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Of Times, Religions, and Revolutions: One Unites into Two[1]

Abstract

Starting from the impact of biblical teachings on Islam, the first part of this article attempts to show the divergent paths that Christianity and Islam have taken when confronted with the three dimensions of time (*chronos, kairos, krisis*). The article aims to elucidate the distinct onto-theologies of the two religious discourses by analysing various examples that illustrate this divergence. Consequently, the onto-theology of Islam can be encapsulated as "One unites in two," in contrast to the onto-theology of Christianity, which can be formulated as "One divides into two." In the second part of the article, one of the political implications of the onto-theology of "One united in two" is examined in depth in a socio-political context, showing how the conceptualisation of such a context can only be done adequately if its onto-theological dimension is taken into account.

O časih, religijah in revolucijah: Eno se združi v dvoje

Povzetek

Izhajajoč iz vpliva svetopisemskih naukov na islam si prvi del članka prizadeva pokazati različne poti, ki sta jih ubrala krščanstvo in islam, ko sta bila soočena s tremi raz-

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sežnostmi časa (*chronos, kairos, krisis*). Z analizo vrste zgledov, ki ilustrirajo to razhajanje, si besedilo prizadeva osvetiliti različne ontoteologije obeh religioznih diskurzov. Posledično je ontoteologijo islama mogoče povzeti v frazo »Eno se združi v dvoje«, v nasprotju z ontoteologijo krščanstva, ki jo je mogoče formulirati kot »Eno se cepi v dvoje«. V drugem delu članka v družbenopolitičnem kontekstu podrobno raziščemo eno od političnih implikacij ontoteologije »Eno se združi v dvoje« in pokažemo, kako je konceptualizacija tovrstnega konteksta mogoča le z upoštevanjem ontoteološke razsežnosti.

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Regarding the socio-politico-cultural milieu in which he came of age—where Zoroastrian and Judeo-Christian traditions held sway—certain scholars have underscored the impact of biblical teachings on the Prophet of Islam.[2] This influence is particularly evident in the development of his deeply apocalyptic perception of the prophetic mission. Substantiating this assertion requires no extensive search. The primary sources of Islam, specifically the Qur'anic suras and verses, promptly come to mind with their vibrant apocalyptic imagery and themes. "Indeed, the Quran insists on numerous occasions on the imminent end of the world. It is not the case of one or two verses, one or two suras, but dozens of suras and verses. This entails not only a large number of scattered verses, this is a case of more than thirty of the very last suras of the Quran, reputed to be the oldest and rightly called the 'Quranic apocalyptic' suras."[3] A substantial number of Hadiths also reflect the idea that "Muḥammad actually announces the imminent coming of the Messiah and the latter is none other than Jesus. At the same time, for some followers of the Prophet, 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib [the first Shī'a imam and the fourth Sunni caliph] seems to have been the Second Jesus,

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[2]   See Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002); Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "Muḥammad the Paraclete and 'Alī the Messiah: New Remarks on the Origins of Islam and of Shi'ite Imamology," *Der Islam* 95, vol. 1 (2018): 30–64, https://doi.org/10.1515/islam-2018-0002; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi, "The Shi'is and the Qur'an: Between Apocalypse, Civil Wars, and Empire," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): article 1, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010001; Jonathan E. Brockopp, "The Rise of Islam in a Judeo-Christian Context," in *Light upon Light: Essays in Islamic Thought and History in Honor of Gerhard Bowering*, ed. Jamal J. Elias and Bilal Orfali (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2020), 25–44.

[3]   Amir-Moezzi, "Shi'is and the Qur'an," 12.

Christ and Messiah of the apocalyptic times."[4] Hence, considering the profound impact of the Judeo-Christian tradition on Muḥammad, it becomes plausible to characterize him as a prophet whose foremost mission was to herald the impending resurgence of the Messiah, rather than to establish an entirely novel religion. In essence, Islam not only fails to exist in isolation from preceding religious traditions, but also amalgamates diverse elements from them into a distinctive synthesis.

Even Franz Rosenzweig, who in his seminal work *The Star of Redemption* endeavors to delineate a clear demarcation between Islam and the Judeo-Christian tradition, portrays the three Abrahamic religions as *distinct* modes of expressing *shared* concepts, such as revelation, providence, and the triadic relationship between "God, world, and man."[5] While Islam shares fundamental ideas with the other two religions, the precise articulation of these concepts within Islam results in notable disparities between the latter and the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this context, we shall briefly examine one of these disparities: the divergent approaches of Christianity and Islam in addressing the interplay of various dimensions of time within their apocalyptic doctrines.

The French historian François Hartog identifies the translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in third-century BC Alexandria as a pivotal event that initiated a process culminating in the invention of what would eventually be known

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[4]   Amir-Moezzi, "Muḥammad the Paraclete," 31.

[5]   In contrast to Hegel, who argued that Islam is a more universal religion than Judaism, Rosenzweig aims to demonstrate that Judaism, when compared to Islam, shares a closer affinity with Christianity, which Hegel regards as the most universal religion. To substantiate this claim, Rosenzweig contends, for instance, that the nature of the relationship between God and humanity in Islam is characterized by a form of revelation that lacks a true dialogical aspect. In Rosenzweig's view, the omnipresence of God in Islam leaves no room for meaningful communication between God and humans. He contends that Muḥammad's understanding of revelation diverges significantly from the Judeo-Christian tradition. Although he incorporated the concept of revelation from that tradition, Muḥammad, due to a lack of a proper understanding, rearticulated this concept within a pagan context. In contrast, revelation in Judaism and Christianity marked a fundamental departure from paganism. Rosenzweig's assertion stems from Islam's distinctive manner of presenting concepts such as revelation and providence. He asserts, in an oxymoronic way, that "in spite of the idea of the unity of God, posited vehemently and proudly, Islam slips into a *monistic paganism*." Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 134.

as Christian or Western time. By adopting and adapting the Greek concepts of *chronos*, *kairos*, and *krisis*, within the biblical framework, the initial translators of the Pentateuch, which held profound significance for early Christians, imbued these terms with meanings distinct from the original Greek intentions. While the Greeks associated *krisis* with a moment requiring a physician's critical decision about a patient's condition and viewed *kairos* as a decisive point when tragic heroes, having missed all earlier chances for triumph, met a tragic fate such as blindness, in the Christian interpretation of the Greek *trio*

> thinking about crisis is [. . .] the business of [. . .] the prophet and the apocalyptist, both bearers of the speech of God, who announce the times to come and the approach of Judgment Day (Krisis), which is, strictly speaking, the sword that will cleave. Kairos takes on the role of the blast of apocalypse [. . .]. Yet the age that is coming, while routinely called the "Day of the Lord," is also known as *Kairos*. Just as *kairos* indicates a rupture within continuity, *Krisis*, acting as judgment, cleaves. While krisis places the stress on the very act of judging, kairos focuses on the temporal rupture that accompanies it.[6]

In essence, *kairos* ("opportunity, the decisive moment") encapsulates the apocalyptic disruption within *chronos* ("ordinary time"), signaling the impending onset of *krisis* ("the judgment that slices"). The intricate interplay of these three facets is such that by the time the Second Coming is proclaimed, the *kairos*, the apocalyptic juncture, is already underway. It is crucial to acknowledge, however, that while *kairos* signifies the suspension of *chronos*, it does not signify the termination of ordinary time. The conclusion of *chronos* takes place solely with the arrival of Judgment Day (*krisis*). This conception of the distinct dimensions of time posed a fundamental challenge to Christianity right from its inception: the interval between *kairos* and *krisis*, that is, the ordinary time of *chronos*, the time of misery, which is like a "wedge" between the time of the apocalyptic act and the time of judgment.

While Christianity did not view the apocalyptic act (the Incarnation) as an outright negation of *chronos*, acknowledging the emergence of *kairos* time within it, two concerns regarding their relationship endured. One concern, on the one

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6   François Hartog, *Chronos: The West Confronts Time*, trans. S. R. Gilbert (New York: Columbia University Press, 2022), 11.

hand, was that believers might begin to doubt the assurance of the apocalyptic act (*kairos*), progressively eroding their faith in the Second Coming and becoming increasingly engrossed in the time of misery (*chronos*). On the other hand, a potential peril existed wherein believers might fervently fixate on apocalyptic time, endeavoring to bridge, if possible, the gap between *kairos* and *krisis* (Judgment Day), striving to merge them into a single time—the extensive history of Christianity presents a multitude of cases where individuals have claimed to be the Messiah, effectively highlighting the gravity and constancy of this threat.

However, rather than solely emphasizing the *Kairos* and *Krisis* and isolating *Chronos* from them, Christianity introduced a new regime of historicity in which the life of the believer is shaped by the interplay of three dimensions: *Kairos*, *Chronos,* and *Krisis*. St. Paul's preaching to the Corinthians effectively illustrates that, in Christianity, Chronos time is not isolated from the other two times: "Those who have spouses should live *as though* they had *none*, and those who mourn *as though* they were *not* mourning."[7] This use of "as though not" (*hôs mê*), as highlighted by Hartog,

> indicates the dual path that will allow one to live henceforth in both Chronos time and Kairos time [. . .]. None of these responses goes beyond the present. They indicate how to live, day after day, the mystery of Kairos, aware that the Judgment Day is coming but never succumbing to the apocalyptic feverishness nurtured by those whom the authors of the New Testament denounce as so many false prophets, false Messiahs, or anti-Messiahs.[8]

There is an aspect in Paul's preaching that could be read in light of Hegel's notion of *the infinite judgment*. While underscoring the interweaving of Kairos and Chronos, the preaching implicitly acknowledges that no common measure exists between the two. "There is no common denominator, no *tertium comparationis*, no basis for a relationship that could vouch for the asserted equivalence"[9] between "*living in Chronos time*" (depicted as "those who have spouses") and "living in *Kairos* time" (portrayed as "should *live as though* they had *none*").

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[7]   1 Cor. 7:29–30, quoted in Hartog, *Chronos*, 46; emphasis added.

[8]   Hartog, 46–47.

[9]   Mladen Dolar, "The Phrenology of Spirit," in *Supposing the Subject*, ed. Joan Copjec (London: Verso, 1994), 67.

Nevertheless, the "*as though not*" functions as a hinge through which a relation between the two parts of the preaching is established. Instead of a negative judgment where one of the predicates of the subject is simply negated, resulting in an *indeterminately determined* subjects, the preaching could be seen as an infinite judgment in which the predicate is affirmed in its negation; or in other words, the *non-predicate* (as though they *had no* spouse) *is affirmed* (should *live*),[10] leading to the positing of the subject as an *indeterminately determinate determinateness*.

However, this does not mean that the infinite judgments provide more determinations of the subject-predicate relation. Rather, in contrast to "the famous thesis on "determinate negation," [according to which,] one would expect negative judgment to *succeed* infinite judgment as a "higher," more concrete form of dialectical unity-within-difference,"[11] "in infinite judgments one is dealing with a *relation to relationality* as such or to discursiveness as such. This is why it cannot simply be more determined; one here deals with the truth of discursiveness."[12] Hence, in lieu of asserting "the positedness of the subject as continuing *itself* into *its* predicate," one can say that the subject is posited in the very *gap* between the subject *and* the predicate. Similarly, the subject *is* the very *gap* between identity *and* difference, it *is* the very minimal difference inherent within every identity, dividing it into identity *and* difference. It is due to this irreducible minimal difference that the infinite judgment is defined as a judgment "dealing with a relation to relationality," rather than providing further determination.

As a result, it could be proposed that in Paul's preaching, the core locus of the subject resides in the "*as though not*," which serves as an indicator neither of "living in Chronos" nor of "living in Kairos." but rather of the unsurpassable gap between the two. To live in both Chronos and Kairos hinges on maintaining

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[10] Slavoj Žižek illustrates the distinction between the negative judgment and the infinite judgment by referring to the distinction that "lies [. . .] between 'is not mortal' and 'is not-mortal': what we have in the first case is a simple negation, whereas in the second case, a *non-predicate is affirmed*." Slavoj Žižek, *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 111.

[11] Žižek, 21.

[12] Frank Ruda, "What Is to Be Judged? On Infinitely Infinite Judgments and Their Consequences," in *Žižek and Law*, ed. Laurent De Sutter (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2015), 168; emphasis added.

this gap, which has nothing to do with further determinations by which those who live in Chronos are "posited as continuing *themselves* into *their* predicate [apocalyptic act]." Accordingly, it follows that one of the potential outcomes of such a positing might involve the emergence of "false prophets, false Messiahs, or anti-Messiahs" who seek to remove the wedge (*chorons*) between *kairos* and *krisis*, feverishly continuing themselves into their predicate (Judgment Day) in order to ultimately fuse Kairos and Krisis into a single dimension of time, that of the end of time.[13]

Viewing the entire narrative of the *division in time* from a Chronos-oriented standpoint, we might posit that this division, which, when seen from a Kairos-oriented perspective, was understood as an interval between Kairos and Krisis, has now transformed into a schism within Chronos time itself. While from the standpoint of Kairos, Chronos is perceived as a "wedge" *between* Kairos and Krisis, from the vantage point of Chronos, it is Kairos that becomes internalized within Chronos, cleaving it from within and thereby unveiling a distinct dimension of infinity within the finitude of Chronos time. In brief, the chasm between Kairos and Chronos should be thought of as a division that has been inherent in each of them from the very outset, even though it took a millennium and multiple centuries—from early Christianity to the modern era—for this *in itself* division to become *in and for itself*.

To return to the question of the apocalyptic in Islam, we maintain that the distinction between the apocalyptic doctrines of Christianity and Islam can be comprehended by examining their differing approaches to the structural division within time, brought about by the interposing of Chronos between Kairos and Krisis. In contrast to Christianity, where this division is addressed dialectically, Islam *disavows* such a division when faced with it.

In the fourth session of *Seminar IV*, held on 12 December 1956, Lacan underscored a pivotal notion that not only serves as the linchpin for comprehending the mother-child dynamic but also proves advantageous for his later work in *Seminar X* concerning the unknowability of the mother's desire as the anxie-

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[13]   Paul's preoccupation with the gap between Kairos and Krisis is also evident in his second letter to the Thessalonians, where he introduces the concept *katechon* from a theodical standpoint as a means of addressing and representing this gap.

ty-provoking *Thing* for the child. Additionally, this notion serves as an apt entry point for delving into the question of perverse disavowal:

> Freud tells us that among a woman's essential missing objects is the phallus, and that this bears the closest relation to her relationship with her child. This is for the simple reason that if woman finds satisfaction in her child, it's precisely insomuch as she finds in him something, the penis, that more or less succeeds in calming her need for the phallus, that saturates this need. Should we fail to take this into account we misconstrue not only Freud's teaching but also something that is manifest in experience from one instant to the next.[14]

As we can see, there is a lack in the mother (the first Other), to which she thinks her child can respond "more or less successfully." However,

> the first Other of a pervert has such a strong and seemingly exclusive interest in the child that the pervert never comes to understand that he only "more or less" resembles the lack in the Other. In other words, the pervert never interprets the symbolic phallus (as the signifier of the lack in the Other) as the signifier of the Other's metonymic, ever sliding desire—which he could never hope to satisfy. Instead, so perfectly does he seem to resemble what the Other wants that he believes the Other lacks something which is present in the world (namely, him) rather than something which is absent.[15]

Hence, when confronted with his mOther, who requires him to have (or be) the phallus, the pervert disavows the lack in the mOther and reduces "the [m] Other's desire to demand [by] seeing himself as the answer to the question of what the [m]Other wants."[16] Put differently, the pervert resorts to disavowal as a self-defense mechanism in the face of the lack in the Other. In contrast to the neurosis, where the subject, by accepting *the No of the Father*, yields to the *separation* from the source of *jouissance*, the mOther, and seeks replacements for lost enjoyment within the socio-symbolic order by embracing *the Name of the*

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14   Jacques Lacan, *The Object Relation*, trans. Adrian Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2021), 62.

15   Stephanie S. Swales, *Perversion: A Lacanian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Subject* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 64.

16   Stephanie S. Swales, "Neoliberalism and Liminality: Perverse Cruelties in the Age of the Capitalist Discourse," in *Lacan's Cruelty: Perversion beyond Philosophy, Culture and Clinic*, ed. Meera Lee (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2022), 194.

Father, the pervert subject acknowledges *the No of the Father* as a signifier that alienates him. Yet, he is reluctant to accept *the Name of the Father*, or more precisely, *the Law of the Father*.[17] This is why he disavows the lack in the Other, the structural schism within the socio-symbolic reality.

However, the distinct manner in which Islam addresses the lack in the Other as the One requires our cautious avoidance of hastily generalizing psychoanalytic concepts, which have their origins in both clinical and institutional practices. The disavowal of the lack in the One in Islam should thus be approached within its singularity, which, similar to the singular cases in clinical and institutional settings, can contribute to the ongoing constructing of the concept of perversion. Thus, one could say that there is a distinction between the concept of perversion and singular cases of perversion, and instead of a one-way path from the concept of perversion to Islam, an alternative route must be taken: from (the concept of) perversion to Islam and back. While it is imperative not to generalize the concept of perversion, this does not preclude us from exploring other implications of such a concept that extend beyond the scope of psychoanalysis, potentially leading to a productive crossroads between psychoanalysis and philosophy.

We find it useful to consider perversion as an ontological elucidation of the way in which our socio-symbolic reality is constituted[18] and to read the lack in the

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[17] However, as Jacques-Alain Miller pointed out in his conceptualization of the term perversion, the pervert is the subject who seeks "to make the Other exist to be the instrument of its enjoyment." Lacan, who was interested in homonymy and homophony, illustrates this relationship between perversion and the Other by introducing a modification of the word perversion. He refers to it as "père-version, a word which is untranslatable, made up of père, father, and version. It implies a turning to the father, a call to the father." Jacques-Alain Miller, "On Perversion," in *Reading Seminars I and II: Lacan's Return to Freud*, ed. Richard Feldstein, Bruce Fink, and Maire Jaanus (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 308, 318. In the words of Bruce Fink, "*perversion involves the attempt to prop up the law so that limits can be set to jouissance* (what Lacan calls 'the will to jouissance'). Whereas we see an utter and complete absence of the law in psychosis, and a definitive instatement of the law in neurosis (overcome only in fantasy), in perversion the subject struggles to bring the law into being—in a word, to make the Other exist." See Bruce Fink, "Perversion," in *Perversion and the Social Relation*, ed. Molly Anne Rothenberg, Dennis A. Foster, and Slavoj Žižek (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 38.

[18] For a comprehensive examination of the interplay between ontology and perversion, contextualized in the works of Lacan, Deleuze, and Agamben, see Boštjan Nedoh, *Ontology and Perversion: Deleuze, Agamben, Lacan* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019).

Other as reflective of the incompleteness of the One, which is divided into the One and the not-One.[19] From this perspective, we contend that what Muḥammad disavowed was, indeed, the very incompleteness of the One. Faced with this incompleteness, the Prophet of Islam did not emphasize the originary, inherent division in time; instead, he highlighted the contrasting extremities of Chronos and Kairos, stemming from this division. In essence, Islam *projects* the inherent *contradiction* in time *onto* the *opposition* between the two poles of Chronos and Kairos, and thus making of this opposition a fetish that veils the inherent contradiction—we will see later how in Iran under the Islamic Republic, opposition and its ramifications, such as parallelism, evolved into the primary form of fetishism.

In summary, differing from Paul's preaching that underscores "*a relation to relationality*" between Chronos and Kairos, Muḥammad emphasizes the two endpoints of this relation. This emphasis is most apparent in the fact that while the Qur'an vividly portrays apocalyptic imagery, Islam does not overlook the opportunity to comment on and engage with the minutiae of everyday life within ordinary time, Chronos. In contrast to the Christian God, who descends to undergo division upon the cross, the God of Islam, molded after the neo-Platonic concept of the One, ascends above Being to reach the pinnacle of transcendence. This ascent serves to render the God of Islam, in a certain sense, more resilient against the division that structurally affects the constructing of our socio-symbolic reality. However, when we turn to the appellations attributed to this supremely transcendent God, we discern the presence of opposing poles. As an illustration, the God of Islam is concurrently referred to as *Al-Zahir* (The Manifest) and *Al-Batin* (The Hidden); or He is concurrently recognized as *Al-Rahim* (The Most Merciful) and *Al-Muntaqim* (The Avenger). To provide further explanation, the Oneness of God is maintained in such a way that while philosophical and

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[19]   One might rightly object that the endeavor to establish a connection between Islam and perversion contradicts Octave Mannoni's take on "religious faith," according to which the problems linked to religious faith are distinct from mere belief and should be distinguished from the realm of fetishistic disavowal. However, we will strive to demonstrate how Islam's approach to the inquiry into the lack in the Other effectively clarifies the resonance between the onto-theological account of Islam and the ontological account of perversion. See Octave Mannoni, "I Know Well, but All the Same . . .," in *Perversion and the Social Relation*, 72.

theosophical traditions envisage a neo-Platonic God[20] transcending the realm of Being, this same God is also characterized by dualistic attributes, represented by these opposing poles.

We have now arrived at a point where, drawing on Žižek's reinterpretation of Mao's contradiction thesis,[21] we can encapsulate the preceding discussions in a dictum of fetishistic disavowal, akin to Mannoni's approach, as follows: "*I know very well that two divides into One, but all the same One unites into two*." Taking this dictum as an onto-theological declaration on Islam, we will endeavor in the subsequent discussion to explore the political implications of such a declaration within the context of Iran under the Islamic Republic.

Before embarking on this analysis, however, we would like to briefly allude to the intricate tiling of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, a masterpiece of Islamic architecture, which serves as a remarkable embodiment of the concept "One unites into two." When observing the ceiling of the mosque dome from any perspective, a division becomes evident at a specific juncture. Emerging from this division point, two symmetrical arabesque lines gradually extend, each branching out in opposing directions. These initial lines generate new lines, which in turn give rise to additional lines, resulting in an elaborate network that cov-

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[20]   We can mention the name of Plotinus, who is the main source of influence of Neoplatonism on Islamic philosophy and theology. It is very interesting that Plotinus not only plays a key role in the formation of Islamic philosophy by providing the latter with the idea of the One, but also, as Andrew Cole explores in detail in his account of Hegel's debt to the Middle Ages, he is one of the main sources of the Hegelian dialectic, which is strongly influenced by the dialectic of identity and difference conceptualized by medieval thinkers such as Plotinus. One could say that these two different influences of Plotinus led to the emergence of two major different kinds of philosophy in Christian and Islamic contexts. See Andrew Cole, *The Birth of Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014).

[21]   "Mao opposed the revolutionary motto 'One divides into two' to the conservative motto 'Two unites into one'; perhaps, however, one should propose a different revolutionary motto: 'Two divides into one,' and oppose it to the conservative 'One unites into two.' From the strict dialectical standpoint, 'One' is not the name for unity but for a reflexive self-division, so 'two divided into one' means that the external opposition of two complementary poles whose harmony is the unity of the One is transposed into the immanent contradiction of the One. The conservative move is, on the contrary, to resolve the self-division of the One by way of positing the two poles as the opposed poles of some higher unity: harmony (or 'eternal struggle') between the two sexes replaces the immanent rupture of sexuality, harmony of classes which form a social Whole replaces class struggle, etc." Slavoj Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020), 220.

ers the entirety of the ceiling surface. The intricate arrangement of arabesques shares a likeness with a biological phenomenon called *dendrite tiling*, a process by which "multiple arbors of neurons innervating the same surface are often arranged in a tiled pattern that maximizes coverage of that surface while minimizing overlap between neighboring arbors."[22] This neural network mechanism is facilitated by "repulsion [or self-avoidance] between sister dendrites of a single neuron, ensuring that they splay apart to cover a large area."[23]

Žižek adopts the Möbius strip as the elementary topological structure embodying the concept "Two divides into one," where "a twisted or convoluted space in which a line, brought to its extreme, punctually coincides (or, rather, intersects) with its opposite."[24] The Möbius strip's topology is further elaborated upon in the more intricate cross-cap form, which is subsequently redoubled in complexity, reaching its zenith in the Klein bottle.[25] The entire dynamic of this topology is determined by the coincidence of a line with *its* opposite at the juncture of an *inner cut* that convolutes and twists the surface. In contrast, the tiling of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque does not manifest a convoluted surface; rather, it presents a configuration where the inner cut is disavowed, projecting itself onto the *speculative* liminality between the lines. The arabesques are intricately arranged so that no line, branch, or dendrite coincides with its opposite; instead, this arrangement *maximizes surface coverage, minimizes overlap, and avoids coincidence*. As we observe, this architectural masterpiece is also rooted in the mechanism of disavowal of the division, the cut, the schism, and the lack in the Other. This prompts us to briefly acknowledge that the scarcity of comedy works in classical Persian literature, when compared to the abundance of tragic and epic works, could potentially be interpreted as stemming from a tendency to disavow what makes us and things irreparably imbalanced. Drawing from Alenka Zupančič's insights in her classic work on comedy, we can posit that a good

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[22] Wesley B. Grueber and Alvaro Sagasti, "Self-avoidance and Tiling: Mechanisms of Dendrite and Axon Spacing," *Cold Spring Harbor Perspectives in Biology* 2, no. 9 (September 2010): 6, a001750, http://doi.org/10.1101/cshperspect.a001750.

[23] Zhiqi Candice Yip and Maxwell G. Heiman, "Duplication of a Single Neuron in *C. elegans* Reveals a Pathway for Dendrite Tiling by Mutual Repulsion," *Cell Reports* 15, no. 10 (June 2016): 2109, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.celrep.2016.05.003.

[24] Žižek, *Sex and the Failed Absolute*, 226.

[25] According to Žižek, these three topological configurations correspond to the three doctrines of Being, Essence, and Concept in Hegel's *The Science of Logic*. See Žižek, 222.

comedy stages a "short-circuit between heterogeneous orders."[26] This principle can lead to the emergence of a range of elements on stage, including collisions, stumbling, coincidences, overlaps, imbalances, repetition, minimal differences, asymmetry, and more. Comedy provides the stage on which the actor continually experiences her "self-othering" (*Sichanderswerden*), to use Hegel's term, and where "the universal concretizes." Notably, in the tiling of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, there is no room for coincidence, short-circuits, or imbalance. Everything is meticulously arranged to showcase the utmost balance, symmetry, and homogeneity.

The tiling of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque provides an illustrative example of the concept "One unites into two." Here, "one" unsplit, symmetrical, homogenous arabesque unites into its "two" lines. Bringing our attention back to Paul, we could argue that unlike the trajectory of the lines (arbors) within the arabesques, his preaching does not present us with the juxtaposition of two opposing poles into which One unites. Instead, within his preaching, we witness *a* statement that internally *coincides with its own* opposite, mirroring the topological structure of the Möbius strip, which illustrates the concept "Two divides into one." It could be argued that the "as though" in Paul's statement operates in a manner akin to the *inner cut* of the Möbius strip. In this context, one side of the statement ("those who have spouses") *coincides with its own* opposite side, ("should live *as though* they had *none*"), which is not a *projected* opposing pole.

Shifting our focus to the sociopolitical context of Iran, we can now try to read the occurrence of 11 February 1979 as a rupture within ordinary time, Chronos, when the revolution erupted into history. In this "interim period," positioned between the Islamic Kairos and *Al-Sa'a* (the Hour, Judgment Day), between *already* and *not yet*, time is once again torn asunder. The fact that revolutions are often commemorated by the time or the place in which they occurred (such as the *French* Revolution, the *Haitian* Revolution, the revolutions of *1848*, the *October* Revolution) points to two significant aspects.

The first point to consider is that a revolution involves the redistribution of "the transcendental conditions for the possibility" of a new sociopolitical order. The materialism of the revolution denotes a radical rupture within the established

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[26]   Alenka Zupančič, *The Odd One In: On Comedy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 8.

regime of "the distribution of the sensible" (*la partage du sensible*), as Jacques Rancière phrases it. This rupture provides the conditions of possibility for reconstructing the socio-political order on the foundation of a *new signifier*. Consequently, this observation highlights the *structural difference* between the transcendental conditions that make it possible to reconstruct the sociopolitical order when a revolution occurs *and* the actual manifestation of such an order. The 1979 Revolution, as a radical disruption of the prevailing *status quo*, laid down the transcendental conditions for the possibility of reconstructing the sociopolitical order. This was achieved by unleashing the *in itself* negativity that had been manipulated and exploited by the Pahlavi's monarchy and its regime of signifiers, representing a fusion of an archaic tendency rooted in pre-Islamic Persian heritage and a state-initiated modernization program from above.

The second aspect highlights that revolution foregrounds *the inherent untimeliness of time* itself. This fundamentally challenges the foundational tenets of the Kantian notion that time and space serve as the transcendental conditions for the possibility of synthesis. Revolution unleashes the untimeliness of time, accentuating inherent out-of-jointness and prompting us to realize that time, as the transcendental condition for synthesis, is itself incurably contaminated by a structural delay—an untimeliness. There is a non-existent time that begets time itself and is incorporated into time from its very inception. Here, we can cite three "slogan-like adages" proposed by Mladen Dolar in his compelling exploration of the untimeliness of time: "1. 'There were times when there was time.' 2. 'Time is the afterlife of time.' 3. 'We are human, so we come too late; we are never on time.'"[27] There is no such thing as being on time; we are always either too early or too late. This structural nonsynchronicity or untimeliness inherent in time is the reason why thought is always belated or premature to the events, resulting in a persistent aspect that eludes synthesis. In this context, Rebecca Comay, in her remarkably innovative interpretation of Hegel's account of the French Revolution, asserts that

> because the present is never caught up to itself, we encounter history virtually, vicariously, voyeuristically—forever latecomers and precursors to our experiences,

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[27]   Mladen Dolar, "What's the Time? On Being Too Early or Too Late in Hegel's Philosophy," in "Hegel 250—Too Late?," ed. Mladen Dolar, special issue, *Problemi International* 4 (2020): 33.

outsiders to our most intimate affairs. [. . .] Historical experience is nothing but this grinding nonsynchronicity, together with a fruitless effort to evade, efface, and rectify it: we measure ourselves against standards to which we cannot adhere and that do not themselves cohere, and subject ourselves to timetables to which we cannot adjust and that we keep trying vainly to adjust. The experience of "revolution in one country" makes this syncopation painfully explicit.[28]

Revolution serves as the quintessential event to illustrate this nonsynchronicity, precisely revealing why there is no distinct *right* time for a revolution. This is because a revolution encapsulates a moment when the inherent structural *unrightness* of time itself is brought to the fore:

If the French Revolution is the epochal marker of modernity—a "world" event in that it sets the schedule and tempo against which past and future history is henceforth measured—this is not because it provides a fixed or objective (strictly speaking, ahistorical) standard of comparison, but rather because *it introduces untimeliness itself as an ineluctable condition of historical experience*. [. . .] There is no right time or "ripe time" for revolution (or there would be no need of one). The Revolution always arrives too soon (conditions are never ready) and too late (it lags forever behind its own initiative).[29]

The 1979 Revolution was untimely because it brought to the fore the very structural untimeliness of Iranian society in its modern era. On a collective scale, Iranians gained awareness of this untimeliness through the series of disastrous defeats in the early nineteenth-century Russo-Persian wars, which culminated in the loss of substantial portions of the northern territory of the country. Continuing along this line of reasoning, another significant facet of the 1979 Revolution can be highlighted.

In our discussion of the first aspect, we proposed that the revolution made it possible to reconstruct the sociopolitical order by redistributing the transcendental conditions of experience within this order. At this juncture, we are still grounded in the Kantian perspective of transcendental conditions of synthesis.

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[28] Rebecca Comay, *Mourning Sickness: Hegel and the French Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 4–5.

[29] Comay, 7.

Nevertheless, as previously noted, another distinctive feature of the revolution comes into play. Embedded within time itself is an inexorable, irreducible untimeliness, which constitutes the residue of a time we have never experienced but is retroactively postulated. In other words, our engagement with it remains exclusively negative—perceiving it as a non-existent time that irrevocably corrupts time with a structural delay, thus unsettling both time and anything conditioned by it. In contrast to "the lingering eighteenth-century German hellenophilic aesthetic fantasies," which posited the existence of a flawless, untainted, and harmonious time experienced during the Hellenic era, the truth remains that there has never been a perfect and uncorrupted time. As Comay persuasively highlights,

> the [French] Revolution brings modernity to its turning point by reactivating the unfinished project of antiquity. It inherits the theological-political crisis of legitimacy that had ruined the illusory tranquility of the Greek polis. Hegel's analysis of *Sittlichkeit* had shattered every nostalgia for an original transparency and plenitude. The beautiful polis turns out to have been a fragile edifice constructed on the hidden fault line between two irreconcilable orders. Beauty sustained the fiction of equilibrium by masking the dissonance between competing grounds of legitimacy—divine and human, sacred and secular, Antigone's law and Creon's. Beauty was in this sense the first aesthetic ideology: it supplied the suture or hyphen of the theological-political.[30]

The French Revolution marks a pivotal moment wherein the inherent untimeliness of time, which was always already *in itself*, came to the fore and became *in and for itself*. From the inception of the so-called perfect, harmonious, and uncorrupted time of the Greek *polis*, time itself bore an inherent untimeliness, and it did not take much patience for this disturbing untimeliness to unfold dramatically, revealing above all that the foundation of the *polis* was rooted in an inexorable antagonism. In her extremely insightful book on Antigone, Zupančič highlights a crucial point regarding this antagonism:

> The figure of Antigone seems to be emblematic of a particular kind of social antagonism that touches on the question of the very constitution, and being, of the social [. . .]. But antagonism should in this case be understood not as hostility and

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[30]   Comay, 58.

> conflict between two (or several) elements but rather in the sense in which Marx talked about "class antagonism": not simply as conflict *between* different classes and their interests but as something that pertains to the very logic of the space, or reality, in which these classes exist—in this case, the reality of the capitalist mode of production. In other words, talking about antagonism in the case of Antigone is meant to direct our attention not to her conflict with and opposition to Creon but rather to something that surfaces *in* and *through* this conflict, something that brings to the fore a singular torsion, or crack, which defines the very ground they stand on in their conflict.[31]

The torsion that "surfaces *in* and *through* the conflict between Antigone and Creon" constitutes the fissure into which the Greek *Sittlichkeit* crumbled. At this point, the era had arrived for the aesthetic ideology of Beauty to give way to the Roman ideology of Law; yet, as is often the case, it was *too late*. The damage done was irreversible, and the Roman legalism represented an ineffectual endeavor to glue together the shattered pieces of the "harmonious," "divine" world, employing "the abstract force of a law stripped of all legitimacy [the execution of which, required] the military prowess of a ruler whose own authority had been reduced to an ostentatious display of destructive, orgiastic excess."[32]

Rather than invoking "the abstract force of a law," the French Revolution shed a dazzling light on the underlying structural out-of-jointness of the order, its irreparable delay, thereby unleashing the originary negativity previously buried under a pile of obsolete odds and ends. Prior to extolling the French Revolution for its triple signifier (*liberté*, *égalité*, *fraternité*), or condemning it for the Jacobin or Thermidorian terror, the pivotal aspect of the French Revolution that demands our serious consideration is the realization that, for the first time, the *in itself* negativity became the *in and for itself* negativity through a collective emancipatory act.

As mentioned earlier, the 1979 Revolution, which brought the originary negativity to the fore, not only provided the transcendental conditions for the possibility of reconstructing the sociopolitical order, but also affirmed that these

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[31]   Alenka Zupančič, *Let Them Rot: Antigone's Parallax* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2023), 2–3.

[32]   Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, 59.

very transcendental conditions are conditioned by the inherent untimeliness that structurally imbalances time. Faced with this untimeliness, the Islamic Republic followed a trajectory analogous to our earlier explanation of how Islam confronted the division in time. The mechanism of disavowing the inherent division in which the socio-symbolic reality is grounded was brutally suppressive from the outset. If we regard the 1979 Revolution as emblematic of the concept "Two divides into one," then the Islamic Republic can be seen as emblematic of the concept "One unites into two." The oxymoronic combination of its opposing poles—namely, "Islamic" and "Republic"—serves as a significant manifestation of this second concept where two opposing poles are brought together to disavow the inner cut, the division that made its emergence as a government possible. Hence, since its inception, the Islamic Republic has never stopped disavowing the 1979 Revolution as the pivotal moment that brought the irreversible division in time back to the fore.

On 1 March 1979, less than a month after the revolution's victory, Ayatollah Khomeini, the architect of the Islamic Republic, addressed the clerics who were gathered to celebrate his return to the city following a fifteen-year exile period at the *Feyziyeh* religious school in Qom: "What our nation aspires to is an "Islamic republic"—not just a simple republic, not a democratic republic, nor even an Islamic democratic republic, but a pure Islamic republic."[33] As emblematic of the concept "One unites into two," the Islamic Republic, as its name suggests, *in principle*, rests on two pillars. On one hand, it is rooted in the religious doctrine of *Imāmiyya Shī'a*, intended to grant it divine legitimacy. On the other hand, by upholding the sovereignty of Iranian citizens in sociopolitical decision-making, as emphasized by the term "Republic" in its title, the post-revolutionary government establishes its second source of legitimacy. In the subsequent discussion, our aim is to illustrate that after the establishment of the Islamic Republic, a new government intended to reshape the sociopolitical framework following the revolution, the structural out-of-jointness of the socio-symbolic reality *self-externalizes* in a form of dualism: Islamic/Republic. This very government

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[33]   Interestingly, Khomeini's initial proposition was not the term "Islamic Republic," but rather "Islamic Government." This very phrase was the title of his treatise, published a year prior to the revolution's victory—a manifesto in which he delineated his ideal governmental model. It was only at a later point, under the sway of his inner circle, that he relinquished his original proposal and embraced the suggestion of an "Islamic Republic," put forth by a member of this close-knit group.

draws its foundation from a theory known as *wilāyat al-faqīh*, translating to the "guardianship of the Islamic jurist." *Wilāyat al-faqīh* "advocates a kind of political system relying upon a just and capable jurist (*faqīh*) to assume the leadership of the government in the absence of an infallible *imām*."[34] It "is based on the four epistemological and anthropological assumptions of guardianship, Divine appointment, jurisdiction, and absolutism. This theory defends the unconditional right of just jurists, as the general vicegerents of the Hidden *imām*, to wield political power over the community of believers."[35] The role ascribed to the Supreme *faqīh* (Guide, Jurist) is analogous to the role assigned by the *Imāmiyya Shī'a* doctrine to the twelve *Shī'a imāms*. According to this doctrine, the holy realm of the *Shī'a imāms* is determined in the intermediary space between earth and the heavens—known as *Malakut*. This unique position enables the *Shī'a imāms* to derive the names and attributes of God from the heavens and then reflect them onto the earth like a mirror. In a similar vein, acting as the general vicegerent of the Hidden *imām*, the Supreme *faqīh* (Guide, Jurist), much like the *Shī'a imāms*, is envisioned as a mediator between the heaven and the earth, the theological and the political, and the spiritual and the temporal. The Supreme *faqīh* (Guide, Jurist) is intended to serve as the pivotal link bridging the two facets of "Islamic" (signifying the divine and heavenly dimension, *Nasut*) and "Republic" (representing the human and earthly dimension, *Lahut*). The intermediary position of the Supreme *faqīh* (Guide, Jurist) is, indeed, the very place that corresponds to the "One" in the concept "One unites into two." It is the place where the One that unites into two is signifierized within the sociopolitical order. However, the duality encapsulated by "Islamic/Republic" extends beyond the mere nomenclature of the government. Over the course of the last forty-four years, it has consistently replicated itself, resulting in the pervasive contamination of the entire sociopolitical structure.

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Let us pause here and closely examine the fundamental components of the Islamic Republic, along with their specific interactions within a distinctive hybrid structure. At the pinnacle of such a pyramid-shaped government resides the role of the Supreme Leader (the Supreme *faqīh*, Guide, Jurist), whose authority and

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[34]   Leila Chamankhah, *The Conceptualization of Guardianship in Iranian Intellectual History (1800–1989): Reading Ibn 'Arabī's Theory of Wilāya in the Shī'a World* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 258.

[35]   Chamankhah, 172.

guardianship over the community of believers are *absolute*, as established by a constitutional amendment in 1988.[36] However, the Constitution does not expound upon all the intricacies concerning the complete scope of the Supreme Leader's powers. In addition to the powers enumerated in Article 110 of the Constitution, the Supreme Leader assumes a pivotal role in the procedures for electing the president, the members of the *Majlis* (the Islamic Consultative Assembly), and the Assembly of the Experts—positions that are filled through general elections. It can be asserted that the Supreme Leader indirectly designates the elected president and the members of the *Majlis* and the Assembly. This is achieved through his appointment of the twelve members of the Guardian Council of the Constitution. He directly appoints six jurisprudents while indirectly selecting the remaining six legal scholars. The latter are presented to the *Majlis* by the head of the judiciary (himself directly appointed by the Supreme Leader), and subsequently elected in a vote by the members of the *Majlis*. The Guardian Council bears the responsibility not only of interpreting the Constitution and ensuring the alignment of legislation passed by the *Majlis* with the criteria of *Imāmiyya Shī'a* jurisprudence (*fiqh*) and the Constitution, but also of overseeing the election process and the qualifications of candidates vying for positions in the Assembly of Experts, the presidency, and the *Majlis*. In accordance with the Constitution, all candidates participating in *Majlis* or presidential elections, as well as those contending for seats in the Assembly of Experts, must undergo qualification by the Guardian Council. The Council interprets the term "supervision" in Article 99 of the Constitution as "approbative supervision" (*nezarat-e estesvabi*), which entails the authority to approve or invalidate the eligibility of candidates and the outcomes of elections. As a result, individuals elected by the public to hold positions such as the president, members of the *Majlis*, and the Assembly, have already been scrutinized and qualified under the approbative supervision of the Guardian Council, whose members are directly and indirect-

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[36] To show what is meant by the *absoluteness* of the authority and guardianship of the Supreme Leader, we can refer here to Khomeini's initiative to add the clause "*muṭlaqa*" ("absolute") to the theory of *wilāyat al-faqīh*, transforming it into *wilāyat-i muṭlaqa-yi faqīh* ("the absolute authority and guardianship of the jurist"). A few months before his death, Khomeini publicly declared that "obedience to the ruling jurist [is] as [obligatory for] the believer as the performance of prayer, and his powers extend even to the temporary suspension of such essential rites of Islam as the *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca)." Hamid Algar, "Velayat-E Faqih: Theory of governance in Shi'ite Islam," in *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*, updated August 23, 2023, https://www.encyclopedia.com/humanities/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/velayat-e-faqih.

ly appointed by the Supreme Leader. Following election, the president must receive formal approval from the Supreme Leader before proceeding to the *Majlis* for the inauguration. The narrative persists. Despite being the head of the executive office, the president lacks complete control over it. For instance, unlike presidential systems wherein the head of government appoints military commanders, the Iranian president holds no such authority. Nonetheless, the Iranian president differs from his counterpart in a parliamentary system, where the president's role is predominantly non-executive and ceremonial in nature.

Functioning as the head of the executive branch, the Iranian president assumes the responsibility of appointing ministers, the governor of the Central Bank (based on the recommendation of the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance), governors-general (following the Minister of the Interior's recommendation), the vice president, and Iranian ambassadors to foreign nations. Furthermore, the president issues executive orders and, as the head of the Supreme National Security Council, is vested with the constitutional power to declare a "state of emergency," entailing the suspension of all laws or the imposition of martial law. This unequivocally underscores that the president is fundamentally more than a ceremonial figure and possesses considerable executive powers. Nevertheless, even these powers are markedly influenced by the pervasive authority of the Supreme Leader. Notably, an unspoken guideline within the Iranian power structure designates the Supreme Leader as the one responsible for selecting ministers overseeing defense, intelligence, foreign affairs, science, and culture. Additionally, over the past two decades, Iran's ambassadors to certain neighboring countries, including Iraq and Syria, have been designated by the Quds Force, an extraterritorial division of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) that directly reports to the Supreme Leader. Most significantly, the Constitution explicitly entrusts the Supreme Leader with the determination of the "overall politics of the Islamic Republic system of Iran." This encompasses establishing the strategic framework for both domestic and foreign policy, along with economic and cultural orientations. This effectively means that the executive authority is already defined by these frameworks, leaving the president and his cabinet to align their actions with these orientations and policies.

Considering these insights into the power dynamics within the Islamic Republic, examining the fluctuations in the relationship between the Supreme Leaders and various presidents over the past forty years reveals a level of complex-

ity that resists facile characterization. Attempts to simplify this relationship by merely asserting that the Iranian president acts as a "buffer zone" between the Supreme Leader and the citizens, or by dismissing the presidential elections as insignificant and merely "a matter of window dressing," are insufficient. Indeed, there is a certain level of truth in these simplifications, and as attested by the majority of Iranians, the president's practical impact remains constrained despite the ostensibly comprehensive scope of powers associated with the position. Nevertheless, despite the disparity between his executive authority and the presumed stature of his role as the head of the cabinet, alongside his commitment to following the directives of the Supreme Leader, the events of the past four decades suggest a tension that has significantly and adversely impacted their relationship. The fact that his presidency is owed to the intervention of the Supreme Leader in "engineering" the elections did not preclude the emergence of the conflict that has been inherent in their relationship since the early days of the Islamic Republic. This conflict does not arise from personal or psychological discrepancies between the two most senior officials in the Islamic Republic's system. Instead, it is a *structural* conflict rooted in the very roles they occupy within the system. From this perspective, one could assert that the distinctiveness of the Islamic Republic lies in its composition of two positions, each endowed with executive power. To elaborate, the executive authority is bifurcated between the president and the Supreme Leader, resulting in the coexistence of two *legitimate* governance structures: one, more potent and led by the Supreme Leader, and the other, comparatively weaker and led by the president. The Supreme Leader effectively operates a parallel government alongside the administration headed by the president. Consequently, every president has confronted the existence of another legitimate government whose pervasive influence shapes his own government's strategies and policies. This is the underlying reason for the persistent tension observed in the relationship between the Supreme Leader and the presidents—a tension arising from the simultaneous presence of these two governance entities. The president, who gains his mandate through popular election, consistently finds himself in a situation where the greater concentration of executive power within the hands of the Supreme Leader and his affiliated institutions impedes his ability to fulfill the promises made during his electoral campaign. As a result, a structural conflict prevails between the functions of the presidency and those of the Supreme Leader, regardless of the extent of political alignment between the occupants of these positions.

Indeed, this tension vividly underscores that beyond the duality ingrained in the name of the Islamic Republic, dualism permeates its entire system. However, in contrast to those who label the government led by the Supreme Leader as the "deep state," it is crucial to recognize that this hybrid structure does not indicate the existence of a clandestine government within the system, running alongside the official government represented by the president. This hypothetical notion of hidden power networks, operating independently from the official government and driven by distinct interests and agendas, does not accurately reflect the reality. What is referred to as the deep state constitutes a legitimate and official segment of the Islamic Republic's state apparatus. It does not represent a hidden government within the official government but rather serves as a legitimate and central component of the entire system of the Islamic Republic. All the institutions within this sector, known as *nahadha-ye movazi* (parallel institutions), hold a specific position within the Constitution. It is evident in the annual budget bill presented by the president to the *Majlis*, where budget allocations are clearly designated for each of these institutions. However, unlike the arabesques of the Sheikh Lotfollah Mosque, where the lines minimize, overlap, and avoid each other, the dual structure of the Islamic Republic entails the presence of at least two institutions for each function, leading to constant interference in each other's operations. As an example, alongside the Iranian Army, which serves as the official armed forces organization, there exists another military entity, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), encompassing ground, air, and naval forces similar to the Iranian Army. Rather than a deep state or a government within a government, there exists a dual structure where this duality stands not merely as *a* characteristic, but as an integral essence of the Islamic Republic itself. This is a structure that does not stop at the division into two segments: the parallel institutions under the guidance of the Supreme Leader and the institutions overseen by the president. It goes so far as to subdivide the institutions of each segment into new institutions. As a consequence, through these continual divisions and subdivisions, the Islamic Republic navigates the sole path to preserve its distinct "identity," its "Oneness."

As noted earlier, with the 1979 Revolution, the very dissonance that makes us "constantly racing ahead of" and "forever lagging behind" was unleashed from being merely the *in itself* negativity manipulated and exploited by the Pahlavi regime of signifiers. The structural dissonance that surfaced introduced a new dimension within time, dividing it again into Chronos time and Kairos time. It

led to the overthrow of the Pahlavi monarchy, which tenaciously sought to patch up this dissonance with materials produced by its *mythological machine*. This is a traumatic dissonance that has made Iranians both latecomers and forerunner to their experience. It is traumatic because it "marks a caesura in which the linear order of time is thrown out of sequence. *We compound this temporal disorientation every time we try to quarantine trauma by displacing it to a buried past or a distant future*."[37] The Pahlavi regime and the Islamic Republic have both responded similarly in the face of such traumatic nonsynchronicity.

In seeking to alleviate this traumatic dissonance, the mythological machine of the Pahlavi regime endeavored to quarantine and displace it into a long-buried past, ancient Persia, and in doing so, ended up amplifying the dissonance even further. An exemplary instance of this phenomenon can be found in October 1971, when Shah Mohammad-Reza Pahlavi extended invitations to leaders from over seventy countries to convene in Iran and celebrate the 2500th anniversary of the Persian Empire at the historical site of Persepolis. During this event, a long-buried past was glorified and fetishized in a pompous spectacle that appeared to serve as a mask against the traumatic dissonance causing Iranian society to face a structurally irreparable out-of-jointness. In other words, while the Shah of Iran's "modernization from above" project, funded by petrodollars, aimed to transform Iran into a "developed," industrialized nation, on an ideological level, the glorification of ancient Persia in a mythological and pastoral manner exemplified the Pahlavi regime's fetishistic approach to concealing and simultaneously manifesting the traumatic nonsynchronicity of Iranian society. This is precisely where the figure of tyranny enters the picture. As Joan Copjec maintains: "Whenever the always already lost past is recast as a once actual past of which a people have been robbed or which they themselves have squandered, the figure of tyranny presents itself in the engineering of efforts to recover the loss."[38]

The more the Shah attempted to alleviate the traumatic dissonance by quarantining it in a "harmonious," "non-contradictory" mythologization of ancient

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[37] Comay, *Mourning Sickness*, 25; emphasis added.

[38] Joan Copjec, "Battle Fatigue: Kiarostami and Capitalism," in *Lacan Contra Foucault: Subjectivity, Sex, and Politics*, ed. Nadia Bou Ali and Rohit Goel (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 148–49.

Persia, the more he intensified it. Then came a dramatic turn in the winter of 1979, merely six years after the lavish celebrations in Persepolis. Neither the return to the glorified past nor the petrodollar-driven modernization could offer a corrective solution to the structural nonsynchronicity; the revolutionary moment provided the most suitable outlet for the traumatic dissonance. The revolution, in suspending this specific form of tyranny, brought the inadequacy of both approaches to the forefront, allowing the traumatic dissonance to assert itself and become *in and for itself*. Although the traumatic dissonance managed to escape from the quarantine in which it was only *in itself* due to the manipulative and exploitative operation of the Pahlavi regime and became *in and for itself* at the moment of the revolution, it was once again quarantined under the Islamic Republic by being displaced onto a *distant future*. In accordance with the messianic doctrine of Twelver Shīʿa, the Twelfth Imam (Muḥammad al-Mahdi) is anticipated to reappear at an undisclosed time, establishing a government that will usher in global peace and justice. Grounded in this messianic conviction, the Islamic Republic, operating as a Shīʿa theocracy, has regarded itself since its inception as a precursor to the rule of Muḥammad al-Mahdi. Consequently, much like the Pahlavi regime, the Islamic Republic, in its struggle with the traumatic dissonance brought back to the fore at the moment of the revolution, quarantines it by displacing it into an unspecified, messianic future.

Undoubtedly, the revolution served as the decisive endpoint to the rule of the Pahlavi regime. However, it should not be construed as an example of "repression proper" in the Freudian sense, where repression pertains to repressing a signifier related to an already experienced trauma. Instead, the revolution should be understood as "primary repression" (*Urverdrängung*), which is not *a posteriori* but, if we are allowed, *a priori*. Primary repression "is not the repression of the affect or its representation," but rather a form of *repression* that provides the condition for the possibility of experience itself, not of this or that experience. At the risk of oversimplification, we can differentiate between primary repression and repression proper with an analogy. In a football game, the whistles that the referee blows during the game are *subsequent* occurrences, like repression proper. First, a foul or an offside goal occurs, and then the referee blows the whistle to nullify it. However, the whistle blown by the referee at the beginning of the game is *a priori* incident, akin to primary repression. This whistle does not negate specific action, but rather provides the condition for the possibility of the game itself. In this context, Zupančič emphasizes that

what is primarily repressed is not the drive itself, or the affect, or its representation, but the subject's marker of this representation. The critical point about this is not to confound this marker with something that the subject saw or experienced in reality, and repressed because of its intimate connection with the affect in its traumatic pressure. The "primarily repressed" marker or representative of the drive is something that has never been conscious, and has never been part of any subjective experience, but constitutes its ground. The logic of repression by association is the logic of what Freud calls repression proper, whereas primary repression is precisely not a repression in this sense. In it the causality usually associated with the unconscious is turned upside-down: it is not that we repress a signifier because of a traumatic experience related to it, rather, it is because this signifier is repressed that we can experience something as traumatic (not simply as painful, frustrating, and so on), and repress it. In other words, at some fundamental level the cause of repression is repression.[39]

Within this Freudian framework, we can read the unleashing of the untimeliness of time with the occurrence of the revolution as a primary repression that paved the path for a fresh sociopolitical order, wherein the lives of Iranians were destined to be overdetermined by the signifying logic of the Islamic Republic. Therefore, we may analyze the structurally intertwined connection between the revolution and the Islamic Republic by employing a Lacanian elaboration of Freud's theory of repression. According to this elaboration, which delves into the process of signifierization,

the logic of the signifier (and the subject as what one signifier represents for another signifier) starts only with two, it starts with the signifying dyad. On the level of the first signifier there is as yet no subject and not signifying logic or chain. The latter, however, does not occur by means of a second signifier being added to the first; it emerges by means of the "repression" of the first signifier, and emerges *at its place.*[40]

Continuing along this line of reasoning, we can assert that the revolution, acting as the primary repression that brings to the fore the immense negative facet of sociopolitical reality, stands for the very first signifier that is retrospectively pos-

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[39] Zupančič, *On Comedy*, 165.
[40] Zupančič, 165.

ited as an always already lost signifier, leaving behind an empty space. This is precisely the empty space in which the untimeliness of time bursts forth during the revolutionary moment. The revolution, emblematic of the untimeliness of time, brings to the fore the empty space of the first signifier in which the signifying chain (the Islamic Republic) is retroactively provided with the ground for its emergence. As a result, the dyadic structure of the signifier leads us to a conception of the One in which the latter is ontologically incomplete, riddled with contradiction from within so that it *is* simultaneously and inseparably *the One and the not-One*. What is precisely disavowed under the Islamic Republic is this very ontological incompleteness. The distinctiveness of the Islamic Republic, as discussed above, becomes evident in the process where the signifying dyad advances through the act of disavowing primary repression to uphold the oneness of the One. Rooted in a specific interpretation of Shīʿa Islam, the Islamic Republic, when faced with the rupture that unveiled the domain of Kairos time during the revolution and thereby laid bare the structural untimeliness of time, followed a trajectory akin to Islam's response to the apocalyptic act.

Much like (Shīʿa) Islam, which disavowed the Division that causes divisions (the theological/the political, the spiritual/the temporal, the esoteric/the exoteric), the Islamic Republic disavows this Division, which was brought to the fore at the moment of the revolution, not only by quarantining it in a messianic future but also by dividing and subdividing its administrative structure into parallel institutions and the presidential institutions. It is through these dual actions that the Islamic Republic seeks to maintain the oneness of the One—the One that unites into two.

Certainly, this phenomenon extends beyond the confines of the administrative structure; it has permeated the entire sociopolitical landscape. In one of his first films following the revolution, *Hamshahri* (Fellow Citizen, 1983), which bears the signature of his realist cinema, the so-called *cinéma vérité*, Abbas Kiarostami provides us with an exemplary illustration of the application of the mathematical statement "One unites into two" within the everyday life of Iranian citizens. Due to traffic congestion resulting from the revolution and the Iraq-Iran war, a law was enacted restricting vehicle passage in certain congested areas of Tehran from 6 a.m. to 3 p.m., allowing entry only with a permit. The film portrays the interactions between drivers lacking a traffic permit and a traffic officer, as they attempt to convince the officer to accept their excuses for entering

the restricted zone. With the insights from the previously discussed signifying dyad, the actions of the drivers who seek to convince the traffic officer, rather than complying with the traffic restriction, could be read as the failure of the signifier "traffic permit" to represent the "empty space" of the first signifier. Its failure to represent the negative dimension of the signifying logic and to refer it to the next signifier, leads to the dysfunctionality of the traffic law to successfully persuade the drivers to submit to such a law. This is because the "empty space" of the first signifier, which internally contradicts the signifier "traffic permit," dividing it into "traffic permit" and "not-traffic permit" (the signifying dyad), is *projected onto* the conjunction between the traffic officer *and* the drivers without a traffic permit. In other words, the "not-traffic permit" *of* the signifier "traffic permit" is now dissociated from it and *self-externalized onto* the *liminality* between the *opposing* poles of "traffic permit" *and* "not-traffic permit" in such a way that both sides are *equally recognized*. This is why the drivers without a traffic permit do not see themselves as transgressors of the traffic law. We are not dealing here with the dialectic of rule and exception in which a violation of the traffic law is an exception that occurs within a framework that is still governed by the same traffic law. Rather, as mentioned above, the failure of the signifier "traffic permit" to represent, to tarry with, its internal negative dimension, the "not-traffic permit," leads to the self-externalizing of the structural impasse of the law and provides those who do not have a traffic permit with a "not-traffic permit" and enables them to act in a way as if they knew that "the law does not cover all circumstances." This dynamic puts them on an equal footing when conversing with the traffic officer, leading to calm and sometimes humorous exchanges aimed at convincing him. Their behavior stands in stark contrast to that of individuals who have violated the law. In one scene, a female motorist whom the officer refuses to let through even says to him: "*Damn the one bothering people!*" In many other cases, however, the officer is convinced to allow the motorists to proceed. In her insightful take on the film, Copjec asserts:

> None of the motorists displays any disrespect for the officer or the law, indeed what is striking is the way a kind of respect or at least a faith in her pact with the law seems to invite the endearing ingenuity with which each attempts to skirt it. The consistency of the responses—not one fails to engage in ruse—in combination with the demeanor of the drivers leads us to understand that what we are witnessing does not go under the name of exception. None of these citizens (the title defines them as such and thus links them to the law and to state power) con-

siders him or herself to be above or outside the law; rather, each seems to take it for granted that the law does not cover all circumstances, that there is in the law itself something that is not decided by law and that this emancipates those subject to it from rote conduct.[41]

Today, four decades after Kiarostami's film, the situation remains unchanged at the very same street intersection where the traffic officer once enforced the new traffic law. Vehicle movement is still restricted during office hours, but now, instead of the traffic officer, traffic control cameras oversee the area. What sets the present situation apart is that a few hundred meters from the intersection, kiosks sell "traffic permit cards" that, when obtained, grant drivers legal access to the restricted traffic zone during working hours. In other words, after all these years, the projected "not-traffic law" of the "traffic law" still persists, not as an internal exception to that law, but as an opposing, if not parallel, pole. The difference now is that the "not-traffic permit" has become a monetized entity. During the time of the film's production, motorists without a permit would attempt to convince the traffic officer using various forms of sophistry, crafting lies and excuses. However, today's sophist motorists are distinct from their Greek predecessors who were paid. Instead, these modern sophist motorists are required to pay a fee in order to legally traverse a route that is otherwise prohibited—needless to say, the officials and administrators of the Islamic Republic can pass through these traffic zones without any obstruction. The realm of Internet access in Iran presents another facet of this phenomenon. While the government officially filters certain platforms like Twitter, it is noteworthy that all authorities of the Islamic Republic maintain official pages on such platforms. Moreover, government-licensed companies legally sell anti-filters and VPNs to citizens, enabling them to access otherwise filtered websites and platforms. This transition from the neo-Platonic God to the Money God is a comprehensive topic that merits deeper exploration. For now, let us conclude with the *liminality* between the traffic officer *and* the drivers without permits, a juncture where One unites into two.

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41   Joan Copjec, "The Imaginal World and Modern Oblivion: Kiarostami's Zig-Zag," *Filozofski vestnik* 37, no. 2 (2016): 36.

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