. (eds.), *Arendt-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, Stuttgart / Weimar, Metzler, 2011, pp. 216–221.

[65]   Arendt, *The Life of the Mind. Vol. II.* B, pp. 39–51.

we understand (*begreifen*) that we are dealing with something new? For Arendt, this is only possible if we take into account the ability of humans to begin anew as a political capacity. For Koselleck, history represents a human "product" which is an open and contingent process and not a construction drawn by a transcendent demiurge.[66]

Crisis as a crisis and a moment to understand

"*For whenever in our own century revolutions appeared on the scene of politics, they were seen in images drawn from the course of the French Revolution, comprehended in concepts coined by spectators, and understood in terms of historical necessity.*"[67]

Koselleck sees the origins of "movement concepts" such as revolution, emancipation, freedom, history, etc., in the modern rupture between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation. These concepts, which are the result of a crisis, at the same time constantly generate it. The horizon of expectation, which is critical and moral at the same time, produces an anti-political effect and has a share in the "acceleration" of history and real time. The crisis reveals the impossibility of formulating a politics that would meet the real challenges. Arendt takes a step further and asks why philosophers and historians tend to construct anti-political concepts and think either in terms of analogies or in categories that (no longer) correspond to actual (political) experience. Koselleck's answer to this would probably be that they escape to the realm of morality (critique), ignore political experience, and with utopian thinking further increase the rupture between experience and expectation. Arendt's answer is that they jump into theory, a world that is elevated above politics and observed from Archimedes' point, and then they judge politics according to their theoretical or philosophical criteria – coming from the experience of thinking, not acting. They want to regulate the world from the point of view of the will – which reaches into the future and subsumes the concept of politics based on the model of ruling and ruled (in Koselleck's case, this would be essentially normative and therefore "moral" and not political).

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66   Palti, "Reinhart Koselleck", p. 12.
67   Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 56.

Both authors, therefore, question the responsibility of those who think of history, politics, and human agency, and discuss concepts. Koselleck, like Arendt, argues that thinkers who pursued a moral argument had no concept of politics, and that they contributed to the "incapacity for politics." He also addresses the critique of the Enlightenment philosophy of history to all those who subsequently, for example in the revolutionary tradition, perceived themselves as initiated into the laws of revolution, understood as a self-accelerating process (of history). They pursued, according to Koselleck, a conscious aspiration for leadership.[68] In other respects, he criticises the attitude of those who believe that it is possible to "make history" as something available and shows how well the historian Marx (in Ludwig Bonaparte's 18th Brumaire) understood the limits of the possibility of "making" history while he was shifting the horizon of expectation ever further into the future.[69]

Arendt too, criticises philosophers of will who attempt to rule instead of thinking. For her, the two different spheres of human experience (one arising from human action, the other from thinking) lead to two entirely different conceptualisations of politics. Arendt sets out to explore these experiences and the implications that they have for political thinking and action. The first is the recurring experience of acting people (who live through it spontaneously, at times when they act together), from which in history, according to Arendt, there always arise anew specific forms of power – and in *On Revolution* she shows this in the case of the councils. However, they – like a lost treasure – usually sink into oblivion. This decline is greatly aided by another experience, which conceptualises politics on the model of philosophical and/or philosophical-historical thinking. The thinkers who wrote of modern revolutions mainly did not create new concepts according to the political experience of the joint actions of plural people, but relied on the old ones, and restored, adapted, and redefined them under the conditions of a "broken" tradition (for example, the concept of revolution, the concept of authority). This is, according to Arendt, one of the reasons why the experience of the French Revolution repeats itself as if it were a general experience of revolution – through the produced conceptual frameworks of necessity, violence, and terror – and why revolution is rejected as automatic violence rather than political action that can create stable political communities in the

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[68] Koselleck, *Futures Past*, p. 54.

[69] *Ibid.*, pp. 201–202.

long run. The past experience of the joint actions of plural actors is not "immortalised" in memory through appropriate concepts, but is replaced by the results of the activities of observers-philosophers: it therefore appears as the result of (individual or collective) will and decisionism, whereby the stronger or weaker conflict of (sovereign) wills results in eventual conflict resolution/pacification. The meaning (not goal!) of politics is not freedom, it is rather understood as a means of ruling, governing, and managing "crises" (an oxymoron according to the original concept of crisis).

Koselleck's perception of politics is, as I noted earlier, substantially different from that of Arendt. While she understands politics as the joint action of equals, Koselleck, who proceeded from Schmitt's understanding of "the political", nevertheless relies on the original meaning of crisis and conflict. Even though he, through a specific anthropology, which he conceives as a condition for any history,[70] later forms a similar "basis" as Arendt in *The Human Condition*,[71] he nonetheless establishes a binary (and not plural) structure of the human situation.[72] He departs from Schmitt's essential conflict structure of the political and transforms it from the *Begriff des Politischen* (concept of the political) into the *Begriff der Politik* (concept of politics).[73] Despite the emphasis on human action and plurality, he sees politics primarily as an original split, crisis, and conflict[74] (as opposed to utopian projections of movement concepts). In order to achieve what is important to the community in the present, the political reconciliation of conflicts and realistic expectations are required. Palonen insists that it is precisely the preservation of variability, plurality, and conflict that is the key to Koselleck's temporal perception of concepts. This also makes it possible to understand conceptual change, rather than a kind of "anthropology" in spatial terms. He argues that besides Heidegger and Schmitt, Arendt too relies on anthropology and ontology, but not so Koselleck, who introduces the tempo-

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[70]   *Cf*. Imbriano, *Der Begriff der Politik*; Olsen, *Beyond utopianism and relativism*, p. 74.

[71]   *Cf*. Hoffman, "Koselleck, Arendt, and the Anthropology of Historical Experience".

[72]   *Cf*. Janet Coleman, "The Practical Use of Begriffsgeschichte", *Finnish Yearbook of Political Thought,* 3 (1/1999), pp. 28–40.

[73]   *Cf*. Imbriano, *Der Begriff der Politik*.

[74]   *Cf*. Timo Pankakoski "Conflict, Context, Concreteness: Koselleck and Schmitt on Concepts", *Political Theory*, 38 (6/December 2010), pp. 749–779.

rality of concepts rather than spatiality.[75] However, Arendt's understanding of political phenomena does not imply Palonen's emphasis, as it is by no means any kind of essentialism. Her *Sinn* (sense) and not the "meaning" (*Bedeutung*) of politics is temporal, not some eternally present essence. Even when she says that the *Sinn* of politics (as opposed to the thesis of politics as ruling and being ruled or conflict) is freedom, she adds that "its field of experience is action," so that freedom is not a given in terms of space, but "takes place" only temporarily, when people act together.[76]

That this move was, all the differences notwithstanding, well understood by Koselleck is obvious from his elaboration of Arendt's approach in his *Laudatio* to Furet, and the connection of his own thinking to these considerations. He emphasised that historical thinking must not abolish the political postulate of freedom: "The political postulate of freedom also has methodological consequences for *Histoire* [...]. *The human being is responsible for the choice of the categories*, by means of which s/he disentangles the history. It must be those which are also able to motivate and guide political action."[77]

Conclusion: The common thinking space

Despite the impression that each of them focused on the one main break between the past and the future, Arendt and Koselleck in fact both consider multiple breaks in tradition and not just one.[78] To repeat, the existential tension between the past and the future (between the space of experience and the horizon of expectation) is a key moment of the human condition for both. For Koselleck, the main conceptual change in modernity occurred with the *Sattlezeit*, the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution, and was later "supplemented" by the industrial and technological revolution and the "acceleration" of time. Arendt, as well, sees the French Revolution as crucial to *Neuzeit* and as the advent of the new temporality in which modern political conceptuality was born – yet not

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[75]   Kari Palonen, "The Life and Work of Reinhart Koselleck", *Redescriptions. Yearbook of Political Thought, Conceptual History and Feminist Theory*, 16 (1/2013), p. 219.

[76]   Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 145.

[77]   Koselleck, "Laudatio", p. 9, emphasis added by V. J.

[78]   One can agree with Palti, who problematises the thesis of a single break. *Cf.* Elias José Palti, *An Archaeology of the Political: Regimes of Power from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2017.

in accordance with the factual political experiences. Moreover, she too address-es the socio-technological development of the 19th and 20th centuries as leading to the process thinking and acceleration. Her main emphasis, however, is that the onset of totalitarian rule in the 20th century with the creation of extermina-tion camps created a factual and definite break with tradition. While Koselleck at first did not conceive the terror of the concentration camps as another break in tradition, subsequently, in the 1970s, he seemed to join Arendt in thinking about another turning point that occurred with the 20th century terror of the Holocaust.

Arendt's conclusion regarding the "difficulties of understanding" which occur when faced with the factual break in tradition is that one must unveil precisely the "burden" of incomprehensible experiences as the burden of our time. These events are only incomprehensible if the explanation is tied to the methodically constructed theoretical concepts that have lost their link with human capacities (and deeds and misdeeds). Therefore, even if one cannot objectively, by explain-ing the causal chain, describe concentration camps, one can still attempt to un-derstand them.[79] It is this "non-communicative" locus comprising the starting point of her thinking from which Arendt develops her specific approach to *Be-greifen* and political concepts. Koselleck comes very close to this when thinking about understanding the experience of concentration camps through dreams. Arendt calls *Begreifen* a "strange enterprise" that is always an attempt to ap-proach and utter what "is". It is not a theoretical procedure, but, so to speak, "the other side of action," "that form of cognition, distinct from many others, by which acting men (and not men who are engaged in contemplating some pro-gressive or doomed course of history) eventually can come to terms with what irrevocably happened and be reconciled with what unavoidably exists."[80]

She addresses the problems with contemporary political concepts not only in terms of the problematic of modernity, but as being inherent in the whole tra-dition, particularly due to the neglect of plurality, which makes it impossible to think politics from the perspective of active people. That is why the modern (transformed) concepts contain the questionable sediments that became radi-

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[79] Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 302, and Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking", p. 172.

[80] Arendt, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 321–322.

calised in the totalitarian rule of the 20th century and why their further use hinders an understanding of the new forms of government.[81]

Paradoxically as this may sound, it seems that the thinking of the breaks in time and crisis by these authors, with such different conceptualisations of politics, can complement each other. Koselleck thinks in terms of stable structures that can prevent conflict, war, and so on. Arendt thinks in terms of the formation of such structures, the actions that can establish them, and at the same time about maintaining the capacity to act as the capacity for freedom and peaceful=political interruptions of the seemingly automatic processes of society.

Koselleck's *Begreifen* is a radical reconsideration of historical thinking and the way we understand history. By determining human experience, plurality, and reciprocity as a condition of the historical process, he highlighted the need to think history and politics together. As Mehring wrote about his last work: "With the 'Begriffsgeschichten', Koselleck makes it clearer than ever before that his theory and method represent a normative and political claim of their own, aiming at a 'grasped history' (*begriffene Geschichte*), a clear historical picture. With Thucydides, Koselleck argues for a 'redescribing' (*Umschreiben*) of history: for a re-connection of exaggerated expectations to "experiences" and for historically controlled, justified expectations."[82]

If we look more closely, Arendt, in *Between Past and Future*, as far as history is concerned, also put it this way. Yet her elaboration of politics may seem more "utopian" in relation to what Koselleck offers us. Given the political experiences she draws upon and which sediment she has found in modern revolutions, she seems to imagine that human beings, who are endowed with the capacity for new beginnings, could strive for more than just "lower expectations" – although there might be times when this is needed as well in order to self-limit the burning revolutionary spirit.

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[81] Arendt points to the revolutionary movements after WW2, and their understanding of violence, power, authority, and revolution. *Cf*. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, London, Harvest, 1970.

[82] Reinhardt Mehring, "R. Koselleck: Begriffsgeschichten", H-Soz-Kult, 2006, https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-9137, accessed 24 April 2021.

For Koselleck, who sees politics primarily as a conflict and a dispute (a crisis), and considers revolution to be the multiplication of conflict; the issue is primarily how to calm it down, to ensure stability in the long run, and to link "excessive" expectations to concrete, more "realistic" experiences. It may seem as if Koselleck seeks to bring "morality" (and thus critique) back into politics; yet, not in a way that makes politics moralistic, but in such a way that people are able to make critical judgments about what constitutes "possible" histories – and the role of the historian is precisely to open up this horizon. Perhaps this is why Koselleck's "conservative" critique of moral "politics" can be read in parallel with Arendt's critique of "social" and "humanitarian" solutions to political problems (first in the French Revolution), i.e. solutions that can lead to violence. Both are therefore critical of the replacement of politics with morality (which, in their opinion, leads to terror). And they both, each in their own way, strive to achieve political solutions, and thus the "possible" (in politics and history). In short, for them, politics represents both the realisation of human potential (Arendt) and the possibility of formulating common realistic answers to burning questions (possible histories, Koselleck).

While this article cannot even remotely capture the complexity of the conceptual thinking of the two authors considered, I would like to conclude that the conceptual journeys through the breaks and crises on which they developed a distinctive conceptual thinking (*Begreifen*) – related to many similar questions – are both close and apart at the same time. We can also read Arendt and Koselleck as parallel and complementary authors: what Koselleck pursued in history is emphasised by Arendt in political thinking. Both focused on people's capacity to act and considered to be a key epistemological condition of the historical and/or political thinking of events and concepts, while at the same time linking history and politics into a key common goal: to return the responsibility for actions and concepts to the human sphere.

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Gorazd Kovačič*

Arendt's Break with the Liberal Imaginary of Society[1]

Introduction

The discourse on civil society and its relation to the state has framed the liberal tradition of political philosophy since Hobbes, and it spread especially between the mid 18th and mid 19th centuries.[2] Hundreds of authors participated in it, and the differences between their positions were always articulated through a re-structured account of natural human sociability and the relationship between civil society and the state. The theoretical discussion of this disappeared after the political authorities in Western countries were constrained by liberal con-stitutions and partial democracy (class and gender exclusive), and it was later resumed only sporadically as an attempt to articulate a programme of extra-in-stitutional opposition to authoritarian government. One of the cases of this was Gramsci's plans for an opposition strategy to maintain ideological confronta-tion within civil society, which he wrote while in fascist prisons. Another case is the Central and Eastern European anti-communist dissident movements from the late 1970s onwards, which articulated their oppositional practices using the concept of civil society.

The liberal tradition of political philosophy formed a particular imaginary of civil society to which some formal characteristics were ascribed. These enabled this philosophy to imagine civil society as a self-regulating sphere that could regulate its internal conflicts by itself and required only a minimal security state over it. This imaginary later entered the modern concept of society constitutive of the social sciences, and it was a signifier of a much broader field or set of

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2   John Keane, *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*, London and New York, Verso, 1988, pp. 36, 63.

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issues than that of the relationship between autonomous civil society and the limited state within the liberal tradition. It has also been adopted by functionalist sociology, as well as by Marxist utopian political discourse (which is distinct from Marxist theory and social analysis), where it has been projected into ideas about the future classless society.

The first part of the article analyses the formal characteristics attributed to civil society and the human activities within it by the liberal tradition of political philosophy. Given the limited space, this article will not go into the details of its key texts (with the exception of Locke, since he was the pioneer of the idea of the self-regulation of civil society), but it will use some of the receptions thereto in recent decades. One of them was John Keane, who in the 1980s theorized the ideas and practices of the CEE dissident movements using the concept of civil society and especially its distinction from the state.[3] The other two belong to the materialist critique of the liberal concept of civil society. The critique of Locke's political philosophy, written by Ellen Meiksins Wood,[4] placed property interests at the centre of 17th century political philosophical debates about civil society and the state. Foucault's critique of the liberal concept of civil society presented it as the basis of a new, biopolitical governmentality in modernity.[5] All three receptions similarly discovered the form of civil society imagined by the liberal tradition of political philosophy.

In the second part, the article presents and analyses the break in the traditional imaginary of the formal characteristics of (civil) society made by Hannah Arendt, especially in her writings on anti-Semitism and the other components of the genesis of the Shoah.

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[2]   Keane, *Civil Society and the State*.

[3]   Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*, London and New York, Verso, 2012, pp. 256–287.

[5]   Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. We understand Foucault's work and this book to be materialist, even though he has written much on the history of ideas, discourse, and mentality. His materialist understanding is that he ascribes to the practices of power the fundamental role in the development of human formations. Meanwhile, discourses are rather functions of practices of power and they are their research indicators, but not their source or even cause.

The concept of civil society in liberal political philosophy

John Keane was the key author who theorized the ideas and practices of the CEE dissident movements in the 1980s. He renewed the already abandoned theoretical discussion of the relationship between civil society and the state, and he saw its historical importance in placing limits on the power of the state.[6] He applied this early modern liberal perspective to socialist political goals and argued for a democratization of real socialism so that civil society and the state would be separate; the former would limit state jurisdiction, both would engage in socialist goals, and thus the result would be a democratic socialist state and a socialist-oriented civil society.[7]

Beginning with an emphasis on the separation between civil society and the state, Keane interpreted and periodized the development of the concept of civil society through its various modifications presented by key authors from Hobbes to Tocqueville.[8] According to Keane, the decisive break in the development or the moment of the modernization of the concept occurred when the term ceased to denote a form of government (one dedicated to respect for fundamental rights) and civil society began to be perceived as a sphere and an entity separate from state authority. Within it, people were said to relate to others in cooperation and grassroots association rather than through the agency of government.[9] Such a notion of civil society was the benchmark for limiting the power of government. Crucial in the imaginary of civil society was the idea that it was capable of effectively and justly governing itself, so that government interference with it was unnecessary. It was derived from theses about human nature enabling people to coexist peacefully and cooperate justly within civil society. The development and reinforcement of this idea can be traced in major authors from Locke to Paine. Its normative political consequence was the intensification of the demand for a minimal state.

In Hobbes's model of the security state, people still threatened each other in the state of nature, and there was no tendency in human nature towards peace-

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5   Keane, *Civil Society and the State*.
6   John Keane, *Public Life and Late Capitalism: Toward a Socialist Theory of Democracy*, Cambridge, etc., Cambridge University Press, 1984.
7   Keane, *Civil Society and the State*. Keane, *Public Life and Late Capitalism*.
8   Keane, *Civil Society and the State*, pp. 35–36.

ful and harmonious coexistence. Security was only guaranteed by an absolutist government, which created a condition for peace called civil society. Hobbes mentioned a private sphere within civil society where people could autonomously organize themselves into private associations, but he thought that this was only possible as long as the ruler guaranteed peace and the existence of civil society and as long as he or she did not prohibit certain associations.[10]

The idea of a natural tendency to cooperate and act in solidarity, which enabled the theoretical discourse on civil society as a self-regulating sphere, was developed by Locke in his *An Essay Concerning the True Origins, Extent and End of Civil Government*.[11] This idea was a prerequisite for Keane's modernization of the concept of civil society, although Locke articulated it not in his terminology but in his assumptions, which we will present a little later. Locke wrote about political and civil society as two sides of the same order. The notion of political community denoted the existence of authority, and the notion of civil society denoted the purpose of associating in order to keep property. The formal side or condition of living in civil society was subjection to the legal order provided by the authority, while the reason for interest in the establishment of civil society and civil government was the preservation of everyone's property. To this end, political authority was more efficient than individuals punishing violators in the state of nature.

In Ferguson's *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*,[12] civil society was not yet distinct from the state, but, similar to Locke, meant a kind of political order characterized by the rule of law and regular government. Within this order, increasingly efficient production and trade have been developing, and this economic progress has brought about the resulting "'civilizing' trends,"[13] but there was also an eventual regression, due to the hypertrophy of state administration and the decay of the sense of the public good and interdependence between

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[9] Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, pp. 36–39.

[11] John Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Origins, Extent and End of Civil Government", in *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2003, pp. 100–209.

[12] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, 5th ed., Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, Inc., available at: https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/ferguson-an-essay-on-the-history-of-civil-society , accessed 20 June 2021.

[13] Keane, *Civil Society and the State*, p. 40.

groups, which showed itself as the selfishness and hunger for honour among the rich and as clientelism and criminality among the poor. "[T]he loss of public spirit neutralizes [...]citizens' suspicion of power and thus prepares the way for despotic government."[14] Thus, civil society needs the administrative state, but economic processes in civil society as well as administration by the government "threate[n] citizen's civil liberties and capacity for independent association, thus undermining a *sine qua non* of life in civil society."[15] Ferguson's solution to this paradox was a republicanist one: he appealed to the reinforcement of public virtue through participation in civic associations, jury courts, and a conscript army, within what we now call civil society in the narrow sense, but within the broadly understood civil society of his day.[16]

Thomas Paine, in *Rights of Man*,[17] written in the shadow of French Revolution, called for the radical curtailment of the power of government in favour of civil society. He valued government as a necessary evil, always prone to despotism, and called for its reduction to a minimum. On the other hand, he valued natural society as an unlimited good. Paine had to make arguments that civil society is almost self-sustaining, without the need to subject it to the control of government. He developed them, in accordance with the form of the liberal tradition of political philosophy, from a certain perception of human nature. "[W]ithin all individuals there is a natural propensity for society: existing before the formation of states, this natural sociability predisposes individuals to establish peaceful and happy relations of competition and solidarity, based only on reciprocal self-interest and a shared sense of mutual aid."[18] "[F]ree and equal individuals living together on earth actively desire peaceful and cooperative forms of social life which are self-reliant and independent of state institutions."[19] A "felicitous coincidence of instrumental market interests and the love of others [...] predisposes individuals to live together harmoniously by exercising their natural rights of freedom and happiness within a civil society which is unhin-

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14   *Ibid.*, p. 42.

15   *Ibid.*, p. 43.

16   *Ibid.*

17   Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man: Being an Answer to Mr. Burke's Attack on the French Revolution*, 2nd ed., Indianapolis, Liberty Fund, Inc., available at: https://oll.libertyfund.org/title/paine-the-rights-of-man-part-i-1791-ed , accessed 20 June 2021.

18   Keane, *Civil Society and the State*, pp. 44–45.

19   *Ibid.*, p. 48.

dered by state institutions and recognizes only the rules of mutual respect, the satisfaction of interest and the safety and freedom of all individuals."[20] "Individuals tend to interact with others spontaneously, and this leads them to form interlocking and self-sufficient social networks emancipated from conflict."[21] In contrast to this idea, Paine claimed that the overbearing state was responsible for barbarism in the modern world, for the perpetuation of patriarchy, for nationalisms, as well as for the creation of class divisions, which he explained as the result of excessive tax burdens.[22] Paine therefore envisioned a self-regulating society in which government was not needed except to sanction individual offenses. The social assumption within which Paine envisioned modern society, overlooking the increasing inequalities within it, was a pre-industrial economy of competition between small businessmen who were both owners and workers. At the macro level, he envisioned a global, stateless civil society: an "international confederation of peacefully cooperating civil societies"[23] would limit the power of individual governments.

A close examination of Locke's second *Treatise of Government* makes it clear that he ascribed the possibility of the emergence of a self-regulating society already to the state of nature. He viewed this as a state of individuals' full freedom, sovereignty, and equality in their right to self-preservation. Natural law did not give individuals the authority to use arbitrary force or to appropriate another's property, but only the right to use personal and direct force against an aggressor and to claim damages.[24] Thus, exaggerations in penalties and compensation could occur, and a chain of revenge acts was set in motion. But such complications of the state of nature resulting in war were not a regularity. Locke understood the state of nature fundamentally as "a state of peace, good-will, mutual assistance and preservation."[25] According to him, the state of nature was neither a state of general war, as in Hobbes, nor a state of individual isolation and autarchy, but a state of a functioning and fully developed economy. Labour, the division of labour, the hiring of a labour force, and thus class relations, in-

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[20] Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, p. 45.

[21] *Ibid*., p. 46.

[22] Keane, *Civil Society and the State*, p. 45.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 49.

[24] Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Origins, Extent and End of Civil Government", pp. 102–103.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 108.

cluding the appropriation and distribution of property, in short, developed economic structures already existed in the state of nature, before the establishment of civil society and the legal state.[26] After property relations became a target due to increasing social tensions, as a result of the concentration of property and the lack of waste grounds on which non-owners could attempt their own projects of land appropriation through labour, owners established civil society to protect their property.[27] There are only a few fragments in Locke's second treatise that discuss these pre-civil society interests and the reasons for the establishment of civil society, while the major part of the essay argues at length about the rule of law as the essence of civil society after it was established.

Locke's installation of developed economic relations in the state of nature had two consequences. First, the state of nature was already a kind of society,[28] as it included the division of labour, trade, property, and class conflict. What was newly created by the establishment of civil society over these economic structures was merely centralized authority, with its exclusive right to use violent means, and the rule of law. And second, property and class relations were something pre-political for Locke, such that legal government should not interfere with them except to the extent necessary for the taxation required to maintain the apparatuses of a minimal security and rule of law state. Locke's key starting point, which was followed in the ensuing centuries by the notion of society as a self-regulating structure, was not his concept of civil society but his description of the state of nature, in which there was already a rich economic and social life and in which economic and property relations were not yet developed.

A materialist critique of the liberal concept of civil society

The Marxist tradition challenged precisely the assumption made by liberal political philosophy about the capacity of civil society to regulate itself justly. There was the core thesis that civil society was populated by *homo economicus* (although liberal thinkers also included non-profit, e.g. intellectual and religious, activities within it) engaged in competition and class conflict. A more

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[26]   *Ibid*., pp. 112–114, 118–119, 135–136. Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property*, p. 272.
[27]   Locke, "An Essay Concerning the True Origins, Extent and End of Civil Government", pp. 119, 121.
[28]   Explicit, for example, in *ibid*., p. 156.

fundamental assumption of this thesis was that civil society was a historical social formation. Whereas the entire liberal tradition, from Locke to Paine, derived its assumption about civil society's capacity for just and harmonious self-regulation from its ideas about human nature (these varied, but all denied the historical formation of human "nature" or values and tendencies towards action). Marx, on the contrary, based his theory (*inter alia*) on Hegel's realistic and historical description of civil society.

For Hegel, civil society was a historically formed realm. Within it there were the market economy and the other activities of private actors asserting their various and conflicting interests; the whole field was regulated by civil law. Within Hegelian civil society there were also various corporate associations and the public administration of social welfare. It was unable to resolve its inherent conflicts, fragmentation and injustices; only the supreme public authority was able to "synthesize its particular interests into a universal political community."[29] The state was to intervene in civil society to redress its injustices and inequalities and to enforce common interests defined only by the state as an agent of the mind.

Marx concretized Hegel's abstract description of the imperfections and contradictions in historically formed civil society with his analysis of capitalist class relations, recognized from the perspective of the proletariat and workers' movement. What liberal political philosophy conceived of as civil society was for Marx an element of bourgeois class society in which class exploitation takes place. In his view, bourgeois society – in its own imaginary – was split between the state sphere of abstract legal equality and the private sphere of civil society. Marx interpreted this split as ideologically functional, since it artificially dissected human life into a real man involved in production in the historically developed mode of production and thus installed in class-structured society, on the one hand, and an abstract citizen with abstract rights, which did not intervene in the structural injustices of capitalist society, on the other. The distinction made by political theory between civil society and the state was analytically fallacious for Marx because both "spheres" were overdetermined by capitalist class domination.[30] This should be analysed starting from the analysis of production and

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[29]   Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, p. 47.
[30]   Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right: Introduction* (html version), Marxist Internet Archive, 2009, available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/

class relations,[31] rather than from the relationship between the spheres of civil society and the state.

Keane acknowledged that Marx was right to warn of a blind spot in the early modern tradition of political philosophy, namely its "silence [...] about the forms of social power and exploitation,"[32] but for him the biggest theoretical problem with Marx and the Marxist tradition was the abandonment of the separation between civil society and the state. This disabled them of the possibility to ask theoretical questions about the role, limitations, and legitimacy of state authority, which was given by the liberal tradition, motivated by an awareness of the "dangers generated by concentrations of political power."[33]

Instead of developing such a discussion, the Marxist theoretical tradition was concerned with "a myth of collective harmony" and "a tendency towards the organic unity of society."[34] It manifested itself in two currents. One espoused the idea of the state's necessary withering away and a self-managing classless society, while the other argued that the community should rule over and abandon the existing class-based civil society, which was characterized by disorder, domination, and corruption. Practical manifestations of these two theoretical currents were self-management and state forms of socialism. Keane held that from the perspective of the liberal separation of civil society and the state there was no crucial difference between these two currents and programmes, as both sought unification and homeostasis in society, and they only chose different ways to get there.[35]

However, this socialist vision of post-class social homeostasis is actually a continuity of the liberal imaginary. The difference was that socialist thought projected a possibility of social homeostasis in the future classless society after the revolution, whereas early modern liberal political philosophy presupposed it

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    marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/index.htm , accessed 20 June 2021.

[31] Karl Marx, *Introduction to a Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (html version), Marxist Internet Archive, 2009, available at: https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/appx1.htm, accessed 20 June 2021.

[32] Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, p. 60.

[33] Keane, *Civil Society and the State*, p. 64.

[34] Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, p. 52.

[35] *Ibid*., pp. 52–56.

already in the present society and even derived it from the state of nature and human nature. It could do so on condition that it disregarded the problems of class, race, gender, and other forms of domination.

A case of a more contemporary materialist interpretation of early modern liberal political philosophy was the critique of Locke and his theory of property and privatization as the core of claims on civil society and civil government written by Meiksins Wood in her book *Liberty and Property: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Renaissance to Enlightenment*.[36] Her social history of Western political philosophy, published in two volumes,[37] interpreted the development of political philosophical ideas and concepts from Ancient Greece to the Enlightenment as the result of struggles between groups with different class interests and sometimes also ideological, especially religious beliefs. She presented the polemics between different ideas about ruling and its limitations in a particular time and space, in correlation with the antagonisms between the exploiting classes with their different strategies for exploiting surplus value.

The political context of the development of English political philosophy in the 17th century was the civil wars between royalists and parliamentarians, and its social context was the rise of agrarian capitalism, which used fencing and the seizure of common land and drove peasants off it. State power was centralized, so the nobility turned to a new source of power, namely capitalized agricultural land. It defended its property interests through Parliament. The dual rule of royal authority and noble property emerged, and was formalized in a mixed constitution.[38] Cohabitation between king and nobility came into conflict from time to time, but gave way to firm cooperation when, from the 1620s onwards, the masses entered the political arena with their social demands (against fencing and for the old customary rights to use common land) and political claims (the extension of suffrage in favour of non-owners, or at least small property owners). The political mobilization of non-owners increased when Cromwell mobilized them in the Parliamentary Army. This sparked a theoretical debate about who constituted the "body politic", the ruling class in Parliament or the politi-

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[36] Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property*, pp. 256–287.

[37] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Citizens to Lords: A Social History of Western Political Thought from Antiquity to the Late Middle Ages*, London and New York, Verso, 2011. Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property*.

[38] Meiksins Wood, *Liberty and Property*, pp. 212–220.

cally awakened people outside Parliament.[39] The parliamentarians' answer was clear: "Citizenship could belong only to those who had the 'wherewithal to live of themselves'."[40] Meanwhile, Leveller radicals, such as Thomas and William Rainsborough and Richard Overton, produced a thesis on self-propriety over one's own body, and they carried from it their demand for universal and equal suffrage, for freedom of religious belief, for the primacy of access to means of survival over the inviolability of private property, and they maintained that the primary purpose of government should be the preservation of the person in addition to the preservation of property, which was the origin of the theory of the welfare state.[41]

Half a century later, Locke, in his argument against absolute monarchy, referred to the Levellers' premises, but with the intention of arriving at anti-democratic conclusions that entailed no threat to property or to the political monopoly of property owners in Parliament. He blocked the demand for the right to vote, which stemmed from the Levellers' thesis of consent, with his own thesis of "tacit consent,"[42] and he legitimized the existing ownership with his theory of privatization. This, according to Meiksins Wood, is the key to understanding the background of interests in Locke's political philosophy.

A consequence of the thesis of self-propriety was the right to own one's own products under natural law. The same law also limited the amount of seizure to how much one could consume. However, the subsequent spread of money changed this, as it allowed one to take more than one could directly consume. In addition, the money economy encouraged trade, improvements, and productivity growth, which led to an increase in the common stocks of mankind compared to the use of unimproved natural resources in the traditional economy. This, according to Locke, was the reason why those who were able to improve productivity and capitalize on natural resources were able to appropriate large portions of land as they also improved the welfare of others who could be employed on their farms, thus achieving a better life than through the traditional mode of production. From the ability to accumulate surplus value was derived

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[39] *Ibid*., p. 229.
[40] *Ibid*., p. 231.
[41] *Ibid*., pp. 234–238.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 264.

the right to privatize common resources and also other people's property, such as that of the natives, and it justified the inequality of property relations.

While the Levellers wanted to protect small property from large expropriators and separate wealth from political power, Locke theoretically secured property by grounding it in natural rights and conditioning it with capitalist competence, which was a new phenomenon at the time. He offered to non-owners living under a legal government symbolic representation in Parliament in lieu of their political participation.[43] He called such a social order civil society. The role of government, in his view, is to protect accumulated property, while a just and effective distribution of resources should be ensured through mechanisms of free exchange. Locke legitimized the wild agrarian capitalism of primary accumulation in England at the time as a society. He attributed to it the capacity for self-regulation, equitable market distribution, and thus spontaneous social harmony without state intervention. In this way, he not only depoliticized the class issue after it had already been politicized by the Levellers, but he also moved it beyond the horizon of moral philosophy. He eliminated the question of the sufficient accessibility of resources for all in the new order with the belief in progress, led by capitalist improvers. One solution to a possible shortage under capitalism was said to be more capitalism.

Another case of a materialist critique of the liberal idea of (civil) society was Foucault's analysis of civil society as an element of perfected modern governmentality in his 1978–1979 lecture cycle published under the title *The Birth of Biopolitics*. His starting point was the fact of ruling. The author was interested in the historical break between the sovereign and biopolitical modes of governing, which was accompanied by a break in the way liberal political philosophy thought about the limitations and efficacy of governing.

During the period of sovereign governing, legal-political theory was developing in polemics between supporters and opponents of absolutism. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the counter-absolutist opposition used a legal argument strategy in favour of limiting monarchical authority by discussing supposed pre-state natural laws and natural rights, and later by concluding a treaty establishing sovereign authority that would limit the king's arbitrary power. In the late 17th

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[43]   *Ibid.*, pp. 266–278.

century and in the 18th century, the opposition developed a different strategy, according to Foucault. Sovereign authority was to limit itself regarding the economic dynamics among the ruled, as it could see labour and capital leaving after it had ruled too excessively, such as through excessive taxation or unreasonable regulations. Within this new theoretical strategy, the measure of governance was determined by political economy or economic growth. Foucault called this "new type of rationality in the art of government"[44] liberalism. The crucial trait of the new theoretical strategy was the separation between the realm that was supposed to be governed and another for which it would be more beneficial if "governing" left it autonomous. The second realm was called civil society or society, and it was perceived as separate from the state.

Foucault noticed that while in Locke's terminology civil society was still constituted by its state or legal ties and was identical to political society, in Ferguson's work a century later this was transformed into the view that civil society was a transhistorical given-ness and the result of human nature. This distinction, however, as we have already pointed out, was only a terminological one. The qualities that Ferguson ascribes to the state of affairs called "civil society" Locke had already attributed to the "state of nature," which would later be upgraded to "civil society." In Ferguson's civil society, within which, as within Locke's, there are "economic men [...] operating,"[45] social bonds are formed spontaneously, always and everywhere, and we are always already in society, so that it did not have to be founded at a particular moment.[46] According to Ferguson, "civil society assures the spontaneous synthesis of individuals" arising from "a summation of individual satisfactions within the social bond itself."[47] (Civil) society was reproduced as a spontaneous mechanics of interests. It acted as "spontaneous synthesis and spontaneous subordination," as "spontaneous bonding and spontaneous equilibrium."[48] Interference by the state in the spontaneously self-regulating economic development arising from society itself was not necessary and would also be counterproductive, since it would hinder the process of value production.

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[44] Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics*, p. 20.
[45] *Ibid*., p. 298.
[46] *Ibid*., pp. 298–299.
[47] *Ibid*., p. 300.
[48] *Ibid*., p. 305.

Keane designated the change in the concept of civil society in the 18th century as its modernization, and he interpreted the significance of this change as contributing to the arguments for limiting state authority. Foucault, meanwhile, was interested in a different aspect of this change of perspective, namely the new social power relations and governmentality arising from (civil) society itself, its hierarchies, its spontaneous division into subordinates and rulers, stemming from the social division of labour. He most of all assessed the significance of this change from the perspective of its function in creating a new liberal, biopolitical governmentality. As a theorist of power, Foucault in *The Birth of Biopolitics* was primarily interested in restructuring governance as a practice, rather than in the development of the philosophical discourse on its limitation.

The modern mode of governing, Foucault argues, co-opted the liberal strategy of political-economic restrictions over executive authority and thus began to perform governing in a new way. The realm of civil society was populated by *homo economicus*, who asserted his own interests. Among them, a mechanics of the market prevailed in which the government was not to interfere.[49] Liberalism took this up as a "new type of rationality in the art of government,"[50] or the new "governmental regime,"[51] or the new "method of government,"[52] or its new "technology."[53] It adopted the liberal political philosophy's demand for the separation of the "social field" into an area of governmental interference and an area of independence from it for the governed.[54] Governing within this new regime was carried out as forming the condition under which the governed could follow their interests.

Foucault highlights an example of the new principles of governance in the central part of the book in his analysis of the early theory (of the German Ordoliberals) and practice of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism did not mean the distancing of governance from the private sphere, but its active interference in it, so that it created market and competition mechanisms as the principle of regulation regarding various spheres of life. The object of interference was "society as such,

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[49]   *Ibid*., pp. 270–295.
[50]   *Ibid*., p. 20.
[51]   *Ibid*., p. 22.
[52]   *Ibid*., p. 13.
[53]   *Ibid*., p. 41.
[54]   *Ibid*.

in its fabric and depth"[55]; society was "the target and objective of governmental practice." More precisely, "the object of governmental action is [...] the social environment."[56] Governing was accomplished by shaping the social environment and the rules of the game in which men-as-businessmen were acting. There was "an environmental type of intervention instead of the internal subjugation of individuals."[57]

According to Foucault, the liberal political philosophy of the 18th century, which argued for a limitation of state authority, imagined *homo economicus* as someone who was and had to be an "intangible element with regard to the exercise of power."[58] Economic subjects alone entered into contracts to coordinate their mutual interests, while the entire economic world was unknowable to the sovereign, so that he or she had to let everyone act in his or her individual interest. The new, biopolitical governmentality took this into account, it adapted to the specificities of the economic field and economic subjects, and made civil society its object of ruling.[59] This new liberal governmentality "manages civil society, the nation, society, the social." Civil society is a part of the modern "technology of liberal governmentality."[60] Thus, society is "both [the] condition and final end"[61] of governance. In this new regime, *homo economicus* is no longer dependent on the old, sovereign type of governance, but he now "appears precisely as someone manageable" and "becomes the correlate of governmentality which will act on the environment and systematically modify its variables."[62]

The form of civil society in the imaginary of liberal political philosophy

What was the form of civil society (whether named "civil society", or "state of nature" as in Locke, or "nation" as in Smith[63]), what was the description of its presuppositions and characteristics within the imaginary of early modern lib-

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55   *Ibid*., p. 145.
56   *Ibid*., p. 146.
57   *Ibid*., p. 260.
58   *Ibid*., p. 270.
59   *Ibid*., pp. 286, 291–295.
60   *Ibid*., p. 296.
61   *Ibid*., p. 319.
62   *Ibid*., pp. 270–271.
63   *Ibid*., p. 298.

eral political philosophy? It consisted of features registered by both liberal affirmative reception, and Marxist critique, which we have described using the interpretations posited by Keane, Meiksins Wood, and Foucault.

The first formal feature of the imagined civil society in early modern liberal political philosophy was that it was presented as a sphere or an area. Human activities within this sphere were supposed to be different from those in the sphere determined by state authority. Only as a sphere could civil society be distinct, separate, and partially autonomous from government. Subsequently, it could also be conceived as an entity.

Second, since the fundamental demand of the liberal tradition of political philosophy after Hobbes was the demand for the limitation of state power, the tradition developed and sharpened its thesis about how people in the sphere of civil society lived and acted in a way that did not need much state regulation of their everyday lives. This was needed only to protect life and property from individuals who violated valid rules of living together in civil society. People were supposed to cooperate spontaneously, out of their nature, peacefully and fairly, to do business, to associate from below, and to practice solidarity, all without state paternalism. Conflicts of interest and tensions over differences between people were to be resolved through negotiation and coordination in civil society. The sum of these deals was the market, and their cultural condition was "civility". Civil society regulated itself almost without the state because of spontaneous market mechanisms and cultivated speech. Therefore, civil society was imagined as a market community.

Third, the human capacity for peaceful cooperation was assumed as a basic given-ness, secured by transhistorical "human nature". Consequently, since the forms of communication derived from this were seen as social, the basic state of affairs, called "civil society" by tradition, was always pre-given. This is why it was so difficult to think of a possibility of conditions and forms of (human) being outside of it.

Fourth, although early modern liberal political philosophy derived the supposed human propensity for peaceful cooperation from "human nature", it actually proceeded from certain social-historical presuppositions. This was a pioneering economic formation in which there were many approximately equally powerful

independent and thus free owners who were not yet constrained in their ambitions by the concentration of property, increasing inequalities, or scarcity of resources. Such circumstances were conceivable only at the price of overlooking structures of domination that stemmed from the preceding feudal social formation, later upgraded under early capitalism, or from colonial violence.

Fifth, the materialist critique of the liberal theory of civil society has perceived the members of the theoretically imagined civil society as *homo economicus* and has focused on analyses of real economic relations in concrete social formations. But these analyses, which have sought to undermine the liberal imaginary of harmonious self-management in (civil) society, should not be conflated with the normative notion of society in the Marxian utopic discussion of the future classless society, which denotes a situation in which humanity, and all the people, have self-realized their positive potentials.[64] Society was imagined there as a situation of "collective harmony" and "organic unity,"[65] similar to the imaginary of the liberal tradition. Both traditions shared the concept of (civil) society, with all the positive qualities and conditions attributed to it, in "human nature" as a normative ideal. The difference between them lay in the arguments and political claims for which they used this normative concept. The liberal tradition called for the limitation of state authority, while the Marxist utopian discourse called for the abandonment of class exploitation and alienation.

Arendt's break with the traditional imaginary of (civil) society

Arendt's conception of society, unlike the liberal and Marxist utopian traditions, was critical and negative. The author did not elaborate it explicitly anywhere in her work, so it can only be reconstructed through a detailed reading of her entire oeuvre, especially the texts in which she discovers all the "origins of totalitarianism" or the processes in modernity that together made the Shoah possible. I made such a reconstruction in my book *Proti družbi: Koncept družbenosti pri Hanni Arendt in meje sociologije*[66] (Against Society: Hannah Arendt's Concept of Sociality and the Limits of Sociology), where I applied the method of first

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[64] Mark Neocleous, "From Civil Society to the Social", *British Journal of Sociology*, 46 (3/1995), pp. 395–408.

[65] Keane, *Democracy and Civil Society*, p. 52.

[66] Gorazd Kovačič, *Proti družbi: Koncept družbenosti pri Hanni Arendt in meje sociologije*, Ljubljana, Založba Sophia, 2012.

registering all noun and adjective derivations from the lexical root of "society" with all connotations in certain contexts, then classifying them and checking for possible consistency among variants of usage.

Arendt's concept of society consisted of three different content complexes. 1.) Status inequalities and in this context especially the phenomenon of social climbing. 2.) Conformist behaviour, the performance of social roles, and assuming socially ascribed identities. 3.) The capitalist economic system, guided by the imperative of economic growth.[67] In order to understand how these three complexes form a conceptual whole, certain formal peculiarities in Arendt's concepts, especially those in her concept of society, should be taken into account.

First, Arendt understood society not as some kind of totality, but as something particular, to be evaluated relationally. She never denoted society as a kind of sociological integrated whole, which is then dissected into some sub-areas, but she used the concept in relations and oppositions to various other notions, such as politics, the public sphere, authenticity, the traditional way of life, worldliness, etc.

Second, the boundaries between society and its oppositions were not to be understood productively in spatial terms, but from an existential perspective.[68] It was about different ways of being determined by different senses (ger. *Sinn*).[69] Despite the author's explicit statements about society as a space, area, sphere,

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[67]   *Ibid*., pp. 143–170.

[68]   *Cf.* Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1982. Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996. Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of Her Political Thought*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994. Maurizio Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*, London and New York, Routledge, 1994. Vlasta Jalušič, "Hannah Arendt: Politika kot možnost", in Arendt, Hannah, *Vita activa*, Ljubljana, Krtina, 1996, pp. VII–LIII. Vlasta Jalušič, "Vaditi politično mišljenje v post-totalitarnih časih", in Arendt, Hannah, *Med preteklostjo in prihodnostjo: šest vaj v političnem mišljenju*, Ljubljana, Krtina, 2006, pp. 233–274. Jerome Kohn, "Introduction by Jerome Kohn", in Arendt, Hannah, *Responsibility and Judgement*, New York, Schocken Books, 2003, pp. vii–xxix. Dana Villa, *Public Freedom*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2008. Ernst Vollrath, "Hannah Arendt and the Method of Political Thinking", *Social Research*, 44 (1/1977), pp. 160–182. Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, Lanham, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003.

[69]   Kovačič, *Proti družbi*, pp. 111–114.

or even entity in the 5th and 6th chapters of *The Human Condition*[70], which have influenced the reception of her concept of society,[71] many other passages in her work justify a different interpretation: Arendt understood the distinction between the social and the non-social not through spatial metaphorics, but in a modal way.[72] The three modes of active life in The Human Condition, as well as her notion of sociality, were not determined by some separate locations, but by their different existential purposes and different modes of how we do things.[73] "Society" for Arendt was neither an entity nor a sphere, but a mode of being. Therefore, despite some sentences in which she uses the noun "society", it should not be understood as an entity or living being that guides people, but as a form of their activities.

Third, Arendt's basic historical ontological position was that what has happened in the course of history was merely possible – and not necessary – before its realization, and was not caused by social forces. It happened due to the human choices to act in a certain way or to refrain from acting against tendencies. Since Arendt always reckoned on a capacity for action, this means that what has happened, including social behaviour, was never predetermined and inevitable, but chosen. Just as "society" is not a totality, it is not taken for granted. Certainly, one of the major effects of sociality, especially in the economic sphere, is the diffusion of responsibility. Nevertheless, the alleged social determination that people will behave in what Arendt would call a "social" manner under certain circumstances is only a fiction of opportunists and conformists who have not taken responsibility for other people and/or for the world and have not acted against trends and social expectations. Society is not a creature, but only a constellation created and reproduced by our behaviour and by giving up the possibility of action against it.[74]

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[70] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 28–49.

[71] *Cf.* Passerin d'Entrèves, *The Political Philosophy of Hannah Arendt*.

[72] Pitkin, *The Attack of the Blob: Hannah Arendt's Concept of the Social*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 179–181, 282. Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 139–140. Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, p. 117. The places where Arendt understood the difference between society and politics spatially and ontologically were, according to Benhabib, the result of theoretical and interpretive slippages. (*ibid*., pp. xxxix–xl, 23, 123, 142–159).

[73] Kovačič, *Proti družbi*, pp. 22, 56.

[74] *Ibid*., pp. 161–170.

Fourth, Arendt consistently assessed society's mode of being as impoverished and the result of giving up or disabling the human capacities to assert equality, plurality, worldliness, and action. Its negative normative charge contrasted with the positive projections invested in it by the liberal tradition and Marxist utopian discourse. Arendt described the social mode of existence as reduced to a generic being, as subject to domination by natural and economic processes of immense collective reproduction in which individual life made no sense, or as compulsive conformity to the expectations of others.[75]

Fifth, when Arendt conducted her historical analyses of problems regarding status inequality, conformism, and the capitalist system to which her concept of society referred, her discussions of these phenomena were not descriptive but critical. It was a matter of from which and whose existential viewpoints Arendt thought about particular phenomena. Only by taking such critical perspectives into account can we understand her view on how people do something when they do it in a social way.

What were her critical perspectives and the contexts thereof in which she critically addressed historical events and processes within the three complexes of her use of the word "social"?

1.) In discussing status inequalities, there were several normative perspectives in her work whose historical subjects were Jews and members of other minorities. One was the perspective of political equality, which is disabled by social practices. The second one referred to the loss of one's self, one's original self-image and authenticity of existence,[76] which was the price social climbers had to pay for their compulsive conformity to the required social norms. The third perspective concerned the coercive nature of social phe-

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[75] *Ibid.*, pp. 111–114.

[76] Villa (*Public Freedom*, pp. 323–324) points out that unlike Heidegger, for whom authentic existence was solitary (the figure of the philosopher in his or her cathartic phase) or collectively unitary, for Arendt authenticity refers to the capacity for shared and pluralistic co-creation of the world, the public sphere, and action. This means that an authentic person is unproblematically integrated into relationships with others who recognize him or her (as well as themselves) as equal in dignity. For members of minorities, an authentic life does not mean clinging to their traditional folklore, but accepting and expressing their own identity without internalizing pressures to assimilate.

nomena and the suffering position of those subjected to the rule of class distinction. The final perspective within this inequality complex was, for Arendt, the possibility of ignoring and actively refusing social rules.

2.) Arendt discussed the issue of conformism primarily from three perspectives. Again, the Jews in modern times were the main historical point of reference. The first perspective was integrated into various historical episodes in her account of how social conformism hindered politicization and the struggle for the recognition of political equality. The second emphasized the loss of authenticity under pressure to assimilate. And the third was her stand in favour of a diversity of modes of human living as a fundamental value; this diversity was impoverished in the social conformist way of being.

3.) Arendt also assessed economic socialization in the process of capitalist re-production from the point of view of the diversity of human activities and modes of living. In *The Human Condition*, her main criticism of social being in the cyclical process of the economic reproduction of society was that it meant only something like a species life. Moreover, in several parts of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she warned of superfluity and of the possible destruction of whole groups of people and of nature if they stood in the way of the process of economic growth.[77]

Arendt's critical concept of society broke with the traditional liberal concept of society, which supposed human nature to be collaborative. This political-philosophical argumentation justified its demand for a field autonomous from state intervention, and its theoretical by-product was the idea of a spontaneously emergent positive society. Its modern derivative is functionalism in sociology. The Marxist opposition tradition has attacked this imaginary through critical analyses of class power relations in real societies, but it has also partially accepted this idea within its conception of a future classless society, which was a slip below the level of materialist theory and analysis.

Arendt's concept of society serves primarily as a negative qualifier of problematic modes of being. Its form is the complete opposite of the form in the liberal tradition. Society, for Arendt, is not a sphere but a way of life. According to

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[77] Kovačič, *Proti družbi*, pp. 143–170.

her, it is not harmonious and enabling of self-realization, but oppressive and self-suppressive, and it impoverishes the modes of existence that have specific human value, such as a creative or politically active life. Sociality is not something given, but is made possible by the renunciation of resistance to it. Besides all this, Arendt rejected a scientifically objective view of the field of the social, since she always wrote about social phenomena from a particular perspective that exposed a set of practices as oppressive. These were mostly epistemological perspectives of oppressed minorities, especially Jews in modernity. Arendt was above all a thinker of the social position of minorities.

This placed her work close to other critical epistemologies, such as Marxist, feminist, postcolonial, environmentalist, etc. However, there was a major blind spot in her theoretical system. Her critical judgements regarding the economic dimension of society, mentioned earlier, were only existentialist and not class-based. The reason for this is that nowhere did Arendt develop her own economic theory or accept any other that would enable her to understand in detail the capitalist economic processes and their effects such as the generation of property and income inequalities. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she addressed mainly the symbolic inequalities of status and rights, but not economic ones. In *On Revolution*,[78] she failed to properly interpret the political significance of high economic inequality, and she developed no sympathy for those who sought to bring the fact of their extreme lack of welfare into the public space as a political issue. She interjected the position that the prerequisite for constituting political equality was relative welfare equality, but did not examine when this was met and why it was often not met. It is precisely the asymmetry of political power that undermines the possibility of political equality and equal public engagement. Past cases of participatory republics, often admired in her texts, were nothing more than oligarchic republics in which participation was limited to members of owner classes.

Marxism deconstructed the early modern liberal imaginary of civil society by making analyses of concrete socioeconomic relations in the bourgeois period that differed markedly from idealistic descriptions of harmony in an abstracted civil society. Arendt's existentialist radicalism would be more convincing if she

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[78]   Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York, Penguin Books, 2006, pp. 49–105.

included the situation of non-owner groups, such as the poor, women, natives, and migrant workers, in her critical historical analyses.

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Lana Zdravković*

The Concept of Emancipation as Political Action (Marx, Arendt, Rancière)

Emancipation is one of the basic concepts at the junction of politics, philosophy, and political theory. This text attempts to rethink the concept of emancipation and how it is structured as political action, while describing its historical origins and how it is further understood by the three important political philosophers: Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Rancière. All three of them – specifically and with substantial differences – understand politics as a space for political action that leads to emancipation in the name of equality.[1]

In order to determine the historical origin of the concept in more detail, I will rely upon its elaboration within the school of "conceptual history" (*Begriffsgeschichte*), which deals with the historical semantics of terms and sees the etymology of and the change in the meaning of terms as forming a crucial basis for a contemporary cultural, conceptual, and linguistic understanding, "which allows us to detect the persistence, change, and novelty which are conceived diachronically along the dimension of meanings and through the spoken form of one and the same word."[2] Then I will, in greater detail, link this "pre-history" with Marx's, Arendt's, and Rancière's understanding of the concept of emancipation, and see how they differ and are related to each other. Furthermore, I will attempt to consider what theoretical conclusions about the concept of emancipation we can take from these relations.

I conclude with some critical questions regarding the different uses, understandings, and political potential of the concept of emancipation while taking into consideration the fact that concepts, too, have inherent political dynamics

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2   Maria Pia Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics: Struggles over the Semantics of Secularisation*, New York, Columbia University Press, 2013, p. 46.

*   Peace Institute, Ljubljana, Slovenia

that refer to their clarity, power, and use. I am particularly interested in how the concept of emancipation is perceived today, who the subject of emancipation is, what the method and final goal of emancipation is, and, finally, how this understandings can help us in the present time when it seems that we need emancipation more than ever.

Historical Overview of the Concept of Emancipation

The early conceptualisation of emancipation – as Reinhart Koselleck develops in his work – can already be found in antiquity.[3] Derived from *ē manu capere*, which literally means "to take from one's hand," *ēmancĭpo/ēmancĭpatio* in the Roman Republic was attached to the legal act that allowed the *pater familias* to release his son from father-related governance, enabling him to become independent and self-sustaining in a civil law sense *sui generis*. As a *têrminus téchnicus* of ancient Roman law, emancipation was therefore linked to a father's authority and the generational hierarchy: only a father could emancipate a son and not vice versa; emancipation could be – but not necessarily – allowed and certainly not claimed. So, at the very beginning, there is an absolute and obvious connection between nature and law.

Thus, in antiquity, emancipation takes place outside the political community, in the private sphere of the family. By widening its meaning in the Middle Ages, the concept gradually loses its special Roman law meaning of a one-layer legal act performed by the *pater familias* and becomes generally accepted as a mark of the naturally available condition of civil law autonomy after approaching the age of twenty-five years. Linguistic use of the expression, consequently, becomes more flexible.

Finally, during the Enlightenment, i.e. in the late 18th century, emancipation separates itself from the limited civil law understanding to be established as a philosophically, politically, and socially potent notion that gains a "revolutionary conceptual potential."[4] The crucial semantic novelty emerges. To that

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[3]   Reinhardt Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation: A Conceptual-Historical Sketch", trans. T. S. Presner, in Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002, pp. 248–263.

[4]   *Ibid.*, p. 252.

point, the strictly transitive use of the concept – which supposes an authority that can allow emancipation (according to the arbitrary will of that authority) – transforms into a reflexive one, which corresponds to the development of the Enlightenment's ideals that address an individual's capability to think and act. Impossible to imagine within the old Roman tradition, self-emancipation became crucial during the Enlightenment, meaning first of all self-liberation from any kind of authority. Since then, emancipation as a concept could not be understood without involving notions of exploiting, repressing, and disrespecting, therefore without an understanding of the existing condition as a condition of inequality that should (and can) be changed through resistance.

It was Jean-Jacques Rousseau, with his famous opening sentence of *The Social Contract* (1762): "[m]an is born free, and everywhere he is in chains,"[5] who gave the concept of emancipation a crucial role within the philosophical struggle for equality. For him, the transition from the "natural" to the "civil" condition is an inevitable slip into the condition of inequality that has to be faced within the political community. To emancipate oneself progressively means to completely abolish obedience, to appropriate unsuitable liberties as one's own, to break the existent rules. As self-empowering was excluded from the legal language, it had to be constructed against the law, norms, and customs. From then on, emancipation could not be imagined without the concepts of revolution, freedom (*Freiheit*) and equality.

Bringing into question the domination of both god and human allows for the construction of the thinking and acting political subject who finds his or her own liberation power only within him- or herself. Immanuel Kant, in his *Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment* (1784), was the first who sketched out the historical-philosophical dimension of that liberation which leads to independence. Even though he did not describe enlightenment as emancipation but rather as "man's emergence from his self-imposed nonage,"[6] he defined the capability to use one's own intellect without anyone's guidance as the ultimate political gesture. By making a separating line between the free (public) and pri-

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[5] Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. G. D. H. Cole, London, Independently Publishing, 2020, p. 3.

[6] Immanuel Kant, *"What Is Enlightenment?"*, trans. M. C. Smith, Columbia University Online Library, http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html, accessed 22 May 2021.

vate use of mind, and with the battle call *Sapere aude!*, he opened up the space for autonomous thinking and acting as a crucial condition for the emancipation process.

The French Revolution (1789) was one of the most significant events that emanates the idea of emancipation as a struggle against domination in praxis. Influenced by the philosophy of the Enlightenment and rationalist natural law, it put into force two basic liberal principles: freedom and equality. *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and of the Citizen* (1789) proclaims a single set of individual and collective rights for everyone to be universal and valid in all times and at all places, which is clear already from the first paragraph: "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only upon the general good." Inspired by the American Revolution (1765) and the *United States Declaration of Independence* (1776), which claims that "[...] all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness," it also linked the concept of emancipation and that of revolution as an important method of changing forms of governance into a more democratic one.

Since 1830 onwards, emancipation has been

> employed everywhere: first, in order to acquire individual and personal equal rights with respect to pregiven civil and legal conditions. Second, it was used for the purpose of making possible equal rights for groups: classes, social strata, women, particular churches and religious groups, entire peoples. Third, emancipation aimed at freedom of rule and equal rights for all of humanity, for the world, or for the emancipating time, as one could empathetically say then.[7]

But – and here Koselleck sees the limit of the concept – the more concretely the concept was linked to a certain group, the harder it was to achieve. Social, economic, religious, or natural obstacles, being hard to overcome in a purely legalistic way, were accumulated wherever Catholics, Jews, women, slaves, workers, etc., requested equality. Emancipation, in order to be effectual, thus needs to be thought as something that is a repeatable demand.[8] Hence, eman-

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[7]   Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation", p. 255.

[8]   Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics*, p. 140.

cipation is an obvious example of ambiguity that Koselleck claims is necessary for a concept to be clear. Marx, Arendt, and Rancière will offer different answers to that ambiguity.

However, it is clear that from the 19th century on, emancipation has established itself as an ultimate request to, in principle, abolish any kind of domination of people over people. Power can now only be accepted as the self-rule of those who are emancipated, and emancipation is increasingly understood as a process of liberation – from legislative, social, political, and economic dependences – which creates the hope that, by the abolishment thereof, there will be an era without domination (*Herrschaft*), which became the counter concept of emancipation. The concept gained the status and shape of a slogan, "a catchword, one that admittedly presupposed or evoked a minimal consensus about the equal rights of all human beings"[9] and that could be appropriated by the socialist viewpoint (in favour of common property as a potential means of abolishing economic domination), the liberal viewpoint (in favour of the rule of law and individual liberty), or by the radical-democratic viewpoint (in favour of the sovereignty of the people).[10]

In the following chapter, I will focus on the theorisation of the concept of emancipation in the works of Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Rancière, authors who were thinking about emancipation on different levels and to different extents, according to their understanding of politics itself, giving the concept a different place and value in their works but still taking it as an important concept for thinking politics, the political subject, and the political community.

K. Marx, H. Arendt, J. Rancière

K. Marx: Emancipation as Revolution

It was Karl Marx who took the concept of emancipation as a guiding concept for the class analysis of society and developed it as the central concept of the 19th century, contrasting it with the concept of domination and understanding it as the struggle of one class over the other in the name of generic humanity. "The claim that emancipation presupposed the critical question of domination was

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[9]   Koselleck, "The Limits of Emancipation", p. 255.

[10]   *Cf. ibid.*

brand-new and unique in the history of concepts, and it was Marx who gave it its full sense of disclosure."[11] Marx's potent theorisation made the concept of emancipation more comprehensive among the general population, who could recognise it as a potential framework to express their demands for equality at every (economic, political, cultural) level.

Already in his early text *On the Jewish Question* (1844)[12], where he critically approached *The Jewish Question* and *The Capacity of Present-day Jews and Christians to Become Free* by Bruno Bauer from the same year, Marx differentiates between political and general human emancipation, clarifying this distinction together with his critique of religion, arguing that Bauer is mistaken in his assumption that in a "secular state" religion will no longer play a prominent role in social life; we can see from recent history and the present how right he was. Political emancipation is subordinated to human emancipation, as it is an emancipation of bourgeois society from politics and the bourgeois state from religion, not of the human as such. "The political emancipation of the Jew, the Christian, and, in general, of religious man, is the emancipation of the *state* from Judaism, from Christianity, from religion in general."[13] However, this process, according to Marx, still does not bring about real human emancipation. "The limits of political emancipation are evident at once from the fact that the

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[11]   Lara, *The Disclosure of Politics*, p. 68.

[12]   A number of scholars and commentators regard *On the Jewish Question* as anti-Semitic; *cf.* Paul Johnson, "Marxism vs the Jews", *www.commentarymagazine.com*, accessed 22 May 2021; Joshua Muravchik, *Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism,* San Francisco, Encounter Books, 2003, p. 164; Hyam Maccoby, *Antisemitism and Modernity: Innovation and Continuity,* London, Routledge, 2006, pp. 64–66; Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites: An Inquiry into Conflict and Prejudice*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1999, p. 112; Edward H. Flannery, *The Anguish of the Jews: Twenty-Three Centuries of Antisemitism*, Mahwah, Paulist Press, 2004, p. 168; Marvin Perry, Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitism: Myth and Hate from Antiquity to the Present,* London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005, pp. 154–157. However a number of others disagree; *cf.* David McLellan, *Marx before Marxism,* New York, Harper & Row, 1970, pp. 141–142; Jonathan Sacks, *The Politics of Hope*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1997, pp. 98–108; Iain Hampsher-Monk, *A History of Modern Political Thought,* New Jersey, Blackwell Publishing, 1992, p. 496; Wendy Brown, "Rights and Identity in Late Modernity: Revisiting the 'Jewish Question'", in A. Sarat, T. Kearns (Eds.), *Identities, Politics, and Rights,* Michigan, University of Michigan Press, 1995, pp. 85–130; Wolfdietrich Schmied-Kowarzik, "Karl Marx as a Philosopher of Human Emancipation", *Poznan Studies in the Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities*, 60 (1998), pp. 355–368.

[13]   Karl Marx, *On the Jewish Question*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1844], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/jewish-question/, accessed 22 May 2021.

state can free itself from a restriction without man being really free from this restriction, that the state can be a *free state* without man being a *free man*."[14]

For Marx, political emancipation does not abolish alienation; on the contrary, it is exactly the omnipresent condition thereof. As it is about the emancipation of the state and not man; man lives alienated, from himself, from other people, and from the society in a politically emancipated state. "The perfect political state is, by its nature, man's species-life, as opposed to his material life."[15] As political emancipation supposes a rupture between state and society, it ruptures human life into two: the private one (the individual) and the public one (the citizen). Contrary to that, human emancipation means reducing the human world and relations to the human himself.

> *All* emancipation is a *reduction* of the human world and relationships to *man himself*. Political emancipation is the reduction of man, on the one hand, to a member of civil society, to an *egoistic, independent* individual, and, on the other hand, to a *citizen*, a juridical person. Only when the real, individual man re-absorbs in himself the abstract citizen, and as an individual human being has become a *species-being* in his everyday life, in his particular work, and in his particular situation, only when man has recognized and organized his 'own powers' as *social* powers, and, consequently, no longer separates social power from himself in the shape of *political* power, only then will human emancipation have been accomplished.[16]

Marx's concept of human emancipation is based on his critique of Hegel's understanding of the bourgeois modern state, which "makes abstraction of *real man*, or satisfies the whole of man only in imagination."[17] Through his critique of religion, he also constructs a critique of Hegel's metaphysics that idealistically claims that mind is capable of gaining universal conclusions that are completely independent of material experience, and, in general, of the mystification

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[14]   *Ibid.*

[15]   *Ibid.*, p. 161.

[16]   *Ibid.*, p. 180.

[17]   Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1843], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/, accessed 22 May 2021.

of Hegel's philosophy, "which descends from heaven to earth."[18] He intervenes with dialectical materialism, which flips the existing dialectics: "Life is not determined by consciousness, but consciousness by life."[19] If the nature of individuals depends on the material conditions, human emancipation is only possible by intervention into those conditions. Or, in the spirit of historical materialism, which is the application of dialectical materialism to society's historical development: "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."[20]

Marx conceives his dialectical materialism with his appeal "*that man is the highest essence for man* – hence, with the *categorical imperative to overthrow all relations* in which man is a debased, enslaved, abandoned, despicable essence."[21] Therefore, he cannot think human emancipation separate from the historical class analysis of capitalistic society, which is a society of inequality in which capitalists, as the ruling class, which owns the means of production, establish their existence by exploiting the working class or proletariat, which owns nothing except its own bodies i.e. the labour force. And as the "proletariat has nothing to lose but its chains,"[22] overall human emancipation can only be achieved by the proletariat's organised rebellion i.e. a revolution in which "the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie lays the foundation for the sway of the proletariat."[23] What is significant is that Marx almost entirely linked the concept of emancipation to the concept of revolution. As the ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, which are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, revolutionary ideas also emerge from certain material relationships.[24] Revolution is constructed as a class struggle of the pro-

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[18]   Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1845], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/, accessed 22 May 2021.

[19]   *Ibid.*

[20]   Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1852], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/, accessed 22 May 2021.

[21]   Karl Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.

[22]   Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1848], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/, accessed 22 May 2021.

[23]   *Ibid.*, p. 601.

[24]   *Cf.* Marx, *The German Ideology*.

letariat or "revolutionary class,"[25] but in the name of the liberation of the whole of humankind. The struggle of the proletariat as a "a class with *radical chains*, a class of civil society, which is not a class of civil society, an estate which is the dissolution of all estates, a sphere which has a universal character by its universal suffering and claims no *particular right* because no *particular wrong*, but *wrong generally,* is perpetuated against it,"[26] is the only struggle capable of achieving real universal human emancipation, as the proletariat "cannot emancipate itself without emancipating itself from all other spheres of society and thereby emancipating all other spheres of society, which, in a word, is the *complete loss* of man and hence can win itself only through the *complete re-winning of man*. This dissolution of society as a particular estate is the *proletariat*."[27]

In the spirit of the famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach – "Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."[28] – with the recursion to the generic notion of the human and its constitution as an emerging subject of his own history, Marx's concept of emancipation gains the character of a mundane-historical and philosophically deducted term of salvation that is constructed as revolution. Not just any kind of revolution, but the communist one: "Communism is for us not a *state of affairs* which is to be established, an *ideal* to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things."[29] The communist revolution is therefore an intervention in the material conditions of labour and Marx believed that economic change would bring equality as well. "The class making a revolution appears from the very start, if only because it is opposed to a class, not as a class but as the representative of the whole of society; it appears as the whole mass of society confronting the one ruling class."[30]

In that sense, the communist revolution differs from the bourgeois revolutions of the 18th century, where the bourgeoisie acted revolutionary in its struggle against the aristocracy and clergy, yet it replaced feudalism with capitalism and put itself, as the ruling class, into a counterrevolutionary role. That is why the

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25   *Ibid.*, p. 59.
26   Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*.
27   *Ibid.*
28   Marx, *The German Ideology*.
29   *Ibid.*, p. 41.
30   *Ibid.*, p. 47.

communist i.e. proletarian revolution is antibourgeois and in the first place social, as it supposes, above all, a radical change of the economic system, therefore, the abolishment of capitalism and not its transformation.

> The social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot take its poetry from the past but only from the future. It cannot begin with itself before it has stripped away all superstition about the past. The former revolutions required recollections of past world history in order to smother their own content. The revolution of the nineteenth century must let the dead bury their dead in order to arrive at its own content. There the phrase went beyond the content – here the content goes beyond the phrase.[31]

For Marx, communism differs from all previous ideologies as it is internally revolutionary, "it overturns the basis of all earlier relations of production and intercourse, and for the first time consciously treats all natural premises as the creatures of hitherto existing men, strips them of their natural character and subjugates them to the power of the united individuals."[32] Only in such a context can one completely emancipate oneself and achieve the state described by the motto: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need."[33]

Karl Marx made an important, complex, and comprehensive contribution to the history of thinking the concept of emancipation, as self-liberation from domination, exploitation, and inequality. In his early works, emancipation has an analytical meaning, while in the later ones it became a motive, programme, and the goal of human action. Still, his linking of human emancipation to historical class analysis, where the classes are understood essentially, does not give space for real universal human emancipation in a political sense. As his understanding of politics is economic in nature, he understands emancipation just as a social matter, overlooking that revolutionising the material conditions and seizing the means of production, thus changing the mode of economic production, does not necessarily lead to achieving political emancipation in terms of freedom and equality. This is what the next two thinkers will try to grasp.

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[31]   Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.
[32]   Marx, *The German Ideology*.
[33]   Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marxist Internet Archive, [1875], https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1875/gotha/, accessed 22 May 2021.

H. Arendt: Emancipation as a Precondition for Politics

Hannah Arendt does not develop the concept of emancipation exhaustively in any single work, but elaborates on it in several – including *The Human Condition* (1958), *Between Past and Future* (1961), and *On Revolution* (1963) – while relating it to concepts such as revolution, liberation, politics, action, new beginning, and especially freedom. Already in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), she is occupied with concern for rescuing human action and politics from what she, together with Kant, named "radical evil", i.e. the production of superfluous people and the abolition of plurality and humanity as such, which in her opinion is the goal of the totalitarian form of government, with the concentration camp as the paradigmatic place for totalitarianism.[34] Her understanding of the concept of emancipation needs to be seen in this light.

Like Koselleck, Arendt elaborates the concept of emancipation within the historical context and as a differentiated concept: as a quest for equality, rebellion against domination, and demand for justice. For her, emancipation is basically "liberation from" any kind of tyranny, while liberation and freedom are not considered to be the same. Opposing the liberal definition of freedom as "freedom of choice" or an act of "free will", she rather connects freedom with the radical equality of acting humans, which is her perception of politics as such. There-

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[34] Even though Arendt herself abandoned the concept of "radical evil" introduced in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and since the introduction of the book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963) she used the concept of the "banality of evil" to explain that thoughtlessness is rather banal than radical – and consequently most of her interpreters have done the same – Zoran Kurelić never gave up using the concept of radical evil, understanding it as crucial for her entire work. "Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism and concentration camps led her to believe that totalitarianism unleashed a type of absolute evil which is exactly the opposite of what human life is. This is why she calls it radical." (Zoran Kurelić, "Does the World Need Humanity", *Filozofski godišnjak* – Glasnik Instituta za filozofiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu, 21 (2008), p. 123) This kind of evil is the opposition of humanity as such as "the idea that everything is possible makes the end of humanity possible" (Zoran Kurelić, "Telos of the Camp", *Croatian Political Science Review*, 46 (3/2009), p. 151), and thus is always radical for Kurelić, who lucidly uses the concept of radical evil also for creative interpretations and theorisations of other contemporary phenomena in the field of politics, philosophy, and art (*cf.* Zoran Kurelić, "Raining Snakes", *Croatian Political Science Review*, 49 (1/2012), pp. 24–40; Zoran Kurelić, "From Hellholes to Hell: On Political Agency in Purgatory", *Croatian Political Science Review*, 56 (3–4/2019), pp. 137–153.). For an analysis of radical evil in Arendt and Kant, *cf.* Richard J. Bernstein, "Reflections on Radical Evil: Arendt and Kant", *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 85 (1–2/2002), pp. 17–30.

fore, for Arendt, freedom represents the crucial concept that enables the emancipation of people striving in political action. It is based on the human capacity to initiate the beginnings of something new together with others: "[t]he *raison d' être* of politics is freedom and its field of experience is action."[35]

Yet such moments of action – when freedom appears – are not very common in human history. Moreover, there are no guarantees that political action and thus freedom would appear at all – on the contrary, there is a tendency towards its extinction, especially with the emergence of elements of total domination. Politics as such is an inter-human phenomenon and also "infinite improbability,"[36] a kind of "worldly miracle"[37] only humans are capable of "producing" when they act together, which is a part of her wider conceptualisation of the human condition or *vita activa*.[38] One of the key works in which Arendt explores how politics as freedom emerges and constitutes a new beginning, a new government and its institutions, is emancipatory action, is her book *On Revolution*.

Through the analysis of two historically important revolutions, the American (1776) and French (1789) Revolutions, she rethinks the basic elements of action that bring about politics, at the core of which is the notion of freedom. For Arendt, revolution as a concept and event does not exist before the Modern Age (starting at the end of the 18th century); it is the only struggle that aims not towards liberation (negative freedom), as in the case of insurrection, but rather towards the constitution of a new political body (positive freedom). Unlike Marx, who distinguishes between social and bourgeois revolutions, for her the distinction between a political revolution whose aim is "freedom for all" and a social revolution whose aim is liberation from an oppressive government or poverty, is crucial. Contrary to Marx, who claims that the state apparatus and classes are to be abolished via revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, Arendt sees exactly the act of a new beginning, "an act of establishing" – constitutional act, permanent institutions, and the framework of the state as a key revolutionary

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[35] Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought,* New York, The Viking Press, 1961, p. 146.

[36] *Ibid.,* p. 170.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Cf.* Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958, pp. 12–17.

achievement guaranteeing the people's emancipation in terms of gaining and maintaining their rights – as political beings, i.e. citizens.

The most important thing in a revolution is thus the establishment of a new political body that guarantees freedom; the French Revolution did not succeed due to pressure arising from the misery of the people, while the American Revolution, having in mind the better economic position of the soon-to-be states, did. A problem arises, according to Arendt, if the core of the revolution is not liberation from tyranny, but from urgency; so instead of the people's misery and mercy for unhappy people, loving freedom is the only relevant aim of the revolution. As the goal of the American Revolution was to establish freedom and that the revolutionary government would found the republic through a constitutional assembly, Arendt understood the American Revolution, which resulted in the production of a constitution, as an example of a successful revolution. On the other hand, she criticised the French revolutionaries for transforming the quest for freedom and new political institutions into social question (economic inequality, poverty) – and, by doing so, sacrificing freedom to the imperative of urgency, i.e. necessity. As "the whole record of past revolutions demonstrates beyond doubt that every attempt to solve the social question with political means leads into terror, and that it is terror which sends revolutions to their doom,"[39] Arendt shows how the French Revolution ended up in Robespierrian terror or a "despotism of freedom"[40] instead of establishing institutions that should guarantee equality. The same critique applies to the concept of revolution of Marx – "the greatest theorist the revolutions ever had"[41] – as well as all the other revolutions that followed the French pattern and put urgency, i.e. necessity, foremost.

> No revolution has ever solved the 'social question' and liberated men from the predicament of want, but all revolutions, with the exception of the Hungarian Revolution in 1956, have followed the example of the French Revolution and used and misused the mighty forces of misery and destitution in their struggle against tyranny or oppression.[42]

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[39]   Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, London, Penguin Books, 1963, p. 112.
[40]   *Ibid.*
[41]   *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[42]   *Ibid.*, p. 112. Here we can also mention the "velvet revolution" and others that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which resulted in the end of "communist rule" in many countries around the world, including in Central and Eastern Europe. (*Cf.* Vlasta Jalušič

Arendt to a great extent developed her argument through a critical attitude toward Marx, with whom, in her opinion, our tradition of political thought – which had its definite beginning with Plato and Aristotle – came to a definite end.[43] In a polemic with three of Marx's well known claims, which she called paradoxes, i.e. "labour created man," "violence is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one," and the famous last thesis on Feuerbach: "the philosophers have only interpreted the world differently; the point is, however, to change it," she tried to show the great perplexities that he himself had anticipated and which remained insoluble according to his own terms.

> If labour is the most human and most productive of man's activities, what will happen when, after the revolution, 'labour is abolished' in 'the realm of freedom', when man has succeeded in emancipating himself from it? What productive and what essentially human activity will be left? If violence is the midwife of history and violent action therefore the most dignified of all forms of human action, what will happen when, after the conclusion of class struggle and the disappearance of the state, no violence will even be possible? How will men be able to act at all in a meaningful, authentic way? Finally, when philosophy has been both realized and abolished in the future society, what kind of thought will be left?[44]

Although Arendt understands Marx as one of the crucial thinkers of the "break in tradition" – together with Nietzsche and Kierkegaard – as regards those who have attempted to think against the Western political tradition, she claims that he has consciously overturned its hierarchy, and has finally fallen back to use its own tools.[45] Marx too, like Hegel, sees world history as a continuous process that is determined from the future, and by overturning Hegel he "jumps" from theory to action, from contemplation into work. However, according to Arendt, with this political action, he becomes more theoretical than ever. Like Koselleck, Arendt is critical of Marx's procedural way of thinking within the horizon of the philosophy of history and indicates how this eschatological perspective leads to violence, the acceleration of social "development", and to terror. Marx sees

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and Mirt Komel, "Misliti revolucijo po Hannah Arendt ali politična znanost o ustanavljanju novih oblik vladavine" (Afterword), in Hannah Arendt, *O revoluciji*, Krtina, Ljubljana 2017, p. 336.)

[43]   Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, p. 17.
[44]   *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[45]   *Ibid.*, p. 28.

the social revolution as the core of the emancipation of humans, while he considers violence – as a powerful emanation of the will – to be a crucial assistant in bringing about social change. Arendt was a great critic of that idea and the Marxist "glorification of violence."[46]

What she identifies as the biggest inconsistency in Marx's thought is that while he puts hope in a new human political actor, i.e. the proletariat, he pleads for the abolishment of the state, public space, and politics. On the one hand, he is planning for the social emancipation of labour and the working class (the whole society becomes a society of workers), while on the other he hopes to abolish labour as a necessity and establish the condition of liberation from labour and work. With this, according to Arendt, the core of revolution as an event in which – in modern times – politics as the free action of the many again emerges, is lost and replaced by the philosopher's lead. Instead, a society of labourers and consumers emerges, which does not have an interest in politics and human action. Against the Marxian hope that a free society of humans emancipated from wage labour and labour as such would be established as a special realm of freedom, an anti-political society of consumers replaces the society of labourers. Again, as before in the course of the Western tradition, political action is replaced by other modes of human activity and therefore put in danger of becoming extinct. She believed that in Marx's ideal society two different concepts, i.e. the classless society and the stateless society, are inextricably combined and because of that the abolition of labour is at the same time an abolition of politics. That is why she questions positing communism as the utopian goal of history, which can lead to a rule of terror.

Criticising the French Revolution, Arendt is also critical of Rousseau, who inspired it, maintaining that equality is not natural, people are not born free and equal, but they can become so within a political community where they guarantee the existence of equality to each other as responsible citizens. She contrasts the ancient and modern understandings of equality:

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[46] Arendt, *On Revolution*, p. 19. (For a more accurate understanding of Arendt's critique of violence and the distinction between violence and power, *cf.* Vlasta Jalušič, "Zmešnjava pri vprašanju nasilja: oblast in nasilje pri Hannah Arendt", *Časopis za kritiko znanosti*, 24 (180–181/1996), pp. 27–53.)

> Isonomy guaranteed equality, but not because all men were born or created equal, but, on the contrary, because men were by nature not equal, and needed an artificial institution, the *polis,* which by virtue of its *nomos* would make them equal. Equality existed only in this specifically political realm, where men met one another as citizens and not as private persons. The difference between this ancient concept of equality and our notion that men are born or created equal and become unequal by virtue of social and political (that is, man-made) institutions can hardly be over-emphasized. The equality of the Greek *polis,* its isonomy, was an attribute of the *polis* and not of men, who received their equality by virtue of citizenship, not by virtue of birth. Neither equality nor freedom was understood as a quality inherent in human nature, they were both not given by nature and growing out by themselves; they were, that is, conventional and artificial, the products of human effort and qualities of the man-made world.[47]

Drawing on the Aristotelian understanding of the relation between the human and the political and on the presupposition that it is only within a political community that human beings can realise a fully human life by distinguishing themselves through public action, she constructed one of her crucial arguments, i.e. that there is nothing natural about politics. In Arendt's view, we become equal only as political beings, i.e. members of a political community, that is, as citizens, and it is only by virtue of this artificial equality that respect for persons, regardless of who they naturally are, can be expected. That is why, for her, "the right to have rights"[48] is the most important emancipatory demand. Arendt thus considers political revolution to be the key political event of modern times, in which freedom as political collective action, representing a novel start in the human struggle for equality, could appear again. Emancipation, thus, can happen only if it is political and with the goal of creating a political community (state) among political subjects (citizens), who have the right to have rights.

J. Rancière: Emancipation as Radical Equality

Jacques Rancière is a radical thinker of emancipation who presupposes the equality of anyone with anyone else; his concept of emancipation requests

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[47]   *Ibid.,* pp. 30–31.
[48]   The concept is especially developed in the famous ninth chapter "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man" (within Part Two: Imperialism) in Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, New York, 1973, pp. 267–305.

thinking the whole of the political problematics in light of the equality-inequality relationship and, for him, emancipation is actually equated with politics itself; he speaks of the politics of emancipation as a synonym for politics as such.

Already in *The Ignorant Schoolmaster: Five Lessons in Intellectual Emancipation* (1987), part of his early "archaeological period," he developed the potent concept of emancipation based on the innovative method of "universal teaching,"[49] which allows teaching others something that you do not know – axiomatically presupposing that "all men have equal intelligence."[50] Claiming that emancipation means exactly "becoming conscious of equality of *nature*,"[51] Rancière turned the Cartesian formula of equality upside down. "Descartes said, 'I think, therefore I am'; and this noble thought of the great philosopher is one of the principles of universal teaching. We turn his thought around and say: 'I am a man, therefore I think.' The reversal equates 'man' with *cogito*. Thought is not an attribute of the thinking substance; it is an attribute of *humanity*."[52] Of course, it would be empirically wrong to claim that all intelligence is equal, but "the problem isn't proving that all intelligence is equal. It's seeing what can be done under that supposition."[53]

Intellectual emancipation – understood as a process in which the schoolmaster does not explain what is considered the ultimate truth and does not expect people to learn by purely repeating what they hear, but as a process of encouraging people to use and develop their own intelligence in their own way, and that is exactly why the schoolmaster can be ignorant – is Rancière's starting point for demanding political equality. "*Equality* and *intelligence* are synonymous terms, exactly like *reason* and *will*. This synonymy on which each man's intellectual capacity is based is also what makes society, in general, possible. The equality of intelligence is the common bond of humankind, the necessary and sufficient condition for a society of men to exist."[54] All his later politics of emancipation, which presupposes equality, rested on this possibility: "It is true that we don't

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[49]   Jacques Rancière, *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, trans. K. Ross, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1991, p. 18.

[50]   *Ibid.*

[51]   *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[52]   *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[53]   *Ibid.*, p. 46.

[54]   *Ibid.*, p. 73.

know that men are equal. We are saying that they *might* be. This is our opinion, and we are trying, along with those who think as we do, to verify it. But we know that this *might* is the very thing that makes a society of humans possible."[55]

In another early book, *The Nights of Labor: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth Century France* (1981), Rancière develops a critical polemics with traditional Marxist essentialisation of the class struggle, developing a new concept of revolution as not purely a revolution of forms of government (the political aspect) and the distribution of wealth (the social aspect), but a revolution within the distribution of the sensible, i.e. aesthetic revolution. In order to challenge this claim, Rancière invested a decade of his life in studying the neglected archives of the creativity of the 19th-century French working class. He confirmed his assumption that in the time envisaged for only reproducing the body for work, workers appropriated time that they did not have and used it for education, reflection, and imagination – for doing what was not intended to be done – and thereby emancipated themselves. By breaking certain rules of decency, which were supposed to apply to a certain class, by expressing a voice that was not supposed to be theirs, and by imitating gestures for which they were not supposed to have time, workers were expressing a rich political potential that was never noticed within the usual perception of the working class by Marxian theoreticians and historians. By showing that the working class has no special common denominator, that it is not such and such "by itself", Rancière is eager to claim that every emancipation emerges from breaking the rules of the dominant order.[56]

 In one of his later works, *Disagreement. Politics and Philosophy* (1995), a part of his "aesthetics of politics" project, he develops his thesis on intellectual eman-

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[55] *Ibid.*

[56] This critique of Marx will subsequently be more developed, as Rancière takes Marx as a crucial representative of the metapolitical understanding of politics, where "politics is understood as a lie about the reality that is called society" (Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. J. Rose, Minnesota, University of Minnesota Press, 1999, p. 83) and goes together with his critique of Marx's metapolitical understanding of emancipation as something that happens outside of politics. Rancière defines metapolitics as the scientific accompaniment of politics, which places itself at the ultimate position of truth and the only one that is able to see beyond ideology as "false consciousness" (*ibid.*, p. 85). Together with archipolitics and parapolitics, metapolitics, for Rancière, is just one of the three historical attempts of "political philosophy" to abolish politics itself (*cf. ibid.*, pp. 61–95).

cipation, understanding it as "a modern term for an effect of equality,"[57] which proclaims the "equality of anyone at all with anyone else,"[58] opening with that a certain "scandal of politics."[59] Emancipation is thus "political interlocution,"[60] where people understand each other as equal; it is a political situation that enables the "equality of whoever with whomever,"[61] which can arise anywhere and everywhere, but it is never given in advance and in any pre-given identity, situation, or category.

Starting from Aristotle's claim in *Politics* that man is a political animal because he has the power of speech to express thoughts (*lógos)*, unlike all the other animals that only use a voice to express pain or pleasure (*phōnē*), Rancière ultimately develops an understanding of politics as a conflictual (dissensual) process,[62] which even before enabling perception of the useful and the harmful, good and evil, the just and the unjust, inevitably enables the organisation of a *pólis* as a community of equals. Namely, *lógos*, which is giving orders, in the first place presupposes that those who have to obey understand those orders, so – and here is the initial contradiction – it presupposes the equality of those who obey with those who are giving orders. "Inequality is, paradoxically, possible only on the bases of equality, which undermines any natural order."[63] That is why disagreement as a philosophical concept, for Rancière is constitutive for politics itself. Politics for Rancière, therefore, emerges as a "constitutive wrong,"[64] when the poor, those without any virtue, demos, etc., or "part of those who have no part,"[65] require that they be considered an equal part of the political community.

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[57]   *Ibid.*, p. 51.
[58]   *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[59]   *Ibid.*
[60]   *Ibid.*, p. 74.
[61]   *Ibid.*
[62]   This is the core of his eighth thesis on politics, where he explains that the essence of politics is dissensus, not as a confrontation between interests or opinions, but as the distance of the sensible from itself. "The principal function of politics is the configuration of its proper space. It is to disclose the world of its subjects and its operations. The essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus, as the presence of two worlds in one." (Jacques Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics", *Theory & Event*, 5 (3/2001), p. 10.)
[63]   Rancière, *Disagreement,* p. 31.
[64]   *Ibid.*, p. 37.
[65]   *Ibid.*

> Politics does not happen just because the poor oppose the rich. It is the other way around; politics (that is, the interruption of the simple effect of domination by the rich) causes the poor to exist as an entity. The outrageous claim of the demos to be the whole of the community only satisfies in its own way – that of a *party* – the requirement of politics. Politics exists when the natural order of domination is interrupted by the institution of a part of those who have no part.[66]

Any regime of domination – defined by Rancière as "police"[67] – defines who is and who is not visible in the common space and if the voice that comes out of the interlocutor's mouth should be understood as meaningful speech or as noise – and, consequently, who should and who should not be included – "counted"[68], as Rancière puts it – in a political community's order. The essence of the police is not repression, but the distribution of the sensible.

> The police is, essentially, the law, generally implicit, that defines a party's share or lack of it. But to define this, you first must define the configuration of the sensible – in which one or the other is inscribed. The police is thus first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being and ways of saying; and sees that those bodies are assigned by name by a particular place and task; it is an order of the visible and sayable and sees that a particular activity is visible and another is not, that this speech is understood as discourse and another as noise.[69]

Politics, on the other hand, occurs as antagonistic towards the police and reconfigures the political space as a space of equals; it enables an encounter – which is never given in advance – between two different heterogeneous processes, the police logic and the logic of equality. Understood as an "open set of practices driven by the assumption of equality between any and every speaking being and by the concern to test this equality,"[70] political activity is "whatever shifts a body from a place assigned to it or changes a place's destination. It makes visible what had no business of being seen, and makes heard a discourse where once

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[66] *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[67] *Ibid.*, pp. 43–45.
[68] *Ibid.*
[69] *Ibid.*, p. 44.
[70] *Ibid.*, p. 46.

there was only place for noise; it makes understood as discourse what was once only heard as noise."[71]

Politics is thus possible only as a consequence of the emancipatory process, when those who are "not counted in a space of politics,"[72] those without a given name and thus invisible, take possession of speech, make themselves visible and perform an "improper counting of the parts of the whole community."[73]

> Politics exists because those who have no right to be counted as speaking beings make themselves of some account, setting up a community by the fact of placing in common a wrong that is nothing more than this very confrontation, the contradiction of two worlds in a single world: the world where they are and the world where they are not, the world where there is something 'between' them and those who do not acknowledge them as speaking beings who count, and the world where there is nothing.[74]

For Rancière, emancipation is – as also elaborated in *Politics, Identification and Subjectivization* (1995) – just a second name for politics itself. It is the process of a specific political subjectivisation, which presupposes the logic of heterology,

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71   *Ibid.*, p. 45. The amalgamation of the wrong and politics, as postulated by Rancière, is critically analysed by Jelica Šumič-Riha, who emphasises that the fundamental wrong, inseparable from politics for Rancière, is in fact another name for politics as such, which in fact does not allow any clear conclusion about the possibilities of the political in situations here and now (*cf.* Jelica Šumič-Riha, "Aisthesis Politike (Afterword)", *Nerazumevanje*, Ljubljana, Založba ZRC, 2005, pp. 187–188). A similar critique of the antagonistic image of politics in the light of the broader French post-structuralist and post-Heideggerian philosophical thought, which originates from Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida and is carried out within or in connection with Schmitt's understanding of the political, is developed also by Vlasta Jalušič (*cf.* Vlasta Jalušič, "Vaditi politično mišljenje v posttotalitarnih časih" (Afterword), in Hannah Arendt, Med preteklostjo in prihodnostjo: šest vaj v političnem mišljenju, Krtina, Ljubljana 2006, p. 259). For a direct comparison between Schmitt's friend/enemy and Rancière's politics/police distinction as constitutive of the political as such, *cf.* Panu Minkkinen, "Rancière and Schmitt: Sons of Ares?", in M. L. Lerma, J. Etxabe (eds.), *Rancière and Law*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2017, pp. 129–149.

72   Rancière, *Disagreement*, p. 25.

73   *Ibid.*

74   *Ibid.*, p. 42.

the logic of the other, the construction of the self as the other.[75] In other words, the process of subjectivisation is a process of disidentification or declassification.[76] Rather than the solid identity, it is *in-between*: between several names, statuses, and identities; between humanity and inhumanity, citizenship and its denial; between the status of a man of tools and the status of a speaking and thinking being. Political subjectivisation is the enactment of equality – or the handling of a wrong – by people who are together to the extent that they are between. It is a crossing of identities, relying on a crossing of names: names that link the name of a group or class to the name of no group or no class, a being to a nonbeing or a not-yet-being. It always involves an impossible identification, an identification that cannot be embodied by he or she who utters it.[77]

This is exactly why Rancière is critical of Arendt's implicit commitment to political capacity as a given quality or destination, which lies at the heart of her separation of the social and the political, public and private, freedom and necessity, which is precisely what is always at stake in politics for Rancière. This commitment to the idea of "pure politics," which is not to be contaminated by private or social life is, for Rancière, only another form of policing politics, or "archipolitics,"[78] as inherent in the traditional understanding of contemporary democracy, unable to think politics outside the *arche*, i.e. governance. With two examples, i.e. the question of the poor in *On Revolution* and the question of the stateless in *Origins of Totalitarianism*, Rancière criticises Arendt's political purism based on the opposition between two forms of life: one that is capable of politics, and the other only doomed to reproduction.[79] Although some pose the question of whether Rancière is "a closet Arendtian"[80] or describe him as an

[75]   *Cf.* Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identification and Subjectivization", in John Rajhcman (ed.), *Identity in Question*, New York and London, Routledge, 1995, p. 60.

[76]   *Cf. ibid.,* p. 67.

[77]   *Cf. ibid.,* p. 62.

[78]   Rancière, "Politics, Identification and Subjectivization", p. 63.

[79]   *Cf.* Jacques Rancière, "Who is the subject of the rights of man?", *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 103 (2–3/2004), pp. 297–310, and Mustafa Dikeç, "Beginners and Equals: Political Subjectivity in Arendt and Rancière", *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 38 (1/2013), pp. 78–90.

[80]   Andrew Schaap, "Enacting the Right to Have Rights: Jacques Rancière's Critique of Hannah Arendt", *European Journal of Political Theory,* 10 (1/2011), p. 37.

"anti-Arendtian Arendtian,"[81] as they both have in common opposition to understanding politics as domination, hierarchy, and governance, and "argue for a politics that overcomes determination through the purely social (economics, competition, life sustainment),"[82] the differences persist.

> Firstly, in Arendt's ontological understanding of politics, which is opposed to Rancière's dealing with the political as a process; secondly, in Arendt's understanding of the human as a speaking animal, whereas Rancière sees the human as a literate animal; and, thirdly, in Rancière's critique of political philosophical anthropocentrism, to which Arendt still professes.[83]

Moreover, Rancière's critique of Arendt's inability to recognise the political agency of the poor and the stateless points to "the vicious circularity of her conception of politics."[84] Thus, "whereas Arendt views 'the human' in human rights ontologically as a life deprived of politics, Rancière views 'the human' polemically as the dismissal of any difference between those who are qualified to participate in politics and those who are not."[85] Rancière's understanding of emancipation is radically different than Arendt's, as for her it is just a first (although crucial) step (liberation) toward politics (freedom), while for Rancière emancipation is already and simultaneously politics itself, which is manifested through the political action of a political subject (who is and can be anyone) and can arise anywhere and at any time.

For Rancière, thus, intellectual emancipation connects social and political emancipation, i.e. it is before and after them, it is their cause and consequence. Happening only in the name of a certain social or political wrong, i.e. the denial of the equality of a certain group, class, or individual, emancipation, the heterological enactment of the self as the other, is a process of counting the excluded one into the whole, which then always has universal consequences.

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81 Ivana Perica, "The Archipolitics of Jacques Rancière", *Krisis. Journal for Contemporary Philosophy*, 49 (1/2019), p. 16.
82 *Ibid.*
83 *Ibid.*
84 Schaap, "Enacting the Right to Have Rights", p. 29.
85 *Ibid.*, p. 23.

Emancipation as Political Action

We have seen how the concept of emancipation has changed over historical time from passive to active (reflexive), and since the Enlightenment and the French Revolution became the ultimate generator for achieving the liberal values of freedom and equality. As one of the key concepts that presupposes an understanding of politics as a process of constructing a political community of equals, it never occurs by itself, but is inevitably intertwined with human action. This self-liberating process presupposes that the action of any political subject is emancipatory only if it is oriented towards the idea of the equality of/for all. In other words, political action is emancipatory only if it is simultaneously particular (in the name of a certain group, identity, or individual) and universal. Koselleck warns that the more concretely the concept of emancipation was linked to a certain group, the harder it was to achieve emancipation. Marx, Arendt, and Rancière showed – with substantial disagreements, however – that emancipation can be achieved exactly through the politically constructed action of a certain group that has universal premises. Their different understanding of political action – as emancipation – derived from their different conceptualisations of politics itself.

For Marx, who thinks politics through economy, changing the modes of production is the ultimate emancipatory action which can (and should) be carried out by the oppressed working class. The social emancipation (revolution) of the proletariat is therefore for him the ultimate political action, which is revolutionary and leads to a classless society and the abolishment of the capitalistic production condition, but also to generic human emancipation. Leaving the social sphere outside the political conception as not only redundant but also harmful, Arendt on the other hand, understands politics as a space where politically active individuals and collectives act together, believing that only stable institutions (guaranteed by law, the constitution, and the state) of a political community established on non-violent principles guarantee freedom. Emancipation can therefore happen only as political emancipation (revolution) by political beings – citizens. Exclusion from citizenship is, for her, exclusion from politics. The sense of politics is the freedom that we experience through our activity. For Rancière, emancipation and politics are synonyms, so, for him, politics can exist only as a politics of emancipation, which manifests itself as the assumption of the equality of anyone with anyone else; this is the core of his conception

of intellectual emancipation (the revolution of the sensible). Politics is an encounter of two opposite processes, domination and equality, so it is always a *tópos* of a certain wrong. Unlike the proletariat or citizen, for Rancière, there is no certain pre-given name for the political subject as emancipation manifests itself as political subjectivisation, as a process of deindividualisation and declassification. Unlike revolution or the act of beginning, for Rancière, there are no protocols for emancipation prescribed in advance. It can happen anywhere and be done by anyone.

On the example of these three authors, we can see that thinking emancipation is a complex process combining social, political, and intellectual processes of self-transformation that leads to the transformation of politics as such. Social justice is necessary, but it does not necessarily lead to political equality. Political equal rights are necessary, but having rights does not always mean having the possibility (power) to exercise (enforce) them. The emancipation of women, refugees, Black people, or the working class can have universal consequences only if it leads to the abolishment or redefinition of the concept of patriarchy, nation state, racism, and capitalism/imperialism. Only in this manner can emancipation, although it happens in the name of some community, group, or individual excluded from the regime of equality, always be carried out in the name of the equality of everyone at the same time and in such a way that is always universal, no matter how particular it can be.

It seems that, in today's time, emancipation has become equated with equality and the struggle to achieve it on the social, political, and intellectual levels. As we are still facing patriarchy, racism, nationalism, and capitalism/imperialism, it remains a crucial concept in rethinking common life as a political life based on equality and the methods to achieve it. It is the basis for every political community and political subject. As identity is multiple, also emancipation could happen only as an intelligent and multi-layered process of combined social (equal payment, decent employment, no exploitation), political (equal rights), and intellectual (demanding to be treated equally in every sphere of life) emancipation. And the most important imperative of emancipation is that it is not enough if I am emancipated if not everyone is emancipated.

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Mirt Komel*

"To Act or Not to Act": Arendt, Hegel, and Shakespeare on Action[1]

μύθων τε ῥητῆρ᾽ ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων
Homer, *Iliad*, Book IX, verse 417 (9.417)

Introduction

This contribution links three unusually connected suspects in order to tackle the age-old – and at the same time perennially contemporary – question of human action, which is eminently at stake not only in the realms of politics and history, but also in philosophy, and, as a peculiar link between the two, in the institution and works of theatre, namely: Hannah Arendt (*Human Condition*), G.W.F. Hegel (*Phenomenology of Spirit*), and William Shakespeare (*Hamlet*).

Arendt, despite her constantly critical stance towards Hegel, especially regarding the issue of history, shows a striking resemblance to the latter's own conceptual take on action as the subject's outward enactment in reality; Hegel, conversely, despite his speculative take on politics and history, always understood action as something that can find its meaning only in relation to others, especially as regards the capital political issues of revolution and reconciliation; both, moreover, constantly employed metaphors taken from the sphere of theatre in order to depict action in all its dramatic, fateful, powerful, and unpredictable character – and that is why, in the final analysis, Shakespeare can function as a mediating link between the two, not only to show how action is represented in theatre, but also to show the very theatricality of action itself.

Now, I am well aware that scholars – past and present – disagree whether Arendt was "Hegelian" or not, but the true question, at least for me, is: Was Hegel an

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"Arendtian"? And, if I may show my cards in advance: Were both "Shakespearian"? And, moreover: Were all of them "Homerian"?

The issue of action in Homer's *Iliad*

Let me now, therefore, introduce the fourth author, with whom I will properly begin this discussion, in order to merge all three of our protagonists and their related topics of politics, philosophy, and theatre: Homer.

The poet of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* was – as is well known and leaving the "Homeric question" aside – not only not just "a" but rather *the* poet, but also, as Plato – this "poet among philosophers" – says in this regard in his *Politea*, the one who "provided the education (παιδεία) of Greece," and despite taking the side of Socrates in the "old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" against those who think that "in the management and education of human affairs it is worthwhile to take him up for study and for living by arranging one's whole life according to this poet," he nevertheless admits that Homer indeed "educated Greece," and, moreover, that he is "the most poetic and first of the tragic poets."[2]

Homer, as we can see, plays many roles at once: the poet of the first Greek epics; the "most poetic and first tragic poet"; the one who brought "education" to Greece; and therefore a practical man of wisdom (σοφός) and a philosopher (φῐλόσοφος) at the same time, since both terms were used synonymously, at least until the "quarrel between philosophers (φῐλόσοφος) and sophists (σοφιστής)," championed by Plato and Aristoteles against Gorgias and the Sicilian school of rhetorics,[3] which gained in popularity in classical Athens during the same time as Socrates' philosophy – both marking the decline of the ancient Greek πόλις – and thus philosophy chasing its own shadow.[4]

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2   Plato, *Republic*, trans. B. Jowett, London, Penguin, 2012, 606e1–5.

3   Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. D. Lee, London, Penguin, 2004; Aristotle, *On Rhetoric,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1991.

4   Cf. Barbara Cassin, *L'effet sophistique*, Paris, Éditions Gallimard, 1995. Jure Simoniti provides an interesting reading of Greek philosophy as a peculiar "restoration" of aristocratic ideals in the atmosphere of proto-democratic developments in post-Homeric Greece. Philosophy could, in one of its dimensions, be interpreted as a specific return to Homer: "In the precise moment, when society began to produce the first inklings of democratic movements, the *impulse* of truth, proliferating at its heart, became elitist and antidem-

If there is a point and a verse in Homer's epics where all of this combines, condenses, and clearly shows the link between politics, philosophy, and theatre, then it is the famous lines describing what the purpose of education was in the case of Achilles: to make him μύθων τε ῥητῆρ' ἔμεναι πρηκτῆρά τε ἔργων, a "speaker (ῥητῆρ', literally "orator") of words (μύθων, "memorable words"), and at the same time a doer (πρηκτῆρά, "practicioner") of deeds (ἔργων, "works").[5]

However, in order for words and deeds to become worthy of remembrance, an assembly is needed – ἐκκλησία, a "gathering of those summoned" – a public space where these words and deeds can be heard and seen, and consequently, remembered.[6]

Achilles, a man of action

Scholars of Hannah Arendt know the relevance of the above-quoted passage for her thought, as in *Between Past and Future* she uses these verses about Achilles, translated as "the doer of great deeds and the speaker of great words" (reversing the line and putting the "deeds" before "words" and redoubling the adjective "great"), regularly in order to show how the public space of politics is something that is made of political actions and speeches.

Such as in the following argument from the *Concept of History*, where she reflects on the distinction between πρᾶξις and ποίησις and then concludes that:

Implied in them, however, is one great and painful paradox which contributed [...] to the tragic aspect of Greek culture in its greatest manifestations. The paradox is that, on the one hand, everything was seen and measured against the background of the things that are forever, while, on the other, true human greatness was understood, at least by the pre-Platonic Greeks, to reside in deeds and words, and was represented by Achilles, the 'doer of great deeds and the speaker

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ocratic." (Jure Simoniti, "Javnost in filozofska invencija resnice," *Filozofski vestnik*, 34 (3/2013), p. 84).

[5]   Homer, *Iliad*, trans. S. Butler, Chicago, Chicago University Press, 2011; verse 9.416.

[6]   In this context, a perhaps not unimportant political footnote must be made, namely, that an assembly provides a public space for deeds and words to be heard and seen independently of any war being waged or not, or, to put it bluntly, a war cannot be waged without an assembly where strategy is discussed and decided, while an assembly can very well also be, and indeed is, called during times of peace.

of great words', [rather] than by the maker and fabricator, even the poet and writer. This paradox, that greatness was understood in terms of permanence while human greatness was seen in precisely the most futile and least lasting activities of men, has haunted Greek poetry and historiography as it has perturbed the quiet of the philosophers.[7]

As far as *political* actions and speeches are concerned, Arendt always contrasts them with violenc*e* and *violent* actions as their exact opposite, which is discernible, for instance, in the following passage from *On Violence*, where she says that the "idea of man creating himself is strictly in the tradition of Hegelian and Marxian thinking" and that "it is the very basis of all leftist humanism"; but if according to "Hegel man 'produces' himself through thought," for "Marx, who turned Hegel's 'idealism' upside down, it was labor," and although "one may argue that all notions of man creating himself have in common a rebellion against the very factuality of the human condition," still, "nothing is more obvious than that man [...] does *not* owe his existence to himself," and that, therefore, "what Sartre, Marx, and Hegel have in common is more relevant than the particular activities through which this non-fact should presumably have come about"; nevertheless, she concludes, "it cannot be denied that a gulf separates the essentially peaceful activities of thinking and laboring from all deeds of violence," and thus also between violence and "power, which springs up whenever people get together and act in concert, but derives its legitimacy from the initial getting together rather than from any action that then may follow."[8]

And as scholars of Hegel know, Achilles does not figure as prominently in his philosophy as he does in Arendt's political theory, but the Greeks, of course, do: in the *History of Philosophy* – as well as in the *Philosophy of History* – he repeatedly says that "among the Greeks we feel ourselves immediately at home," because the "Greeks were at home in the world": "If we were to have an aspiration, it would be for such a land and such conditions."[9] Moreover, and more specifically regarding the role of Greece in world history, in the *Philosophy of History* he says that

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[7]   Hannah Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, London, Penguin, 1963, pp. 45–46.

[8]   Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, London, Harcourt Brace & Co. Press, 1970, pp. 12–13, 52.

[9]   G.W.F. Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, trans. E. S. Haldane, Nebraska, University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 75.

> Greece presents to us the cheerful aspect of youthful freshness, of Spiritual vitality. It is here first that advancing Spirit makes *itself* the content of its volition and its knowledge; but in such a way that State, Family, Law, Religion, are at the same time objects aimed at by individuality, while the latter *is* individuality only in virtue of those aims. The [full-grown] man, on the other hand, devotes his life to labor for an objective aim; which he pursues consistently, even at the cost of his individuality. [10]

And the two embodiments of such a stance are precisely Achilles and his great admirer, Alexander, since he says that "the highest form that floated before the Greek imagination was Achilles, the Son of the Poet, the Homeric Youth of the Trojan War"; for Hegel, Homer is "the element in which the Greek world lives, as man does in the air," and the Greek way of life is "a truly youthful achievement"; Achilles, "the ideal youth of *poetry,* commenced it"; Alexander, "the ideal youth of *reality,* concluded it: and these youths not only supply a picture of the fairest kind in their own persons, but at the same time afford a complete and perfect type of Hellenic existence."[11]

As we can see already from these briefly dealt-with passages, Hegel shares with Arendt a fascination with the Greek ideal, both being well-aware of the break in tradition that the Roman Republic and the Catholic Church brought into world history; however, while Hegel stresses the main achievements of the Greeks in the fields of arts and philosophy, Arendt, of course, focuses more on the *political* experience and philosophy.[12]

Philosophy and politics are, for Arendt, on the one hand, mutually exclusive if philosophy is understood narrowly as "metaphysics" and philosophers as "pro-

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[10] G.W.F. Hegel, *Philosophy of History*, trans. J. Sibree, Kitchener, Batoche Books, 2001, p. 243.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 244.

[12] I think one does not need to stress the importance of the Greek *polis* for Arendt's political thought, and neither that of Aristotle's philosophy, but for a further clarification regarding Hegel's understanding of the Greek world as a world of beauty, let me again quote his *History of Philosophy*: "The Greeks stand between both these extremes in the happy medium; this therefore is the medium of beauty, seeing that it is both natural and spiritual, but yet that the spiritual still remains the governing, determining subject. [...] Thus, it is a free subject which still possesses that original unity in content, essence and substratum, and fashions its object into beauty. The stage reached by Greek consciousness is the stage of beauty." (Hegel, *History of Philosophy*, p. 76).

fessional thinkers," but, on the other hand, mutually interdependent if philosophy is understood broadly as *thinking* and philosophers as "thinkers," as becomes evident especially in modern times, where "non-thinking" – or the "lack of thinking" – was the precondition for the rise of totalitarianism as a new form of government that enacted one of the most fundamental breaks in the Western tradition of philosophy and politics alike.[13]

Achilles, a man of inaction

Finally, as scholars of Shakespeare know, he reworked many a mythological history from Antiquity at large, for obvious reasons mostly preferring Roman history (*Julius Caesar, Antony and Cleopatra*) since it did not reflect itself in the form of tragedy as the Greeks did with Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, who dealt with pure mythology (*Prometheus Bound*) as well as history (*Persians*), and only once portrayed Achilles, who makes an appearance in his tragedy – or more precisely: *tragicomedy*[14] – *Troilus and Cressida,* where the hero is mocked in the dialogue between Cressida and Pandarus (Act I, Prologue):

> CRESSIDA
> There is among the Greeks Achilles, a better man than Troilus.
> PANDARUS
> Achilles! a drayman, a porter, a very camel.
> CRESSIDA
> Well, well.
> PANDARUS
> 'Well, well!' why, have you any discretion? have
> you any eyes? Do you know what a man is? Is not
> birth, beauty, good shape, discourse, manhood,
> learning, gentleness, virtue, youth, liberality,
> and such like, the spice and salt that season a man?
> CRESSIDA

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[13]   *Cf.* Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism,* New York, Harcourt, 1973; on the connection between the "evil of non-thinking" and the Arendtian concept of "(post-)totalitarianism", see also: Vlasta Jalušič, *Zlo nemišljenja*, Ljubljana, Mirovni Inštitut, 2010, pp. 17–56.

[14]   For a discussion of Shakespeare's mixing of genres in general and the overlap between tragedy and comedy in particular, see, *inter alia*: Gregor Moder, *Komična ljubezen: Shakespear, Hegel, Lacan,* Ljubljana, Društvo za teoretsko psihoanalizo, 2015.

> Ay, a minced man: and then to be baked with no date
> in the pie, for then the man's date's out.

Achilles himself does not refrain from mocking, but not as a man of action, but rather, as Homer in his *Iliad* and his followers from the *Epic Cycle* glorifying his "sacred anger" will it, as a man of *inaction*, which has, however, massive political consequences, since his refrain from fighting produces more violence than his return to battle does; Ulysses, king of Ithaca, who can be regarded as Achilles' "double" due to his use of wits and tricks instead of strength and violence – in answer to Agamemnon's question of "What is the remedy" to "[t]he nature of the sickness found"? – says the following (Act I, Scene III):

> The great Achilles, whom opinion crowns
> The sinew and the forehand of our host,
> Having his ear full of his airy fame,
> Grows dainty of his worth, and in his tent
> Lies mocking our designs.

The *Iliad* begins with Achilles' μῆνῐς, a word with Indo-European roots that links it with both the old Iranian *Avesta* (the collection of sacred Zoroastrian writings) and the old Hindu *Bhagavad Gita* (part of the *Mahabharata* epic poem) to the "sacred rage" of the god(s), which, however, in Homer presents an important political twist: as argued by Leonard Muellner in his *The Anger of Achilles: Mênis in Greek Epic*, "sacred rage" can be invoked by humans too, especially if they are demigods, as Achilles is, but at the cost of life; moreover, it consists not only of a psychological "anger" (dealt with especially well in tragedy on the stage with actors performing its psychological manifestation), but it also has a metaphysical dimension in the sense that it pertains to the "sacred" (an enlarged anger, so to speak, since the gods are part of it too), while its political precondition is that it must be politically legitimate in order to be invoked (so, no arbitrary, individual, capricious character is permitted); and, most importantly for our discussion, Achilles' "anger" manifests its peculiarity in the form of his *in*action, of his withdrawal from the affairs of man and his transition into the realm of the gods (together with all the consequences that follow).[15]

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[15]   *Cf.* Leonard Muellner, *The Anger of Achilles: Mênis in Greek Epic*, Ithaca (NY), Cornell University Press, 1996.

And both Arendt and Hegel took this issue to heart, considering inaction – the lack of action, if you will – as pertaining to action, as an essential part of action, both in terms of direct effects as well as responsibility for the consequences: think only of Arendt's conclusion in *The Human Condition*, with the Latin words attributed to Cato, *Numquam se plus agere quam nihil cum ageret, numquam minus solum esse quam cum sollus esset*;[16] or Hegel's dealing with the figure of the "beautiful soul" that does not want to "get dirty" with worldly affairs, in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*.[17]

I am dealing at length with this "negative" of action – namely its *lack* – in order to show that Arendt and Hegel have a very defined understanding of action that includes even its lack as an essential part, while still, however, and this will now be my main point, lacking a theoretically coherent definition of action.

Arendt and Hegel's theory of action

Action is, as we have seen via Homer, central to our two authors of preference, but surprisingly what both *lack* is a coherent theory of action: Arendt speaks of "human", "political", "violent", "individual", and "collective" action almost indiscriminately even in chapters or books that are dedicated entirely to the issue – such as throughout the whole *Human Condition*, where (political) *action* is opposed to *labour* (*Arbeit*) and *work* (*Werke*);[18] while the speculative best that Hegel produces in terms of an inner conceptual distinction is the one between deed (*Tat*) and action (*Handlung*) from his *Philosophy of Right*.[19]

Arendt in the *Human Condition* defines *vita activa* as "active life", in contrast to the *vita ontemplative* as "contemplative life", which is already discernible from the Latin wordings that the distinction is more "Roman" than "Greek" in its character, opposing, to put it bluntly, "theory" to "action".[20] Nevertheless,

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16   Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 325.
17   G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, trans. T. Pinkard, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp. 380–1.
18   Arendt, *The Human Condition*, p. 7.
19   G.W.F. Hegel: *The Philosophy of Right*, trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991, pp. 145–6.
20   *Cf*. Arendt, *The Human Condition*.

she, of course, at least starts by dealing with the old Aristotelian definition of the three ways of life from Book I of the *Nicomachean Ethics*:[21] one is devoted to pleasure (*bios hedonikos*), the other to politics (*bios politikos*), and the third one to theory (*bios theoretikos*), the main opposition being between politics and philosophy, as discernible from the later recapitulation in Book X.[22] Now, Aristotle's analysis is actually a copy of how Plato dealt with the same or a rather similar subject in the *Philebus*, where he distinguishes only between a "life devoted to pleasure" and a "life devoted to thinking," while opting for a "mixture of both," since either of the first two are impossible in themselves.[23] From here on and keeping this in mind, it is obvious why Arendt was, of course, more interested in Aristotle than Plato, and how it is precisely with this insistence on action that she reads – or at least understands – Aristotle together with Hegel. Arendt's innovation with regard to both Aristotle and Hegel was to add a critique of Marx to the mixture, since for her a life devoted to political action differs from a life of labour (*Arbeit*) that produces products through which one overcomes the necessity of living, on the one hand, and the creation of works of art (*Werke*) that are formed as enduring monuments beyond the necessity of everyday life, on the other.[24] Thus, the main and most important conceptualisation that she provides in terms of defining the nature of action is the rather explicit "Greek" distinction between labour (*ponos*) and creation (*poeisis*), which differs from action (*praxis*) in the sense that the latter is the only one that is an end in itself, while the others two are both instrumental, a mere means to an end: overcoming the mortality of biological life, and achieving immortality through the creation of worldliness, to put it bluntly.

Hegel also, so it seems, follows Aristotle, this time not in differentiating action from theory (this distinction is, according to him, made by those who have an interest in affirming either action against theory or vice versa), but rather by making a distinction in the milieu of action itself. Aristotle says in Book III of the *Nicomachean Ethics* that "as when you have let a stone go it is too late to recover it; but yet it was in your power to throw it, since the moving principle was in you," the ἀρχή or "principle" of an action – ἀρχή meaning "cause", "rea-

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[21] Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics,* trans. W. D. Ross, Kitchener, Batoche Books, 1999, 1095b17–19, p. 6.

[22] *Ibid.*, 1172b–1181b, pp. 163–182.

[23] Plato, *Philebus*, trans. D. Frede, London, Penguin, 2012, 27c–28b.

[24] *Cf.* Arendt, *The Human Condition,* p. 7.

son", and "beginning" at the same time – also defines the character or *ethics* of a man, since his or her repetitive action started somewhere, sometime, and caused someone to become as he or her is now, "but now that they have become so it is not possible for them not to be so": "It is from the exercise of activities on particular objects that states of character are produced."[25] Hegel re-baptised this "Greek" example by first quoting the old German saying that "the stone belongs to the devil once it is thrown,"[26] while at the same time enlarging Aristotle's definition of freedom of action by excluding women and slaves from the list of those unable to act freely – leaving "children, imbeciles, and lunatics" on the list – understandably, since slaves were abolished in his time, or rather transformed into workers, and women were already regarded as possessing the ability to think freely.[27] Apart from these cultural and historical curiosities and differences, the result of Hegel's inquiry is very similar to Aristotle's: *Was das Subjekt ist, ist die Reihe seiner Handlungen*, "what the subject is, is the series of its own actions," or more prosaically speaking by redacting the translation, *the subject is the series of its own actions*.[28]

Hegel, however, also brought something new to the table that neither Aristotle *could* nor Arendt *did* think, namely, the distinction between *Tat* and *Handlung*, between "deed" and "action": an action has "multiple consequences in so far as it is translated into external existence [*Dasein*]"; these "consequences, as the outward *shape* whose *soul* is the *end* to which the action is directed, belong to the action as an integral part of it"; thus, action is exposed to "external forces which attach to it things quite different from what it is for itself, and impel it on into remote and alien consequences," thus transforming "necessity into contingency and vice versa," so that from this point of view, "to act therefore means *to submit oneself to this law*."[29] And this contingency is precisely the reason why there is always already a tragic moment attached to action, a moment that neither Hegel nor Arendt failed to address, as Allen Speight brilliantly demonstrates in his article *Arendt and Hegel on the Tragic Nature of Action*.[30]

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[25]   Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1114a, p. 42.

[26]   Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right,* §119, p. 148.

[27]   *Cf. ibid*., §120, pp. 148–9.

[28]   *Ibid*., §124, p. 151.

[29]   *Ibid*., §118, pp. 145–6.

[30]   *Cf.* Allen Speight, "Arendt and Hegel on the tragic nature of action", *Philosophy Social Criticism*, 28 (5/2002), pp. 523–536.

As far as a subject acts, he must take upon him – or herself – the fact that his or her action can have a completely different outcome that the one intended, even a genuinely tragic one, and the prototype that Hegel mentions in the note to the above quoted §118 for such a case of a tragic hero in action is none other than Oedipus, who killed a stranger at a crossroad, solved the sphinx's riddle, became the king of Thebes, and married its queen, only to find out that it was his father whom he had killed and his mother whom he had married. This is the point where Hegel draws the line between purpose as *Absicht* and purpose as *Vorsatz*, in the sense of intention: intention pertains only to the particularity of a freely willed deed, while purpose also includes its unpredictable consequences,[31] so that Oedipus' *intention* may well have not been to fulfil Freud's wettest dreams of killing his own father and having sex with his own mother, but this was for sure his *purpose*; hence, Hegel's critique of the "*heroic* self-consciousness," which "has not yet progressed from its unalloyed simplicity to reflect on the distinction between *deed* [*Tat*] and *action* [*Handlung*]," between the "external event and the purpose and knowledge of the circumstances, or to analyze the consequences minutely, but accepts responsibility for the deed in its entirety."[32] And this is why Constantine Sandis could ingeniously entitle his article on Hegel's theory of action as *The Man Who Mistook his Handlung for a Tat: Hegel on Oedipus and Other Tragic Thebans.*[33]

As we have seen, despite Arendt's and Hegel's patient conceptual working of the concept of action – action as differing from labour and work and action as distinct from deed – neither of the two provided any further differentiation or definition, so that the author to whom one needs to turn in order to gain a well-defined – and well-refined (if you will allow me) – theory of action in its own terms, is Shakespeare.

To act, to do, to perform

Now, one last – alas final – effort remains in order to grasp the concept of action properly: in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, at the very beginning of the famous comic relief of the two clowns on the graveyard and just before the very last scene of

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[31]   Hegel, *The Philosophy of Right*, §119, p. 147.

[32]   *Ibid.*, §118, p. 146.

[33]   *Cf.* Constantine Sandis, "The Man Who Mistook his Handlung for a Tat: Hegel on Oedipus and Other Tragic Thebans", *Hegel Bulletin*, 31 (2010), pp. 35–60.

the tragedy, we encounter this humorous dialogue regarding the most delicate issue of Ophelia's suicide and whether she deserves a Christian burial or not (Shakespeare, *Hamlet,* Act V, Scene 1):

> FIRST CLOWN
> Is she to be buried in Christian burial that
> wilfully seeks her own salvation?
> SECOND CLOWN
> I tell thee she is: and therefore make her grave
> straight: the crowner hath sat on her, and finds it
> Christian burial.
> FIRST CLOWN
> How can that be, unless she drowned herself in her
> own defence?
> SECOND CLOWN
> Why, 'tis found so.
> FIRST CLOWN
> It must be 'se offendendo;' it cannot be else. For
> here lies the point: if I drown myself wittingly,
> it argues an act: and an act hath three branches: it
> is, to act, to do, to perform: argal, she drowned
> herself wittingly.

Shakespeare, thinking as a man of theatre that "the world is a stage and all the men and women merely players," first starts not with the noun "action", but rather with the verb "to act". And then proceeds to repeat or redouble it, as if the *genus* of action encounters first itself as its own *species* in the "to act" of an *actor,* in order to dialectically produce the other two, the "to do" of the *doer* and the "to perform" of the *performer.* A doer is less than an actor since the act of the actor includes the doing of the doer (such as: "doing a theatre piece"), but the act is less than a performance, since performing is broader in meaning and can thus encompass not only the act and the doing (one can, for instance, speak specifically of a "theatre performance" as well as of an "artistic performance" in general, theatrical or not), but can be stretched into the realm of politics and

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philosophy as well (such as when one speaks of a "political performance" or of a "philosophical performance").[34]

All the world may very well be a stage, but we are *not* all "merely players," since, as Shakespeare rightfully says, "one man in his time plays many parts," not only diachronically from infancy to old age,[35] but also synchronically by acting, doing, and performing while engaging in the arts, philosophy, and politics.

Conclusion

The Shakespearian dialectics here employed understand *action*, as encompassed in the universal "to act" that "hath three branches," as composed of: "to act" in the specific theatrical sense of the word for "acting"; "to do" in the sense of "deed"; and "to perform", which would mean "performance" in the broadest sense possible. Thus, as I would like to argue, action is an eminently *political* category since it is the only "branch" that includes not only itself together with the other two – "to act", "to do", "to perform" – but others too: philosophy, at least in theory, does not need others in order to be done, or even demands isolation from others, and therefore falls into the category of mere "doing"; by contrast, a theatre piece, or an artistic performance in general, *does* necessarily need others, but others as a public that differs from the performers; while action is the only one of the three that essentially needs others as its own actors, doers, and performers at the same time, since there is no action without *inter*action. And here we have it: if there is a theory of action that can be drawn by linking Arendt, Hegel, and Shakespeare, then it is the following: the *inter*subjective dimension is a prerequisite of any *political* action, which is thus essentially an *inter*action, a situation where "a group of people get and act together," as Arendt puts it, and where there is no dif-

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[34] Bara Kolenc accentuates the constitutive moment of *enactment* within the notion of performance, thus distinguishing the performative gesture from mere representation: "Performance is, in the first place, an *enactment*. Unlike representation, it does not represent something else – for example certain other (hypothetically more real or original) reality – but directly produces a new reality by performing it." (Bara Kolenc, "Fantazma dotika in uprizoritev (ne)dotakljivega: Piram in Tizba", *Problemi*, 58 (5–6/2020), p. 120).

[35] *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene VII): "His acts being seven ages. At first the infant [...] And then the whining school-boy [...] And then the lover [...] Then a soldier [...] And then the justice [...] The sixth age shifts into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon [...] Last scene of all, that ends this strange eventful history, is second childishness and mere oblivion; sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything."

ference between acting subjects – as pertaining to the theatre, where the actors are on stage and the public is seated, or as to philosophy, where a thinking "I" always already differs from the others – but rather, as Hegel articulates it while discussing the French Revolution, the political and concurrently theatrical event *par excellence*, the acting subject is "an I, who is We, and a We, who is I."

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Toni Čerkez* and Martin Gramc**

Towards Biopolitics beyond Life and Death: The Virus, Life, and Death

Introduction

In March 2020, as the COVID-19 (hereafter "the virus" or "coronavirus") outbreak was spreading like wildfire across Europe, and massively irrupting in Italy, Giorgio Agamben issued a strong attack on the Italian Government's safety measures, its utilisation of scientific expertise in the form of safety decrees, in the process also lamenting the state of Western democracies, and Western sociopolitical values. For Agamben, the said measures affirmed the continued decay of life (understood as bios) and its transformation into zoe (mere life), thus demonstrating that survival had become the central political value in Italian and, broadly, Western politics. He asked, quite pertinently: "What will human relations become in a country that will be accustomed to living in this way for who knows how long? And what is a society with no other value other than survival?"[1] The centrality of zoe, which Agamben has spent many a decade studying,[2] is nested in the increasing normalisation of the "state of exception", whereby: "men have become so used to living in conditions of permanent crisis and emergency that they don't seem to notice that their lives have been reduced to a purely biological condition, one that has lost not only any social and political dimension, but even any compassionate and emotional one."[3]

Agamben points us, consistent with his life's work, to thinking about contemporary society, where "social distancing" and a "state of emergency" have become central to "normal" politics. That is, he points to a "deeper ethical, social, and

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[1] Giorgio Agamben, "Clarifications", in "Coronavirus and Philosophers", *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, https://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/coronavirus-and-philosophers/, accessed 5 January 2021.

[2] See Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2005. and Giorgio Agamben, *Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 1998.

[3] Agamben, "Clarifications".

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metaphysical erosion"[4] that has captured the West in the second half of the 20th and early 21st centuries. The manifestation of this erosion for Agamben is a further entrenchment of thanatopolitical praxis in politics. Namely, in Italy during the COVID-19 pandemic: "The dead – our dead – have no right to a funeral and it's not clear what happens to the corpses of our loved ones."[5] For Agamben, this erosion is found in zoe, or survival, taking the centre stage of politics, where the ethos of kinship and relations is supplanted by an ethos of self-preservation. In that sense, the 2020 pandemic has enabled the full normalisation of the politics of the "state of exception". And yet, despite Agamben's fears, the "state of exception" has allowed for a "normal", if circumstantially diminished, functioning of our societies, economies, and politics. We ask how can something that leads to a "metaphysical erosion" of ethics, values, and society allow for the maintenance and functioning thereof?

One way to understand the contemporary centrality of the measures and the virus is to think of them in Agambenian terms. Namely, to think of them as something abnormal that has been normalised. The paradox which we mentioned above would thereby be displaced, and the political task of our age would be to counter the changes. This position has many merits because it seeks to slow down the, somewhat forced, change in our societies in the face of the pandemic. From the digitalisation of higher education (e.g., over-reliance on distance e-learning), to permits issued by local authorities to travel locally, we ought to critically analyse the changes happening around us. To refer to Naomi Klein's work, we must not allow the crisis to be abused for the implementation of sweeping and unchecked sociopolitical changes, whose aim would be to centralise power in the government and reduce vertical and horizontal responsibility therein.[6] This perspective holds that the "state of exception" is a historically emerging form of governance that is being actualised as a standard sociopolitical praxis in the face of the virus, often according to the logic of "shock" or "crisis" management, thus recalibrating the traditional ethos of sociability, community, and compas-

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[4] Christopher Caldwell, "Opinion: Meet the Philosopher Who Is Trying to Explain the Pandemic", *The New York Times*, 21 August 2020, Opinion Section, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/21/opinion/sunday/giorgio-agamben-philosophy-coronavirus.html, accessed 4 January 2021.

[5] Agamben, "Clarifications".

[6] Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, London, Penguin Books, 2008.

sion into an ethos of the self-preservation, atomisation, and centralisation of governmental power via decrees on the state of exception (thus affirming state sovereignty over "making live and letting die").

However, does not this view, despite its many merits, rest on a misconception of life? More precisely, this view makes it seem as if the government of pure (human) life (zoe) applies equally to everything. In turn, it makes it seem like the state of exception is unilaterally imposed by political elites, without any grounding in circumstance. Furthermore, this position takes for granted the human role in governance. The conception of power here is eminently the one of human sociability with the metaphysics of bios and zoe kept as the main ground, to the point of ignoring the agential potential of non-human forces (such as viruses) in a global society. We contend that such a perspective is insufficient to grasp what our societies are facing and whether that "what" is governable in the first place.

The other way to think the current "crisis", and one which we posit, is less as a destruction and replacement of the "normal" way (or a metaphysical erosion of the values) of life, but more as its rupture and change in the face of the events that "normal" life has brought about (e.g., via processes such as climate change, deforestation, and poaching). This perspective does not legitimise or leave in abeyance the abuse of power by political elites behind the veil of expertise but is rather an acknowledgment that the "normal" that humans thought of as "theirs"[7] is suddenly inhabited, overpopulated, and over-stretched by some other beings, such as the virus. In that sense, the foregoing paradox is not displaced but is at the core of the problematisation of biopolitical thinking. The crux of the concern, therefore, is to think of the erosion of values and the normal

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[7]   Primarily, the point would be to interrogate the universality of the "human" (see Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2018), bearing in mind the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on minorities across the world, which has been well documented (see Mrigesh Bhatia. "COVID-19 and BAME Group in the United Kingdom" *The International Journal of Community and Social Development* 2 (2/2020); El-Khatib et. al, "The Disproportionate Effect of COVID-19 Mortality on Ethnic Minorities: Genetics or Health Inequalities?" *EClinicalMedicine*, 23 (2020), p. 100430; Rajeev Syal, "Structural Racism Led to Worse Covid Impact on BAME Groups – Report", *The Guardian*, 27 October 2020, *World News Section*). For an excellent overview of the pandemic's disproportionate impact on minorities, see PEH's 2020 report (Public Health England, *Disparities in the Risk and Outcomes of COVID-19*, London, Crown Copyright, 2020, p. 92).

functioning of society beyond traditional theorisations and with the praxis of "thinking without a banister".[8] That is, the task would be to rethink those values and a sense of normality in the face of the virus.

Beyond Biopolitics: the Anthropocene

The Anthropocene is the time of the anthropos (human). This concept serves to denote a specific geological time during which human activity acquired a geological character.[9] Put simply, the Anthropocene is a moment in which humans' social, economic, and political activities have acquired a telluric, or geological, significance. This means that humans are changing and manipulating nature's processes to the point where those processes are no longer understood as strictly natural (i.e., non-human). However, the Anthropocene is not an entirely new category. Human-induced environmental changes have been present ever since humans properly started cultivating land, domesticating animals, and changing the environment around them. In that sense, the Anthropocene is not "new" in that it started during the Great Acceleration (the period after WWII) or after the outset of the Industrial Revolution (broadly from the late 18th to late 19th centuries), where most literature places it.[10] The novelty of the Anthropocene is that since the outset of the Industrial Revolution and especially since the start of the Great Acceleration, the human-induced impact on the environment has reached previously unseen levels and has generated unprecedented geological and environmental changes (that is, in both known human history and known geological history). For example, human "activity has transformed between a third and a half of the land surface of the planet."[11] Additionally, the diversity of plant and animal life has been greatly reduced as a direct result of human activities, where "the number of wild animals on Earth has halved in the last forty years. Creatures across land, rivers, and the seas are being decimated as humans kill them

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8   Hannah Arendt and Jerome Kohn, *Thinking Without a Banister: Essays in Understanding, 1953–1975*, New York, Schocken Books, 2018, p. 497.

9   Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses", *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2/2009), p. 209.

10 See Stanley C. Finney and Lucy E. Edwards, "The 'Anthropocene' Epoch: Scientific Decision or Political Statement?", *GSA Today*, 26 (3/2016) and Clive Hamilton, Christophe Bonneuil, and François Gemenne (eds.), *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis*, London and New York, Routledge, 2015, pp. 1–10.

11 See: *ibid*.

for food in unsustainable numbers, while polluting, fragmenting, and destroying their habitats."[12] Zoonotic globalisation, where various bacteria and viruses are easily transferred across the globalised world from "nature" to "human", is one of the features of this great event, the Anthropocene.

With regard to COVID-19, the most recent agent of zoonotic globalisation, researchers, at the time of the writing of this article, do not yet know if the virus originated from wild meat consumption (e.g., bats) or if it "escaped" from a research facility.[13] The Anthropocene is often a point of seeing the effects (e.g. in the form of a pandemic) of human exploitation of the environment, but is also often a point of not knowing where those effects come from and how to deal with them. One of the reasons for the confusion regarding the origin of COVID-19 is that Wuhan, China, where the first cases were recorded, is in central China and outbreaks of coronaviruses (that is, instances of when a virus "jumps" from an animal to a human) are more frequent in subtropical Chinese provinces.[14] Thus, the conclusion is often advanced that human intervention in, or exploitation of, the environment is the most probable cause of the current pandemic. In that sense, what does the inability to identify the origins of the virus and the potential role of the human exploitation of natural resources in causing the pandemic tell us about governing in the Anthropocene?

Much like Agamben asking what the loss of an emotional dimension of our lives would be like with the "new normal", Arundhati Roy's poignant essay on the pandemic in *Azadi* (2020) points us to some new concerns and worries:

> Who can use the term 'gone viral' now without shuddering a little? Who can look at anything anymore – a door handle, a cardboard carton, a bag of vegetables – without imagining it swarming with those unseeable, undead, unliving blobs dotted with suction pads waiting to fasten themselves on to our lungs? [...] Who among us is not a quack epidemiologist, virologist, statistician, and prophet? [...] And even while the virus proliferates, who could not be thrilled by the swell of

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[12]   Arne Johan Vetlesen, *Cosmologies of the Anthropocene: Panpsychism, Animism, and the Limits of Posthumanism*, London and New York, Routledge, 2019, p. 4.

[13]   Jane Qiu, "How China's Bat Woman Hunted Down Viruses from SARS to the New Coronavirus", *Scientific American*, 1 June 2020. https://doi.org/10.1038/scientificamerican0620-24, accessed 4 January 2021.

[14]   Qiu, "How China's Bat Woman".

birdsong in cities, peacocks dancing at traffic crossings, and the silence in the skies?[15]

Roy's text points us to a present, and a future, of an intensification of worry, and an intensification of the instinct of self-preservation or survival across the world. However, this discourse does not base its analysis on the looming threat of the state of exception. If anything, Roy criticises the Indian government for racism in implementing its measures, and for the poor quality of the measures implemented. Rather, the analysis is focused on uncertainty, that is, an acquired state of being uncertain, of not knowing what will transpire, and its interpolation into the political. In that sense, Roy helps us think how everyday actions, such as social interaction, are becoming unsettling precisely because they are now what is at stake for survival. While Agamben's worry is that this is happening due to the centralisation of power in the state, concomitant with the erosion of the values of sociability, and through the imposition of the emergency measures, for Roy this is happening due to the fact that life, other life, forces humans to accept an altered normality. In the same vein, Slavoj Žižek, in his response to Agamben, writes about creating, with great difficulty, a new normality[16] because we will: "have to change our entire stance to life, to our existence as living beings *among other forms of life*."[17] (Italics added.)

The virus, the "unseeable, undead, unliving blobs," are merely one of myriad existing beings that are slowly, but surely, demonstrating to us that our "old normal" politics, performed against a backdrop of nature, i.e., the life and nonlife (bios and geos, respectively), was merely an illusion. Today, we see that this division of bios and geos, so present in dominant forms of theorising the governance of life (biopolitics) and death (thanatopolitics), is being displaced by an appearance of non-human forces, many of which stand in between life and nonlife, conventionally understood. That is, the tenets of biopolitics and than-

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15   Arundhati Roy, *Azadi: Freedom, Fascism, Fiction*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2020, p. 135.

16   Aleksander Adamski, "I Respectfully Disagree with Agamben' (Slavoj Žižek on COVID-19)", *Contemporary Humanism*, 14 September 2020, https://www.contemporaryhumanism.net/i-respectfully-disagree-with-agamben-slavoj-zizek-on-covid-19-aleksander-adamski/; see also Nataša Štefe, "Slavoj Žižek: Z muko bomo morali zgraditi drugačno normalnost." Val 202, https://val202.rtvslo.si/2020/03/slavojzizek/, accessed: 4 January 2021.

17   Slavoj Zizek, *Pandemic!: COVID-19 Shakes the World*, New York and London, OR Books, 2020, p. 70.

atopolitics are not somehow transcended or made obsolete. Rather, there is a call for a recalibration of the ontological grounding of these tenets in the face of the radical changes of the Anthropocene.

Consequently, biopolitics, as restricted to sociopolitical relations,[18] needs to be rethought in the 21st century through the lenses of planetary and ecological entanglements. Biopolitics, emerging in the 18th century as a mode of governance of human life and of the resources and bodies needed for the capitalist mode of production,[19] centred human life and human ways of being as the focus of biopower (i.e., the organisation of life). However, considering the global situation in which climate change reshapes everyday practices, social relations, and political institutions, the traditional conceptualisation of biopolitics as the sovereign power of making live and letting die is being challenged. In that sense, biopolitics can no longer be limited to human life as opposed to non-human (non-)life, but processes of life and death in general. That is, the governability of life as a sociopolitical paradigm is embedded in larger entanglements of planetary, biological, and geological processes, where the political ethos of the "extended normal" consists in affirming the fact that we are intertwined with the foregoing processes and "at stake to and with" them.[20]

Just as we depend on bacteria for our digestion, and the plants that produce the oxygen we need to survive, human beings also rely on the soil that we live on. We are bound to collaborate to enable life for each other, as subjects related and connected to "multiple others".[21] The virus has demonstrated this to us in a far more visceral way, nearly shutting the global economy down, but at the same time opening for us a window to a world that could be. As Roy writes, "while the virus proliferates"[22] it opens some new perspectives on and visions of the active world, which are usually suppressed by the dominant humano-centric socioec-

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[18]   Maurizio Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics", *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy*, 13 (2002), pp. 112–25.

[19]   *Ibid*., see also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York, Vintage Books, 1995.

[20]   Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, p. 55.

[21]   Rosi Braidotti, *The Posthuman*, Cambridge, UK and Malden, Polity Press, 2013, p. 167.

[22]   Arundhati Roy, *Azadi,* p. 135.

onomic and political activity. How can we think this opening to the world? What challenges does it present?

(Un)governability

Biopolitics, or governance of life, has become one of the most enduring paradigms of contemporary political thought. And beyond that, governance is the central matter of concern for most political theorists today. How do we govern in the Anthropocene? Who governs? Indeed, questions abound. In that sense, some argue that we live in an era of "risk,"[23] where the governance of effects, or risk management, is the dominant way of addressing contemporary crises, especially climate change.[24] The proliferation of risk has ushered in an era of "resilience,"[25] where resilience is understood as a form of governing the complexity of the challenges affecting the world.[26] Thus, in the new "risk" modernity, it is no longer desirable to focus on the causes of problems, but rather to seek to manage the effects thereof.[27] Some have rightly lamented that the paradigm of the governance of effects, when faced with the global challenges of climate change, is in trouble because it forces policymakers to simultaneously want to manipulate the environment to mitigate climate change, while concurrently realising that the environment is "out of reach."[28] However, most of the mentioned literature rests on the inherited assumption of "human" life

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[23]   Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, London and Newbury Park, Sage Publications, 1992.

[24]   Olaf Corry, "Securitisation and 'Riskification': Second-Order Security and the Politics of Climate Change", *Millennium* 40 (2/2012), pp. 235–258.

[25]   David Chandler and Jon Coaffee (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of International Resilience,* London and New York, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017, see also Myriam Dunn Cavelty, Mareile Kaufmann, and Kristian Søby Kristensen, "Resilience and (in)security: Practices, subjects, temporalities", *Security Dialogue* 46 (1/2015), pp. 3–14, as well as Claudia Aradau and Rens Van Munster, "Governing Terrorism Through Risk: Taking Precautions, (un)Knowing the Future," *European Journal of International Relations* 13 (1/2007), pp. 89–115.

[26]   David Chandler, "Beyond Neoliberalism: Resilience, the New Art of Governing Complexity", *Resilience* 2, no. 1 (2 January 2014), pp. 47–63.

[27]   David Chandler, "A World without Causation: Big Data and the Coming of Age of Posthumanism," *Millennium,* 43 (3/2015), pp. 833–851.

[28]   Pol Bargués-Pedreny and Jessica Schmidt, "Learning to Be Postmodern in an All Too Modern World: 'Whatever Action' in International Climate Change Imaginaries", *Global Society*, 33 (1/2019), p. 1.

being the model for all life and, more importantly, on the assumption that any life or non-life can be governed. Because of that, and given the virus and all the problems with managing the fallout of the pandemic, is it not pertinent to think of the challenge of ungovernability as a rupture in the established modes of understanding governance?

In terms of effects, human entanglements with planetary, bio-ecological, and physical processes are so great that we as a species are not able to fully grasp them. In terms of the causes of relations and events, sometimes it is impossible to even distinguish between human and non-human causes. This overlap between unmanageable effects and unknowable causes is broadly what we consider the ungovernable. Following Ghassan Hage, we treat the ungovernable thusly:

> That is, the ungovernable is something we have originally classified [...] as 'not governed-yet' – which also implies that we consider it as 'ought to be governed' – but find ourselves, and one must insist on this point, find ourselves repeatedly unable to govern. It is because of this repetitive nature of the encounter that we start classifying something as ungovernable. Thus, we can say that the ungovernable denotes a certain history. Individuals, groups, animals, plants, things or social processes cannot be deemed by governmental assemblage as "ungovernable" on the basis of a single encounter. This makes the 'ungovernable as a classification and an experience paradoxical in that it indicates on one hand an inability of governmental force to relate to it and yet it also implies a historically acquired familiarity: it denotes a relation paradoxically marked by a certain intimate lack of relationality, a relating to something through a recognition of permanent inability to relate to it.[29]

What Hage so aptly points to is the experience of being familiar with something that should be governed, but cannot be, despite its historical familiarity to a given governmental regime. This inability to govern can be caused by many factors. For example, our relationship to various illnesses is one of acquired historical familiarity, but it is at the same time an inability, or lack of desire, to form such relationships. Ungovernability is thus the inability to understand how and where the outbreak of an illness, such as COVID-19, originates, and illustrates difficulties in dealing with the consequences of the outbreak. The virus operates

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[29]   Ghassan Hage, *Is Racism an Environmental Threat?*, Malden, MA, Polity, 2017, p. 80.

as an ungovernable non-human actor because it forces the established political and economic order to change its basic parameters in order to protect human life: increasing the prevalence of online communication, economic fallout, the suspension of physical public life, and an extreme decrease in air pollutants – something that no climate conference has succeeded in accomplishing thus far. The virus reveals how the ungovernable reacts upon governability. The ungovernable entity forces the political order of governability to redirect its course precisely because relating to it is problematic and undesirable.

Ungovernability is the point where the traditional axis of the division of life and non-life meets. This is where the boundaries of governability are temporarily and provisionally set because governability never ceases trying to categorise, analyse, and subject the ungovernable entity to its order, despite its failures. In that vein, "ungovernability" is one of the features of the Anthropocene. This primarily refers to the fact that as geologic agents in a globalised world, humans have set into motion processes that reverberate in the world, and which they often cannot account for. That is: "there is a question [in the Anthropocene] about our capacity to make decisions regarding events that are beyond the human experience. That's probably one of the first requirements of the new geological epoch."[30]

In that sense, and as Nils Bubandt convincingly argues, there are "gray zones" in understanding governance, whereby cause and effect mechanisms are displaced due to their undetectability and uncertainty. He uses the example of a mud "volcano" that erupted in 2006 near an oil drill in Surabaya, Indonesia, to point to "the increasing impossibility of distinguishing human from non-human forces, the anthropos from the geos."[31] (Italics in original.) The impossibility of distinguishing between different forces relates to the causes of the eruption of the volcano, which displaced close to 40,000 people and caused USD 2.2 billion in damage.[32] Bubandt asks if the eruption was caused by seismic activity (like

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[30] Clive Hamilton, Christophe Bonneuil, and François Gemenne, *The Anthropocene and the Global Environmental Crisis,* p. 11.

[31] Nils Bubandt, "Haunted Geologies, Spirits, Stones, and the Necropolitics of the Anthropocene", in Tsing et al. (eds.), *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts of the Anthropocene*, Minneapolis and London, The University of Minnesota Press, 2017, p. 122.

[32] Bubandt, "Haunted Geologies", p. 121.

an earthquake) or human activity, such as oil drilling.[33] He posits that in the mentioned case it was impossible to establish what or who caused the eruption, thus pointing to a new regime of extinction, catastrophe and geological change in the Anthropocene, which he calls "necropolitics" (see below).

Bubandt argues that the impossibility of finding an answer is a demonstration that we live in an era of necropolitics, where necropolitics is not understood as defined by the term's originator, Achilles Mbembe, whereby it is: "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations."[34] Rather, Bubandt's necropolitics is explained thusly:

> But in a time of global warming, ocean acidification, and mass extinction, I suggest necropolitics has come to cover a much broader and much more stochastic politics of life and death. Humans, animals, plants, fungi, and bacteria now live and die under conditions that may have been critically shaped by human activity but that are also increasingly outside of human control. I use the notion of a necropolitics of the Anthropocene to indicate the life-and-death effects—intended as well as unintended—of this kind of ruination and extinction. Nature may increasingly be human-made, but humans have not only lost control of this nature making and unmaking; we have increasingly lost the ability to tell the difference between our own world and the natural worlds we make and destroy. As each new scientific discovery reveals more details of the complex interplay between human worlds and natural worlds, we are also increasingly faced with our inability to tell these worlds apart. In the Anthropocene, necropolitics operates under the sign of metaphysical indeterminacy rather than certainty, unintended consequences rather than control.[35] (Italics added.)

What Bubandt posits with necropolitics has everything to do with the politics of not knowing the cause, even if that cause is human, and not being able to "govern" the effect. In that sense, not knowing the cause returns us to the position of ungovernability, which does not imply only that something is unmanageable, but also unknowable. Ungovernability then challenges the solutionist and

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[33] *Ibid*., p. 122.

[34] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. S. Corcoran, Durham, Duke University Press, 2019, p. 68.

[35] Nils Bubandt, "Haunted Geologies", pp. 124–125.

managerial paradigms so well-entrenched in contemporary political theorising. It challenges them not because it presents humans as incapable of "governing" per se, but rather because it forces us to recalibrate the ontological roots upon which paradigms of governance in the Anthropocene rest (e.g., the nature-culture dualism). Put simply, one cannot simply distinguish between the human and non-human forces at play. This fact is a challenge for political theory.

The humano-centrism of biopolitical governance is slowly becoming unsettled in political theory and practice. Since there are limits to governance that correspond roughly to the limits of being human and what the human, understood in the broadest sense, can govern, human political activities are constrained, reshaped, and moulded by other forces, agencies, and modes of being.[36] Thus, the human condition and politics need to be considered in the broader framework of being entangled with the ungovernable. It is important to focus more on the idea of the ungovernable as it pertains to the distinctions between life and death. Why? Because the distinctions between life and death, and the centralisation of human life as the primary concern of the analysis of power, is something that sustains traditionalist conceptions of biopolitics and thanatopolitics. In that sense, thinking about that distinction through the prism of the virus, an entity which traverses the boundary between life and death, helps us grasp further the importance of reorienting our thoughts towards relational approaches of thinking politics and governance.

The Virus and the (Un)governability of Life and Death

Viruses have generally been considered to be entities that operate on the border of life and death. This is so due to their specific structure, which "lacks essential systems necessary for metabolic functions."[37] The University of Queensland Australia's Institute for Molecular Bioscience (IMB) defines viruses thusly: "Viruses are an assembly of different types of molecules that consist of genetic ma-

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36   Simon Dalby, "Biopolitics and Climate Security in the Anthropocene", *Geoforum*, 49 (2013) pp. 184–192; Christy Tidwell, "Monstrous Natures Within: Posthuman and New Materialist Ecohorror in Mira Grant's 'Parasite'", *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* 21 (3/2014), pp. 538–549; William E. Connolly, "The 'New Materialism' and the Fragility of Things", *Millennium*, 41 (3/2013), pp. 399–412.

37   Luis P. Villarreal, "Are Viruses Alive?", *Scientific American*, 8 August 2008, https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/are-viruses-alive-2004/, accessed 5 January 2021.

terial (either a single- or double-stranded DNA or RNA) with a protein coat and sometimes a layer of fat too (an envelope)."[38] That is, viruses are an assemblage of molecules that cannot survive on their own and reproduce on their own (the IMB states that hence "they aren't considered 'living'"[39]). However, what viruses can do is survive on surfaces for varying amount of time until being picked up by a host. Put simply, viruses need a host to survive. They are predators who, upon entering a host, replicate by entering living cells and reprogramming them to produce viral cells. Viruses are paradoxical beings that constantly mediate the interstices of the borders between life and death. In that sense, viruses are a palatable trope for an age in which borderline entities help challenge the strict division between nature and culture, and the strict division between life (bios) and nonlife (geos). For Elizabeth Povinelli, the "Virus" is one of the three central figures of "geontopower" (see below), with the other two being the "Animist" and the "Desert".[40] For our purposes, we focus on the Virus.

According to Povinelli:

> The virus is the figure for that which seeks to disrupt the current arrangements of Life and Nonlife by claiming that it is a difference that makes no difference not because all is alive, vital, and potent, nor because all is inert, replicative, unmoving, inert, dormant, and endurant. Because the division of Life and Nonlife does not define or contain the Virus, it can use and ignore this division for the sole purpose of diverting the energies of arrangements of existence in order to extend itself. The Virus copies, duplicates, and lies dormant even as it continually adjusts to, experiments with, and tests its circumstances. It confuses and levels the difference between Life and Nonlife while carefully taking advantage of the minutest aspects of their differentiation.[41]

[38] "What's the Difference between Bacteria and Viruses?", *Institute for Molecular Bioscience* 20 April 2020, https://imb.uq.edu.au/article/2020/04/difference-between-bacteria-and-viruses, accessed 3 January 2021.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism,* Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, p. 4.

[41] Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Mathew Coleman, and Kathryn Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli: Geontopower, Biopolitics and the Anthropocene", *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34 (2–3/2017), pp. 18–19.

The Virus, as a liminal entity, operates across zones of life and nonlife. It exploits and confuses at the same time every slightest differentiation between life and nonlife in order to extend itself.[42] It moves from one entity to another to reproduce itself, leaves dead, inert organisms behind, and does not give anything in return. The Virus is a parasite and parasites instrumentalise the living functions of other species for their reproduction: "Parasites do not make value judgements about their hosts or take sides in the human conflicts they get involved in; they show up because an opportunity is an opportunity."[43]

More importantly, however, the Virus operates as a new figure of "geontopower". While for Foucault the historical regimes of the governance of life (biopower) were represented by four metaphorical figures: the Malthusian couple, the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, and the perverse adult,[44] for Povinelli the new figures (the Animist, the Virus, and the Desert) represent a new kind of plane of power's manifestation. The ontological roots of bios and geos, on which biopolitical governance rests, as mentioned earlier in this paper, are represented by the three foregoing figures. With that in mind, the Virus, as one of the figures, challenges the roots of the division between life and death, and the governance of this division. For Povinelli, this division is "geontopower" and its mode of governance is geontology, the power that divides between life and death and a governance regime that decides what gets to be valued as life, and what is disavowed as death. However, geontopower is not something that emerged recently because of climate change. According to Povinelli, geontopower has always been there, it was rather sidelined by the dominant discourses on governance. Therefore:

> But geontopower is not a new power – a power only now emerging to replace biopolitics. Biopower (the governance through life and death) has long depended on a subtending geontopower (the difference between the active and the inert). In other words, geontopower does not come after or alongside the new geological and meteorological age of the human – Anthropocene and climate change – nor is it a new stage of late liberalism. The Anthropocene and climate change have

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[42] Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p. 19.
[43] Rosemary Drisdelle, *Parasites: Tales of Humanity's Most Unwelcome Guests*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 2010, p. 15.
[44] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. R. Hurley, Westminster, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2012, p. 105.

certainly made geontopower visible to people who were previously unaffected by it – who shunted its deleterious effects elsewhere.[45]

In Povinelli's sense, the key to understanding and analysing geontopower would be to historicise and politicise its characteristics, especially during the Anthropocene, the time when its visibility has become hard to deny. The Virus, then, as one of the figures of geontology, allows for a more incisive analytical focus and a representation of how the organisation of life and death in late modernity operates. With that in mind, Povinelli writes:

> A similar approach can be taken in relationship to the Desert, the Animist, and the Virus. Each of these figures provides a mechanism through which we can conceive of the once presupposed but now trembling architectures of geontological governance. Again, these figures and discourses are not the exit from or the answer to biopolitics. They are not subjugated subjects waiting to be liberated. Geontology is not a crisis of life (bios) and death (thanatos) at a species level (extinction), or merely a crisis between Life (bios) and Nonlife (geos, meteoros). Geontopower is a mode of late liberal governance. And it is this mode of governance that is trembling.[46]

The Virus is an ungovernable entity that upsets the governance based on the clear differentiation between life and non-life. It wavers on the ever-changing verge between life and nonlife. As such, the Virus has no firm, given place in the world, no sense of belonging or attachment, and this renders it vulnerable to expulsion: "But while the Virus may seem to be the radical exit from geontopower at first glance, to be the Virus is to be subject to intense abjection and attacks, and to live in the vicinity of the Virus is to dwell in an existential crisis."[47] In that sense, the Virus as an ungovernable entity introduces a crisis in the existing order of governmentality because it challenges the established distinction between life and nonlife and thus exposes the dependence and vulnerability of biopower on geontopower. However, at the same time, as an ungovernable entity that poses a danger to human lives, its existence is fought against. As a

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[45]   Povinelli, Coleman and Yusoff, "An Interview with Elizabeth Povinelli", p. 173.

[46]   Povinelli, *Geontologies*, p. 16.

[47]   *Ibid*., p. 19.

figure, then, the Virus is ultimately lonely, abject, but continually proliferating and challenging the dominant forms of organising life on the planet.

Critically thinking the COVID-19 virus as a figure of geontopower and the Anthropocene as an event that ruptures the sedimented discourse of the primacy of the anthropos and life over non-anthropos and nonlife in biopolitics and governance is important for investigating the shift in the understanding of non-human agencies in the Anthropocene. It makes us ask if it is only important to find a way to include the non-human in the dominant mode of governing. Perhaps this is the easy way out, merely adding more ways of "caring" for nature and the world to the existing paradigm of governance. In that sense, if the case is that politics is the constant struggle to include subjects that are not part of the existing political order – demos – into it, to make them heard, seen, and visible in a linguistic, legitimate, articulated way (e.g., logos), then can we simply include non-human entities into the sphere of demos even though they lack linguistic reasoning (i.e., they make noise)?[48]

With that, we would seemingly be committing the inclusion or, better said, transformation of noise (viruses, rocks, insects) into language.[49] But how would that help us address our political issues in a substantive way? The mere inclusion of the non-human into the human sphere of politics is a liberal gesture.[50] One simply recognises an entity as legitimate within the existing political order and continues with the established practices and processes; business as usual thrives. The paradox of that position is even more ironic because the processes of the Anthropocene are already underway, and it is impossible not to consider the ramifications thereof in politics. What is needed is a radical transformation of our existing categories and processes of the political and politics. The posthuman condition in which subjects are not linear, fixed, and unitary but always situated and entangled with multiple others, other "companion species,"[51] is a

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[48] For the distinction between logos and noise, see Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, trans. S. Corcoran, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi and Sydney, Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

[49] Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "The Rhetorics of Recognition in Geontopower", *Philosophy & Rhetoric,* 48 (4/2015), p. 432.

[50] *Ibid.*, pp. 432–433.

[51] Rosi Braidotti, "Posthuman, All Too Human: Towards a New Process Ontology", *Theory, Culture & Society,* 23 (7–8/2006), pp. 197–208; Haraway, "Staying with the Trouble", and

cornerstone of the new way of understanding the political, where it is all that is enmeshed with the organisation of the entanglements of life and non-life.

In that sense, the paradigm of ungovernability, or thinking the ungovernable, is one of the processes of opening up to different ways of thinking, which go beyond the traditional concepts of biopolitics as the governance of life. Here, Agamben's concerns are not dispelled as anachronous or irrelevant, but are rather upscaled and recalibrated to include other processes that destabilise notions of the human control of the planetary. Perhaps, given the current conditions, the "state of exception" created during the pandemic is a necessity, and a form of human solidarity, in the face of the different consequences of the human role as geologic agents, but it surely is not a static ahistorical condition. Its history is bigger than just the history of the survival of (the human) zoe taking centre stage in politics. Rather, its history is one of entanglements, i.e., the material, planetary, human, non-human, capitalist, and geophysical entanglements that are visible today more than ever before, and whose presence we need to see through different lenses.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to investigate some claims made in the face of the pandemic that rest on the dominant, or traditional, ways of theorising bios and geos, as well as the contemporary organisation of life (biopolitics) and death (thanatopolitics). We focused on an article of Giorgio Agamben and addressed his critically potent remarks on the way the Italian Government handled the pandemic due to their impact on the debate over the strong lockdown measures in the early period of the pandemic (February to April 2020) and the importance of Agamben in biopolitical thought. We argued that COVID-19 is a different kind of threat, to which the classical biopolitical and thanatopolitical logics of analysis do not apply. In the Anthropocene, the age of humanity's apotheosis as a geological actor, there is confusion as to how we can understand the causes and effects of both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric actions and govern them. What is to be done? Which way to go? We argue that this situation forces us to think anew and "without a banister".

Donna Jeanne Haraway, *Manifestly Haraway*, Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2016.

The COVID-19 outbreak is an example of zoonotic globalisation, a feature of the Anthropocene, where the deeper human global interconnection enabled the quicker spread of the virus, carried over into the wider world again due to human action (either through wet markets or labs studying coronaviruses). However, that same action was not *just human*; we cannot deny the role of the virus in the pandemic, nor can we deny that the way it spread depended on a particular human relationship to nature. The fact that humans cannot consider themselves the only actors in the wide system of Gaia in the Anthropocene and the fact that humans cannot reckon with the consequences of their actions, presents a challenge for political theory, in which theory must reckon with the ungovernable.

The ungovernable, as we argued, is a somewhat paradoxical situation of being familiar with historical challenges, such as pandemics, but not being able to govern them. In that sense, the challenge behooves a rethinking of the foundations of the present theoretical efforts. Pandemics such as COVID-19 open the doors to thinking viruses, and other beings, as agents of this seemingly new age. Mediating the border between life and death, the ungovernable virus has exposed the roots of the problem of biopolitics: the organisation of life and death, which it takes for granted (i.e., geontology).

Finally, we argue, it is time to take biopolitics further and to think the deeper planetary entanglements of different humans and different non-humans. In that sense, COVID-19 and the lockdown measures would not be thought simply through the prism of the state of exception or the survival of bare life (zoe), but through the prism of the causes and consequences of human beings as geological agents, and how these causes and consequences alter the sociopolitical paradigms and understandings of the world. Furthermore, complexifying the picture by confronting the Anthropocene does not aim at obfuscating answers, but rather at demonstrating that the questions and answers humans have traditionally asked and posed have depended on the now decaying ontological roots of nature vs. culture and life vs. death. The level of analysis has moved to a new plane, one that takes a broader image of relations as being central. The aim of this article, however, was not to exactly demonstrate the "how" of this predicament, but mainly to diagnose it and set it up as a problem.

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Echoes

Marina Gržinić*

Necropolitics by Achille Mbembe
Extended essay on the book[1]

Intro[2]

It is a challenge and a pleasure to write an extended essay review of *Necropolitics*,[3] the latest book by Achille Mbembe. An African theorist born in Cameroon in 1957, he holds a PhD from Paris (at the Sorbonne) in Political Science, and is a professor at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa, and also at Harvard, in the United States. His recent books include *Critique de la raison nègre*,[4] and *Politiques de l'inimitié*.[5]

Necropolitics takes us back to his seminal text on "Necropolitics,"[6] translated and published in the US in 2003. At this point, 40 years after Foucault's biopolitics,[7] Mbembe was re-theorizing biopolitics through a necro (death) horizon, which proved to be a robust conceptual shift from occidental thought.[8]

[2]   Marina Gržinić, "*Necropolitics* (2019) Achilla Mbembeja. Razširjeni esej" [*Necropolitics* (2019) by Achille Mbembe. An Extended Essay], in T. Kancler and M. Gržinić (eds.), "Rasni kapitalizem, intersekcionalnost spolnosti, bojev in mejnih teles" [Racial Capitalism. Intersectionality of Sexuality, Struggles and Bodies as Borders], special issue, *Časopis za kritiko znanosti, domišljijo in novo antropologijo,* 48 (281/2020), pp. 145–162.

[3]   Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, trans. S. Corcoran, Durham, Duke University Press, 2019.

[4]   Achille Mbembe, *Critique de la raison nègre*, Paris, La Découverte, 2013. Translated by L. Dubois as *Critique of Black Reason*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2017.

[5]   Achille Mbembe, *Politiques de l'inimitié* [Politics of Enmity], Paris, La Découverte, 2016.

[6]   Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. L. Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15 (1/2003), pp. 11–40.

[7]   Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975—76*, eds. M. Bertani and A. Fontana, trans. D. Macey, London, Penguin, 2004.

[8]   See Mbembe, "Necropolitics."

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Necropolitics as a semiotic, literary, theoretical-technological invention has inserted itself as a cog in the machine of biopolitics. It has presented itself as the engine of thought. It provoked much resistance in occidental thought, which insisted and still tries to get rid of necropolitics in many ways, for example, to replace it with thanatopolitics.

Necropolitics is the "darker side" of biopolitics, as decolonial theory would claim. In 2003, Mbembe took a bold step: he took the sovereignty mode of governance—which until then had been in the realm of political theory and the defense of the nation-state, as a method of protecting the boundary of the sovereign nation-state—and placed it in a much broader context. Mbembe re-read sovereignty, not as a theory of protection, but as a central category of the sovereign's decision (which began to lose its unilateral character) to decide over life and death. What had been there as an exclusive right to protect nation-state borders was reframed by necropolitics as the right to decide who should live and who must die. This short and simple statement of "who should live and who must die" is the most transparent and concise definition of necropolitics.

Necropolitics, despite all resistance and insistence on biopolitics in the Occident, increasingly proves its materiality, its necessity and contingency.

In the titular book, published 17 years after the seminal text that significantly influenced the theory and practice of philosophy, politics, anthropology, esthetics, not much more is explicitly said about necropolitics. He does, however, go into detail about the consequences of necropolitics in recent decades. Simply put, Mbembe presents the layers of forms, modes, and procedures of the necropolitical working through contemporary neoliberal global societies. It permeates the *All-World* as a total curative work. It is therefore not surprising that Mbembe makes reference to theory in forms, form is the way to redefine content, or in other words, "who should live and who must die" is presently the beginning. But how this is done in the 21st century, what are the methods and procedures to implement this central act in neoliberal global democracy—that is the task of this book. Mbembe captures the procedures and modalities of necropolitics 17 years after and centuries in the past by building genealogies of its possible beginning.

Mbembe's language is a dense literary language, a description of fragmentation, or rather, an accumulation of adjectives which present the main term over and over again—racism is in this respect profligate, extravagant, excessive and unrestrained. It proliferates so madly, poisonously, violently that it takes on a form of nano-racism, as a small invisible particle, or said in the context of current developments, like a virus. Mbembe excavates the root of every modernist concept: Democracy, Capitalism, Colonialism, Universalism, and Freedom. Yet, with various exponential adjectives, and with each term comes its violent "darker side," it is another part of the coin, not as a binary, but as a Moebius strip, a surface with only one side (when embedded in three-dimensional Euclidean space) and only one boundary. We get a long list of adjectives added to the concept of modernity, all of which are modes of necropolitical transposition.

Mbembe groups the modalities that form clusters of horror as what is otherwise necropolitics; it is not the politics of managing life (biopolitics), of governing life (for better or worse). It is the sovereign decision about death, a killing machine to maximize profit. Therefore, post-2003 necropolitics has evolved into a system of elaborate versions of this original statement. Morality is an essential part of the philosophy of the West, which has always been rooted in Christianity. After colonialism, it continued with the two world wars and the Holocaust. The West is in constant repetition, after the Second World War a whole series of biopolitical formal, institutional, legal and economic and political mechanisms, human rights charters, international banking systems and tribunals were set up. Yet we have genocides everywhere, the most exponential in Africa, Rwanda,[9] and in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Srebrenica genocide[10] in the 1990s.

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[9] The Rwandan genocide was a mass murder of Tutsi, Twa, and moderate Hutu in Rwanda, which took place during the Rwandan Civil War. It began on the night of April 6, 1994, when a plane carrying Rwanda's the then President Juvenal Habyarimana and his counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira of Burundi (both ethnic Hutus) was shot down. In just 100 days in 1994 (between April and July), about 800,000 people were slaughtered in Rwanda by ethnic Hutu extremists. See Helen C. Epstein, "America's secret role in the Rwandan genocide," *Guardian*, 12 September 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/sep/12/americas-secret-role-in-the-rwandan-genocide, accessed 10 April 2020.

[10] Srebrenica genocide was a mass murder of more than 8,000 Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslim), boys and men, in July 1995, during Balkan Wars. The executions were committed by the Army of Republica Srbska (VRS) that invaded the Srebrenica, town in eastern Bosnia and Herzegovina. See International Criminal Tribune for the former Yugoslavia, "Srebrenica

To point out this system is no easy task, since that regime which exercises necropolitics most persistently, the government of whiteness, the occidental world, has developed the most distorting forms of concealment of its actual project of contemporary genocides.

After the Second World War, it became clear that the modes of killing should ask for more reasons and more explanations of the Occident, for more moral narratives. The mode of dealing with refugees, the mass flow of refugees that is a product of the proxy war for power and profit, is not to kill refugees, but to imprison them in the most miserable camps, to exclude and seal them off, yet to attribute to them the form of radicalized abandonment, not a direct killing. Why, in fact? As an Occident, the regime of whiteness cannot accept direct killings in general; the regime of whiteness and its civilizationally superior mission demand that all kinds of additional methods be developed. These forms are the main ways today. I argue that every layer of society, practice, and institutional mode of governmentality is affected by necropolitics. Jothie Rajah touches on this as well. In her talk "The Killing of Al-Baghdadi: Translating from Liberal Legality to Necropolitical Law," announced online in Vienna in 2020, she asks:

> What does this killing—an extraterritorial, extrajudicial assassination—mean for the law? Conventionally, positivist thinking regards law as boundaried and binaried, such that law's other is "illegal" or "not law." Against this conventional understanding of the law, critical theorists perceive all that we embody, enact, and engender, including cultural texts, as expressing law and legal meaning. What then is the law brought into existence by the assassination of al-Baghdadi? Drawing on Achille Mbembe's highly influential theorizing of necropolitics [...], Jothie Rajah argues that contemporary forms of imperialism, alongside narratives of American exceptionalism, have effected a translation from liberal legality to necropolitical law.[11]

Genocide: No Room For Denial", https://www.icty.org/en/outreach/documentaries/srebrenica-genocide-no-room-for-denial, accessed 9 April 2020.

[11] Jothie Rajah, "The Killing of Al-Baghdadi: Translating from Liberal Legality to Necropolitical Law," *IFK*, March 2020, http://www.ifk.ac.at/index.php/kalender-detail/translating-from-liberal-legality-to-necropolitical-law.html, accessed 10 April 2020.

The analysis and presentation of the book

The book is a compilation of texts that have been produced in recent years and are now being carefully rearranged. The result of such reordering is a well-rounded thought, brilliantly translated from French into English by Steven Corcoran. The title of the French original is *Politiques de l'inimitié* (Politics of Enmity) that reappears in the present book as "The Society of Enmity," chapter 2.

I will focus on chapters that encircle the central one, "Necropolitics,"[12] the text from 2003. I propose to give a detailed analysis on the mechanisms, the reordering of death, and abandonment of life, in the last decades. I will go into detailed analysis of the following chapters: the first, "Exit from Democracy,"[13] second, "The Society of Enmity,"[14] fourth, "Viscerality,"[15] fifth, "Fanon's Pharmacy"[16] and sixth, "This Stifling Noonday."[17]

In its very introductory part, Mbembe departs from Édouard Glissant's (1928–2011) *Tout-Monde*,[18] or *All-World*; he starts where he concluded his *Critique of Black Reason*. Glissant extends his attention to relations between the local and the global, especially the effects of globalization. Against this, what is called *mondialisation* (globalization) in French, he proposes a *mondialité* (variously translated as world mentality, worldliness, or worlding). This is important as Mbembe exposes a critique of abstract universalism.[19] He connects this criticism with two main features of necropolitics and capitalism; one is the relation of democracy and capitalism; the other is the accumulation of enmity. He will present these relations of hatred, hostility, the voice of blood, and terror and counter-terror as the medicines and poisons of our time.[20] Another author who structures Mbembe's thought in a remarkably stable way is Paul Gilroy. Gilroy's departure from cultural studies and his call to approach philosophically the

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[12] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, pp. 66–92.

[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 9–41.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 42–65.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 93–116

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 117–155.

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 156–184.

[18] Édouard Glissant, *Tout-Monde*, Paris, Gallimard, 1993.

[19] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 9.

[20] See Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, chapters 1 and 2.

work of Richard Nathaniel Wright (1908–1960), whose works dealt with racial issues, seems to be one of the ways present in Mbembe's writings. Gilroy exposes Wright's importance arguing, "His most significant contribution, however, was his desire to accurately portray blacks to white readers, thereby destroying the white myth of the patient, humorous, subservient black man."[21]

Mbembe opens chapter 1, "Exit from Democracy," uncovering a time that he sees as a reversal, an inversion of acceleration,[22] a kind of persistent fossilization of the contemporary Occidental societies. This is very visible in the time of coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

Democracy, writes Mbembe, is the racial system of life, that presents a double place of the black body, as labor and reserve, and colonization is a technology for regulating migratory movements.[23] Mbembe shows that from the 16th to the 19th century, capitalism practised repopulation through predation, wealth extraction, and the formation of subaltern groups.[24] One thing must necessarily be pointed out, even to all those who think and maintain that nothing new is produced in this book. I maintain that what we are given to read, chapter by chapter, is a never-ending process of rewriting genealogies. Genealogies are histories in the plural as political positioning, the latter is not hidden alongside "objective but dead historicity," on the contrary, genealogies provoke, contest and tear.

Therefore, Mbembe exposes that this bone, this skull and this skeleton all have names: repopulation, the settler colony as an extension of the nation, exploitation of colonies.[25] The objective is to divide the humanity into those of value and those doomed to be disposed of.[26] He shows the influence of religion or the "religious factor" on migration and mobility.[27]

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[21] Gilroy quoted in Abebooks, "Native Son", https://www.abebooks.com/Native-Richard-Wright-Harper-Brothers-New/22882338817/bd, accessed 10 April 2020.

[22] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 9.

[23] *Ibid*., p. 10.

[24] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[25] *Ibid*.

[26] *Ibid*., p. 13.

[27] *Ibid*., p. 12.

The destiny of Huguenots that were French Protestants in the 16ᵗʰ and 17ᵗʰ centuries that followed the teachings of theologian John Calvin is taken as an example. On March 1, 1562, troops under the command of Francis, Duke of Guise, attacked 300 Huguenots who were worshiping in a barn outside the city walls of Vassy, France. More than 60 Huguenots were killed and more than 100 injured in the massacre. Francis said he did not order an attack but instead retaliated for throwing stones at his troops. French Wars of religion sparked by the Vassy massacre led to massive violence. Protestants took control of Orleans in April 1562 and massacred Huguenots in Sens and Tours; in Toulouse as many as 3,000 people, many of them Huguenots, died in the suppression of an uprising. Shortly thereafter, religious violence escalated again. Worst of all was the Night St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572, when up to 70,000 Huguenots were murdered across France, led by the regent queen Catherine de Medici, King Charles IX' mother. On the night of August 23, 1572, and for the next two days, violence spread from town to town. Officials had recruited Catholic citizens into militia groups that hunted down Huguenots, tortured and mutilated them, and desecrated the dead.[28]

This is also one of the many historical cases in the book that serve to rethink genocidal impulses; to rethink the human, Mbembe proposes to discuss three features: first, the human condition as a world condition;[29] second, the redefinition of the human;[30] and third, computation, calculation, and the computer.[31]

What is the meaning of this? Mbembe is clear that we live in a historical context in which it is not possible to separate the digital from life,[32] as the human, its form of presence, traces the shadow of digital technology. The human materiality double is none other than its digital subject.[33] This is also a moment to note that all these contradictory relations also come from a rereading; an immense referential library is also found in this book.

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[28] The Editors of History, "Huguenots," updated September 6, 2019, https://www.history.com/topics/france/huguenots, accessed 10 April 2020.

[29] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 13.

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] *Ibid.*

We could go—not as passers-by, but on the contrary, as forensic readers—from one to hundreds of notes that frame the chapters and provide a parallel route that is the one to dive into these references. The digital subject in question is the result of a referential reading of a volume with the same title, published in 2015,[34] which unfolds an interdisciplinary reflection on transformations and new figures of subjectivity in the digital age. The outcome is, as exposed by Mbembe, "the capacity to voluntarily alter the human."[35]

It is about a mixture of the power of capital, accumulation and devouring, artificial intelligence, which brings war and the market into symmetry.[36]

Mbembe challenges the assumption that life in a democracy is free of violence. Simply put, either we have democracy as a potential, or we have other forms of democracies that are inextricably linked to capitalism and its violence.

About capitalism: "democratic societies are pacified society," "but the brutality of democracies has simply been swept under the carpet."[37] The historical list of faded, "crippled" democracy comes alive with Mbembe's reading of W.E.B. du Bois's 1935 analysis, which showed that the U.S. is a pro-slavery democracy; as early as 1848, Alexis de Tocqueville noted this pro-slavery democracy as a segregationist community.[38] Therefore, Mbembe states that the slave develops a racist democracy and this keeps Black people out of society.[39] He claims that the lynching of Black people in the United States is the basis for a racist democracy.[40]

Democracy cannot be seen outside two systems, the colonial and the slave system.[41] We could therefore argue that in 2020, European Union tends to be an anti-Muslim racist democracy. Mbembe sees equality as inherent to violence. He suggests that workers' protests in response to capitalist state repression in

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[34] See Claire Larsonneur, Arnaud Regnauld, Pierre Cassou-Noguès, and Sara Touiza (eds.), *Le sujet digital*, Dijon, Les Presses du Réel, 2015. Translated as *The Digital Subject*, Dijon, Les Presses du Réel, 2017.

[35] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 14.

[36] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

[38] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 18.

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

the early 20th century provoked the critique of democracy from the standpoint of social classes.[42]

So he points out that the mythical foundations of democracy,[43] say, equality, have swept colonialism, the slave plantation, and the colonial penal colony under the rug.[44] These forms of racial democracy are pillars of the colonial-imperial order working hand in hand with weapons, technology, and medicine.[45]

Mbembe recounts that the Cinchona has always been coveted for its medicinal value (for the extraction of quinine and other alkaloids), which in the heyday of European colonialism were the only effective remedies against malaria and were therefore of great economic and political importance. The artificial synthesis of quinine in 1944 and the advent of alternative therapies eventually ended the great financial interest in cinchona cultivation. Academic interest continued, however, as many cinchona alkaloids showed promise in the treatment of falciparum malaria, which has developed resistance to synthetic drugs. So we see various forms of colonial extraction that can now be added to these modernist universal practices for "humanity." It is clear that it is about Western humanity, and the consequences are colonial experimentation and colonial medicine.

Again, this links democracy directly to violence; first, capitalist or liberal democracy has the colony within it,[46] second, it exists in and on the borders,[47] and third, it draws from history without the people.[48] The horizons that these three relations open up are that both terror and counter-terror strike at the law and rights centrally.[49] The modes of sovereignty are fundamental,[50] because the rule of sovereignty in contemporary liberal democracy is without accountability. At the same time, capital has inherited from colonial times a right to decide over life and death.[51] Again, regarding coronavirus disease (COVID-19), the best ex-

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[42]   *Ibid.*, p. 22.
[43]   *Ibid.*, p. 23.
[44]   *Ibid.*
[45]   *Ibid.*
[46]   *Ibid.*, p. 27.
[47]   *Ibid.*, p. 30.
[48]   *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[49]   *Ibid.*, p. 33.
[50]   *Ibid.*, p. 34.
[51]   *Ibid.*

ample is the former president of the USA, Trump. Was not the forced political action and increased militarization in the case of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outside, or above the law, called for? Various medical professionals were less and less considered, politics decides for them.

What is it that we don't understand here? Mbembe again enumerates several forms of sovereignty. It is state terror that uses ethnic contours to depoliticize social protest. [52] The French Riots of 2005 (French: *Émeutes De 2005 Dans Les Banlieues Françaises*), was a period of three weeks of riots in the suburbs of Paris and other French cities, in October and November 2005. These riots involved youth of African, North African and French origin, who committed violent attacks and set fire to cars and public buildings. The media portrayed the riots as the rage of a barbaric mob. This was followed by a portrayal of the monopoly of power that only comes to fruition through killing.[53]

Finally, one of the essential points in the analysis of democracy is that democracy produces a society of separation.[54] With this statement, Mbembe leads us into chapter 2, "The Society of Enmity." Mbembe refers to two positions: the first is that of a controversial German jurist Carl Schmitt, who provides a critique of parliamentary democracy—particularly as embodied in the form of the Weimar Republic—in his *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*,[55] first published in 1923 (as *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*). Mbembe recapitulates Schmitt's point by asserting that in a democracy the surplus population is wholly or partially without rights.

The second reference is Wendy Brown. In her article "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," she discusses how neoliberalism and neoconservatism are two distinct political rationalities in the United States today.[56] As she further elaborates,

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[52] *Ibid.*

[53] *Ibid.*, p. 35.

[54] *Ibid.*, p. 42.

[55] Carl Schmitt, *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, trans. E. Kennedy, Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 1985. Originally published as *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismu*, Munich, Duncker and Humblot, 1923.

[56] Wendy Brown, "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization," *Political Theory*, 34 (6/2006), pp. 690–714.

> Their respective devaluation of political liberty, equality, substantive citizenship, and the rule of law in favor of governance according to market criteria on the one side, and valorization of state power for putatively moral ends on the other, undermines both the culture and institutions of constitutional democracy. Above all, the two rationalities work symbiotically to produce a subject relatively indifferent to veracity and accountability in government and to political freedom and equality among the citizenry.[57]

Mbembe conveys that what we see today is a fantasy of extinction, as a product of the intertwining of capital, technology and militarism as the central nexus of neoliberal global capitalism.[58] In such a situation, the enemy is a social need, a need for the ontology of the nation, and it is constitutive of its formation.[59] The result is a hypertechnological development of the most backward nationalist reactionary blood identity politics.[60] Referring to Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon's *The Human Right to Dominate*,[61] it is obvious that militarism no longer needs a mask to advance.

A very detailed description of these relations is spread out before the reader; this is done in lush literary language with juicy coinages. They come from the literary repertoire and are transformed into political, philosophical, theoretical terms. The security state aspires to a state of insecurity; each term produces or clings to its opposite, because the only way to understand neoliberal global capitalism is through its opposite; everything that politicians, multinational CEOs, and military generals publicly proclaim is at least the opposite. The invocation of security, for example, serves precisely to produce maximum insecurity. Mbembe has come to terms with a category of doubt that is beginning to be a significant force, not truth and falsehood.[62]

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In all these constellations, Mbembe discloses that racism is the impetus. Onto it, it is that enmity is funded. He asserts that it is not so much class that unites

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 690.

[58] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 48.

[59] *Ibid.*

[60] *Ibid.*, p. 52.

[61] Nicola Perugini and Neve Gordon, *The Human Right to Dominate*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2015.

[62] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 55.

groups in society, but kinship, that is, the blood of the masses.[63] This is what Mbembe calls nano-racism,[64] less class and technology is there without inno-cence, made naked. The nano-racism that Mbembe speaks of it in 2015,[65] is the small-minded white prejudice,[66] but also the basis of another machinery, hy-draulic racism, which is the machinery that works even without the computers, I would say, because Mbembe also considers in this machine to pump racism the juridical-bureaucratic state machine measures, and therefore to be blind is to be indifferent to differences.[67] After all, the Occident is still fomenting racism centuries later.[68] Racism is constitutive of Western instincts and economic sub-jectivity.[69]

For Mbembe, racism is a commodity "in this era of salaciousness," obscenity, "without this resource 'the society of spectacle' [...] simply no longer exists,"[70] as it has acquired the status of lubricity, carnality.[71] The passion for profit, lu-bricity, lust, brutality and sexuality is that which promotes the society of the spectacle of racism.[72]

Let us pause for a moment. It is obvious that the entire repertoire of primary texts from the 1960s and 1970s is getting a new look; the *Society of the Spectacle* by Guy Debord[73]—to which every occidental hipster and new accelerationist has returned—is now colored by the missing part, racism.

Mbembe also shows that the West, or the Occident, is the one that defines being, and therefore, after historical horrors, after genocidal practices, it can always

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[63]   *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[64]   *Ibid.*, p. 57.

[65]   See Achille Mbembe, "Nanoracisme et puissance du vide" [Nano-racism and the power of vacuum], in N. Bancel, P. Blanchard and A. Boubeker (eds.), *Le Grand Repli*, Paris, La Découverte, 2015, pp. 5–11.

[66]   Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 59.

[67]   *Ibid.*

[68]   *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[69]   *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[70]   *Ibid.*

[71]   *Ibid.*

[72]   *Ibid.*

[73]   Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, trans. F. Perlman and friends, Detroit, Black & Red, 1977. Originally published as *La Société du Spectale*, Paris, Editions Buchet-Chastel, 1967.

preach a new beginning, the great new beginning. That is the universality of the West, to start over again, again and again.[74] The West cannot think of a proper finality, except perhaps a cleansing, which is the genocidal logic of purging everything; and if necessary, a complete destruction of the "less-humans."[75]

If there is a universality, it is the universality of violence, of the victors of wars all professing a predatory system.[76] This is also related to another fantasy that David Theo Goldberg[77] calls postracial. In the last instance, we get the illusion of a different beginning, the beginning of a different history without contemporary humanity; the fantasy of ablation.[78] Or, as Shirley Anne Tate[79] has excellently captured and elaborated: the myth of the post-race society is possible for all those Others, all those Black, but only if passing as white.

That chapter 4, which follows "Necropolitics," is titled "Viscerality" is not surprising, for what else can be the result of the necro-governing of the death of thousands? Not subjectivity, but flesh, the crude, earthly instrumentalization of life through a perspective of death, exercised through capital, technology, militarization. What term better fits today's necroterror and dystopian necro-future than viscerality? Let us think of the status of refugees in Greece, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Libya, Italy, Slovenia, at the mercy of necrocapitalism of the neoliberal era? Therefore, the techno-politics of residual governance in Africa produces a molecular colonialism on regional political futures. This molecular form of colonialism is a concept conceived by Margarida Mendes. The significance of the miniaturization of colonialism, as with nano-racism, lies in its absolute, almost "invisible" fragmentation.

Here, too, the list of terms and forms of dispossession, exploitation and expropriation grows, because global neoliberal necrocapitalism means a totality of never-ending differentiations, fragmentations and ruptures; these also affect

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[74] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 63.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[76] *Ibid.*

[77] David Theo Goldberg, *Are We All Postracial Yet?*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2015.

[78] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 64.

[79] Shirley Anne Tate, "Border Bodies: Mixedness and Passing in *Prison Break*," in M. Gržinić (ed.), *Border Thinking: Disassembling Histories of Racialized Violence*, Vol. 21 of Publication Series of the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna, Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2018, pp. 138–151.

the possibilities of influence on time and space and not only on the capitalist mode of production.

The result, as Mbembe claims, is the production of new forms of space.[80] He speaks of enclosure, contraction containment; the latest is a series of measures designed to protect the world's population due to coronavirus disease (COVID-19). All lead to the "impoverishment of the real,"[81] which for Mbembe is a new relationship after financialization. Mbembe refers to Aeron Davis and Karel Williams' introduction to "Elites and Power after Financialization," this text brings "state-capital relations, innovative forms of value extraction, new elite insecurities and resources in liquid times and the role of elite intermediaries and experts."[82] Mbembe's view forms an entanglement of neoliberal capitalism, computational technologies, and social media that reflects the phase of humanity.[83]

The centrality of technology is once again revealed; digitalization brings the dimension of the nano-part (one billionth, 10-9), which adds to all these processes of subjugation, dispossession and discrimination. This is why Mbembe speaks of nano-racism; it goes hand in hand with nano-cameras and neo-fascism.[84] As Mbembe uncovers: "We can finally become our own spectacle, our own scene, our own theater and audience, even our own public. In this age of endless self-curation and exhibition, we can finally draw our own portrait. Intimacy has been replaced by what Jacques Lacan called 'extimacy.'"[85] He connects this "super-isolation of the self" to Evan Osnos's article about super-rich Americans (in Silicon Valley, New York, and elsewhere) preparing for disaster, the story of guys who want a "refuge that would be far from cities but not entirely isolated" and who "think that one guy alone could somehow withstand the roving mob."[86]

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[80] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 96.

[81] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

[82] Aeron Davis and Karel Williams, "Introduction: Elites and Power after Financialization," *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34 (5–6/2017), pp. 3–26.

[83] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 114.

[84] *Ibid.*

[85] *Ibid.*

[86] García Martínez quoted in Evan Osnos, "Doomsday Prep for the Super-Rich," *New Yorker*, January 30, 2017, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/01/30/doomsday-prep-for-the-super-rich, accessed 10 April 2020.

Here the psychosis, the Rambo fantasies and the supremacists' ideologies work together. The final chapters after the psychosis of history, the psychosis of capital, the psychosis of militarization, the fantasies of power, and supremacists' desires, etc. come to another set of in-depth reflections on Frantz Fanon. In reading Fanon (1925–1961), Mbembe exposes him as a psychiatrist, political radical, Pan-Africanist and Marxist humanist concerned with the psychopathology of colonization and decolonization. Mbembe reads Fanon through a relationship between the political and the psychiatric.

Already in his 2016 lecture, Mbembe connects the category of viscerality to two important works of Fanon's, showing "when the clinical and the political are co-constitutive and when they are not."[87] Already in his work *A Dying Colonialism* Fanon warns that postcolonial elites become predators of their societies. [88] His conceptualization of violence directly mirrors the "genocidal impulses" of European colonialism in its "'founding, empirical and phenomenal' dimension."[89]

In "Fanon's Pharmacy,"[90] "Mbembe turns to Fanon to characterise 'colonisation as a prodigious machine for the production of desires and fantasies,' by no means all of which are materialistic. He reminds us that if 'there is a secret to the colony, it is clearly this: the subjection of the native by way of desire.' This is a version of Fanon which is as much concerned with what drives us as with what we wish to drive out."[91]

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[87]   Achille Mbembe, "Frantz Fanon & the Politics of Viscerality," keynote lecture for the Frantz Fanon, Louis Mars, & New Directions in Comparative Psychiatry Workshop, April 26–27, 2016, John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute, Duke University, available at https://humanitiesfutures.org/media/achille-mbembe-frantz-fanon-politics-viscerality/, accessed 10 April 2020.

[88]   Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism*, trans. H. Chevalier, New York, Grove Press, 1967. Originally published as *L'An V de la Révolution Algérienne*, Paris, Maspero, 1959.

[89]   Sindre Bangstad, "Achille Mbembe's Fanonian meditations," *Africa Is a Country*, December 12, 2018, https://africasacountry.com/2018/12/achille-mbembes-fanonian-meditations, accessed 10 April 2020.

[90]   See Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, chapter 5.

[91]   Imraan Coovadia, "Africanism and Afrofuturism: Imraan Coovadia considers Blackness, Black Panther and Achille Mbembe's Critique of Black Reason," *The Johannesburg Review of Books*, April 4, 2018, https://johannesburgreviewofbooks.com/2018/04/04/africanism-and-afrofuturism-imraan-coovadia-considers-blackness-black-panther-and-achille-mbembes-critique-of-black-reason/, accessed 10 April 2020.

Fanon's importance to Mbembe as to other thinkers such as Lewis Gordon, Ngũgĩ was Thiong'o, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, is that Fanon brought to light a dichotomy,[92] a double face that lurks on colonialism under liberal democracy. Colonialism enables democracy, so that the will to live under the supremacist regime of liberal democracy is born directly out of destruction, annihilation, and genocide. Therefore, Fanon enters to capture the dimension of destruction in three lines of debate: racism, imperialism and the right to self-determination, and our relationship to destruction and death.[93] Starting from this analysis, Mbembe brings together colonialism, fascism and Nazism to dismantle the first European myth of humanity with a genealogy of the camps.[94] He posits that the early brutal genocidal policy of Nazi Germany was against the Herero in 1904. He claims that the killing of the Herero was the first genocide of the 20th century.[95] The camp history taken from a study by Federico Rahola,[96] presents the camp system not as an event, but a chain of crimes.[97] Mbembe is very precise to also show the difference between the concentration camps and extermination camps for the Judeocide.[98]

By referring to Fanon, Mbembe exposes his analysis of the Algerian war of independence against the French colonizers, which Fanon called "a genuine genocide"[99] and in this respect, racism is never accidental for Fanon.[100] Fanon speaks of two kinds of racism: of vulgar racism, we may say, the scientific racism, and cultural racism; they are subcortical, generic racisms.[101] Fanon states that the denial of proper racism by the racist is also linked to sexuality. The Black person's virility is taken and presented as a "danger" to the dominant society, as if this "virility" is "stolen" from the dominant white community.

[92] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 118.

[93] *Ibid*.

[94] *Ibid*., p. 121.

[95] *Ibid*., p. 125.

[96] Federico Rahola, "La forme-camp: Pour une généalogie des lieux de transit et d'internement du present" [The camp form: For a genealogy of the places of transit and internment of the present], *Cultures et Conflits*, 68 (2007), pp. 31–50.

[97] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 123.

[98] *Ibid*., p. 126.

[99] *Ibid*., p. 128.

[100] *Ibid*., p. 130.

[101] *Ibid.*

The result is a series of the most appalling consequences; the Black person is always the other, always denigrated being in a position of "object among objects."[102] Mbembe describes in detail the white racist fantasies that transform the Black person into a sexual object. He states that the "Dionysiac and sado-masochist sexuality [...] in racist phantasmagoria"[103] are both connected with the phallus.

Here as earlier in his book, Mbembe makes an essential reference to Jacques Lacan; the French psychoanalytic theorist spoke of the phallus as that signifier which cannot simply be reduced to the penis as such. It functions in a metaphorical and metonymic set of a signifier. Unlike Lacan, however, Mbembe highlights at this point that the phallus is neither

> the organ without body so dear to a certain Western psychoanalytic tradition. On the contrary, in colonial—and therefore racist—situations, it represents that which, of life, is manifest in the purest fashion as turgescence, as trust and as intrusion. Clearly, it is impossible to speak about thrust, turgescence, and intrusion without restoring to the phallus if not its physicality, than at least its living flesh, its capacity to testify to domains of the sensible, to feel all sorts of sensations, vibrations, and quivering's (a color, a scent, touch, weights, an odor). In contexts of racial domination and thus of social minoritization, the Negro phallus is above all perceived as an enormous power of affirmation. It is the name of an at once totally affirmative and transgressive force that no prohibition holds in check.

> As such, it radically contradicts the racial power that, in addition to defining itself first and foremost as the power of a prohibition, also represents itself as endowed with a phallus that functions as its emblem and its finery, as much as the central apparatus of its discipline.[104]

From here we can read a list of ways to castrate the black man, starting with lynching.[105] This leads well to formulating a fundamental, cynical inversion that covers colonialist and supremacist racial fantasies: Because of the exuberant

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[102] Frantz Fanon quoted in Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 132.

[103] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 135.

[104] *Ibid.*, p. 136.

[105] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

organ, victims are suddenly themselves responsible for the violence inflicted upon them. [106]

"This Stifling Noonday," chapter 6, continues the relationship to capitalism[107]; since capitalism is an economic system but also a sin regime, it functions through psychopathological methods of coercion, organization, and redistribution of power to set things right, but only to extract their intrinsic value.[108]

For the capitalist economic system, the only thing that counts is what can produce surplus value, profit, which is then privatized and capitalized solely by the capitalist or a multinational corporation. To extract more profit from the hyper-exploitation of the Black body, they are rendered worthless. It is then a simple matter to completely nullify labor and make labor power superfluous.

The main mechanism, as revealed by Mbembe, is ordering, such as sorting, re-organizing and economizing commodities, bodies for maximum extraction and expropriation. Three main regimes are cited: Slavery, Colonialism and Capitalism. In all these formations, as Mbembe notes, it is not so much about social death; [109] it is about waste, desiccation.[110]

In this chapter, Mbembe also enters into an extensive polemic with other strains of Black philosophies, both historical and present, current. This polemic already begins with the notion of "social death," a process proposed by Orlando Patterson, [111] and continues with a distinction of three lines in history and present. The first is the Afrocentric line, [112] the second is Afropessimism.[113] As pointed out by one of the leading figures of Afropessimism, Frank B. Wilderson III,[114] scholar and award-winning author, Afropessimism is an unprecedented account of Blackness, where race colors (almost) everything.

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[106] *Ibid.*

[107] *Ibid.*, p. 158.

[108] *Ibid.*

[109] *Ibid.*

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 159.

[111] Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982.

[112] Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 161.

[113] *Ibid.*, p. 162.

[114] Frank B. Wilderson III, *Afropessimism*, New York, Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2020.

Mbembe is tough on it; he notes that racial pessimism is rooted in white America and its deep belief "that the freedom and security of the white race can be guaranteed only at the expense of the life of nonwhites."[115] The third line Mbembe favors is Afrofuturism, because of the technological elements it entails. He emphasizes that the Afrofuturist critique of humanism works in tandem with the analysis of capitalism.

Mbembe is one of the few postcolonial writers to deal so directly and forcefully with the analysis of capitalism. He explicitly elaborates the principle of race, not as a marker of identity, but as a threshold that produces the withering of life and matter and creates a null world.[116] More so, as it is the one that also reconfigures the entire mechanism of value extraction while providing for worthless living flesh. Mbembe is constantly moving backwards and forwards, to the colonial slave system that produced the slave as human bio stock.[117] In summation, in this extremely powerful book that needed to be presented forensically, the political dimension of postcolonial and decolonial critique is reactivated through the analysis of capitalism.

What is lacking in the book? It has no reference at all to the former Eastern European space, the once known "Second" World; the only reference to it is in the context of Balkanization and re-Balkanization, as the processes of hyper-territorial fragmentation through ethnic wars in 20th century Europe, on the territory called Balkans (former Yugoslavia). One of the possible reasons is Mbembe's complete distancing from the idea of socialism. In particular, he seems to have a distaste for the socialist and communist waves of the 1960s that worked with decolonization.

In the last section of chapter 6 bearing the title "Capitalism and Animism,"[118] Mbembe finally presents this universalization as objectification, as a passion for being transformed into a commodity, which is an essential feature of the time in which we live. He developed this thesis in 2016. John Drabinski[119] has synthe-

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[115]   Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 162.

[116]   *Ibid.*, p. 168.

[117]   *Ibid.*, p. 165.

[118]   *Ibid.*, p. 177.

[119]   John E. Drabinski, "Mbembe, Democracy, Animism," December 6, 2013, http://jdrabinski.com/2013/12/06/Mbembe-democracy-animism/, accessed 10 April 2020.

sized well this central point of Mbembe. Drabinski writes that the meaning of the human and the meaning of the social have been radically

> altered by 21st century cultural and technological life, which transforms classical Marxist conceptions of commodity fetishism and the labor-commodity link [...]. What does this mean for how we think about democracy when our models and terms for theorizing the *demos* (and co-extensive notions of belonging, justice, and the like) come from other centuries. Centuries in which the struggle was to maintain a sense of subjectivity *against* the reduction of the human subject to an object; the early Marx's humanism, we could say, is premised on just such a struggle. But the age of animism, thought in Mbembe's terms here, reverses so much of this at the moment that the desire of the human subject is to become an object and, in that becoming-object, to become animated in the new *proper* sense. That is, in the 21st-century sense, where the distinction between the virtual and the actual is utterly confusing to 18th–20th century modes of thinking the relation. Animism demands that we think virtuality and actuality differently, which, in many senses, is tantamount to saying we must figure out how to think democracy otherwise.[120]

"How do we think otherwise?" asks Drabinski. Because right now, as I write this review, we are still in the pandemic mood of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19).

That is the task, but are we in a position to do so? An ambiguous universality, as Mbembe shows, is a process of becoming within neoliberal global capitalism that fully universalizes the colonial Black-body-thing condition across the neoliberal global necrocapitalist world.[121] Are we capable of thinking otherwise? Also, it seems almost impossible to archive past and present histories within and with ordinary mechanisms of memory, recollecting and ordering—they are all outcome result of post-modernist supremacist's vocabularies, taxonomies, and so forth.

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This is why Achille Mbembe speaks of the anti-museum.

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[120]   *Ibid.*; emphasis in original.
[121]   Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, p. 178.

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Aleš Bunta*

In Times of "Chastity".
An Inquiry into Some Recent Developments in the Field of Perversion[1]

This essay is part of a project that has set out, as one of its primary approaches, to observe perversions as important indicators of broader changes and developments within society. I believe that both of the momenta I follow in this study meet all the requirements for such an inquiry. First, they are both recent – indeed, both can be seen to some extent as permanent social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which played an important role in both developments and even catalysed them to some degree. And second, both developments are massive and far-reaching enough that they can indeed be considered indicators of significant change.

The first development to be examined is what I will call *the decline of pornography*. At a time when all of society is increasingly becoming pornographic in so many ways, it sounds strange to talk about the decline of pornography. And yet pornography as a genre is, I believe, losing ground to something else – to a distinctly different system of unfolding sexuality and its economic exploitation.

The second development to be discussed is *the rise of masochism*. In this context, I will analyse certain reports that show that, especially since the outbreak of the pandemic, the number of people practicing masochistic "heavy play" has increased significantly. What can we say? It appears that in a period when one would expect people to be dreaming of the lifting of restrictions, freedom, or whatever, many have chosen to undertake the cruel path of "servitude".

Eventually, I will show that these two developments are essentially connected, probably even consubstantial.

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The Obscene Surplus of YouTube Sexuality

Recently, a video entitled "Girl on tractor" appeared on YouTube and became an instant commercial success: five months after its initial release, the video was already approaching ten million views, and the numbers still seem to be steadily increasing.[2]

Clearly, this popularity must have something to do with "sex". First, we cannot avoid the question of the sexism of the title. Of course, I am not suggesting that all the people who decided to click on the "Girl on tractor" video were male chauvinists who do not believe in women's ability to drive a tractor, or who, more likely, found the idea of a woman sitting in the driver's seat of a tractor – arguably still a place of great symbolic importance – so irritating that they simply could not resist watching it. Still, it is clear that the title grabs one's attention by pointing out this "anomaly". Eventually, the video itself dispels such preconceptions, as the tractorist Giulia is a true tractorist virtuoso: seeing her handle and manoeuvre her colossal Fendt Favorit 920 certainly explains what the video producer had in mind when he said that after watching the video we will all understand "*di che pasta è fatta questa ragazza, tanto bella quanto brava.*" In other words: by showing Giulia's ability to perform even the most difficult harvesting manoeuvres on a challenging sloping terrain at high speed and with utmost precision, the video seems to ultimately score a moral victory over the likely sexist source of its success. And why not: perhaps in all that follows we see a kind of liberating profanation of one of patriarchal society's most symbolically charged stools.[3]

The thumbnail, after all, also contains another, much more directly obscene lure: a giant vibrating, lurching, thrusting machine upon which sits the body of an attractive woman. In this respect, the video certainly does not fall short of viewers' bawdier expectations.

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[2]   Killercrock 88, "Girl on tractor: Giulia and Fendt Favorit 920/ Sorghum Silage", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PrfoBy88byI&t=629, accessed 19 November 2020.

[3]   In a broad sense, I am referring to Agamben's theory of profanation perceived as a political task for the coming generations. See: Giorgio Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. J. Fort, Paris, Payot & Rivages, 2005, pp. 115–117.

Giulia, the tractor operator, is a good-looking young woman by all the usual standards (more on the delicate side, actually), clad in a low-cut black top that rather "generously" (but by no means exaggeratedly) reveals her chest. Initially, the camera is "conveniently" located near the top of the cockpit's front window, providing a "perfect view" into the depths of Giulia's cleavage. Later, the camera is moved over her right shoulder, to an angle that shows even more (or at least creates such an illusion). Especially when she turns – and she must turn constantly because her efforts must be coordinated with a companion combine pouring grain into the trailer of her tractor – one can get the impression that the fabric is going to slip completely off her breast (which, of course, never happens). Last but not least, a Fend Favorit 920 is a powerful machine that, despite its built-in hydraulic system, generates vibrations that create a very special dynamic in the aforementioned area. The difficulty of the bumpy terrain that the heavy machine has to cross contributes its part to this impression.

At a certain point, Giulia starts going downhill at very high speed: Her hydraulic driver's seat swings violently up and down, right in front of the viewer's eyes – and yet at this point I'm already becoming lewd, I'm imagining things, regardless of the fact that I'm basically just describing the video rather objectively, without adding much interpretation – because after all, what we are really looking at is just a person going about her daily work, in her normal work clothes, which actually seems quite appropriate for a hot, sunny summer day on the beautiful hills of Ascoli. The obscene undertone that seemed to surface for a moment – the fleeting impression that the video, describing a normal day in rural life, has suddenly morphed into some kind of futuristic, machine-driven cybersex experience – is not only repelled, but also somehow transferred to the narrator trying to describe it. Surprisingly enough, the video is far from vulgar; its atmosphere is probably best described as playful. There is no doubt that Giulia's quivering and writhing bosom is the focus of the entire 44-minute video; but over time, what the viewer initially perceives only peripherally – the surprising complexity of the various controls, the speed with which Giulia operates them, and the unusual sensation of floating high in the air in a capsule, probably caused by the size of the tractor and its hydraulics – gradually comes into focus and achieves a kind of equilibrium.

The reason I find the "Girl on tractor" video particularly interesting is that it provides us with an example of how sexuality is represented and deployed on

YouTube that must be considered both rather atypical and essentially paradigmatic. And the first reason I find it rather atypical lies in the fact that – given the commercial success of the video – it is actually *surprisingly modest* in terms of explicit nudity or explicit sexual behaviour. Considering that almost every sportswear try-on haul on YouTube involves widely-used routines like "squat-proofing" (a model in tight leggings positions herself in a low squat position directly in front of the camera so the viewer can check that the fabric is tight enough to prevent her crotch from showing), it almost strikes me as a kind of voyeuristic, retro-avant-garde act to peek into a woman's blouse (which the "Girl on tractor" eventually has to offer). Hence: sure, the popularity of the video has something to do with "sex", but the real question is more like: How is it possible that it has attracted so much attention with so little of it?

Micro-bikini try-ons, Russian masseurs, yoni yoga performers, fitness competitions, lingerie try-on hauls, sexually charged ASMR, twerking tutorials – given the amount of near-explicit nudity that regularly pops up on YouTube, it is a serious question indeed. But should we not also address this question to the entire realm of YouTube sexuality, considering the ultimate explicitness of pornography that the internet is literally awash with?

One type of statement describes the specific paradox that underlies this situation particularly well. I have heard it several times from various YouTube influencers who (among other things) produce content such as thong try-ons or lingerie try-ons. For example, one very popular content creator, Gwenn Gwiz, used to reproach viewers who only watched her videos to see her breasts and bottom: "Like I usually say, I would try all this [see-through lingerie] on video if it wasn't for creeps. It's just for someone who wants some lingerie and wants to know how it fits."[4] On one occasion, she even revealed that "there's a little thing out there on the internet called PornHub," which she highly recommended to all those viewers who, in her words, were looking for sexual relief at the wrong address.

Of course, such statements may be seen like extreme hypocrisy: the content creators on YouTube are regularly fed information about the gender makeup of their viewership, and unsurprisingly, things like thong try-ons are predom-

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4   Gwengwizetc, "Victoria Secret & Adoreme try-on haul", https://www.youtube.com/watch ?v=3iCTEOilOdM&t=26s, accessed 18 January 2019.

inantly viewed by men who are less concerned with the actual "clothing" than what these minimalist garments barely attempt to cover up. So, by supposedly sending away viewers who were only interested in her "tits" and "ass", the content creator was essentially "dismissing" the vast majority of her channel fans. And yet, both sides knew that the stated request to leave the channel was meant as an order to be disobeyed (still as an order, though) – a provocation, perhaps, or a teasing gesture that might even get viewers to stay until the end of the video. More importantly, the statement also very clearly reveals that the influencer who uttered it *was well aware that PornHub was not a serious alternative for viewers of her channel*, not a threat at all.

I believe that YouTube sexuality has grown into a powerful force that is beginning to achieve something that had long seemed unattainable – it has managed to put pornography on the defensive on its own turf. In other words, I think pornography (in its traditional form) is losing ground to the YouTube type of deployment of sexuality. And I must add right away that the reason for this is not, as one might think, that people are growing tired of pornography, or that more and more people find its vulgarity repulsive while still finding pleasure in "softer', more playful depictions of sexuality such as those found on YouTube. On the contrary, I believe that YouTube sexuality is gaining the upper hand on pornography for a much more direct reason and in a much more direct sense: YouTube sexuality is able to produce (or is perhaps even based on) a kind of *obscene surplus that pornography is unable to reproduce*.

This may sound strange, of course, because pornography can essentially be described as a system of obscene reproductions of all sorts of content. But the case of its relation to YouTube sexuality is specific: namely, in this case pornography is surpassed, so to speak, on the level of its own essence. In other words, while it is clear that this obscene excess of which I speak cannot be measured in terms of sexual explicitness, I nevertheless believe that this fleeting excess of obscenity makes YouTube sexuality essentially more pornographic than pornography itself.

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Finally, one might say that pornography cannot reproduce this obscene excess of YouTube sexuality because this obscene excess is, in fact, *an essential reproduction of pornography itself*. What I think is crucial here, however, is that we should not understand this in the sense that pornography finds in YouTube

sexuality a new form, a new means, and an entirely new field for its own ex-pansion. Such an interpretation is, I believe, only a reflection of the growing moralistic tendencies that want to see the world on the verge of being devoured by the pornographic monster. I do not think so, and I will try to explain be-low that the essential reproduction of pornography, as inherent in the obscene excess of YouTube sexuality, *leads to a much more radical transformation* that eventually produces a very *different form of pleasure consumption* – one that, as Peter Klepec indicated in his *Capitalism and Perversion*, is paradoxically close to masochism.

Of course, these are all claims that are difficult to substantiate. But some recent developments show that they are not empirically unfounded. It is widely known that in recent years new social platforms with adult content such as Onlyfans, Chaturbate, and to some extent Patreon (where only "artistic nudity" is allowed) have taken over a significant portion of the internet "sex" market. Especially since the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, which brought the traditional porn industry to a halt (as regards filming), the role of these new platforms became al-most indispensable: a large number of erotic performers who found themselves without income discovered that platforms like Onlyfans allowed them to create independent, homemade content and sell it directly to their consumers. Consid-ering that this was the first time many sex workers were given the opportunity to work independently of their shady managers and the "industry" itself, many of them, such as actress and webcamming star Lily Labeau, welcome these new platforms as a means of important social change.[5] However, while it is true that Onlyfans has been boosted by the arrival of the "COVID sex migrants", we must also bear in mind that Onlyfans has also spawned a whole new breed of content providers who have never been involved in the porn industry proper – and many of these new content providers, including some of the most financially success-ful, are in fact YouTubers who have brought their already established fan bases with them. How do we know this? The answer is simple: these content creators talk very openly about these topics on their YouTube or Instagram channels.

Of course, you could say that what is shown on Onlyfans is still pornography pure and simple, and on a graphic level, that is of course true. However, the

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[5] Alone with the Pope podcast, "Lily Labeau", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANY 9J2sSHTI, accessed 4 December 2020.

entire *social substructure* and, even more importantly, the *fundamental relationship between the content provider and the consumer* is completely different. And while it may be true that much of the content on Onlyfans can be technically labelled as pornography, voices are being raised, especially within the new generations, who disagree with this assessment and emphasise that Onlyfans has a very different "vibe" compared to pornography:

> Onlyfans feels much healthier than porn. I really don't watch porn, it's not my thing. If I wanted any sexy content, I'd probably go to Onlyfans. And I feel like – ok, I'm giving seven dollars a month or something – and I'm going to *this person*, that's fine. It has a different vibe to it.

> Dude, I hate porn! It never turns me on. Okay, if I find some webcamming so I can see the *real people*, that's fine. Porn is like, I would say, guys with bad tattoos fucking a woman with emotional problems, and that's too much like my parents – a little too close to home for me. [6]

These two statements actually reveal two very crucial differences between Onlyfans and traditional pornography. The first statement highlights the fact that Onlyfans is always about "that person" – a consumer is paying to see that particular person; a person with whom a consumer may (if he or she chooses to pay for a high enough tier) even be able to communicate, perhaps even get some of that person's attention. And that, of course, is very different from the traditional porn experience.

Pornography, as such, is first and foremost a gigantic aggregate of anonymous bodies at one's disposal, constantly renewed by the arrival of "fresh" bodies. For me, at least, pornography has always had a kind of "communist" appeal surrounding it – an appeal that is somewhat ruthless, a bit proletarian, and righteous in its own way: *every body counts*, all bodies that enter the scene must somehow be coped with, accepted; they all belong to the experience. And even if someone has decided to watch a film because it features an actress that that viewer finds particularly attractive, there is always the chance that on that day

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[6]   Politically Homeless podcast, "Onlyfans vs. PornHub with Lacey Claire Rogers", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EploAvMgLE8, accessed 20 October 2020.

he or she will eventually end up finding pleasure in someone else whom he or she might otherwise find even repulsive.

Onlyfans, on the other hand, seems to be a very different story. The organisation resembles a beehive: there is always a queen bee at the centre – "that person" who occupies the sole focus of attention: the content provider. Of course, the experience itself may in fact be much more personal, and therefore perhaps even easier to accept from a moral perspective. Behind this "ethical curtain", however, there is clearly another allure, which is also highlighted in the statements above as the second particularly important feature of the experience of the difference between Onlyfans and porn: the personal approach can also give consumers the impression that they are dealing with "real people" – not with a monotonous pornographic display of anonymous bodies, but with a real person whose "personal reality" *takes the reality of the whole experience to a whole new level*. What lies behind the more personal approach is still the "passion for the real" that Klepec posits at the core of pornography's essence: "In what follows, we will try to show that a porn film is permeated by only one passion, namely the passion for the real, if I may borrow this term coined by Alain Badiou."[7] At the same time, however, it is clear – and this still keeps me close to Klepec's brilliant exposition – that this reiteration of the essence of pornography at the core of the Onlyfans experience *is something that eludes pornography*, because it is obviously inherent in the more personal approach, which, as we have seen, concerns the very essential difference in the experience of Onlyfans sexuality and porn.

I think we have thus reached the point where we can reiterate the thesis and underline it with its first statement. Pornography is indeed surpassed on the level of its own essence: if what drives pornography is indeed "passion for the real," then Onlyfans seems to be the next stage of development within that same drive – one in which consumers no longer seem to care so much about the reality of the sexual act itself, but about the *reality of the person* performing that act. And herein lies the first reason why I am convinced that the signifier of this redirection of the collective drive must be YouTube and not Onlyfans: the explicitness of the act itself, as represented in pornography, no longer represents the central focus of this drive. Indeed, it is tempting to speculate that because the pornographic sexual act must necessarily be staged, its explicit representation

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[7]   Peter Klepec, *Dobičkonosne strasti. Kapitalizem in perverzija 1*, Ljubljana, DTP, 2008, p. 96.

is increasingly experienced by consumers as something *that stands in the way* of achieving a real experience. In the podcast mentioned above, for example, the speakers vigorously lamented that the pornographic camera, which constantly takes close-ups of genitalia and penetration, completely misrepresents the actual experience of a sex act. By contrast, what makes the fleeting moment of obscenity in the "Girl on tractor" video so real is precisely the fact that it was neither staged nor intended. And besides, Giulia the tractorist is, of course, a *very real person*: the fact that she is so good at driving her tractor must, in this sense, be directly recognised as the driving force of her sex appeal.

The fact that YouTube sexuality is restricted by some rules that prevent more explicit representation should therefore not be seen as an obstacle in its triumphal march. On the contrary, the fact that sexual content must always be hidden in a discourse that is not directly sexual clearly gives it the upper hand in the sense that it represents an almost ideal laboratory for perversion. Many of the popular creators of the more or less explicit sexual content on YouTube therefore make some (indeed highly perverse) adjustments to their discourse:

For example, the content creator Sophie's Stage, who performs dancing in lingerie, usually adds an after-recorded audio to her performance, in which she critically comments on her clothes in a monotone voice: "This material is so CHEAP; you can see the LOW quality of the fabric; the garter belt is so CHEAP that it's going to fall off; the panties are so CHEAP that you can almost see my butt-crack through it."[8] So, after all: it's an "honest" fitting, and that seems to go over well with viewers. Another content creator, Naides Aqua, whose dark sarcasm I actually find remarkable, uses a different strategy. Her tactic is not to comment on her (barely there) clothes; instead, she comments directly on her body as if it were a mere commodity: "A lot of you have been quite concerned about me not eating enough. Would you know, I get it, I get it. So, on my Amazon gift-list there is now gift-cards for food. So, if you are that concerned just buy me a gift-card for food so I can eat, since you know, you are all so concerned."[9] In other words: she does not mind eating; she just wants to get paid to do so. This example

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[8] Sophie's Stage, "Lingerie try-on haul", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wea2cNS-goG4&list=PLbTGIxA5N97Ls7TS9wjKuHsdYc_n3DFRS&index=42&t=760s, accessed 25 September 2020.

[9] Naides Aqua, "Sexy Micro Bikini", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BfWcJPrsKwg, accessed 23 April 2021.

perhaps best illustrates how the lack of explicit sexuality can be replaced with something even more real – namely, the relentlessly honest portrayal of what's really going on in the video.

The "Surge" of Masochism

Masochism is on the rise. And by that I do not just mean that masochism is coming out of the shadows, so to speak, because people are starting to be more open about their quirks and sexual habits than ever before. In that respect, masochism is still one of the quieter and more secretive forms of sexuality, for obvious reasons. What I really want to draw attention to are reports that indicate that the actual number of people practicing masochistic play has seen a dramatic increase in recent years. Furthermore, these reports – which come from the only sources actually in possession of the necessary data, which is obviously not readily available – also reveal surprising information, to say the least, as to when exactly these "surges" of masochism have occurred:

> When Donald Trump won the 2016 election, I saw a surge in female, racial, and religious minorities who contacted me; people who, because of external events, were required to be unyielding and resolute in their day-to-day struggles, seeking heavy play that helped them break down within the context of a safe and trusting environment. I've seen *a similar response during COVID-19*, and wanted to deconstruct it a bit. It may seem counterintuitive to think that when times are tough someone might want to add to that pain by seeking out things like discipline, humiliation, pain, or physical confinement. After all, isn't it tricky enough just to make sure you're wearing pants on your Zoom meeting? And yet many do find themselves craving BDSM when they feel especially vulnerable, particularly those with a submissive bent. Of course, this is not the only reason people seek out BDSM. Like music, comedy, or any form of expression, it can serve a specific purpose or it can simply be sexy and fun – a lust for adventure and curiosity for new things, the excitement of breaking social taboos. But when people are feeling vulnerable, helpless and anxious, there can be a particularly strong urge to be dominated. Why is that?[10]

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[10] Mistress Iris, "A Dominatrix on why BDSM Business is Booming During Trump and COVID", *Daily Beast*, https://www.thedailybeast.com/a-dominatrix-on-why-bdsm-business-is-booming-during-trump-and-covid?ref=scroll, accessed 29 September 2020.

Mistress Iris is not the only dominatrix who has made such an observation. In 2017, the journalist Carrie Weisman conducted a survey that included a series of interviews with dominatrixes and porn site editors, all of whom agreed that since Donald Trump was elected president, demand for BDSM content had increased significantly.[11] Furthermore, similar observations regarding the COVID-19 era have also been made by many other dominatrixes recently appearing on podcasts, such as La Maison du rouge[12] or Alone with the Pope,[13] which predominantly cover BDSM-related topics.

Of course, we should not pretend to be very surprised by the fact that a person in a period of social isolation can develop some sort of introverted sexual proclivity, which can include some form of introverted sexual aggression. What is really interesting in this particular context is the more "technical" aspect: How is it possible that the BDSM business boomed at a time when dominatrixes and their submissives were actually unable to have any kind of physical contact with each other? This is indeed the question that will interest us most, for the consequences of its ingenious solution are far-reaching, even from a purely theoretical point of view. And yet – when you put it all together – it is astonishing: in times when you would expect people to spend much of their time dreaming of the full restoration of freedom, of the lifting of restrictions, or (as in the case of Trump's presidency) even of fighting the regime, many have chosen – in a gesture that in itself is by no means devoid of emancipatory cravings – to undertake "servitude".

Speaking of this "servitude", attention must be drawn to one detail in particular. In some of her explanations as to how masochistic sessions actually work, Mistress Iris stressed that no dominatrix with an established reputation would even consider making an appointment with a client who was only looking for a one-off experience: some form of *relative permanence* to the established power relationship between a dominatrix and a submissive seems indispensable to the

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[11] Carrie Weisman, "Dominatrixes and Porn-sites Report a Huge BDMS Uptick since Trump Became President", *Vice*, 6 March 2017, https://www.vice.com/en/article/vvjew4/dominatrixes-and-porn-sites-report-a-huge-bdsm-uptick-since-trump-became-president, accessed 23 March 2021.

[12] La Maison du Rouge podcast, "Interview with Educatrix and Creatrix Domina Colette", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNRw-SEV7Bs, accessed 23 March 2021.

[13] Alone with the Pope podcast "Madeline Marlow", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-1jc4jPX11Q&t=310s, accessed 26 February 2021.

experience of genuine masochistic play.[14] There are many reasons for this, and some of them are purely practical, such as building trust, getting to know each other, and finding out the limits of the submissive. But there is another, much more substantial, explanation, which, among other things, also points to what distinguishes masochistic play from any other form of sexual activity: namely, the most essential reason why the duration of a relationship is key to the quality of the experience of being dominated is not the actual number of sessions, but the *intensity of the periods in between them*. In fact, arguably the most important part of a masochistic session actually *takes place off-session*. Later we shall find that this must be understood in the most literal sense.

These observations clearly go hand in hand with Deleuze's famous thesis that masochism is essentially built on the *suspension of time*: in his canonical study *Coldness and Cruelty*, he repeatedly stressed the importance of Masoch's literary ability to freeze time, or even to petrify those moments that precede the actual execution of a "punishment".

> The whip or the sword that never strikes, the fur that never discloses the flesh, the heel that is forever descending on the victim, are the expression, beyond all movement, of a profound state of waiting closer to the sources of life and death. The novels of Masoch display the most intense preoccupation with arrested movement; his scenes are frozen, as though photographed, stereotyped or painted. [15]

Another important parallel can be drawn with Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's own obsessive preoccupation with precise timing, as seen in his famous contracts with the "cruel women" who obliged themselves to "enslave" him by signing these documents:

> On his word of honour, Mr. Leopold von Sacher-Masoch undertakes to be the slave of Mrs. von Pistor, and to carry out all her wishes for a period of six months. [...] These six months need not run consecutively: they may be subject to inter-

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14 Mistress Iris, "Kinky Sex & Relationship Advice", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= qoWhQSZnaGI&t=206s, accessed 25 February 2021.
15 Gilles Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" in *Masochism*, New York, Zone Books, 1991, p. 70.

ruptions beginning and ending according to the whims of the sovereign lady. [...]
Came into operation 8th December 1869.[16]

The duration, then, the relative permanence of the established power relationship that extends beyond the session itself, is clearly part of the essence of masochistic play. However, while we speak of the duration of a masochistic relationship, we are actually speaking of its *intensity*: the session, once one enters into it, *takes place all the time*. All within the confines of a game, of course – and yet Mistress Iris says that when she meets one of her clients purely by chance in a grocery store or a theatre, she expects him to make some kind of discreet gesture of recognition of the hierarchy that has been established between them.

Finally, we should also not pretend to be surprised by the fact that some people seek a form of emancipation by engaging in masochistic games. After all, this topic has been widely discussed by very eminent philosophers.

Is our civilisation perverted? Of course it is! It cannot be otherwise, for it has made its highest value and perhaps its only meaning out of a wheel of torture called freedom. Nietzsche's diagnosis could not have been clearer: freedom was first invented as an instrument of guilt. And by beginning to feel guilt, we have in fact become guilty of an incessant cruelty – namely, the cruelty to ourselves that Nietzsche calls "bad consciousness."[17] This lash of freedom and "bad consciousness" by which we inflict wounds on ourselves has been indispensable in the historical process that has shaped us into "sovereign individuals." And since our civilisation, as Nietzsche famously says, has never had any purpose or meaning other than this creation of "sovereign individuals," this also means that our entire civilisation is essentially built on this self-inflicting cruelty: it has shaped us into what we are, but it also makes us fundamentally sick, tormented beings.[18] Freud's invention of the concept of the "superego" naturally adds another essential perspective to this diagnosis.

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16 Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, "Contract between Mrs. Fanny von Pistor and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch", in *Masochism*, pp. 277–278.

17 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. C. Diethe, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 56–58.

18 Even though Nietzsche himself was always advocating for "purity" in man's ways of life, we should probably note the small detail that he, Lou Salome, and Paul Rée had a photo

Because our civilisation is fundamentally sick due to this combination of freedom and "bad consciousness" that lies at the heart of its development, it will always end up spontaneously reproducing perverse cruelties under the guise of progress and righteousness, such as the following passage from Catherine II's Law Code that was brought to our attention by Foucault:

> It is a triumph of civil liberty when the criminal laws derive each penalty from the particular nature of each crime. In this way all arbitrariness ceases; the penalty does not depend on the caprice of the legislator, but on the nature of the thing; it is not man who does violence to man, but the man's own action.[19]

It is not difficult, therefore, to understand the emancipatory appeal of masochism. If freedom was indeed invented as the wheel that turns the perverse machinery of guilt, then the masochistic decision to give up freedom by taking on "bondage" can indeed be perceived as a kind of remedy for this inherent self-imposed cruelty on which society was built. Masochism can be perceived as a sexual perversion that simultaneously reflects the grotesque truth of our society and eludes its grasp. That is why Deleuze, for example, saw the masochist as triumphant over the "law of the superego."

It seems to work: numerous people who practice the Japanese bondage art of *shibari*, for example, describe such sessions as therapeutic. And of course, it is not at all surprising that letting go of freedom can produce very liberating effects.

On the other hand, Slavoj Žižek has developed a number of critiques of the notion that perversion can be seen as a means of subversion. And one of his main arguments is based precisely on the fact that perversion seems to work so well. In fact, Žižek says that perversions work all too well: a perverse subject, according to Žižek, must be seen first and foremost as someone who has found a way to exploit the given situation for his or her own pleasure, and through this pleasure he or she remains essentially attached to it: "The pervert is thus the 'inherent transgressor' *par excellence*, he brings to light, stages, practices the

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taken of them together, representing their own (very innocent) version of the famous scene of "Aristotle and Phillys", which had been popular during the Middle Ages.

19   "Article 67", in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, trans. A. Sheridan, New York, Vintage Books, 1979, p. 117.

secret fantasies that sustain the predominant public discourse, while the hysterical position precisely displays doubt about whether those secret perverse fantasies are 'really *it*'."[20]

On top of all these philosophical dilemmas, dominatrixes have developed their own rather straightforward doctrines of emancipation regarding their "slaves." Many of them see themselves at the forefront of the feminist struggle. Domina Colette, for example, says that the work of a dominatrix is about creating a new shape of power: "We need a new symbol of power – one that is feminine, wild and free; a new shape of power that we are shaping into our future."[21] Mistress Marx and Mistress Malissia, see "female supremacy" as the only way for humanity to survive in the future, and so on. Finally, most of them seem to be convinced that domination actually emancipates their "slaves" – in the sense that it liberates them from the patterns and attitudes of patriarchal society (such as egotism, narcissism, machismo, etc.).

In this essay, however, I will not engage in these inherently political debates as to the subversive or emancipatory potential of masochism, both its positive and negative aspects. What I really want to scrutinise is the "economic miracle" of masochism – the fact that the business of dominatrixes has done so well during the pandemic, which seemingly should have brought it to a halt. The first question to ask, then, has a purely practical or technical sense: how did the dominatrixes solve the problem of growing demand for their services?

The first thing that comes to mind might be that the dominatrixes also resorted to homemade pornographic videos. But that answer is largely wrong. Mistress Iris, for example, immediately rejected the idea of making pornography. And her dismissive attitude is perfectly understandable: in fact, it is highly questionable whether there can be such a thing as "masochistic pornography" at all. Of course, the genre exists as such; but the question remains: Does it really appeal to true masochists? Basically, there are two reasons why I find this hard to believe. The first is that a masochist needs *something done to his own body*

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[20] Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, London and New York, Verso, 1999, p. 248.
[21] La Maison du Rouge podcast, "Interview with Educatrix and Creatrix Domina Colette by Dia Dynasty", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eNRw-SEV7Bs&t=6s, accessed 23 March 2021.

(or soul); masochism is arguably the most introverted form of sexuality, which cannot be compensated for by voyeuristic pleasure: seeing another person tortured can hardly satisfy a masochist's cravings. Much more important, however, is the second reason: pornography cannot reproduce what we described earlier as the *essential duration* of masochistic play, which extends far beyond the actual session; it cannot reproduce the essential intensity of the periods between sessions; it cannot effectively compensate for those interruptions of time (followed by nothing) that Deleuze finds so essential to Masoch literature.

Why is this so essential? Because what the dominatrixes *have actually done* to make their art flourish during these seemingly very inconvenient times is to opt for a particular technique that *directly fills up with matter* those very moments of intense agony between sessions:

The technical term is "to put men in chastity". A "chastity box" or "chastity cage" is a metallic device shaped like a penis in its non-erect state. The procedure involves inserting the penis into this tight-fitting, downward-facing device, which is then locked behind the scrotum – thus preventing any possibility of an erection. Of course, "chastity play" is not a new invention; some dominatrixes say that "locking away the penis" is to be observed as a prerequisite for any serious masochistic session, and the reason for this supposedly lies in the fact that by "locking away the penis" the entire body becomes increasingly sexualised. The most important purpose, however, is that "chastity play" *can extend the session* beyond its actual duration. Mistress Iris reports that the ideal duration for this type of torture is two weeks: in the first week, submissives become "sullen", "grumpy", and "hyperactive", but by the second week they become truly "desperate and willing to endure any kind of sexual humiliation"; by the beginning of the third week, their libido usually decreases and they enter a kind of "Zen state."[22]

Ultimately, one could say that "chastity play" captures, or even materialises, one of the most essential aspects of the masochistic dialectic: the "chastity box" is a device designed to elicit extreme sexual frustration, but at the same time it is also an instrument that turns *that very frustration into a means of to-*

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[22]   Mistress Iris, "Chastity & O Denial", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VkyNOqkkU4, accessed 31 March 2021.

tal sexualisation of both body and time. "Chastity play" works from a distance and *at all times*, but without relying on pornographic voyeurism. No wonder Mistress Irene Blunt famously asserts that for a dominatrix, no other pleasure even remotely compares to the sensation she feels when she takes all the keys entrusted to her for safekeeping and shakes them in a large jar, knowing full well that each one of those keys represents a man who, *at that moment*, is cruelly reminded that he belongs to her. Servant Bertha – one of the few masochists who has chosen to share his story of being locked up in "chastity" (for life, in his case) – says that these "reminders of belonging" are especially painful on nights when men tend to get particularly strong night-time erections.[23]

Given that the device is designed to produce tormenting effects in the absence of the actual tormentor, it is immediately clear how indispensable it has become since the outbreak of the pandemic. Or perhaps we should turn the tables completely and ask the following question: What if it was actually the COVID pandemic that revealed to the dominatrixes that this small, simple device was all they really needed to turn masochism (which has always been surrounded by a kind of elitist secrecy) *into a mass production industry?*

Indeed, this seems to happen: as Mistress Iris observed with such lucidity – during pandemics people become increasingly frustrated, and for some people at least, one way of dealing with frustration is to actually add to it, or even to try to derive sexual excitement out of their very frustration (the masochistic game). On the other hand, the pandemic also created an environment in which *everything had to be done remotely* – and was that not an "excellent opportunity" for all those who, under normal circumstances, would not even dare to dream of actually seeking out a dominatrix? On the one hand, the pandemic set the stage for a new influx of frustrated customers, while on the other, seclusion made everything much easier: basically, all that is required of a dominatrix is to appear on her channel or website and issue an order: "My servants, bottoms and pets, for the next two weeks you will serve my pleasure by being locked in chastity!", that is essentially it.

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23 Servant Bertha, "Life in chastity part 4", https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gEZw-qCrx-pw, accessed 24 December 2020.

But let us go back to the other side of the map we have been drawing: Isn't a "chastity device" a near-perfect metaphor for YouTube sexuality? Of course, I'm not suggesting that masochism is the sole impetus behind so many different types of sexual content shown on YouTube. But I do believe that the connection is strong.

One thing is for sure, the YouTube type of deployment of sexuality and masochistic play have one thing in common – they are both heavily based on what is called "tease and deny" in BDSM parlance. "Chastity play" is really just a tool of this tactic of sexualisation, which is far more important to many dominatrixes than the actual infliction of physical pain. On the other hand, YouTube sexuality is also not designed for masturbation or the direct arousal of the viewer. What YouTube sexuality actually does is create a kind of *micro-molecule of "sex"* that must be small and weak enough to reach us at any given moment. Unlike watching pornography, which (for most people) is based on choice, the micro-molecules of YouTube sexuality are constantly scattered and tend to develop into little involuntary habits. And the sole purpose of these micro-molecules of "sex" is to leave us wanting *more of the same* kind of content, and not to create some kind of vivacious crescendo of excitement or passion. In a way, you could say that these micro-impulses of "sex" that YouTube sexuality operates with are designed to *tame the libido* by keeping it constantly at the same level of desire for more of the same kind of content. Of course, these sexual impulses also tease, but preferably this teasing is not strong enough to provoke actual arousal: what YouTube sexuality is aimed at is getting the viewer to click on another video, and not to find satisfaction in any single one of them. In this regard, it is clear that YouTube sexuality, with all its limitations, represents a commercial dreamland of the pornographic business that pornography itself is absolutely incapable of realising.

Therefore, YouTube sexuality operates within the confines of frustration: video after video of similar salacious content that always seems to push the boundaries a little further, and yet we know in advance that this is an illusion, because no matter how small the micro-bikini gets, the video will always remain within the boundaries of what is allowed. And yet, people keep coming back to watch these videos. Is it not clear that somehow frustration itself must play the deciding role here? Or, to put it another way, is it not clear that people come back so that their libidos are both somewhat aroused and tamed?

Perhaps we should propose the following synthesis: YouTube sexuality, in its direct form, actually represents another step in the evolution of "passion for the real". Previously, we noted that this passion can no longer be satisfied with the reality of the sexual act itself that characterises pornography, and must be supplemented by the reality of "the person" that characterises Onlyfans or Chaturbate. But what if this "passion for the real", which must also be a passion for scepticism – we have observed how quickly it loses faith in what can be considered the legitimate basis of that "real" – now demands a higher and different kind of investment? Not the boring staged sex act, not the personality of a shady starlet, but something that *is actually real*, and which is the viewer's own frustration?

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Povzetki | Abstracts

Matjaž Ličer
Časovnost v Badioujevi ontologiji in Veliki logiki
Ključne besede: Badiou, ontologija, Velika logika, historičnost, transcendental, urejenost, časovnost

Badiou v ontologiji operira s historičnimi situacijami, ki jih identificira z možnostjo spremembe reprezentacijskega režima. Njegova Velika logika podobno operira s spremembami transcendentala, ki so povezane s spremembo sveta, ki ga transcendental določa. Možnost spremembe je na nekaj mestih v ontologiji in logiki implicitno povezana s pojmom časovnosti, ni pa povsem jasno, kaj je z uporabljenim pojmom časovnosti mišljeno. V prispevku skušamo podati operativno ilustracijo pojma časovnosti, ki si ga izposodimo iz fizike, in ki se zdi skladen z Badioujevim miselnim sistemom ter produktiven za njegovo razumevanje. S pomočjo tega pojmovanja časovnosti, ki eksplicitno povezuje urejenost in časovnost (ali pač njeno odsotnost) skušamo na novo osvetliti nekatera mesta Badioujeve ontologije in logike.

Matjaž Ličer
Temporality in Badiou's Ontology and Greater Logic
Keywords: Badiou, ontology, Greater Logic, historicity, transcendental, order, temporality

In his ontology, Badiou operates with historical situations that are identified as situations whose representation regime is prone to change. Similarly, his Greater Logic operates with changes and modifications of the transcendental related to a change in a particular world determined by its transcendental. In both ontology and logic, Badiou often loosely relates the occurrence of change to temporality, but the operative concept of temporality remains unclear. The paper aims to provide a concept of temporality, borrowed from physics, and which seems consistent with Badiou's system of thought and helps in comprehending it. We use this concept of time, which explicitly links disorder and temporality (or lack of temporality) in an attempt to elucidate certain parts of Badiou's ontology and logic.

Magdalena Germek
Dialektika formalizacije
Ključne besede: Badiou, resnice, dialektika, formalizacija, dialektika formalizacije

V članku raziskujemo misel francoskega filozofa Alaina Badiouja z vidika oznake, ki jo po našem mnenju posebej natančno povzame: *dialektika formalizacije*. Osrednja teza besedila je ta, da lahko Badioujevo doktrino štirih postopkov resnice (politiko, znanost, ljubezen in umetnost) razumemo kot doktrino o dialektični realizaciji nove in univerzalne forme v svetu. Dialektika formalizacije naznanja dvojni postopek, in sicer avtonomni in ustvarjalni postopek proizvajanja nove resničnostne forme v svetu, ter vzpostavitve kontinuitete v diskontinuiteti. Poleg tega pa besedna zveza dialektika formalizacije zastopa sintetično idejo, ki povezuje zrela Badioujeva dela s tistimi, ki so nastala konec 60. let. Čeprav v obdobju med 60.–70. leti še ne obstajata koncepta subjekta in resnice v pomenu kot jih Badiou razume danes, je možno zastopati tezo, da je med zgodnjim Badioujevim konceptom formalizacije in kasnejšim konceptom generične procedure resnice neodpravljiva povezanost. To idejo kontinuitete bomo poskušali opravičiti z Badioujevo skovanko *dialektika formalizacije*.

Magdalena Germek
The Dialectic of Formalization
Keywords: Badiou, truths, dialectic, formalization, dialectic of formalization

This article discusses the philosophy of Alain Badiou from the perspective of a formulation that we believe represents it succinctly: the *dialectic of formalization*. The main thesis of the article is that Badiou's doctrine of the four truth procedures (politics, science, love, and art) can be understood as a doctrine of a dialectical realization of new and universal forms in the world. The dialectic of formalization announces a double procedure – an autonomous and creative procedure for the production of a new true form in the world and a process of the formation of continuity in discontinuity. Moreover, the dialectic of formalization represents a connection between Badiou's mature work and his early writings from the late 1960s. Even though in the 1960s and 1970s Badiou had not yet introduced the concepts of subject and truth in the sense that he understands them today, it is possible to support the thesis that there is an indisputable connection between Badiou's early concept of formalization and his later concept of generic truth procedure. We will try to show that the *dialectic of formalization* (Badiou's own formulation) designates the continuity between Badiou's early and mature work.

Jana Ndiaye Berankova

Razbiti zrcalo: Badioujevo branje Lacana

Ključne besede: Badiou, Lacan, antifilozofija, psihoanaliza, subjekt, sofistika, smisel, Eden

V tem članku se osredotočam na Badioujevo idiosinkratično interpretacijo Jacquesa La-cana in izpostavljam konceptualne točke njegovega razhajanja s psihoanalitikom. Po-drobno razpravljam o Badioujevem razlikovanju med filozofijo, antifilozofijo in sofistiko, pa tudi o pojmih smisla, ab-smisla in nesmisla, ki jih je predstavil v knjigi *Il n'y a pas de raport sexuel: Deux leçons sur "L'Étourdit" de Lacan*, pa tudi v svojem seminarju o Laca-nu. Za razliko od Lacana, za katerega je filozofija podvržena fantazmi Enega, za Badiouja Eno obstaja zgolj kot rezultat štetja. Na tej podlagi spodbijal Lacanovo prepričanje, da filozofija izključuje realno. Trdim, da je Badioujeva glavna točka razhajanja z Lacanom osredotočena na pojem subjekta in na lokalizacijo praznine glede na subjekt. Dotaknem se tudi razmerja filozofije do simbolnega, in sicer njene zmožnosti, da *nemoč dvigne na raven logične nemožnosti*.

Jana Ndiaye Berankova

Breaking the Mirror: Alain Badiou's Reading of Jacques Lacan

Keywords: Badiou, Lacan, antiphilosophy, psychoanalysis, subject, sophistry, sense, the One

In this article, I focus on Alain Badiou's idiosyncratic interpretation of Jacques Lacan and highlight his conceptual points of divergence with the psychoanalyst. I elaborate on Badiou's distinction between philosophy, antiphilosophy, and sophistry as well as the notions of sense, ab-sense, and non-sense that he proposed in the book *There's No Such Thing as a Sexual Relationship: Two Lessons on Lacan* as well as in his seminar on Lacan. Unlike Lacan, who affirmed that philosophy is subject to the fantasy of the One, Badiou claimed that the One exists merely as a result of an operation of counting. In this manner, he contested Lacan's conviction that philosophy forecloses the real. I argue that Badiou's main point of divergence with Lacan is centred on the notion of the subject and on the localization of the void in relation to the subject. I also touch upon philosophy's relation to the symbolic, namely its ability *to raise powerlessness to logical impossibility*.

Uroš Kranjc

Velikosti v Badioujevi objektivni fenomenologiji in teoriji potrošniške izbire

Mladi Marx je nekoč pripomnil, da se je politična ekonomija znašla v odtujeni formi in terja kritičen premislek lastnega predmeta raziskovanja. Njegov predlog je šel v smer popolne razgraditve kategorij ekonomske objektivnosti, da bi se lahko dokopali do prave življenjske dejavnosti človeka. V pričujočem članku zavzemamo stališče, da se sodobna ekonomska teorija še naprej nahaja v takšni odtujitvi, čeprav se ponaša s subjektivistično revolucijo, ki je odpravila vezi s klasično politično ekonomijo. Marginalistično opiranje na »merljive« potrošniške preference ni zgolj utrdilo odtujitev te vede, neoklasična ekonomika je v nadaljevanju rekonceptualizirala tudi celotne temelje klasične ekonomije. Novo kritično ekonomsko mišljenje bo zato moralo odpraviti diskontinuiteto med klasiki in neoklasiki, če bo želelo ekonomsko vedo pripeljati iz te odtujitve. Za uspešen preboj bo najprej potrebovalo ustrezno močan konceptualni okvir, ki bo zmožen obravnavati kontinuiteto temeljnih kategorij. V članku zagovarjamo tezo, da objektivna fenomenologija Alaina Badiouja poseduje sinhrono strukturo, ki je zmožna zajeti ključne ekonomske zastavke in v analogiji omogoča komparativni in sintetični pristop. Takšno strukturo razumemo kot pogoj za nov način kritičnega mišljenja v ekonomski znanosti. Članek sklenemo s pogledom na Marxovo vrednostno formo kot možno osrednjo kategorijo v zastavitvi alternativnega ekonomskega okvira.

Uroš Kranjc

Magnitudes in Badiou's Objective Phenomenology and Economic Consumer Choice

The young Marx once remarked that political economy finds itself in an estranged form and is therefore in desperate need of a critical reconstruction of its object [*Gegenstand*]. He proposed a complete deconstruction of economic objectivity and its categories, hoping to recover the true species-life of man. In the article, we assert that contemporary economic theory remains confined by this estrangement, despite managing to 'revolutionize' itself out of the grip of classical political economy. The subjectivist-marginalist reliance on 'measurable' consumer preferences not only solidified the discipline's estrangement, but also wrested away any remaining basic principles of economics through neoclassical reconceptualization. A break with estrangement would require novel critical economic thinking that would do away with the discontinuity between classical and neoclassical (contemporary) economics. It would therefore need a rich enough framework to scruti-

nize its principal categories. We argue that Alain Badiou's objective phenomenology possesses a complementary synchronic structure able to conform to basic economic tenets, allowing for a comparative and synthetic approach. This would then be the basis for a new model of economic theorizing. We conclude the article with Marx's value form, seeing it as a possible central category of a newly proposed economic framework.

Vlasta Jalušič
Arendt, Koselleck in *Begreifen*: ponovni premislek politike in pojmov v času *krize*

Ključne besede: Arendt, Koselleck, *Begreifen*, politika, politični pojmi, prelom s tradicijo, kriza

Reinharda Kosellecka so imeli dolgo časa za posebej eminentnega teoretika političnih pojmov, medtem ko so se na Hannah Arendt kot konceptualnega avtorja osredotočili šele nedavno. Članek raziskuje skupni prostor razmišljanja med Arendtovo in Koselleckom skozi njuno tezo o vrzeli, rezom, krizo ali prelomom v tradiciji političnega mišljenja in zgodovinskih obdobij ter to, kako je vse to povezano z njunim pojmom pojmovnosti, tj. *Begreifen* (razumevanja). Navkljub vtisu, da se je vsak od njiju osredotočil na glavni prelom med preteklostjo in prihodnostjo, sta tako Arendt kot Koselleck preučevala različne prelome v zahodni politični tradiciji. Članek skuša pokazati, kako sta njuno različno mišljenje in premislek političnih pojmov (*Begreifen*) povezana s temi prelomi s številnimi direktnimi in posrednimi srečanji, ter kako sta si oba avtorja istočasno blizu in narazen. Medtem ko oba različno pojmujeta politiko in politično, lahko njuno razumevanje prelomov v času in kriz beremo kot komplementarno, zlasti glede na njuno prizadevanje, da bi odgovornost za delovanje in za pojme vrnila nazaj v človeško sfero.

Vlasta Jalušič
Arendt, Koselleck, and *Begreifen*: Rethinking Politics and Concepts in Times of *Crisis*

Keywords: Arendt, Koselleck, Begreifen, politics, political concepts, break in tradition, crisis

Reinhard Koselleck has long been regarded as a particularly eminent theorist of socio-political concepts, while Hannah Arendt had not been in focus as a conceptual author until recent times. This article explores the common thinking space between Arendt and Koselleck through their thesis about the gap, rupture, crisis, or break in the tradition of political thinking and historical periods and how this is linked to their notion of conceptuality, i.e. *Begreifen* (understanding). Despite the impression that each of them focused on the one main break between the past and the future, Arendt and Koselleck both

studied multiple breaks and crises in the Western political tradition. The article attempts to show how their distinctive thinking and rethinking of political concepts (*Begreifen*) are related to these breaks through several direct and indirect encounters and how these are both close and apart at the same time. While they have different concepts of politics and the political, their understanding of the breaks in time and crises can be read as complementary, especially considering their concern with returning the responsibility for actions and concepts to the human sphere.

Gorazd Kovačič

Prelom Arendtove z liberalnim imaginarijem družbe

Ključne besede: Hannah Arendt, koncept družbe, civilna družba, novoveška liberalna politična filozofija, John Locke, Thomas Paine, historični materializem

Članek v prvem delu analizira imaginarij o značilnostih in obliki (civilne) družbe, kot se je razvil v novoveški liberalni politični filozofiji, zlasti pri Johnu Locku in Thomasu Painu. Opira se na sodobne recepcije ključnih avtorjev te filozofske tradicije, in sicer na liberalno recepcijo Johna Keana, ki poudarja teoretsko razmejitev med civilno družbo in državo, na materialistično recepcijo Ellen Meiksins Wood, ki kontekstualizira politične ideje s političnimi boji in razrednimi interesi v času njihovega razvoja, in na Foucaultovo recepcijo, ki se osredotoča na razvoj biopolitične vladnosti. Članek ugotavlja, da si je liberalna tradicija predstavljala (civilno) družbo kot dano sfero, ki se samouravnava in zato ne potrebuje državnega poseganja. Socialno zgodovinska predpostavka tega imaginarija je ekonomska suverenost posameznikov, spregledala pa je razmerja gospostva in izkoriščanja. V drugem delu članek predstavi kritični koncept družbe pri Hannah Arendt. Ta družbe ne razume kot dane totalitete in prostorsko, temveč uporablja ta koncept kot kvalifikator posebnega, osiromašenega načina bivanja in z njim analizira zlasti položaj in perspektivo manjšin.

Gorazd Kovačič

Arendt's Break with the Liberal Imaginary of Society

Keywords: Hannah Arendt, concept of society, civil society, early modern liberal political philosophy, John Locke, Thomas Paine, historical materialism

The first part of the article analyses the imaginary of the characteristics and form of (civil) society as developed in early modern liberal political philosophy, especially by John Locke and Thomas Paine. It uses different contemporary receptions of the key authors of this tradition, namely the liberal reception of John Keane, which emphasizes the theoretical distinction between civil society and the state, the materialist reception of Ellen Meiksins Wood, which contextualizes political ideas in the political struggles and class

interests of the time, and the reception of Foucault, which focuses on the development of biopolitical governmentality. The article finds that the liberal tradition imagined (civil) society as a given and self-regulating sphere that does not require interference from the state. A socio-historical presupposition of this imaginary was the economic sovereignty of individuals, and it overlooked the relations of domination and exploitation. In its second part, the article presents Hannah Arendt's critical concept of society. She did not conceptualize society as a given totality and in a spatial way, but used it as a qualifier of a specific, impoverished mode of being, in particular to analyse the situation and perspective of minorities.

Lana Zdravkovič
Pojem emancipacije kot političnega delovanja (Marx, Arendt, Rancière)

Tekst ponuja premislek o konceptu emancipacije in o tem, kako je le ta strukturiran kot politično delovanje, hkrati pa opisuje zgodovinski izvor koncepta ter kako ga razumejo trije pomembni politični filozofi: Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt in Jacques Rancière. Vsi trije – posebej in z bistvenimi razlikami – politiko razumejo kot prostor za politično delovanje, ki vodi k emancipaciji v imenu enakosti. Da bi podrobneje ugotovili zgodovinski izvor koncepta emancipacije, se argumentacija besedila opira na njegovo elaboraciji v šoli »konceptualne zgodovine«, ki se ukvarja z zgodovinsko semantiko izrazov, etimologijo in spremembo pomenov izrazov, ki tvorijo ključno osnovo za sodobno kulturno, konceptualno in jezikovno razumevanje, nato pa povezuje to »predzgodovino« z Marxovim, Arendtinim in Rancièrejevim razumevanjem koncepta emancipacije ter preizprašuje, kako se razlikujejo in so med seboj povezani, pri tem pa ponuja razmislek o tem, katere teoretične zaključke o konceptu emancipacije lahko izpeljemo iz teh odnosov. Posebno zanimanje je usmerjeno v to, kako danes razumemo koncept emancipacije, kdo je predmet emancipacije, kakšna je metoda in končni cilj emancipacije in, končno, kako nam lahko to razumevanje pomaga v današnjem času, ko se zdi, da potrebujejo emancipacijo bolj kot kadarkoli prej.

Lana Zdravkovič
The Concept of Emancipation as Political Action
(Marx, Arendt, Rancière)
Keywords: human emancipation, political emancipation, intellectual emancipation, revolution, liberation, freedom

The text attempts to rethink the concept of emancipation and how it is structured as political action, while describing its historical origins and how it is further understood by the three important political philosophers: Karl Marx, Hannah Arendt, and Jacques Rancière. All three of them – specifically and with substantial differences – understand politics as a space for political action that leads to emancipation in the name of equality. In order to determine the historical origin of the concept in more detail, the argumentation of the text rely upon its elaboration within the school of "conceptual history", which deals with the historical semantics of terms and sees the etymology of and the change in the meaning of terms as forming a crucial basis for a contemporary cultural, conceptual, and linguistic understanding, and afterwards it links this "pre-history" with Marx's, Arendt's, and Rancière's understanding of the concept of emancipation, and see how they differ and are related to each other, considering what theoretical conclusions about the concept of emancipation we can take from these relations. Particular interest is aimed at how the concept of emancipation is perceived today, who the subject of emancipation is, what the method and final goal of emancipation is, and, finally, how these understandings can help us in the present time when it seems that we need emancipation more than ever.

Mirt Komel
»Delovati ali ne delovati«: Arendt, Hegel in Shakespeare o delovanju
Ključne besede: Homer, delovanje, Arendt, politika, Hegel, filozofija, Shakespeare, teater

Prispevek poveže tri nenavadno povezane osumljence, da bi naslovil vprašanje človeškega delovanja, kakor je eminentno zastavljeno ne samo v kraljestvu politike in na področju zgodovine, temveč tudi filozofije, in, kot posebna vez med tema dvema, tudi teatru, namreč: Hannah Arendt (*Vita Activa*), G.W.F. Hegel (*Fenomenologija duha*), in William Shakespear (*Hamlet*). Da pa bi lahko povezal vse te tri avtorje in njihova področja filozofije, politike in teatra glede na njihov skupni element delovanja, bo za izhodišče vzeta figura Ahila, kakor ga je portretiral Homer v svoji *Iliadi*.

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Mirt Komel
"To Act or Not to Act": Arendt, Hegel, and Shakespeare on Action
Keywords: Homer, action, Arendt, politics, Hegel, philosophy, Shakespeare, theatre

The contribution links three unusually connected suspects in order to tackle the question of human action, which is eminently at stake not only in the realms of politics and in the field of history, but also in philosophy, and, as a peculiar link between the two, theatre, namely: Hannah Arendt (*Human Condition*), G.W.F. Hegel (*Phenomenology of Spirit*), and William Shakespeare (*Hamlet*). And In order to connect all three authors and their respective fields of philosophy, politics, and theatre as regards the particular issue of action, the starting point will be the figure of Achilles as portrayed in Homer's *Iliad*.

Toni Čerkez in Martin Gramc
Proti biopolitiki onstran življenja in smrti: virus, življenje in smrt
Ključne besede: Giorgio Agamben, biopolitika, virus, geontomoč, nevladljiv, ne-človeški, Elizabeth Povinelli, Donna Haraway, Ghassan Hage

Z analizo prispevka Giorgia Agambena o ukrepih italijanske vlade v prvem valu epidemije virusa COVID-19 avtorja trdita, da COVID-19 predstavlja meje klasične logike biopolitične in tanatopolitične analize; zahteva nov konceptualni okvir. Izbruh COVID-19 je primer zoontične globalizacije, v kateri je človeška vrsta kot biološki in geološki akter le ena izmed mnogih vrst, ki vplivajo na biološke in geološke procese na Zemlji in tako predstavlja izziv humanističnim konceptualizacijam politike. Tu je vloga človeka decentralizirana, ker virus misliva kot enega izmed akterjev, ki vplivajo na vladanje v politični sferi. Trdiva, da je virus epitom nevladljivega – entiteta ali široko zastavljen zgodovinski izziv, ki ne more biti podvržen obstoječim načinom vladanja – ker obstaja v mejnem prostoru in se nahaja med ontološkimi izvori dominantnega načina vladanja: bios (življenja) ter geos (neživljenja), ter jim predstavlja izziv zgolj s tem, da obstaja. Črpajoč iz del Ghassana Hagea, Nilsa Bubandta, Elizabeth Povinelli in Donne Haraway, prevprašujeva meje biopolitike in diagnosticirava teoretske probleme, ki izvirajo iz delitev: narava vs. kultura, življenje vs. neživljenje, zakoreninjenih v obstoječih socialno-političnih paradigmah. Raje kot da bi podala dokončni odgovor o vlogi virusa kot ne-človeškega akterja v politični sferi, zastavljava vprašanja, zakaj in kako je pomemben.

Toni Čerkez and Martin Gramc

Towards Biopolitics beyond Life and Death: The Virus, Life, and Death

Keywords: Giorgio Agamben, biopolitics, virus, geontopower, ungovernable, non-human, Elizabeth Povinelli, Donna Haraway, Ghassan Hage

By engaging with Giorgio Agamben's article on the Italian government's measures during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, we argue that COVID-19 points to the limits of the classical biopolitical and thanatopolitical logics of analysis and therefore requires a new conceptual framework. The outbreak of COVID-19 is an example of zoonotic globalisation in which the human species as a biological and geological actor is merely one among many other species that influence biological and geological processes on Earth, thus challenging humanist conceptualisations of politics. Here, the human role in politics is decentralised by thinking the virus as one of the actors that exert influence on how the political sphere is governed. We argue that the virus is the epitome of the ungovernable – an entity or broadly a historical challenge that cannot be subjected to existing mode(s) of governing – due to its interstitial and borderline character, resting between the ontological roots of the dominant modes of governing bios (life) and geos (nonlife), and challenging them by merely existing. We draw upon the works of Ghassan Hage, Nils Bubandt, Elizabeth Povinelli, and Donna Haraway to interrogate the limits of biopolitics and diagnose theoretical conundrums stemming from the division of nature vs. culture and life vs. nonlife entrenched in the existing social-political paradigms. Rather than providing finite answers about the role of the virus as a non-human actor in the political sphere, we raise questions as to how and why it should matter.

Marina Gržinić

***Nekropolitika* Achilla Mbembeja: razširjeni esej o knjigi**

Ključne besede: oblika, življenje, smrt, filozofija, črnska misel, Ves-Svet

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Nekropolitika Achilla Mbembeja nas vodi nazaj k njegovemu temeljnemu istoimenskemu besedilu, ki je v angleškem prevodu v Združenih Državah Amerike izšlo leta 2003. Takrat, torej štirideset let po Foucaultovi biopolitiki, je Mbembe na novo teoretiziral biopolitiko z vidika smrti (*nekro*), kar se je izkazalo za močan konceptualni odmik od zahodne misli. V knjigi, ki z enakim naslovom izide 17 let po izvornem besedilu, ki je pomembno vplivalo na teorijo in prakso filozofije, politike, antropologije, estetike, o nekropolitiki ni izrecno kaj več povedanega. Mbembe predstavi neizčrpno zalogo oblik, načinov in postopkov nekropolitičnega delovanja v sodobnih neoliberalnih globalnih družbah. Zato ni presenetljivo, da se Mbembe sklicuje na teorijo kot obliko, oblika je način, kako na novo definirati vsebino, ali rečeno drugače, »kdo naj živi in kdo mora umreti«, je trenutno le začetek. Pa vendar, kako to poteka v 21. stoletju, kakšne so

metodologije in postopki za izvajanje tega osrednjega akta v neoliberalni globalni de-mokraciji – to je naloga te knjige.

Marina Gržinić
Necropolitics by Achille Mbembe: Extended Essay on the Book
Keywords: form, life, death, philosophy, Black thought, *All-world*

Necropolitics by Achille Mbembe takes us back to his seminal text on "Necropolitics" translated and published in the US in 2003. At this point, 40 years after Foucault's Bio-politics, Mbembe was re-theorizing biopolitics through a *necro* (death) horizon, which turned out to be a robust conceptual shift from Western thought. Not much else is ex-plicitly said about necropolitics in the titular book, which comes 17 years after the semi-nal text that had a significant impact on the theory and practice of philosophy, politics, anthropology, and esthetics. Mbembe presents the layers of forms, modes, and proce-dures of the necropolitical working through contemporary neoliberal global societies. It is therefore not surprising that Mbembe makes reference to theory in forms, form is the way to redefine or rephrase content, and "who should live and who must die" is cur-rently the beginning. But how this is done in the 21st century, what are the methods and procedures to implement this central act in neoliberal global democracy —that is the task of this book.

Aleš Bunta
V časih »čistosti«: raziskava nekaterih nedavnih premen na področju perverzije
Ključne besede: spremembe na področju perverzije, zaton pornografije, vzpon mazohizma

Prispevek je del projekta, ki si je za enega svojih osnovnih ciljev zastavil preučevanje per-verzij kot pomembnih indikatorjev širših družbenih sprememb in razvojev. Oba momen-ta, ki jima sledim v tej študiji, zadostita vsem zahtevam tovrstne raziskave. Prvi razvoj, ki ga bomo raziskali, je tisto, kar bom imenoval *zaton pornografije*. V času ko družba kot celota postaja v številnih pogledih čedalje bolj pornografska, zveni nenavadno govoriti o zatonu pornografije. In vendar pornografijo kot žanr pričenja nadomeščati nekaj druge-ga – nek drugačen sistem prikazovanja seksualnosti in njene ekonomske eksploatacije. Drugi razvoj, o katerem bomo razpravljali je *vzpon mazohizma*. V tem kontekstu bomo analizirali določena poročila, ki indicirajo, da je še zlasti v času po izbruhu epidemije CO-VID-19 znatno poraslo število oseb, ki prakticirajo mazohistično »trdo igro«. V obdobju, ko bi pričakovali, da bodo ljudje sanjarili o odpravi omejitev, svobodi in še čem, so si številni raje izbrali kruto pot »suženjstva«. Na koncu bomo pokazali, da sta oba procesa bistveno povezana in verjetno celo kosubstancialna.

Aleš Bunta

In Times of "Chastity": An Inquiry into Some Recent Developments in the Field of Perversion

Keywords: changes in the field of perversion, decline of pornography, rise of masochism

This essay is part of a project that has set out, as one of its primary objectives, to observe perversions as important indicators of broader changes and developments within society. Both of the momenta I follow in this study meet all the requirements for such an inquiry. The first development to be examined is what I will call *the decline of pornography*. At a time when all of society is increasingly becoming pornographic in so many ways, it sounds strange to talk about the decline of pornography. And yet pornography as a genre is, I believe, losing ground to something else – to a distinctly different system of unfolding sexuality and its economic exploitation. The second development to be discussed is *the rise of masochism*. In this context, I will analyse certain reports that show that, especially since the outbreak of the pandemic COVID-19, the number of people practicing masochistic "heavy play" has increased significantly. It appears that in a period when one would expect people to be dreaming of the lifting of restrictions, freedom, or whatever, many have chosen to undertake the cruel path of "servitude". Eventually, I will show that these two developments are essentially connected, probably even consubstantial.

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British or American spelling is acceptable, but the text must be internally consistent. Furthermore, consistent use of the S or Z form of words such as organise/organize, summarize/summarise, etc., is required. A comma follows e.g. and i.e. in American English, but not in British English.

Other
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