ENCOUNTERING WITH THE REAL: A CRITICAL READING OF THE
WORKS OF LACAN, LACLAU, ŽIŽEK AND BADIOU

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

SAVAŞ YAZICI

IN PARTIAL FULFİILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

SEPTEMBER 2007

Approval of the Graduate School of Social Sciences

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ABSTRACT

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WORKS OF LACAN, LACLAU, ŽIŽEK AND BADIOU

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August 2007, 276 pages

Lacan is an influential figure of 20th Century thought. Being a psychoanalyst, a linguist and at the same time a philosopher, in his theory he combines all three of these disciplines. Even in his later works, he tried to combine his theory with mathematical formalization.

His theory influenced three important political thinkers: Laclau, Žižek and Badiou. The purpose of this dissertation is mainly to examine Lacan's thought and its impasses which could be found especially in the political applications of his theory. First I start with a critical reading of Lacan's own works. I try to figure out the idealizations, presuppositions and blind spots hidden in his work.

I develop my critical reading by focusing on the works of Laclau, Žižek and Badiou. The main argument of this dissertation is, such a critical reading of these philosophers will lead us to a general questioning of Lacan's theory and the legitimacy of its applications.

Lacan's use of the impossibility as a founding principle and his passion for

formalization cause several idealizations, like the idealization of the neutrality of the signifier, the idealization of the non-represented and so on. These problems are extended and transformed into other ones in his disciples' works. For Laclau, the problem is transformed into a purely content-free understanding of elements of democracy which ends up with paradoxical results. For Žižek and Badiou, because of their insistence on a political theory based on the impossible real, their subversive theories end up with a theory which take the form of messianic discourses.

What I propose is a reconsideration of the role of the theory on the understanding of human reality: in principle every theory excludes some portions of the richness of human life-world, therefore every theory must have a retrospective and critical stance against its own founding principles. This cannot be done by formalized theories which keep the formal structure of itself untouchable.

Keywords: Lacan, psychoanalysis, formalization, Laclau, democracy, Žižek, Badiou, event, impossibility

ÖZ

GERÇEKLE KARŞILAŞMA: LACAN, LACLAU, ŽIŽEK VE BADIOU'NUN
ÇALIŞMALARININ ELEŞTİREL BİR OKUMASI

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Tez Yöneticisi: Doç. Dr. David Grünberg

Ağustos 2007, 276 sayfa

Lacan, 20 yüzyıl düşüncesinde etkileyici bir figürdür. Bir psikanalist, dilbilimci ve aynı zamanda da bir filozof olarak kuramında bu üç disiplini birleştirir. Dahası geç dönem çalışmalarında bunlarla matematiksel formelleştirmeyle birleştirir.

Kuramı üç önemli siyaset düşünürünü etkiler: Laclau, Žižek ve Badiou. Bu tezin amacı, Lacan'ın felsefesini ve özellikle kuramı siyasete uygulandığında ortaya çıkan açmazlarını incelemektir. Öncelikle Lacan'ın kendi eserlerinin bir okumasıyla başlayacağım. Eserlerinde gizli bulunan idealleştirmeleri, ön kabulleri ve kör noktaları bulmaya çalışacağım.

Eleştirel okumama Laclau, Žižek ve Badiou'nun eserleriyle devam edeceğim. Bu tezin ana fikri, bu düşünürlerin eleştirel bir okumasının bizi Lacan'ın kuramının ve bu kuramın uygulamalarının meşruiyetini sorgulamaya götüreceğidir.

Lacan'ın imkansızlık kavramını kurucu bir ilke olarak kullanması ve formelleştirmeye olan tutkusu, gösterenin tarafsızlığı idealleştirmesi, temsile edilemeyenin idealleştirilmesi gibi çeşitli idealleştirmelere yol açmaktadır. Kuramsal takipçilerinin çalışmalarında ise bu problemler başka alanlara genişlemiş ve biçim değiştirmiştir. Laclau için problem demokratik unsurların içerikten yoksun bir idealleştirilmesi gibi paradoksal sonuçlara yol açmıştır. Žižek ve Badiou için, imkansız bir gerçekten yola çıkan bir siyaset kuramında ısrarcı olmaları sebebiyle, muhalif kuramları mesihçi bir söylem halini alır.

Önerim, kuramın insan gerçekliğinin anlaşılmasındaki rolünün yeniden gözden geçirilmesidir: kural olarak her kuram insan yaşamının belirli kısımlarını dışlar; bu nedenle de, her kuram kendi kurucu ilkelerine yönelik bir geriye bakış ve eleştirel bir duruşa sahip olmalıdır. Bu, kendi formel yapısını dokunulmaz kılan formelleştirilmiş kuramlarla yapılamaz.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Lacan, psikanaliz, formelleştirme, Laclau, demokrasi, Žižek, Badiou, olay, imkansızlık

To Ebru, of course.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The following abbreviations are used for the most cited works in this dissertation:

BE	Badiou, A. (2005) *Being and Event*, trans. Oliver Feltham, New York: Continuum.
EC	Lacan, J. (2006) *Écrits: The First Complete Edition In English*, trans. Bruce Fink, Héloïse Fink and Russell Grigg, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
ET	Badiou, A. (2001) *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, Trans. Peter Hallward, London & New York: Verso.
FA	Žižek, S. (2000) *The Fragile Absolute or, Why is the Christian legacy worth fighting for?*, London and New York: Verso.
FTK	Žižek, S. (1991) *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment As A Political Factor*, New York & London: Verso.
PLF	Žižek, S. (1997) *The Plague of Fantasies*, New York & London: Verso.
SE	Freud, S. *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* (trans.) J. Strachey, London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1955.
SEMI	Lacan, J. (1998) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book 1: Freud's Paper's on Technique, 1953-1954*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. with notes John Forrester, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
SEMII	Lacan, J. (1988) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book I1: The Ego in Freud's Theory and in the Technique of Psychoanalysis 1954-1955*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. Sylvana Tomaselli, , New York

	and London: W.W.Norton & Company.
SEMIII	Lacan, J. (1997) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book III: The psychoses 1955-1956*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. with notes Russell Grigg, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
SEMVII	Lacan, J. (1992) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis 1959-1960*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. with notes Dennis Porter, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
SEMXI	Lacan, J. (1978) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. Alan Sheridan, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
SEMXX	Lacan, J. (1999) *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: ON Feminine Sexuality The Limits of Love and Knowledge: Book XX: Encore 1972-1973*, Jacques-Alain Miller (ed.), trans. with notes Bruce Fink, New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company.
SOI	Žižek, S. (1999) The Sublime Object of Ideology, London and New York: Verso.
TS	Žižek, S. (1999) *The Ticklish Subject: The Absent Centre of Political Ontology*, New York & London: Verso.
TV	Lacan, J. (1990) *Television*, Joan Copjec (ed.), trans. Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson, New York and London: W.W.Norton & Company.
TWN	Žižek, S. (1993) *Tarrying with the Negative: Kant, Hegel, and the Critique of Ideology*, Durham, Duke University Press.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Werner Herzog's legendary documentary, *The Grizzly Man* is on an eccentric American zoologist, who with his girl friend, had been living with grizzly bears in North America until they were attacked and eaten by them. At the very early stages of the documentary, Herzog tells us the truth about what happened. One watches the movie with the knowledge of this unbearable truth. Almost all of the scenes of the movie were shot by the victims with an amateur video camera. What we learn from the movie is the existence of an audio recording of the unexpected and fatal attack of the bears. However, Herzog did not put these recordings of the tragic event in his documentary. We were prohibited from watching these horrifying recordings.

Werner Herzog, as being a great director, structured the story around this attack in such a way that we cannot stop ourselves imagining about the horrors of such an attack. In other words, the horror is always present with its absence in the movie. The void, the unrepresented real in the story, is filled with our imagination, in a sense, we desire for the lacking truth. This void becomes the founding principle of our understanding of the story: it triggers our attention, imagination and interest. This is the enchanting nature of the lack: one may not even express what this lack is all about and even one may not have enough linguistic tools to express it, but the imagination ceaselessly tries to fill it in.

This dissertation is mainly on *the* lack, which is the founding principle of our psychic, political, social, ethical, scientific and artistic practices and behaviors due to Lacan. It is a little bit strange to speak

about something which *exists by its absence*. Writing and thinking about an absence, without knowing what is absent, is one of the most important ideas that I would like to focus on in this dissertation.

If I use Lacanese, the lack is based on a certain impossibility: an impossibility to represent *the Thing* in its fullness.[1] This impossibility is caused by the nature of language, which is incapable of representing the fullness of this real thing. Instead, living as social animals, what is imposed on us by language is the acceptance of a certain Law which keeps this Thing away from our world of symbols. (i.e. One cannot express the pre-linguistic feeling of unity. After the introduction in language, this inexpressible Thing takes the form of incestuous feelings towards the mother. And with this Law, mother, which is the primary representative of the unrepresentable Thing is also prohibited. Last stage in this prohibitory phase, the desire for mother, which is unacceptable, is replaced with other and socially acceptable desire objects.) That is why, this dissertation would not only be on the absence and impossibility, but also on the nature of language: how does it work and why is it incapable of representing the Thing.

Lacan is undeniably one of the outstanding thinkers of the last century. The above mentioned formulation of the lack and its relation with impossibility is a central theme that Lacan's psychoanalytic theory is based on. In the following sections, I shall merely sketch in a few of Lacan's central positions. Then I will discuss the necessity and importance of the central themes of this work.

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1 The Thing denotes the unbearable presence of the pre-linguistic and mythical unity. This will be explicated later on. But for now, it can be considered as the *essential* backbone of representation: the Thing is what we try to represent, but at the same time which is impossible to be represented. On the other hand, by the symbolic entrance into language, this impossibility is replaced with prohibition. In other words, we pretend as if the impossibility is actually a prohibition. (Stavrakakis, 1999: 42-3)

1.1. Jacques Lacan, the linguist, the philosopher and the psychoanalyst:

The hero of this dissertation is Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst, or at least who had been known as a clinician until he started his famous seminars in 1953. But then why did I chose a psychoanalyst as the main character of a dissertation on philosophy? First of all, as will be seen, Lacan was a clinician but his theory of psyche is based on several philosophical ideas. Lacan tries to import theories from linguistics, mathematics and philosophy into psychoanalysis. The result of this is a complex system of thought which consists of the following:

1. A Theory of subject: One of the core concepts of Lacanian psychoanalysis is his theory of subject. This novel theory is based on a strange idea of split borrowed from Freud: Lacanian subject is basically a *split subject*. It is formed by two different but intertwining realms.[2] One of these is an imagined unity, the ego, which is based on a mis-recognition. The second one is the symbolic subject (or the subject of the signifier) which is based on the socio-linguistic appearance of an individual. This subject exists in language, in our daily social practices.

2. A Linguistic Theory and a Theory of Meaning: This second half of the split, the symbolic subject, is founded by the structural relations of the elements of language. Lacan introduces a new theory of language for analyzing this realm, which is a radicalized structuralist theory based on the works of Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand de Saussure. As a consequence of such a novel linguistic theory, there exists

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2 As will be seen, there is a third realm (the real) in the formation of the subject. But for now, for the sake of clarity, I will present the very basics of Lacan's theory of subject by using only the two realms of the imaginary and symbolic. In Chapter 3, I will present what the real of a subject is.

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also a Lacanian theory of meaning. This theory of meaning consists of the impersonal flux of the linguistic elements, the Law of language and also personal points through which individuals can access this linguistic domain. For Lacan, the meaning is also based on the lack: it is impossible to achieve the meaning in its fullness.

3. An epistemology: As language shapes our understanding of the world, Lacan's theory at the same time deals with epistemological issues. The ego is based on an imagined unity and this unity is as I will show, founded by an initial mis-recognition (with an imagined ego as a fullness). Lacan's conception of the "mirror stage" is not only on the development of human infants, but also is on how our access to the world is enabled with such an initial and inevitable mis-recognition.

4. An Ontology: In Lacan's writings, there is always a tension between being and language. The process of symbolization is at the same time the death of the singularity of the symbolized Thing. Thus language is the domain of the lack of being. On the other hand, the ontological principle of the linguistic domain is the lack, which means, the linguistic use and even the linguistic structure are based on the lack Thus Lacan's theory is at the same time an investigation of the *being* of this lack.

5. A Theory of Mind: By the invention of the unconscious, Freudian schools bring forth a critique against the Cartesian conception of human consciousness. For the psychoanalytic theory, there is always another realm which has an affect on our conscious actions. And the main task of the psychoanalytic theory is understanding the logic of this realm –if there exists such a logic. Lacan, by combining his theory

of language with Freudian psychoanalysis, puts together a new theory of mind also. For him, the unconscious is structured like language. This means, the mechanisms of desire and the symptoms work like the linguistic processes (i.e. the symptoms work metaphorically and the desire works metonymically).

All of these disciplines are closely intertwined, with a certain emphasis on the lack as the central concept. The lack as the foundational principle becomes one of the most influential ideas in political science and cultural studies. I shall discuss these influences with a brief introduction of the works of Žižek, Badiou and Laclau[3] in the next section.

1.2. The disciples: Žižek, Badiou and Laclau:

In this dissertation, although the main thinker is Lacan, I will present other philosophers, who are also Lacanians[4]: Slavoj Žižek, Alain Badiou and Ernesto Laclau —in collaboration with Chantal Mouffe. What is shared between these figures is, at the core of their theories, there is the idea of the impossibility of representation and the lack or the void as the founding principle of the human activities, and especially the socio-political ones. For Laclau and Mouffe, the project of democracy is in a way hegemonizing the empty signifiers which lack of meaning. For Žižek, the psychoanalytic theory of Lacan can be used for analyzing the realm of ideology and popular culture. And finally, Badiou introduces a mathematical ontology[5] based on the void, which is exactly the same with

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3 The most important work of Laclau was written together with Mouffe. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985)

4 Except Slavoj Žižek, Badiou and Laclau do not call themselves as "orthodox Lacanians". But Badiou, for several occasions, called Lacan as his "master" and Laclau, in most of his works, refers to Lacanian theory, and even in Yannis Stavrakakis' seminal book *Lacan and the Political*, Laclau and Mouffe's "radical democracy" is presented as one of the examples of an application of Lacanian theory to the political theory. (see Stavrakakis, 1999 especially chapters 4 and 5)

5 This was one of the dreams of Lacan: a mathematical model of the human psyche. What he advised to his disciples was studying mathematical disciplines, especially

Lacanian idea of lack. In his theory, the void denotes the entities which are not represented.

All of these actors are present in this dissertation and what I will mostly focus on will be the political outcomes of their theories. There are two major points that I would like to emphasize:

1. First of all, all of these theories are based on a theory of psyche. It is something usual in the history of philosophy that one philosopher may adopt certain developments in sciences or mathematics. Similarly, one may find several examples that one philosopher adopts a theory and elaborates on it and changes it radically. Even Freud uses his theory for understanding the mass culture. Similarly, by the works of Badiou, Žižek, Laclau and Mouffe, Lacanian theory is extended into another realm without applying any radical changes to the core of the theory. In this dissertation, what I would like to discuss is the legitimacy of such an extension.

2. Secondly, Lacan opens the door to a formalization of psychoanalysis. Another Lacanian, Alain Badiou, puts together a theory which is based on a purely formal system: axiomatic set theory. Similarly, in Laclau and Mouffe's works, one can find another type of formalism: a mechanics of social construction without contents. I would like to elaborate on these cases in order to explicate their use and abuse of mathematical innovations. I am not trying to repeat what Alain Sokal and Jean Bricmont have done in their *Fashionable Nonsense.*[6] Their work is based on the idea that several postmodern and poststructuralist philosophers abuse

topology and set theory. As we will see, what Badiou uses is Zermelo-Fraenkel's axiomatic set theory as ontology.

6 *Fashionable Nonsense: Postmodern Intellectuals' Abuse of Science,* New York: Picador, 1998.

scientific theories and mathematics. They also claim that such thinkers use such a pseudo technical language in order to pretend that their theories consist of a certain complexity and rigor. I think that Sokal and Bricmont's book is fixed with certain presuppositions against several thinkers. Quite the contrary, what I will try to do in this work is —with an acceptance of the fact that Lacan and Badiou knows enough on mathematical formalism— to achieve an understanding of their theories and criticize their use of formalism. What I believe is, it is impossible to understand the human psyche with a purely formal system. I will try to develop this idea with a further criticism of formalism in political theory and ethics also.

Before going into the details, I would like to summarize the role of formalism in the poststructuralist philosophical theories.

1.3. Gödel and the problem of representation:

What is the relationship between the work of Kurt Gödel, a mathematician and Jacques Lacan, a clinical psychoanalyst? What I believe is, not only for Lacan, but also for Derrida and for several others, Gödel's famous incompleteness theorems are highly influential. The very first claim of Derrida's deconstruction is that there is nothing beyond text. This opens a whole new realm of thinking which can be related to the mathematical inquiry. One may read Derrida's whole methodology of deconstructive reading as an extension of what Gödel used during his proofs. Derrida asserts that it is impossible to have a philosophical text/system which is consistent and complete in itself. In other words, it is impossible to cover all the truths within a text, without falling into inconsistencies. That is the whole endeavour of Derrida: finding out the centers of a text which structure the text, re-evaluating the legitimacy of these centers, revealing the consequences of the acceptance and

rejection of such centers by trying to open the text for the new possible readings. Deconstruction is basically a method of reading and interpreting texts in order to provide evidence for the claim of "incompleteness". What Derrida proposes is a "parasitic reading" by which, without introducing any external and transcendent truths to the text under investigation, slowly getting into the depths of the text by using the text's own language (texts own formalization, assertions, presuppositions and transformation rules), showing the *blind spots* in it. These blind spots are hidden consciously (or may be unconsciously) by the author in order to keep the text's consistency and closure at the same time.

Perhaps Gödel's incompleteness theorem is one of the main resources behind the paths of such an innovative idea. What Gödel accomplished was moving within the limits of mathematics without using any meta-mathematical or transcendent orders or truths, deconstructing the very idea that every truth could be expressed (or every truth could be proven). He proved that there will always be undecidable statements in mathematical formalization and even some of these undecidable statements might be true. In short, certain formal truths are not axiomatizable in mathematics.

I think this radical distinction between the truth of a statement and its formal provability gives inspiration to Derrida that for him, philosophical system, which impose their own rules could never cover all the possible truths within their realms of interest. In order to pretend that such an impossible completeness is achieved, a philosophical text should hide the blind spots (irrational, metaphysical or contradictory presuppositions, transcendent truths) from the eyes of the readers. If Gödel's incompleteness theorems are on the formal systems, Derrida's deconstruction is an extension of the method of Gödel's proof to the whole realm of philosophy and philosophical systems.

Similarly, for Lacan, the linguistic dimension of human life is not capable of telling all the Truth about the world:

I always speak the truth. Not the whole truth, because there's no way, to say it all. Saying it all is literally impossible: words fail. Yet it's through this very impossibility that the truth holds onto the real. (TV: 3)

There is always a lack which is based on such an impossibility and it is the founding principle of the human psyche. We all suffer from our incapability of filling up this lack. We desire objects in order to cover up this lack, but the objects that we use to fill this lack consist of lack also. The reason for that is the fact that it is impossible to say what is lacking. The lack is inevitable. The lack is based on the impossibility of representing what Lacan calls "the real".

Life teaches us to live by using language and acceptance of such a life is at the same time an acceptance of a certain form of prohibition as language is based on socio-cultural norms and presuppositions. Certain feelings and desires are impossible to express as they are prohibited from language. Language imposes on us a Law, the Law of socio-linguistic life. Being a social animal is living within language, living together its prohibitions and impasses.

For Gödel, syntax is separate from semantics. Similarly, for Lacan, meaning is an imagined effect of the flux of the elements of language (signifiers). It is impossible to achieve meaning in its fullness. There is always a fundamental gap between these two realms (the realm of language and the meaning or the Truth) and this gap could only be overcome through imagination.

This dissertation will provide an investigation of these prohibitions, impossibilities and our linguistic incapability also. There is a dialectics between the impossibility and prohibition. These are all based on the Law of language which ends up with the incapability. Related to these concepts, there are two major points that I am interested in and I would like to elaborate on.

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1.3.1. Formalization:

Not Derrida, but Lacan was, someway obsessed with a formal theory. Especially during his last years of teaching, he tried to formalize his theory by using certain symbols which are similar to the mathematical ones. We know that, in his long intellectual life, he was always interested in mathematics, but this is not the only reason behind such an attempt of formalization. What I think is, he was trying to achieve a *perfect theory* which, for him, could only be achieved through formalization: a bullet-proof system which is beyond the reach of any empirical changes in the content, a model of every possible psychic phenomena in which, there is even a place for the real although it is impossible to represent it. In his system, both language and its impasses are included. The indeterminable character of the real, the amorphous realm beyond the reach of language is also formalized and a certain determinism is injected into the theory: a theory which points out both the foundational role of the lack and what is lacking. This is one of the crucial dimensions of Lacanian theory that I will focus on in this work.

1.3.2. The problem of extension:

The second major point is the adoption and extension of Lacan's theory by other thinkers in order to achieve a better understanding of other realms of interest. Although Lacan has written on almost everything, from literature to history of mathematics, from Ancient Greek tragedies to optics, he is at the very first, a Freudian psychoanalyst and his theory is a theory of the human psyche. But at the core of his work, there exists a very strange theory of subject, by which, the border between an individual and society is blurred: the Other, the socio-linguistic dimension of life is not external to the human subject; it is where the subject is alienated from itself, where the pre-linguistic singularity of an infant is lost. This blurring of the borders between the social and the individual inspires other thinkers to use Lacan's theory in order to introduce new theories on other areas.

One of the major points that I will question in this work is the legitimacy of using a theory of one realm of interest in order to understand and investigate another one. I will focus on the two steps of such an extension of theories. The first step is the use of linguistic theories and mathematical formalism in analyzing the psychic domain. The main question that I will try to answer is "how could it be possible to use a linguistic theory in understanding the nature of the unconscious and how could it be possible to apply a certain type of proven impossibility in mathematics in understanding the impossibilities in the domain of subjectivity?" The second step is using this theory of psyche in analyzing another domain, this time the socio-political one. And the second question is "how could it be possible to use a psychoanalytic theory for understanding the socio-political relations of human beings?"

At the very origins of Lacan's theory there exists two main theoretical edifices: first of all, there is a formal proof by Gödel[7] which tells us something about the impossibility of the provability of certain statements within formal systems. Secondly, there is Saussure's linguistic theory, which is on the structural relationship of the elements of language. As an addition to the problem of extension, one may ask also the question that how could it be possible to combine these two theories in order to grasp the realm of human psyche?

Lacan's theory is a combination of two different disciplines; it is a model based on two different models. And what his disciples have are extensions of such a *hybrid* model. Once again, what is the legitimacy of this double modeling? This will be one of the points that I will investigate in this dissertation with an account of weaknesses of such a modeling.

These two points will be discussed in this dissertation with

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7 Lacan never mentions the name of Gödel as his precursor. But, such a reading of Lacan as a thinker who was influenced by Gödel's theorems is consistent with especially his later writings on formalization of psychoanalysis and the tension between language and the Truth.

examples from both Lacan and his disciples. Alain Badiou's ontology is an example for both of the above mentioned issues as he equates axiomatic set theory to ontology. This equation is a formalization of a domain (ontology) and at the same time extension of Lacanian psychoanalysis with a combination of Zermelo-Fraenkel's axiomatic system.

1.4.   The (hi)story of the lack:

Perhaps one of the most important and fruitful problems of philosophy is the problem of representation and perhaps it has been predominating the philosophical inquiry since the first appearance of the discipline called philosophy. By Kant, this problem is formulated with an abyss or gap which is a product of the subjective encounter with the world-in-itself. The inevitable subjective touch causes an insurmountable gap, which is shaped by the spatio-temporal and categorical nature of the human subject. This gap between the noumena and phenomena transformed in Lacan's theory as the impossibility of representing the real caused by the prohibitive nature of language.

With Hegel, this gap becomes a historical and a dialectical gap: there is always a tension of oppositions in our access to the world, and these oppositions are sublated with a synthesis. The gap is not only subjective, but also socio-cultural and historical in its nature. Historical changes in any society end up with the changes in that society's understanding of their own world. At some point in the course of history, with the achievement of Absolute knowing, this gap will be surpassed.[8]

A different style and approach, in the very early days of 20th Century started proliferating with Heidegger's attacks on rationalism and subject-object dichotomy. For Heidegger, Da-sein lives in a world with others and its access to its own world is not separate from its worldliness

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8 For several Hegel scholars, what Hegel claims is, by his own system, the Absolute knowing is achieved.

(the fact of his own being in the world). Our every attempt of understanding at the same time imposes our own worldliness on the "object" of inquiry. The object's being is determined by our worldly pre-engagements with things. There is no such a transcendent position in which we can encounter with things without having a categorial pre-theoretical understanding on them which is called by Heidegger as "average understanding of Being." (Heidegger, 1962: 25) We start our encounter with things which are already meaningful for us. In other words, there is always already a pre-theoretical understanding of things which shapes our encounters with them. Instead of using the theoretical approaches to things, as defended by Husserl, he introduces a new form of phenomenology which is based on the daily experiences of Da-sein. As we have a pre-theoretical intuition of the Being of beings, theoretical reductions, will only keep us away from understanding the question of being: "why are there beings rather than nothing?"

Heidegger, is one of the first philosophers, who gave a certain priority on language in our worldly relationship with things. Our understanding is based on and bounded by our use of language:

> Language is the house of being. In its home man dwells. Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home. Their guardianship accomplishes the manifestation of Being insofar as they bring the manifestation to language and maintain it in language through their speech. (Heidegger, 1977: 217)

Heidegger is the most influential figure of philosophy in the 20th Century French thought. There are also other attempts which are as important as Heidegger's influence on a "linguistic turn" in philosophy: Wittgenstein's works, new theories of physics, Gödel's incompleteness theorems, Saussure's studies on linguistics and so on. Although most of the French philosophers of structuralist and poststructuralist schools are separated from each other with certain methodological and conceptual differences, they share one crucial idea: there is always a gap between the world and its representation. For some, this gap is caused by the

incapability of human psyche. This approach defends that psychoanalysis has founded a new realm of study which gives us enough evidence for the fact that consciousness is not the only mechanism which controls the human life. There are unconscious tensions and forces which for the most of the cases shape our understanding of and access to the world and others. Others believe that this incapability is based on our language and understanding the logic behind language will enable us to resolve our philosophical problems and especially the ones related to the theory of knowledge.[9]

During the fifties and sixties, especially in France, several philosophers started a new school of thought called structuralism which is based on Saussure's works on linguistics. What they defend mainly is the idea that human subject is a product of structures. For some, these structures are linguistic ones, for others, there are ideological or power related structures. But what they share is a complete rejection of an autonomous human subjectivity. This fits exactly in Heidegger's critiques of the traditional subject-object dichotomy. The crucial point here is not only the disappearance of this dichotomy. For the structuralist thinkers, the gap between the world in itself and our access to it is based also on these structures.

During these innovative and fruitful years, Lacan, as a clinician, started his famous seminars in 1953 and he continued them until his death in 1981. Although he was influenced by the work of Saussure, he has a major difference with the other structuralist and post-structuralist thinkers: for him, there are structures (which are socio-linguistic structures) and beyond them, there is also a pre-linguistic world of the Thing and the flux of pre-linguistic energies, which are castrated by these socio-linguistic structures. These excluded realms continue affecting the human life with

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[9] This is obviously the position taken by Wittgenstein of *Tractatus*. Although early Wittgenstein is mostly neglected by the French thought of sixties, I think the structuralist inquiry exactly fits in his project in *Tractatus*.

remainders, and there are also imaginary unities which are necessary for the linguistic access. He intertwined all of these with a linguistic philosophy.

As I have mentioned earlier, at the very heart of Lacan's theory stands the lack which is the ontological principle and it structures all the human praxis. This core is based on the impossibility of representation. Lacan's account of the problem of representation mainly differs from Kant's and Hegel's philosophies for at least three reasons: First of all, Lacan's version is a linguistic theory, thus the gap is not created by the categories of the subject. It is based on the intrinsic incapability of language. Secondly, at the other side of the gap, there exists the real. It is strictly related to the development of the human infant and the socio-linguistic prohibitions. And last but not the least, this gap produces desire, a desire to achieve a fullness which has an effect on all human praxis.

1.5. On the style:

Lacan's *Écrits* starts with a critique of the claim "[t]he style is man himself." (EF: 3) This claim locates man as a central reference point. Although in his life he lived like a real master or a leader of a religious sect, he, by his style always tried to evade from being a center of the signification process. He in his writings left certain questions unanswered and in order to achieve a certain form of psychoanalytic neutrality —which is obviously an idealized relationship— deliberately left several holes in his thought which are open for the intervention of his readers. This is an affirmation of an openness and hospitality to the different interpretations of his own work. On the other hand, he also advises understanding slowly, in order to be in harmony with phronesis. (SEM XX: 79)

Reading Lacan's seminars is like experiencing a psychoanalytic session. He tried to keep his students (analysands) not to be identified with his (the analyst) ego. This is the ethical position that Lacan advises to the analysts: the analyst should play the dummy during the sessions in

order to let the analysand find his or her own way in the symbolic register. (EF: 492) In other words, the analyst should try to avoid locating himself or herself in the session with his own personality (the ego). Instead of this, through this play, the analyst situates himself or herself as the Other, the symbolic order in which we encounter reality. Such an act helps the analysand to experience the mirror stage, the stage at the human infant's development by which the socio-linguistic order is shaped, the ego and the subject are structured. The analyst as a mirror helps the analysand to recover a certain critical stance against his or her own ego.

For Lacan, unlike Freud, the experiences of the analyst during the analytic sessions are inexpressible. Playing the dummy is in a way trying to keep the analyst's imaginary identity, the ego, away from the analysand. This makes it impossible to be shared with others for two reasons: first of all, for Lacan, a complete communication is impossible and secondly, every psychoanalytic session is a singular case. In order to keep the singularity, the ego of the analysand should be excluded and singularities cannot be represented within the universality of language:

> [...] I cannot make use of my own analyses to demonstrate the level interpretation reaches—when the interpretation, proving to be coextensive with the subject's history, cannot be communicated in the communicating milieu in which many of my analyses without the risk of betraying the subject's identity. For I have succeeded at times in saying enough about a case without saying too much, that is, in conveying my example without anyone, except the person in question, recognizing it. (EF: 500)

As being an intimate relationship, the case histories of psychoanalytic sessions are dangerous to be taken literally. Each analysand should be taken in itself as a unique case. This is another reason that Lacan has the horrible style which is always open for interpretations and every interpretation is in a way a singular relationship with our own symbolic Other. We are supposed to re-experience the mirror stage while reading Lacan: finding our own ways within the symbolic order.

This makes it impossible to achieve a unique interpretation of Lacan's texts. This work is not an exception. What I will try to do, starting with the next chapter is to present Lacan's complex theory. I do not claim that my own interpretation of Lacan is a highly original one. In the following two chapters, I will undertake an interpretation in which I will try to keep a neutral distance against him. Before criticizing him, keeping such an idealized neutrality —which is also an impossible attempt— is crucial. Then in chapters 4 and 5, I will discuss the problems of Lacan's theory. What I will defend is that Lacan's theory is mostly consistent with the practical side of psychoanalysis, but the problems start flourishing when this application area is extended.

In chapter 6, I start presenting one of these *extensions*: Laclau and Mouffe's theory of radical democracy. As will be seen in chapter 10, radical democracy fits better to Lacan's theory which is mostly based on ideally presupposed relationships. In chapter 7, I present the most famous Lacanian, Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek's political theory including his critique of radical democracy. In chapter 8, I will give a retrospective approach to my previous discussions with an introduction to the *ethics of the real.* This is the most crucial concept for understanding what Žižek founds his theory on and how Badiou moves forward. Chapter 9 is on another Lacanian, Alain Badiou, who introduces a strange and controversial ontology. He tries to realize the Lacanian dream of formalization of a theory which points its own impasses. In chapter 10, I will put together my concluding remarks including my critiques against Lacanian political theories.

What will be missing in this work is proposing an alternative to these theories. For me, a general theory of the psyche which protects the singularity and the richness of the human subject is an impossible task. The problem that I see in Lacan's theory is, although he points this impossibility, he insists on finding a way to get a better understanding of it. Similarly, a general theory of the human praxis in its richness is another

type of impossibility. But besides these *impossibilities*, I will try to propose what should be done in order not to fall into the traps of that Lacan's disciples have fallen.

CHAPTER 2

LACAN'S THEORY OF THE SUBJECT

Lacan started his legendary seminars in 1953 with a detailed examination of Freud's works on the psychoanalytic technique. Starting early on these seminars and in several of his articles from *Écrits*, he introduced a radically novel conception of the subject and the ego with a severe criticism of ego psychologists. Lacan always had a tendency to rework on his earlier ideas and in his later writings, sometimes some of these earlier ideas are renewed in such a way that it is not easy to find the traces of the old ideas in them. Although this work is not on the historical development of Lacan's ideas, I believe that —and I am not alone with this idea as several Lacan scholars believe in the same way as I do— it is still important to understand his earlier writings. *Écrits* is Lacan's only book which contains his articles. His other books are based on his seminars which continued for 27 years.[10] Although *Écrits* contains relatively older articles, Lacan insistently referred to it in his seminars. That is why, I will start my discussion of Lacan's theory from his articles in *Écrits.*[11]

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[10] I believe that the above mentioned everlasting changes and renewals in Lacan's theory are strictly related to the way that he presented his theories. The "spoken tradition" which he uses in his seminars, is in a way a repetition of the transferential relationship of psychoanalytic sessions between the analyst and the analysand. During his seminars, although he sometimes rebuked some of the commentators, most of the times he was open for discussions. As several of Lacan's audiences consist of some of the most prominent figures of French thought like Derrida, Foucault, Kristeva, these discussions between him and his audiences enabled him to find out the shortcomings and deadlocks in his theory. He continuously revised and corrected certain parts of his theory until the end of his life.

[11] For the first English translation, Lacan advised nine of his articles from the French edition of *Écrits*. As an addition to these, several of the articles from *Écrits* were published in journals and in selections. In 2006, the first complete English translation of *Écrits* was published.

In this chapter, I will mainly focus on Lacan's writings on the formation of the ego and the subject and the relationship of these with language. In order to accomplish this, I will first present Lacan's famous conception of "the mirror stage" which is the initial step of him for constructing a consistent theory of the subject.

Lacan defends a theory of subject which is influenced by Hegel and Kojève's theory of alienation, Freud's idea of narcissism and Spaltung (split), Saussure and Jakobson's theories of language. In this theory, there are mainly two different forms of identifications: an imaginary identification which ends up with the ego and a symbolic identification which ends up with the subject. In order to shed light on this idea of a split between the ego and the subject, I will go through several of these influential ideas. First of all, I will present the idea of the mirror stage. While doing this, I will mostly be faithful to *Écrits* with some additional remarks from his seminars. Then in order to present the symbolic identification, I will summarize Saussure's linguistics, Jakobson's ideas on aphasia and Freud's use of speech in psychoanalytic theory. Then I will present a detailed interpretation of Lacan's famous essay "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" which is accepted as the most important article on Lacan's theory of language.

2.1. The Mirror Stage:

Lacan's most famous —and probably the shortest—article "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the *I* Function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience" was delivered on July 17, 1949 in Zurich at the Sixteenth International Congress of Psychoanalysis. In fact this is a second version of "The Mirror Stage..." and the first one was presented at the Fourteenth International Congress of Psychoanalysis in Marienbad on August 3, 1936. Ernest Jones, the famous biographer and one of the major figures of ego psychology movement, who was the president of the International

Psychoanalytic Association during that year, interrupted Lacan's talk because Lacan exceeded the allocated time. This first version of Lacan's presentation is lost.[12] The second version was published in *Écrits* which is based on the above mentioned second presentation in 1949 and it is the oldest article in it.

This famous article was based on a general biological observation: *humans born prematurely*. They do not know how to use their organs; they cannot talk and walk in the earlier stages of their lives. This assumption apparently evokes an important question on the human development: why and how human beings move from this prematurity towards a certain way of using their organs, minds and language with such a complexity? If we closely examine this question, it will be revealed that it is a question on the essence of human beings and of civilizations. Although Lacan never uses such "essentialist" concepts like "origin" and "essence", while reflecting on the above mentioned question—as several 20th Century French philosophers— he gives an answer which covers the very origin of all human creations and what is so essential that makes human beings different from animals.[13]

Lacan refers to a certain phase of human infants' psychic development which occurs between the ages of six months and eighteen months, which is named by him as "the mirror stage". This phase is elucidated by Lacan with the use of a visual metaphor.[14] Basically, an infant —who at the earlier stages is not able to identify herself as an isolated being—, at a certain age, after being faced with a mirror, starts using her organs and moves beyond this non-isolatedness towards a

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[12] For a detailed discussion of this event see Roudinesco, 2003: 25 and Gallop, 1985: 74-7.

[13] I will discuss the essentialism of Lacan later in this work.

[14] One of the reasons that he used such a visual metaphor is his preference to name the product of such a phase in human development as an "imaginary identification" which obviously has a relationship with an "image" that can basically be exemplified by the use of a mirror.

socially identified human being by the help of her own image. *The infant identifies herself with the image in the mirror.* This identification is the *imaginary* identification of the infant with something *external* to her. This initial identification with an externality makes the mirror stage a "psychic or ontological operation." (Roudinesco, 2003: 29) In other words, this operation gives an initial meaning to the being of the infant: *to be is to identify oneself with an external fellow-being.*

2.2. Freud's Legacy:

Freud's seminal essay, "On Narcissism: An Introduction" (SEXIV: 69-102) has a major influence on Lacan's conception of the identification with a mirror image. First of all, for Freud, narcissism is a necessary stage in human development. Although narcissism has a pathological or perversive sense, it is at the same time the "libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature." (SEXIV: 73-4) In other words, narcissism is a libidinal component as it is in a way, treating the own body like any other sexual object is treated, thus it is a kind of sexually oriented self-love. As an addition to this, it is also necessary for self-preservation. Freud was aware of the fact that, beyond this necessary functions of narcissism, there is always a danger of falling back to the own ego and keeping oneself away from the external world. This is what happens in several cases of schizophrenia, in which, the *patient* is trapped in her own ego. In order not to fall in such a pathological illness, this initial narcissism is generally balanced with a certain form of sociality.

Freud separates these two forms of libidinal movements by "ego-libido" an "object-libido". (SEXIV: 76) The former is related to the narcissistic and at the same time self-preserving function of the ego and the latter is on the socialization of the human beings. With the help of this conception of the narcissism, Freud introduces a new notion of the ego

which is not something given as in the traditional sense of the term but continuously develops with the help of the socialization and libidinal energy.

What Lacan advises is a "return to Freud". This return is for sure not a mere repetition of Freud's legacy but sometimes a subversive interpretation of Freud's works with some mixture of several other philosophers' and linguists' views. In his theory of the subject, he combined the view of Freud with structuralism with an additional pinch of Kojève's Hegel.

2.3.   The Lack and the Other:

Mirror stage is not only on the development of the ego but it is at the same time on the necessity of the human socialization. As I mentioned, the idea is based on the initial lack of unity of the human infant. At this phase, the infant is faced with her own image in the mirror and identifies herself with this image. This is called as the imaginary identification by Lacan.

This pattern does not work properly. There is always a discord between the infant and her image. When she moves her left hand, the image in the mirror moves her right hand and although she does not attain completeness and mastery on her body, the image seems to be properly working. The identification with the image is never a complete one. There is always something missing or moving away. There is always a *lack*. This lack is related to the initial lack, which is the lack of unity before the mirror stage. This lack also evokes a certain form of anticipation to gain the unity. The lack and anticipation goes hand in hand and this fact, the dialectic between the two does not only mark a childhood drama, but covers the whole human life. This dynamic but at the same the dramatic movement of *identification* is different from identity which is a static fact, not an

everlasting process. The dynamism of identification enables the human creativity and the psychic movement necessary for every human being to strive for living.

Identification with something beyond oneself must be elaborated in great detail. This "beyond" is called "the Other" or sometimes "the discourse of the Other" in later writings of Lacan. In order to put the metaphorical theme back into *literal* terms, this "the Other" should be considered as the socio-cultural side of the human identification based on language. [15]

The human identity cannot be thought without its worldliness. This theme has certain similarities with Heidegger's conception of Dasein in it's being-in-the-world.

> [I]n Heidegger's writings one comes upon the idea that man—being connected to the environment and to the future—is always projecting himself outside himself. What Heidegger called Dasein is not an interiority. He defines the existence of man not as interiority, an inner something like ideas or feelings, but rather as a constant projecting outside. (Miller, 1996:10)

Lacan, like several Heideggerians followed the critique of the Cartesian conception of the subject which is an isolation from the world and keeps a stance by which it objectively experiences the world.[16] The Cartesian cogito, for Lacan is based on the imaginary unity evoked by the mirror stage. As will be clarified during the discussion of the symbolic identification, Lacan insists on a split between this imaginary identification

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[15] The concept "the Other" is used by Lacan for denoting both the symbolic register (see below for the details of this register) and another subject. At the very early phases of the human development, the mother has the role of the Other both as a subject by being the closest subjective otherness in the infant's life and as the symbolic register by giving support to the infants entrance into language.

[16] Jacques-Alain Miller adds also that although Heidegger has an influence on Lacan, this should not be exaggerated. (Miller, 1996: 13)

and the social formation of the subject.

2.4. Some Additional Influences:

Lacan always had a deep interest in natural sciences and mathematics. His knowledge of sciences of his days, as declared by the audiences of his seminars, was immense and he never hesitated to combine the natural scientific discoveries with psychoanalysis.

First of all, as an addition to Freud, Saussure, Kojève, Hegel, Jakobson and Heidegger, in his work on mirror stage, he was mostly influenced by the sociologist Roger Caillois' work on social mimicry. Due to Caillois, several insects and animals use mimicry not in order to protect themselves from the enemies, but to identify themselves with the environment surrounding them. This is similar with the human infant's alienating identification with the image. (Sarup, 1992: 23-25) This theme of social mimicry can also be related to Heidegger's notion of "the they" (Das Man) or Nietzsche's "herd animal".

Apart from Caillois, there are several scientists and thinkers who have a major influence on Lacan while he was working on his theory of the mirror stage. One of the most important of these is French psychologist, Henri Wallon (1879-1962). He was the first who recognized the importance of being distinguished from the others in the infant's development. For him, distinguishing inside and outside is necessary to attain self-awareness. (Nobus, 1998: 105-6)[17]

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[17] Due to French psychoanalyst and historian Elisabeth Roudinesco, "Lacan tried to obliterate Wallon's name". (Roudinesco, 2004: 27) Probably this may be explained by Lacan's repudiation of the academic form of writing. Lacan in his seminars, several times insisted on that there is no such a thing like plagiarism. For him, knowledge is always a social construction, thus nobody has the privilege to own any knowledge. On the other hand, Lacan himself accused Ricoeur of "stealing" his ideas. Ricoeur asserts that his ideas in his book on Freud had been introduced before attending Lacan's seminars, and also he adds that he did not understand anything from Lacan's seminars. (see Ricoeur, 1998: 68)

Lacan borrowed the idea of "prematurity" from the German zoologist Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919) and the Dutch anatomist Lodewijk Bolk (1866-1930). Lacan used this idea of prematurity in order to explicate the reason why human infant's are captivated in their mirror image, although the other animals are not.

Lacan also was influenced by French physicist, Henri Bouasse's (1866-1953) works on apes. Bouasse claims that apes do not recognize themselves in front of a mirror but they consider the mirror image as the image of an animal of the same species. They try to catch their own images, look behind the mirror, but never recognize themselves. (Nobus, 1998: 109)

2.5. Lacan against Cartesian Tradition:

Lacan starts his "The Mirror stage..." with a critical comment on the Cartesian cogito which I believe may give us a clue on his further discussions of the traditional understanding of the subject in Western thought:

> The conception of the mirror stage I introduced at our last congress thirteen years ago, having since been more or less adopted by the French group, seems worth bringing to your attention once again—especially today, given the light it sheds on the *I* function in the experience psychoanalysis provides us of it. It should be noted that this experience sets us at odds with any philosophy directly stemming from the *cogito*. (EC: 75)

Then we can conclude that one of the purposes of the elaboration of such an "identification with the Other" is in a certain sense an attack against the *cogito*. For Lacan, the ego works as an "imaginary binding". (Dolar, 1998: 11) This idea of the imaginary binding is concomitant with a deception, the *méconnaissance* –another central concept of Lacan's theory- which shapes the constitution of both the ego and the subject.

The idea of the constitution with the méconnaissance instead of a self-certainty or self-transparency is one of the most important and revolutionary ideas of Lacan's theory of the subject. The infant, in the mirror image founds herself as an imaginary identity and at the same time, this foundation is strictly based on the mis-recognition of her in the mirror. In other words, instead of the traditional theme of obtaining self-consciousness through knowledge, Lacan asserts that consciousness depends on an initial and everlasting mistake or the lack of knowledge. The child identifies herself with this mis-recognized image and this mis-recognition helps her to get a mastery to her own body. I will get back to this idea of méconnaissance later on while discussing the political theory based on Lacan's theory of the subject.

2.6. Language and Psyche:

Julia Kristeva once stated that through the revolutionary findings on language, man became "a speaking system". (Kristeva, 1989: 4) This comment summarizes a new approach to the human mind and the interaction between human beings and language. This new approach does not consider human beings as the founders and innovators of language but the reverse. It is thought by several influential philosophers that language is the measure of our thought. Their assertion is not exactly the same with early Wittgenstein's motto. On the contrary, there is not any correspondence between the world and language but our only way to access reality is through language. Language is not something manmade but the reverse: every human product is shaped by the structure of language. Analyzing any social reality requires an initial understanding of language. The laws of language bring us novel approaches to the social products as every social activity is regarded as a signifying act. Language is regarded as the most accessible of these signifying acts. This conception of language entails that any study of humanities requires a theory of language.

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Such a linguistic turn was started by several different schools of thought. In the analytic tradition, works of Wittgenstein was the most influential among others. On the other hand, there are at least two major figures in the continental tradition: Saussure and Heidegger.

Similarly in France, this linguistic turn had a great impact on almost all of the humanities including philosophy and anthropology. It opened a new path of thinking and research which was called "structuralism". Although to my knowledge Heidegger never referred to Saussure, his critique of Cartesian subject allows his philosophy to be open for a nice combination with Saussure's linguistics. Foucault and Derrida, among others were influenced by both Saussure and Heidegger. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss' anthropology, Lacan's psychoanalysis, Barthes' literary theory were mostly based on Saussure's linguistics.

In Lacan's theory of the subject, as I have previously mentioned, there are two combined forms of identifications. The first one is —as we have seen in the previous section— *the imaginary identification* or the identification with the imaginary. As it is not a complete identification, another one is required, which is a symbolic identification or the identification in the symbolic register.[18] That is why, in the following sections, I will get through the idea of a sign and its parts and I will also try to explicate Saussure's ground-breaking conception of linguistics.

2.7. Saussure and the Science of the Signs:

Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure are accepted as the two founders of the science of signs.[19] The basic definition of

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[18] The three registers, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real will be discussed in detail later in this work although it is hard to summarize Lacan's philosophy of language without giving a definition of the symbolic register.

[19] In general the term "semiology" is used by the Saussurean tradition and the term "semiotics" is used mostly by the Peircean tradition.

semiology is the "*science* that *studies the life of signs within society*". (Saussure, 1966: 16) It takes its name from the Greek word "sēmeîon", meaning sign. Saussure puts linguistics under the general discipline of semiology as the linguistic signs are signs used in languages and used for communication.

Sturrock mentions that the definition of the sign is the most central definition of any theory of signs but at the same time, it is one of the most difficult ones to give. (Sturrock, 1979: 6) There are several of these definitions existing and some of them contradict the others. For example, a sign, due to Peirce, "is something which stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity." (Peirce, 1931-1958: 2.228) This definition is unacceptable for structuralists. Due to Saussure, a sign does not denote something in reality but, quite the contrary, a linguistic sign "unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image." (Saussure, 1966: 66)[20] The idea that a sign does not denote anything in reality sounds quite unacceptable as it is totally against any realist conception of language. How could it be possible to communicate with the help of such a language which does not have any referents to the real world? The question will be answered later on but first I will go into details of Saussure's linguistics.

2.7.1. The Signifier and the Signified

Saussure divides the sign into two parts: the signifier and the signified. The signifier is basically defined as the material body or the form of the sign (the sound image in the above definition); for example the material symbol written on a paper or the written part of the word "cat" or the sound image /cat/. On the other hand, the signified is the concept or the notion behind this signifier, which is the mental and semantic

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[20] It is quite usual to extend Saussure's definition of the linguistic sign by replacing the "sound image" with several other material components of a concept, like an odor, a light, a flag, an image, some letters on a piece of paper etc.

component of the sign. In other words, it is the notion evoked in our mind when we hear (or see, smell, feel etc.) the signifier. (Saussure, 1966: 67)

For Saussure, a sign must always contain both of its components. We cannot have a signifier which is not representing any concept and we cannot have a signified which does not have a form.[21] Due to him, the signifier and the signified are like the two faces of a coin.

> Psychologically our thought —apart from its expression in words— is only a shapeless and indistinct mass. Philosophers and linguists have always agreed in recognizing that without the help of signs we would be unable to make a clear-cut, consistent distinction between two ideas. Without language, thought is a vague, uncharted nebula. There are no pre-existing ideas, and nothing is distinct before the appearance of language. (Saussure, 1966: 112)

Saussure uses the following graph in order to explain this dual nature of the sign:
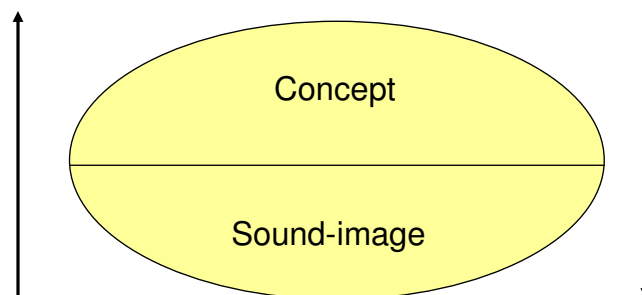
Figure 1 A linguistic sign (Saussure, 1966: 66)

The two arrows on the two sides of the graph symbolize the way of signification. In other words, a linguistic sign may work from a signifier towards a signified or vice versa. When we hear a word, this may evoke the concept of such a word in our minds and also thinking about a concept

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[21] As will be clarified, Lacan and several others criticized this definition of the sign. They destroyed the link between the signifier and the signified.

will evoke the signifier of the concept.

2.7.2. Arbitrariness:

Saussure adds another surprising property to the sign which is the arbitrariness. Due to him, "[t]he bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary." (Saussure, 1966: 67) In order to understand this property, we have to think several different sound images in several different languages for exactly the same concept. For every different language, the same signified has a different and arbitrarily chosen signifier. There is not any intrinsic relationship between the sound image of the word "sister" in English and "soeur" in French and the concept of a sister.

Saussure claims that "the arbitrary nature of the sign is really what protects language from any attempt to modify it." (Saussure, 1966: 73) As there is no intrinsic reason of choosing one word instead of the other, it is not possible to artificially manage a language. This "untouchable" or "uncontrollable" nature of language enforces linguists to approach it as if it is a domain of research which is beyond and above any historical, cultural and ethical domains. Although there are certain historical necessities which enforce language to have certain changes, as these changes are fully arbitrary in nature, they cannot be related to any intentional motives.

2.7.3. Meaning and Value:

Once the relationship with the reality is excluded, what was needed by Saussure was putting together a consistent theory of meaning in order to explain how communication occurs and how do we use words. His theory of meaning is relational, instead of being referential. In other words, signs do not have any meaning by themselves, but their meaning arises within a contextual relationship with other signs. As the signified

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within a sign is the semantic element, there is always a signification within the limits of a sign, but this occurs by the process of differentiation. Saussure introduces another concept, "the linguistic value" in order to explain the effect of the system of language on meaning:

> [T]he idea of value [...] shows that to consider a term as simply the union of a certain sound with a concept is grossly misleading. To define it in this way would isolate the term from its system; it would mean assuming that one can start from the terms and construct the system by adding them together when, on the contrary, it is from the independent whole that one must start and through analysis obtain its elements. (Saussure, 1966: 113)

Every linguistic term has its value in relation to other terms. A word isolated from language does not contain any positive and pre-given value. In order to explicate this, Saussure gives and example of the pieces on a chessboard. These pieces, when taken out of the game and the board, do not have any value and meaning. Their values do not depend on the material each individual one is made off, and they do not depend on the color of the pieces. Their values consist of the roles they have on the board and their relation with other pieces. One of the pieces can be lost and can be replaced with another one. The value of the new one will exactly be the same with the lost one.

Through this relational understanding of the system of language, a sign takes it meaning not from its individuality but from the system. If there is any autonomy, it is not the autonomy of some of the signs by which the representation of reality is done correctly. On the contrary, the system itself is autonomous. In other words, as Jameson says "the entire field of the *langue*, lies parallel to reality itself [...]" (Jameson, 1974: 33) There is not any correspondence between elements of language and reality, but they, by being two different systems correspond each other as two totalities.

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During the process of communication, several signs flow and their meanings are captured by an operation of differentiation. Saussure emphasizes this logic of differentiation: "In language, as in any semiological system, whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it." (Saussure, 1966: 121)
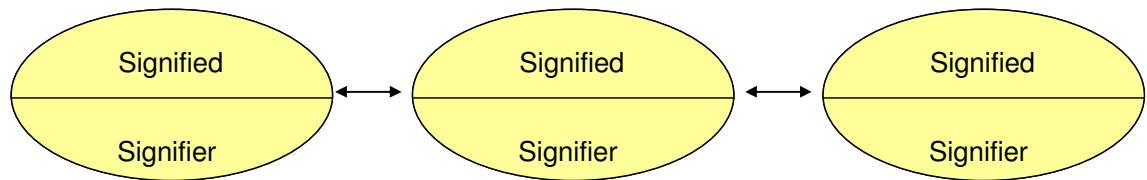
Figure 2 Differential relationship between signs (Saussure, 1966: 115)

For Saussure, the concept (thought) and the sound-image are two distinct but at the same time interconnected planes. During a talk, these two planes move together in exact synchrony. Saussure refers to Figure 3 and notes:

> The linguistic fact can therefore be pictures in its totality—i.e. language—as a series of contiguous subdivisions marked off on both the indefinite plane of jumbled ideas (A) and the equally vague plane of sounds (B). (Saussure, 1966: 112)

Actually these two planes of Figure 3 denote the floating signifiers and signifieds in exact correspondence. Thus, understanding is differentiating the limits of one sign from the other. (The little dotted lines in figure 3 denote the limits of the consecutive signs.)
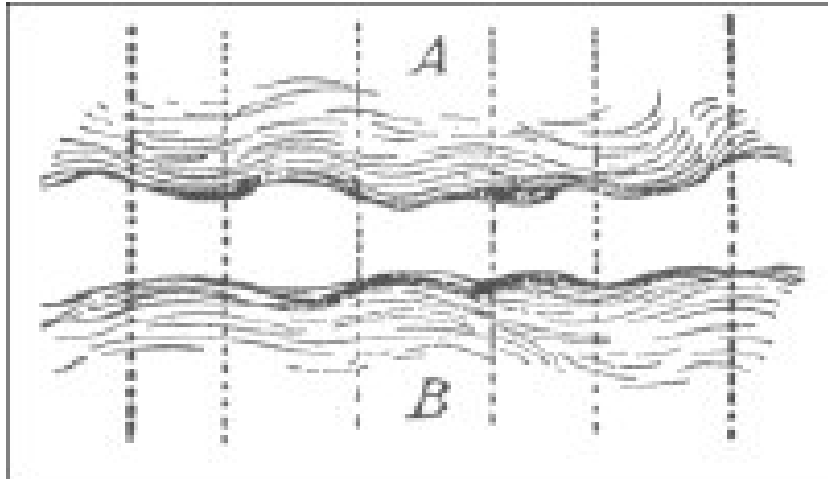
Figure 3 Language and thought (Saussure, 1966: 112)

2.7.4.Synchrony and Diachrony:

Saussure insists on a synchronic investigation of language, as if no changes occur within language. For him, the change in any linguistic component in time (diachronic change) is based on a synchronic change, no matter whether it ends up with a totally new element or not. Culler summarizes this view:

> Historical filiations are derived from synchronic identities. Not only that, they are facts of a different order. Synchronically speaking, diachronic identities are a distortion, for the earlier and later signs which they relate have no common properties. Each sign has no properties other than the specific relational properties which define it within its own synchronic system. From the point of view of signs, which after all is the point of view which matters when dealing with signs, the earlier and later sign are wholly disparate. (Culler, 1988: 40)

Assume that word A had had a singular meaning and B had been used for the plural of A. Within time, assume that changes occurred in language and C is replaced with A and D is replaced with B. The general working structure of language and the intrinsic formal relations of language, due to Saussure, did not change. There are still two elements,

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one of them denoting the singular and the other one is the plural.

> Diachronic facts are not even directed toward changing the system. Speakers did not wish to pass from one system of relations to another; modification does not affect the arrangement but rather its elements. (Saussure, 1966: 84)

The linguistic structure may be considered as a snapshot of the changing elements of language. Perhaps Saussure used this abstraction in order to make language something accessible for the linguists. Otherwise, language would be considered as a complex unity which continuously changes and evolves, and it would be impossible to investigate it formally.

One may claim that the best and the most objective way of approaching language is using a "panchronic synthesis" which tries to investigate language with its synchronic and diachronic aspects. For Saussure, this is impossible because of the arbitrary nature of linguistic signs. Panchronic view should consider the changes in the sound-images which does not help the linguists to grasp the features of language. (Saussure, 1966: 95-96) As there is the arbitrary relationship between the signified and the signifier, the changes in the sound-images should be neglected in order to analyze language as a structure. The focus should be made on the relationships of the elements, instead of the elements themselves. A formal research should only deal with the general mechanism of language, instead of dealing with the content of it.

Saussure adds that the diachronic and synchronic facts belong to different orders. Changes occur in *parole* (the linguistic performance, i.e. speech) and what a linguist should focus on is *langue* (the structure behind parole). The general structural system of langue does not change as a result of historical changes within the parole. In other words, any daily practical change, like an insertion of a new element or removal of another

one, does not affect the structure and working mechanism of language.

What Saussure founds is a new science of language which does not go into details of the contents of languages, but it deals with the structures of them. This new way of formal investigation inspired several thinkers and social scientists during the 60s. What they tried to do was not to analyze what exists in the system but the relationship between the elements of a system. The deep structure behind the appearance of elements became the main focus of their researches, instead of the contents of the elements. For Saussure, "never is the system modified directly." This gives the researchers an opportunity to find out what is static and everlasting; as for structuralism the system is unchangeable, only the elements of it change. (Saussure, 1966: 84)[22]

2.8. Freud on speech and language:

Lacan once asserted that one of the most important discoveries of psychoanalysis is finding out the fact that, what is inside the unconscious is language. He adds that the unconscious is not the seat of drives or instincts. How could it be possible for Lacan to combine the structuralist linguistics and Freudian psychoanalysis? In order to understand this, we need to go back to the earlier years of psychoanalysis and find out how Freud analyzed linguistic phenomena during the psychoanalytic practice.

Several patients of Freud used the phrase "talking cure" for psychoanalysis. Freud himself wrote several papers and books on the relationship between the symptoms and speech. One of the basic premises of psychoanalysis is that the healing occurs after the analysand utters some hidden and repressed feelings. And as an addition to this, Freud advises the analysts that they should always be aware of some talking habits or fallacies like slips of tongue (parapraxis), forgetting names

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[22] Later on, I will come back to this subject with my critical remarks.

or places and several other forms of misuses of language. Due to Freud, each one of these may contain some messages on the repressed feelings. In this section, I will summarize one of Freud's works on language. His approach to the case is illuminating, instructive and at the same time controversial.

One of Freud's earliest essays on the relationship between language and the repressed feelings is "The Psychical Mechanism of Forgetfulness" (1898). (SE III) We learn from the editor's note that Freud wrote this paper during a visit to several places in the Adriatic coast, including Bosnia and Herzegovina.

During this trip, Freud forgot the name of an artist and instead of this artist's name, he recalled several wrong ones. The paper is a detailed survey of the cause of this forgetfulness.[23] This essay starts with a general account of forgetting names and asserts that they are not, for most of the cases, as innocent as they seem to be. Freud focuses on such an event which seems ordinary and works on it like a phenomenologist in order to grasp the truth behind the appearance.

The event occurred during a talk with a friend. Their topic was the Turks living in Bosnia and their behaviors. Right after this, they turned to the subject of art. Freud recommended his friend to visit Orvieto and see the frescoes over there. The main themes of these frescoes were the end of the world and the Last Judgment. Although Freud remembered the paintings in great detail, he could not manage recalling the name of the artist.[24] No matter how strongly he tried, he could not succeed in

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[23] Freud went through the same case, once again, in his 1904 book *Psychopathology of Everyday Life.*

[24] At this part of the text, there exists a very interesting comment by the editor of Freud's collected works on the remembrance of the paintings with such a vividness: "Freud is here drawing attention to an observation that, when a memory is repressed, there often emerges into consciousness *with unusual vividness* an image of something

remembering, but instead the names of two different artists came to his mind: Botticelli and Botraffio. He knew lots of things about the former, but the latter was almost unknown to him. He was aware of the fact that none of these names were the name he had been seeking for. After being tormented for several days, an Italian told him the name of the artist, which was "Luca Signorelli". (SE III: 290-291)

Freud, after summarizing the instance, starts listing the clues from this story in order to identify the repressed feelings which caused the event:

1. Right before the event, he had been talking to his companion about certain behaviors of the Turks in Bosnia.

> [The Turks] treat doctors with special respect and they show, in marked contrast to our own people, an attitude of resignation towards the dispensations of fate. If the doctor has to inform the father of a family that one of his relatives is about to die, his reply is: 'Herr [Sir], what is there to be said? If he could be saved, I know you would help him.' (SE III: 292)

Freud also had told his companion about the Turks' attachment of too much importance to the sexuality and sexual enjoyment. He suppressed this second attitude of the Turks right after he had forgotten the name of the artist. Later on, he never mentioned about this until his self-analysis.

2. The subject matters of the frescoes (the Last Judgment and Doomsday) are related to Turks' attitudes: death and sexual enjoyment.

which, though unimportant and irrelevant, is closely related to the repressed memory." (SE III: 291, n1)

3. 'Signor' of 'Signorelli' in Italian means 'Herr' in German and Turks were using the same word (Herr) while they were talking to the doctor.

4. 'Herr' is almost present in the word 'Herzegovina'.

5. During those days, Freud was speaking Italian and he was occasionally translating words from German to Italian in his mind.

6. 'Botticelli' contains the same syllables with 'Signorelli'.

7. 'Bosnia', 'Botticelli', and 'Botraffio' begin with the same syllable 'Bo'.

8. Freud, few weeks before this event occured, had received the news of the suicide of one of his patients. The name of the place he received that bad news is 'Trafoi'. The name of the second "wrong" artist is 'Botraffio' which ends up with almost the same syllables as 'Trafoi'.

Bringing together all of the above mentioned clues, Freud maps out the cause and effect relationships between the repressed thoughts and the forgetfulness of the name Signorelli. He was trying to repress the idea of death and sexuality for a while and the name Signorelli helped him doing this. With the forgetting of the name, he also concealed his dangerous feelings.

Freud, on several occasions asserted that the best training for psychoanalysts is not medicine but humanities. Even during the early days of the institutionalization of psychoanalysis, he opened the doors of psychoanalytic practice to everybody no matter whether they have a medical training or not. Psychoanalysis, in general, is like a puzzle solving activity. There is always something beyond the appearances. Due to

Lacan, Freud's greatest discovery "was that man bears otherness within him." (Bowie, 1979: 136) This otherness reveals itself through its uncontrollable effects on speech and capturing this otherness requires more than medical training. Similarly Lacan advised his students and colleagues to do crossword puzzles in order to deepen their practical linguistic skills.

In *The Psychopathology of Everyday*, Freud collects several clinical examples not only on forgetting, but also on several "tricks" of speech, like skirting the issue, understatements, changing the subject, slips of tongue etc. Each one of these is taken by Freud as a demonstration of how repressed feelings can have certain effects on the speech. Lacan, with great respect to both Saussure and Freud, combined these two theories under a brand new conception of language. Due to Lacan, even if Freud had had a chance to read the works of Saussure, he would have done the same.

In the next section, I will present an introduction to Lacan's efforts on combining these two major theories.

2.9. Lacan on language:

Saussure's theory of linguistic signs gives Lacan a strong tool to organize his thoughts on the formation of the ego and the subject. First of all, Saussure's linguistics rejects a representational conception of language. Language is an autonomous system. This rejection of reality occurs in Lacan's conception of the mirror stage. The infant is captivated by his image and not by something from reality. An imaginary other constitutes the ego and during this construction there is a certain form of rejection of the reality through a méconnaissance (mis-recognition). The imaginary unity is formed against a lack of unity. In other words, the real situation of the infant does not have any unity, quite the contrary, it is

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based on a fragmentation, but through this rejection of reality, the imaginary identity is attained. This imaginary identity helps the infant to get an entry ticket into the world of language. Similarly, the real world is fragmented in its essence. Through language we insert certain unities, forms and relations between the fragmented parts of it. We have an access to the world by language.

> The imposition of single forms or terms on the disparate variety of what we experience is what enables us to know and control our environment, and is essential to intellectual development.(Miel, 1970: 99)

A certain form of méconnaissance is necessary for human beings to survive. Saussure's linguistics provides Lacan a tool for theorizing such a méconnaissance. There is a strange result of putting the méconnaissance at the core of identity: a mistake is required in order an infant to be inserted in language. This imaginary identity is the prerequisite for the entry into the symbolic register.[25]

2.9.1.The In(si)stance of the Letter:

The most famous essay of Lacan on the relationship between the unconscious and language is "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious, or Reason Since Freud" from *Écrits*, which was delivered on 9 May, 1957. Although Lacan never gave up elaborating his ideas on language, this was the first and the most detailed analysis of language by him. Here in his essay, he introduced at least two revolutionary ideas:

First of all, Lacan declares that the unconscious is not the seat of drives or instincts. On the contrary, unconscious is the seat of language. In other words, as he mentions at several instances, unconscious is

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[25] Later on, Slavoj Žižek uses this idea of méconnaissance in order to develop his theory of ideology. I will come back to this later on.

structured like language. (EC: 413)

One may say that his strange arguments on language and his whole theory is an analysis of the linguistic structure of unconscious. Freud and also Lacan were aware of the fact that the logic of unconscious does not work exactly the same way as consciousness works. Two important linguistic processes are always at work in the unconscious: the condensation and the displacement. Freud analyzed these especially in his *The Interpretation of Dreams*. (see Freud, 1995: 288-304 for condensation and 304-307 for displacement)

Lacan, as I will explain in a moment, combines two linguistic terms, metaphor and metonymy with the condensation and displacement. What he asserts is, the processes in the unconscious can be simplified with the use of Saussure's linguistic theory. The unconscious works like language and this similarity is the essential idea in Lacan's theory.

The second point that was introduced by Lacan is an attempt of radicalizing Saussure's linguistic theory. The Saussurean bar between the signifier and the signified, for Lacan does not denote the double-sided relationship of signification. Due to him, the bar denotes an (un)relation. (EC: 415) The meaning is just an effect of sliding signifieds under the chain of signifiers. In other words, there is not a meaning attached to the sign or to a chain of signs, but the meaning is an effect of the signifiers. Lacan, quite the contrary to Saussure, prioritizes signifier over the signified.

For Lacan, the intrinsic link between the signifier and the signified is not enough to formulate how language works. The first move Lacan makes in the structuralist linguistics is strengthening the bar between the signifier and the signified, and reversing their priorities. As for Saussure, the signified has a certain priority over the signifier, although they cannot

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be detached from each other. On the contrary, for Lacan, the signifier has the major role on the meaning production. Lacan also adds that, there is not an unbreakable link between the signifier and the signified but the link is just an effect. They work like two independent realms. The signified is a meaning effect of the play of the signifiers. Lacan uses the formula[26] in Figure 4 for denoting this change in the priority. The capital "S" denotes the signifier and it is put above the bar in order to denote its supremacy over the signified:

$$\frac{S}{s}$$

Figure 4 Lacan's formula of signification. (EF: 141)

This formula seems exactly the same as Saussure's formulation although their difference arises from the reversed order of the signifier and the signified. This small difference denotes the above mentioned change in the priority but there is one more thing which is the bar itself. For Saussure, the bar is used just to identify the analytic subdivision of the sign and the difference between the signifier and the signifier. In Lacan's formula, bar denotes a real resistance to the signification. This is the repudiation of the idea that there is a correspondence and reciprocity between the signifier and the signified.

Lacan, as I have mentioned previously, with a subversive twist, moves the signifier above the bar and increased the priority of it over the signified:

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[26] Lacan calls it an "algorithm". (EF: 141)

Figure 5 The signifier is over the bar

In Saussure's example, the signified (shown as the picture of the tree) is above the bar. For Lacan, the sound-image "t-r-e-e" has a certain priority over the signified. In other words, the difference and the process of signification start from the level of the signifier. There is not any representational relationship between the signifier and the signified as it is in the case of Saussure's linguistics.

In order make himself clear, Lacan gives an example. Assume that there are two doors which are identical. (see Figure 6)

Figure 6 Two identical doors

On one of the doors, we have the signifier "LADIES" and on the other one we have "GENTLEMAN". Anybody —even who does not know English— facing with these two doors, will have a certain concept of difference. This difference does not necessarily ends up with an understanding of the "exact" meaning of the signifiers on the doors. The difference in meaning is caused by the difference in the signifiers. Thus, signification occurs at the level of the signifier. [27] A signifier, usually

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[27] For the case of twin doors, identifying the signifiers and the fact that signification occurs at the level of the signifier is quite understandable. On the other hand, I have to admit that, it is not so easy to identify the separate signifiers at the level of speech.

signifies another signifier. They work like a dictionary. Assume that you are looking for words in a dictionary of an unknown language. When you start with a word, you find out a chain of words and when you look for the meanings of each word in this chain you will have more chains. There are infinitely many chains within a language. Thus at some points, in order to attain some meaning, this chain of signification should stop.

2.9.2. Button ties:

The bar between the signifier and the signified should not be considered as just a simple border between them. It is not just a line between the two in order to distinguish them which is in Saussure's case. On the contrary, the bar shows the (non)relation or the resistance between the two. For Lacan, "[t]he signifier stuffs the signified" (SEMXX:37) This strange term, "stuffing" means that, during signification process between the signifiers, the signified is stuffed with several different signifiers. In other words, signifiers signify each other and during this chain of signification, sometimes, some meaning effects stuff the signified. Lacan gives the example from James Joyce's writing. When Joyce uses a word, like "bootiful", this entails several significations like "beautiful", "booty", "boot"... Each one of these words adds some meaning —by a kind of stuffing— to the signified. Thus there is not a one-to-one relationship between the signifier and the signified. The signified, through this chain of signifiers, slides from one meaning to another. Every additional signifier brings a certain change in the meaning effect. Assume two persons, lets say A and B are talking. When A starts his words by "I hate...", a meaning effect appears. Beyond the already used words, "I hate...", the voice, tone and the relationship between A and B affects this meaning effect. The effect occurs retrospectively but at the same time, it involves a certain form of anticipation There are several possibilities that A may continue his

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Because speech is a continuous phenomenon in which it is hard to find the limits of the signifiers.

speech, like "... you!" or "...telling you that you are better then me." These two endings are among the infinitely many possibilities and each one of them evokes certain changes in the signified or, if we use Lacan's terminology, with each different ending, the signified is stuffed with different meanings.

As I have mentioned, the infinite possibility of signification at the level of the signifier should sometimes stop. In the above example, the sliding begins right after the first words of A is uttered and has a temporary stop when the words "I hate" are enounced. It is impossible to communicate in a case of never stopping movement of a sliding signified under the chain of signifiers. These crucial points, called by Lacan as "le point de capiton" (Alan Sheridan translates this as "anchoring points" and Bruce Fink prefers "button ties") are used during the conversation in order to stuff the signified.

2.9.3.Metaphor and Metonymy:

Lacan continues investigating the process of signification by borrowing some ideas from Roman Jakobson. Jakobson in his short but illuminating work on aphasia asserts that there are two types of linguistic arrangement of signs. The first one is "combination" which basically is forming or being a part of a context. "This means that any linguistic unit at one and the same time serves as a context for simpler units and/or finds its own context in a more complex linguistic unit." (Jakobson, 1980: 74) The second one is "selection" which is selecting one sign instead of another.

Jakobson relates these two forms of arrangements with metonymy and metaphor, as combination works through contiguity and selection works through similarity:

The development of discourse may take place along two different semantic lines: one topic may lead to another either through their similarity or through their contiguity. The METAPHORIC way would be the most appropriate term for the first case and the METONYMIC way for the second, since they find their most condensed expression in metaphor and metonymy respectively. (Jakobson, 1980: 90)

Jakobson asserts that metaphor and metonymy are at work during normal verbal processes. Lacan borrows this separation of the semantic process into two mechanisms and developed it. For Lacan, metaphor is not just a replacement of one signifier with another one, but "is situated at the precise point at which meaning produced in nonmeaning [...]". (EC: 423) Metaphor is a replacement of one signifier with another one in case of no preliminary structural relationship between the two exists. This non-relatedness is the point where the "nonmeaning" is located at. For example, when one says "You are a lion.", the word "lion" does not have any structural relationship with being brave. In other words, the word "brave" is not equivalent to "lion". Their substitution does not work for every sentence. For example for the sentence "The lion drinks water.", we cannot replace the signifier "lion" with "brave". In this case, the signifier "lion" suppresses the signifier "brave". If we use the Lacanian symbolization, it can be denoted as follows:

$$\frac{\text{Lion}}{\text{Brave}}$$

Lacan states that symptoms work metaphorically. The repressed feelings are repressed under the bar and instead of the real content of the feeling, another signifier signifies this feeling. Lacan asserts that Freud's term "condensation" (Verdichtung) works like a metaphor.

On the other hand, "the metonymy is a displacement from signifier to signifier, but since the original term, which is latent, remains

unexplained, it corresponds to the censorship's seeking to escape the significant term by calling up another one contiguous to it [...]." (Wilden, 1981: 242) At this time, one signifier signifies another one like in the dictionary. No signification occurs, no signified is stuffed. Lacan equates the term "displacement" (Verschiebung) with metonymy. (EC: 425) For Lacan, the relationship between the signifier and the signified denotes both the mechanisms of conscious and unconscious uses of language. In the above given example of "lion" and "brave", the metaphoric use of language is at the conscious level. On the other hand, symptoms work also metaphorically as they are used to replace the repressed feelings.

2.10. The Symbolic Identification:

The imaginary identification is not a perfect and complete one. There is a certain discord between the image and the infant. When the infant raises the left hand the image raises the right hand. The image in the mirror has a completeness, but this completeness is never attained by the infant. This discord or lack of unity compels the infant to seek for a symbolic identification. Although I am presenting them in a chronological order, there is a dialectical relationship between the imaginary and the symbolic identifications. Even at the time the infant is born, she is born in language. She has a name and her mother shows her feelings through certain symbolic actions. When the baby cries, she gets milk and crying is the way to ask for milk. Thus the symbolic identification is always at work, even before the mirror stage.

This "insertion" into language dynamically goes hand to hand with the identification process. There is, as I have mentioned, always a gap between the ego (the image) and the body. Thus, the infant needs some more to have a unique identity and to close this gap. We shape ourselves in the eyes of the others. Society always has a certain effect on us. We idealize some people. We chose role models. We hate some of them. We

hear from the others about ourselves. We learn from the society. There is always a never ending (unless the infant is a psychotic) interaction between the imaginary I and the symbolic world.

A new subject, which is called by Lacan as "the subject of the signifier" (SEM XI: 67) arises through and by this interaction with language. As Yannis Stavrakakis mentions, this subject is subordinate to language. (Stavrakakis, 1999: 20) The law of language determines the subject.[28] This second identification, different from the ego is based on the signifier.

In the next chapter, I will continue with the third register: the real. And while discussing this register, I will discuss the identification process once again, with the help of it. Till now, all I put together is strictly related to language and the linguistic access to the world. In the next chapter, what is the ground for and beyond this linguistically determined domain will be discussed.

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[28] Lacan uses the term "the-Name-of-the-Father" in order to denote these laws His use of such an "Oedipal" name is based on his intention to link psychoanalysis with linguistics.

CHAPTER 3

THE REAL

Lacanian real is one of the most complicated concepts of his theory. There are two main reasons for that: First of all, it is basically *defined* as something beyond the reach of language and it is quite clear that this definition itself is problematic and paradoxical —as to be beyond the reach of language means also to be beyond the definability (within the limits of language of course)[29].

Second reason for the confusion is Lacan's and Lacanians' incompatible and inconsistent exploitations of the very notion of the real. Lacan, like several other philosophers uses an obscure language which is for some cases, totally incomprehensible. Although the subjects that he discusses in his seminars and articles have a certain complexity, his infamous style is not caused only by the complexity of them. He prefers such a style as he considers his relationship with his readers and audiences, a psychoanalytic relationship. In other words, although he is famous with his highly narcissistic character, he tries to keep his own ego away from his teaching.[30] By this, he tries to open his teaching for the critical interpretations. As a point of departure, I would like to throw light on Lacanian idea of identification, which I am sure is the best place to start discussing the Lacanian real.

3.1. The real and the identification within the three

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[29] In the next chapter, I will go into the details of this issue of definability.

[30] As I have already mentioned, for Lacan, the role of the psychoanalyst is acting in such a way that the analytic session would be a repetition of the mirror stage. Therefore the analyst must hide its own ego and act like the Other.

registers:

Till now, I have mentioned only two of the Lacanian registers, namely the imaginary and the symbolic. With the introduction of the third register, the real, the general structure of the Lacanian theory will be completed. I think one of the best places to start elucidating such a complex concept is its practical appearance and function. That is why, in this section, I would like to discuss the effects of the real on the identification process.

Let me start with the location of the real in Lacan's theory. The three registers should not be considered as mutually exclusive spheres, but instead, they should be taken as interconnected rings. Lacan uses a kind of topological figure called "Borromean Knots" for demonstrating the relationships between these three registers.
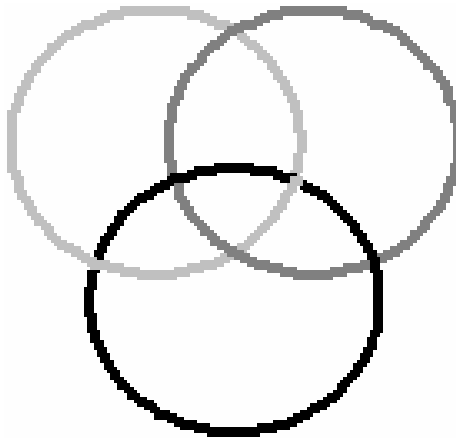
Figure 7 Borromean Knots

The Borromean knots represent the interconnectedness of these three registers. Each ring denotes one of the three registers. And if one of the links is detached, all the three will be freed. (SEM XX: 123-4) The registers do not need any external or transcendent bindings; what each

one of them needs is being linked to the other two registers. Any detachment of the links ends up with psychosis.[31] Therefore, there are not intertwinements between the registers. Either they work all together or they are detached.

As I presented in the previous chapter, the symbolic register has a certain form of binding functionality against the discords of imaginary identifications. In a way it gives a certain form of consistency to the imaginary experiences. Lacan expresses the role of the Symbolic against the imaginary as follows:

> While the image equally plays a capital role in our own domain, this role is completely taken up and caught up within, remolded and reanimated by, the symbolic order. The image is always more or less integrated into this order, which, I remind you, is defined in man by its property of organized structure. (SEM III: 9)

The symbolic identification is necessary in order to have the image to start functioning. In order to be identified with an external image, what the infant needs is a support from the symbolic register or the Other. When the infant recognizes itself in the mirror, it turns back to its mother and asks for her approval. In other words, the infant seeks for the appropriate signifier in order to support and represent its imaginary identity and this signifier is provided by the mother.[32] This signifier is also the signifier which signifies the desire of the mother. In other words, the infant wants to be identified with the signifier which is desired by the mother.[33]

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[31] In the next chapter, I will discuss briefly Lacan's introduction of the concept "sinthome" denoting another form of binding three registers which enables without falling into psychosis, some individuals find a way of relating these three registers.

[32] Some Lacanians use the term "the (m)other" for denoting this role of the mother acting as the Other in the early phases of the infants development.

[33] This is the desire related dimension of the symbolic register which I will discuss later on.

This desire is not limited only to the mother's desire. The symbolic identification gives a consistency to the imaginary identification: I need someone to call my name in order to have a consistent existence within the domain of signifiers:

> The symbolic provides a form into which the subject is inserted at the level of his being. It's on the basis of the signifier that the subject recognizes himself as being this or that. The chain of signifiers has a fundamental explanatory value, and the very notion of causality is nothing else. (SEM III: 179)

It not only enables the subject to be named[34], but it also enables any conceptual way of understanding the reality by providing signifiers. Every experience —including the imaginary identification— is tied up with the signification process. To see, to observe, or to recognize requires the symbolic to give support to the infant for the access of signifiers.

> In other words, it's the symbolic relation which defines the position of the subject as seeing. It is speech, the symbolic relation, which determines the greater or lesser degree of perfection, of completeness, of approximation, of the imaginary. (SEM I: 141)

That is why psychosis is explained by Lacan as a loss of the symbolic. Through the symbolic the subject grounds and locates itself: to be a subject is to be subordinated under language. It requires an acceptance of and obedience to the symbolic laws of language which is usually denoted by Lacan as "the-Name-of-the-Father".

This symbolic subject is based on a lack also. As getting into and

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[34] Althusser borrows this idea of being named in the symbolic while developing his concept of "interpellation". The subject, due to him, is "interpellated" by the ideological structures. This locates and gives roles to the subject. There are not any autonomous subjects. The structure determines the subject: "*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject." (Althusser, 1971: 173)

being subordinated under language requires a lack because it is not possible to fully represent *the singularity of the subject*. Language is something universal beyond the control of the subject. Being signified within language requires a certain form of death, which is the death of the singularity of the subject:

> There is, in effect, something radically unassimable to the signifier. It's quite simply the subject's singular existence. Why is he here? Where has he come from? What is he doing here? Why is he going to disappear? The signifier is capable of providing him with the answer, for the good reason that it places him beyond death. The signifier already considers him dead, by nature it immortalizes him. (SEM II: 180)

Through this death, subject is alienated in the symbolic on the one hand, and on the other hand, it achieves an immortality as signifiers are immortal. This lack of singularity is in parallel with the loss of the mythical pre-linguistic unity with the mother. Therefore the subject in the symbolic is the subject of an inevitable lack and is denoted by an "S" with a bar on it: $.

Let me go back to the relationship between the signifier and the signified. As I mentioned earlier, the signified is an effect of the chain of signifiers. Why do we have such an effect? It is due to an imagination about the representational and harmonious relationship between language and the world. For Lacan, there is not any form of full representation of the world. The fullness belongs both to the imaginary register and to the real. The real is the realm which is beyond signification. It denotes the pre-linguistic unity and in signification such a unity could only be attained as an imagination. Therefore, the signified is both imaginary and real. It appears as an effect of signification and this effect is based on the mythical and lost unity in the real.

Following these descriptions, another question comes to the fore:

what is the role of the real in the identification process? As the real is elusive and beyond linguistic access, it only appears with its absence in the symbolic. Therefore the subject of lack ($) does not denote the presence of the real, but its absence. The real is present by its absence during the signification process.

In the next section, I will elaborate on the requirement of such a notion as better understanding of the real and its place in Lacan's theory requires an understanding of the reason why Lacan introduced such a concept.

3.2. The need for a third register:

The first two registers, the symbolic and the imaginary enables Lacan to encapsulate a divided subject in which the linguistic, the individual and the social dimensions are interconnected. But these two registers are based primarily on the linguistic and the spatial experiences: the symbolic is the linguistic register in which the subject is shown by a barred signifier, and the imaginary is the register by which the infant identifies itself with a *spatially* detached imago.

Therefore both of these two registers are about the *post*-linguistic development of the infant. In them there is nothing beyond language. Therefore, there is a requirement for another register which at first represents the pre-linguistic realm of the human psychic development and also which should continue its presence beyond linguistically structured life of human beings. Such a new dimension to his theory also prevents Lacan from being a linguistic reductionist.[35] As a consequence of these, the real is the primary register which gives the ontological grounding for the other two. In other words, this register, the real, is the location which is

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[35] As will be seen, in the next chapter, I will defend the view that no matter such an introduction of the real, Lacan is still a linguistic reductionist.

the basis for the pre-linguistic unity and singularity of the infant that is lost through language. And this unity is the main producer of the desire: we always desire to achieve this lost fullness. Therefore the real also gives the basic support for the dynamism of human life.

The real could be grasped through the fissures or ruptures in our linguistic access of the reality. Language cannot veil or represent the real. It denotes the limit, the impossibility which is beyond the reach of language. It is the beyond which is unspeakable.

As I will present in the next section, the real is strictly related with the mirror stage: as by the mirror stage, the infant enters into language and loses its unity with the mother. This pre-linguistic unity is imagined to be grasped by the formation of the ego in the imaginary register. We could only imagine achieving back this lost unity. The real denotes the lost past before the infant is subordinated under language. The imaginary identification is the linguistic signification of this lost unity.

When Lacan asserts that the meaning is just an effect which appears against the flux of signifiers and it is not possible to achieve an absolute meaning, he also relates the real with such an absolute meaning. The absolute, literal meaning exists at the real. That is why it is impossible to achieve such an absolute meaning. The bar between the signifier and the signified then denotes also the resistance of the real against the symbolic access.[36] The real is always the place of that something which is more than what we have achieved through symbolic interaction. It is an excess for the signification. If the symbolic is the location of the unconscious, then the real is the location of the cause of the unconscious.

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[36] But one should always keep in mind the truth that the signified also has the imaginary dimension.

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I will continue with the Lacanian conception of the Oedipus complex in order to go into the details of the signifier-signified relationship and the role of the real in it.

3.3. Oedipus Complex and Lacan:

For Lacan, the Oedipus complex is something which everyone should go through in order to achieve an access to the symbolic. As I mentioned while discussing the mirror stage, at the very first, the infant has a mythical, pre-linguistic unity. Entrance into language destroys this unity. During the very early stages of such a formational stage, the unity is replaced with a unity with the mother. This has allusions to Freud's Oedipus complex which is based on the infant's *perversive* desires for the mother. For Lacan, the initial unity has an inhuman character which should be get rid of in order to be human —as being human is being socialized and every socialization is based on sacrificing the animal instincts.[37]

Through the socialization by language, the infant *imagines* that this sacrificed unity is a unity with the mother. This imagined unity is repressed by the symbolic law:

> The Oedipus complex means that the imaginary, in itself an incestuous and conflictual relation, is doomed to conflict and ruin. In order for the human being to be able to establish the most natural of relations, that between male and female, a third party has to intervene, one that is the image of something successful, the model of some harmony. This does not go far enough — there has to be a law, a chain, a symbolic order, the intervention of the order of speech, that is of father. Not the natural father, but what is called the father. The order that prevents the collision and explosion of the situation as a whole is founded on the existence of this name of the father. (SEM III: 96)

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[37] This dialectic between human and animal instincts or desires is borrowed from Kojéve. Lacan was one of the students of Kojève's legendary seminars between 1933 to 1939.

The incestuous unity with the mother should be doomed in order to be a human being —by getting rid of the animal instincts through socialization. While doing this, a law should be accepted, which is the law of the father. This law is superimposed to the infant not by the natural father, but by the linguistic father which is called as "the Name-of-the-Father." It gives consistency to the infants psyche by repressing the unacceptable incestuous desires of it. The famous Lacanian formula of "there is no sexual relationship" can be interpreted as follows: there is not any essential harmony between man and woman. But instead, the harmony is achieved through the mediation of the Name-of-the-Father. It enables the infant to be socialized.

The Oedipus complex appears after the mirror stage. First the fantasy of the fragmented body is overcome by the mirror stage through the introduction of the imaginary identification with the image in the mirror. Through this phase, although the ego is developed, this is not the end of the relation with the mother. But instead, the infant identifies itself as the object of mother's desire. The infant desires to be the desire of the mother. In Lacanese, the infant imagines to be the object of mother's desire, *the phallus*.

Through the development of the oedipal period, child is brought into the process of castration. This is needed in order to resolve the dialectical opposition between being the object of mother's desire and not being of that: in order to find a place in the socio-symbolic world, the infant should leave behind its obsession with a unity with the mother. *The paternal metaphor*, the name that symbolizes the law of socialization appears to mediate the relationship between the infant and the mother. The imaginary identity with the mother's desire is replaced with the Name-of-the-Father.

The (castrating) father appears to be a prohibitive figure but it is at

the same time necessary for the infant to function at the symbolic register. It allows the child to achieve the linguistic access but at the same time, it inserts a lack of the pre-Oedipal unity with the mother. If we use the linguistic terminology, the imagined unity is first repressed by the mother's desire and then the mother's desire is also repressed by the Name-of-the-Father. Both of the repressed ones become signifieds in Lacan's formulations.

The two formulas below represent how metaphors in general work during the oedipal phase and how the paternal metaphor is applied for this general formula. In the first one (Formula 1), the lost unity is symbolized by x. Therefore x is the signified which denotes the imaginary unity.[38] After that, x is replaced with (or repressed by) the subject of lack ($): first of all, x is the effect of the signifier. In other words, x denotes the lost unity and through the signifier $, there is the lack. This lack, in effect produces "x" as the signified. There is another direction of this replacement. "$" replaces the unacceptable unity "x". This is done through repression. The use of the symbol $ denotes that the subject can only be represented by a subject of lack. It cannot be fully represented. The representation of the subject by "x" is socially prohibited. Finally, "S" represents the signifier which replaces the subject of lack, "$". The subject after castration and losing its unity, seeks for replacements in order to attain unity again. That is why, "$" is replaced with "S" which is supposed to give the lost unity back to the subject.

$$\frac{S}{\$'} \bullet \frac{\$'}{x} \longrightarrow S\left(\frac{1}{s}\right)$$

Formula 1 Formula for metaphors (EC:464)

On the right hand side of the formula, S is the final signifier and

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[38] The real unity cannot be represented in these formulations. In this formulation, x consists of both the imaginary and the real registers.

the expression $\left(\dfrac{1}{s}\right)$ denotes the effect of such metaphorical replacements.

The success of the metaphor, due to Lacan can be seen through such effects. "x" cannot be seen on the right hand side of the formula as it is, by the success of the metaphor is completely concealed.

In the second formulation (Formula 2), the imaginary signified is first replaced with the Mother's Desire, and then through castration, the Name-of-the-Father —which is the law, the structural center of the Other (the Other is denoted by "A" (abbreviation for *Autre* in French) on the right side of the formula)— replaces it. Consequently, the Name-of-the-Father is the approval of the subordination under the Other (the socio-linguistic domain) and the "phallus" is the repressed signified (which signifies the Mother's Desire). As Dor comments, by "'naming the Father' the child is really still naming the functional object of his desire. But now it names it metaphorically, since it has become unconscious for him." (Dor, 1997: 117)

$$\frac{\text{Name - of} - \text{the} - \text{Father}}{\text{Mother's Desire}} \bullet \frac{\text{Mother's Desire}}{\text{Signified to the Subject}}$$

$$\longrightarrow \text{Name} - \text{of} - \text{the} - \text{Father}\left(\frac{A}{\text{Phallus}}\right)$$

Formula 2 The paternal metaphor (EC: 465)

The Oedipus complex represses the incestuous animal desires of the infant through a symbolic modification by the acceptance of the Name-of-the-Father. The socialization requires the *exclusion* and the repression of certain non-social and unmediated desires. The real object of desire is suppressed forever in order to prevent the infant from the psychosis. For Lacan, psychosis is a problem of socialization which is the lack of the access to the symbolic. Without the acceptance of the law, the subject is identified only with the imaginary ego which is the basis of the psychosis.

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Such an identification has another effect which is the experiencing of the others with their imaginary identities. Lacan comments on such a case while discussing the case of President Shreber:

> The Other being truly excluded, what concerns the subject is actually said by the little other, by shadows of others, or, as Shreber will express himself to designate all human beings he encounters, by *fabricated*, or *improvised* men. The small other effectively presents an unreal character, tending towards the unreal. (SEMIII: 52)

But this comment entails a fact that there is still some symbolic, the Other for the psychotics. Otherwise, it could not be possible to comprehend "the little other" (imaginary identities) of the others. For Lacan, the loss of the Name-of-the-Father affects the sense-giving and signification mechanism of the psyche:

> It is an accident in this register and in what occurs in it— namely, the foreclosure of the Name-of-the-Father in the place of the Other—and the failure of the paternal metaphor that I designate as the defect that gives psychosis its essential condition, along with the structure that separates it from neurosis. (EF: 479)

In other words, the loss of one signifier entails a loss of other signifiers which damages all the symbolic access. (SEMIII: 203) For Lacan, the Name-of-the-Father is the main signifier which gives coherence to the symbolic and its loss is a general replacement of the chain of signifiers in the signification process. That is why the psychotic concerns with the shadow of the others.[39]

The identification within the symbolic is also in an alienating form. We do not have the control of the Other. The linguistic dimension is not ours but it is socially determined. Therefore the subject which is in the

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[39] For a further discussion of psychosis see below.

symbolic is also beyond our full access or, if we use the linguistic terminology, the subject can never be fully represented in the symbolic. As I have mentioned earlier, the signifier which signifies the subject ($) is based on a certain exclusion (the exclusion of the singularity of the subject). And this subject operates in the Other which is not under its own control. That is why the subject is always a subject of lack. It is constituted by a certain lack of full representation and this lack requires a filling. In other words, the lack in the symbolic identity requires the objects which are supposed to fill in the lack. I will deal with this subject later in this work.

3.4. The Real and the reality:

As I have mentioned earlier, castration is a sacrifice of the real maternal thing which cannot be symbolized. Through this sacrifice, the real is formed imaginarily as a signified under the signifier "reality". In other words, the real is moved below the bar by the acceptance of the Law. The Law restricts the real and the real as the signified appears only as an effect of signification:

$$\frac{\text{Reality}}{\text{Real}}$$

Formula 3 The Reality vs. The Real

In this formula, "the real" as a signified, belongs both to the imaginary and the real orders (as a signified always appears in both of the registers). This may seem paradoxical: How could the real appear both in itself and beyond itself? This point is crucial for understanding the role of signification. The explanation is still hidden in the conception of the signified as an effect. The signified "real" denotes the lost unity which belongs to the real order. On the other hand, the existence of such a whole real, in its fullness is an imagined illusion. Thus the real with its fullness belongs to the imaginary also.

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The imaginary dimension of the real is caused by the imagined harmony between the signifier and the signified (in this case between the reality and the real). Perhaps one may claim that this paradox is caused by our insistence on symbolizing the real with the caution that it is impossible to symbolize it in its fullness. We try to symbolize something which cannot be symbolized and this very action is constitutive and necessary for human beings to continue living. [40]

There is a dialectic between the lack and signification: First of all, this lack of representation of the real is based on our linguistic incapability. On the other hand, the real is also retroactively produced as an effect of the symbolic order. In other words, the absence of something (the real) depends on the mis-representation of that "absent" thing (the reality).[41]

Lacan claims that the process of signification is based on the lack of harmony between the signifier and the signified and the insistent production of this lack through signification. Every harmonious conception of the world is itself an imaginary conception. Even though the scientific understanding of our world is based on such a mythical harmony: there is a correspondence between the real and the reality or the theory and the world.

The lack is something which acts positively on desire: the lack is *the presence of the absence of something*. It works as a constitutive tool. As we will see, it constitutes the motivation of filling in this lack with desire objects. This process of seeking for the lost objects is an everlasting process as it is impossible to find a final satisfaction, because the lost object is also an effect of the lack. The final fullness requires a meta-

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[40] In the next chapter, I will separate two different reals: "the symbolic real" and "the real real" in order to resolve the paradoxical character of the real.

[41] As will be explicated later on, this is another form of impossibility: impossibility to represent the lost object of desire.

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linguistic position —or a position which transcends the three registers— that is able to locate and determine both the lack and the lost object. But as for Lacan, there is no Other of the Other.[42] There is not any tool by which we can achieve a final fullness. The lack in the Other is at the same time the representation of the impossibility of such a meta position. Lacan uses "$\overline{A}$" for denoting the impossibility of achieving the fullness of the Other:

> I can only assume that you will recall my statement that there is no Other of the Other. The Other, that is, the locus in which everything that can be articulated on the basis of the signifier comes to be inscribed, is, in its foundation, the Other in the most radical sense. That is why the signifier, with this open parenthesis, marks the Other as barred: S($\overline{A}$)[43] (SEMXX: 81)

Let me put it more accurately: there is not any signifier which can signify the fullness of the Other. Otherwise, there would be a way to represent the real with the help of such a full Other, or the Other of the Other. The lack in the Other, which is denoted by the barred Other, is at the same time the impossibility of such a meta position.

There is one major question left unanswered which is on the role of the lack. How could the lack dynamically has an effect on the human beings? The answer to this question is related to the Lacanian concepts of desire, jouissance, objet petit a and fantasy. In the next section, I will deal with these concepts.

3.5. The lack, jouissance and the desire:

The lack requires a filling and the final fullness, the signifier which

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[42] In plain English, there is no meta-language.

[43] In some of the translations, the barred Other is denoted by S(Ø) but in SEMXX, Bruce Fink prefers the original French symbolization in order to separate the barred Other from the null set.

signifies the Other in its fullness, is an impossibility. But if it is impossible, then why the human beings should suffer for filling in it? The answer to this question is puzzling and paradoxical. First of all, in the symbolic, the impossibility does not appear as an impossibility. It appears as a prohibition: the Name-of-the-Father prohibits the desire-of-the-mother. But what it prohibits is actually an impossible pre-linguistic fullness. The real mother, the pre-linguistic thing is not something desirable. Therefore prohibition is the prohibition of an impossibility but at the same time it triggers the dynamics of desiring process.

It is obvious that, through castration and with the help of pleasure principle, the real and the symbolic are linked to each other in such a way that psyche can continue a socialized life in a balanced mood. Therefore if there is an interaction between the real and the symbolic, then Lacan should answer the question that on what basis this interaction occurs. What are the elements that are shared between the real and the symbolic? Thus it is necessary to investigate "jouissance"[44] and the "objet petit a" in order to understand the interaction between these registers.

The term jouissance, —although having a major importance in understanding Lacanian theory— is not explained in detail in Lacan's works. Reading and re-reading Lacan and his followers only adds more to the difficulties and confusions of understanding the sense of such a term. For some of the Lacanians, like Braunstein, there is a deep continuity in Lacan's work and also in the meaning of jouissance. (see Braunstein, 2004) On the opposite side, quite convincingly some others claim that, Lacan, for several instances, revised his definition of jouissance. (see especially Evans, 1998 and Fink, 2002) No matter which view we accept, it is a fact that there is not one, unique definition of jouissance. Its meaning evolved during the development of Lacan's ideas and on the other hand,

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[44] Jouissance was translated as "enjoyment" .in the earlier translations of Lacan's works (i.e. SEMI) but in the later translations it has become more usual to leave it in French.

there is still a continuity in some of the meanings it take at the very early seminars.

Before going into the details of the Lacanian conception of jouissance, I would like to clarify one point that I have mentioned previously. As jouissance belongs to the real and at the same time, its leftovers appear at the symbolic, then it is the only tie between the real and the symbolic. Lacan notes in one of his seminars that "with jouissance we meet the only ontical to which we may confess." (SEM V: 251, quoted in Braunstein, 2004: 106) Perhaps what he meant by this is, jouissance is placed at the crossing between the ontical and the ontological or in other words, it is the ontical which we can trust and follow in order to move beyond the level of the ontical. [45]

In his *Seminar XX*, jouissance becomes the substance of the body, which is named by him as "enjoying substance" (*la substance jouissante*): "Isn't that precisely what psychoanalytic experience presupposes? —the substance of the body, on the condition that it is defined only as that which enjoys itself (*se jouit*)." (SEM XX: 23) Why does psychoanalysis need such a presupposition? As noted before, there is a primary unity, which is sometimes called by Lacan as "mythical unity" before the mirror stage and the formation of the subject and the ego. This unity with the mother and with the external world is the presupposition and the requirement which is based on the idea that it is impossible to know the pre-symbolic *substance* of our psyche and even of our body. This presupposition considers the pre-symbolic body as something filled with a certain form of flux of liveliness —which has allusions with Freudian libido— in which pain and pleasure are mixed together. Such a mixture of feelings is caused by the pre-linguistic character of the real. Through the introduction of language we separate the pain from pleasure. We cannot

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[45] Iwill discuss in the next chapter jouissance and its relation with the two registers.

know and experience jouissance directly as such an experience would end up with a total collapse. But what we can do is find out its traces in the symbolic everydayness.

By jouissance Lacan introduces a *before* to the ego and to the subject: a before which is the period before the entrance of the infant into language. It is the only ontical which gives us clues about the Being of a human being (or Da-sein).

Jouissance first appeared at *Seminar I,* while Lacan was discussing Hegel's Master-Slave dialectics in which, the master enforces the slave to work harder and does not allow him/her to enjoy his own pleasure [jouissance]. The only pleasure in this context is the pleasure of the Master. (SEMI: 223) Here jouissance was equated with pleasure. Same theme appears in *Seminar II* also: "He [the slave] effaces his pleasure so as not to arouse the anger of his master." (SEMII: 269) Why does Lacan use jouissance while he is elaborating on the Master-Slave dialectics? Perhaps during that time, he was thinking of a relation based on pleasure and desire like Kojéve had done in his work. In Lacan's later works, a change occurs in the meaning of jouissance. The sense "pleasure" never disappears but several other dimensions are added. He sometimes uses the two terms, pleasure and desire at the opposite poles.

For understanding the mechanics of desire and jouissance, what we have to know now is the fact that jouissance is castrated from the body by the introduction of language. Law prohibits and organizes enjoyment and desire. The acceptance of the (moral) Law enables the desire. For Lacan, the death of God, the rejection of the Law, against Dostoevsky's formulation, will be a blockage for the desire. The death of God, or the rejection of the moral law will be at the same time the death of the desire. The only way to achieve jouissance is through the mediation and transgression of the Law:

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We are, in fact, led to the point where we accept the formula that without a transgression there is no access to *jouissance*, and, to return to Saint Paul, that that is precisely the function of the Law. Transgression in the direction of *jouissance* only takes place if it is supported by the oppositional principle, by the forms of the Law. If the paths to *jouissance* have something in them that dies out, that tends to make them impassable, prohibition, if I may say so, becomes its all-terrain vehicle, its half-truck, that gets it out of the circuitous routes that lead man back in a roundabout way toward the rut of a short and well-trodden satisfaction. (SEM VII: 177)

Here Lacan refers to the Paulinian link between the Sin and the Law which is one of his most favorite texts he recommends for several occasions (i.e. SEMVII: 83): "What shall we say then? *Is* the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." (Romans 7:7)[46] For Lacan, this text fits perfectly in his formulation that the desired object (the sin) is constituted by the prohibiting Law. We desire in order to eliminate the lack in the Other. But as Stavrakakis mentions, "[i]t is the lack that introduces the idea of fullness and not vice-versa." (Stavrakakis, 1999: 43)

Once again, the lack is introduced by the acceptance of the Law and it is the inevitable gap between the real and the reality. This lack is based on our incapability to capture the Other, and on the other hand, the lack dialectically constructs the imaginary fullness (the real as the signified). This imaginary illusion constitutes the logic of desire: the impossible seems to be prohibited then one may desire to transgress this prohibition and try to achieve the imagined fullness and harmony.

For Lacan, desire is the desire of the Other. (EF: 581-2) In other words, as in the case of the private language argument, similarly there is no private desires which are exclusively immanent to the individual. The

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[46] *The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the original tongues and with the former translations diligently compared & revised. New York:* American Bible Society.

desire has the core social dimension which is based on the lack in the Other. If we go back to the paternal metaphor, the desire-of-the-mother is replaced with the Name-of-the-Father. It is the replacement of the initial desires with the allowed ones. The primordial desire of the mother is prohibited and the Other determines what can be desired.

As the desire is based on the illusory fullness, it always ends up with frustration.

> 'That's not it' is the very cry by which the jouissance obtained is distinguished from the jouissance expected. It is here that what can be said in language is specified. (SEMXX: 111)

The desired object, after the dissatisfaction and the frustration is replaced with another one. There is always a fantasy which promises a final fulfillment behind this displacement of the desired objects. The fantasy is required as a defense against the unbearable lack in the Other. The fantasy "changes the *impossible* into the *prohibited.*" (TWN: 116)

Through castration, there are two things remain in the symbolic: the barred subject ($) and the leftovers of the jouissance, which is called as *objet petit a*. It is the "object cause of desire" (or sometimes called as "surplus jouissance") which can never be reached or revealed but exists in every desired object. It is the cause of desire as it imaginarily embodies the fullness which is impossible. It has a strange nature: it, as a cause, affects not with its presence, but with its absence.

It is the gap between desire and jouissance. First of all, jouissance is lost through castration but at the same time, the desire for this lost thing is created with the same operation. Desire can never reach jouissance and it requires a cause which promises the fullness.

3.6. The Real as the impossibility of the Truth:

Another dimension of the real is epistemological: it is, for Lacan, the location of the Truth. The Truth, due to Lacan is beyond the reach of language, therefore belongs to the real. Lacan insists on that his own theory does not consist of eternal truths. Although at several instances he has a rigorous voice, which is pretending the Godly voice that is telling the complete truth about the human psyche, he always reminds us that, one could only tell half of the truth. The truth is even beyond the reach of the founder of the theory. In other words, Lacan's theory is a theory without a truth. If he had not left anything beyond the two registers of the imaginary and of the symbolic, then there would have been a possibility to pronounce a truth in the symbolic. Therefore Lacan needed a place for the Truth which is unattainable and the real is that place by which it is shown that the truth escapes from the symbolization.[47]

Every "truth" which is asserted within the limits of symbolization, is a partial truth which does not apply for all. The famous quotation that I quoted previously[48] from *Television* (TV: 3), brings out several questions. First of all, the "literal impossibility" of saying all the truth gives rise to the question whether the truth can be reached metaphorically or not. In his theory, symptoms appear as metaphors and the signification occurs with the help of metaphors also. Thus I think, it is always possible and inevitable to speak the truth metaphorically. What I mean is, truth always appears in our talks, in our representation of ourselves, but not in our intended utterances. The truth, like the real, appears in the fissures of the symbolic.

Secondly, there is another and more important problem in his idea

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[47]   This theme of something beyond the access of language can be found in a different sense in *Tractatus*. In the next chapter, I will compare Lacan's views with Wittgenstein's and Gödel's.

[48]   see section 1.3.

of the impossibility of the truth, which requires further elaboration: How could it be possible to speak the impossibility of the truth which itself is a truth?[49] I am leaving this question unanswered as I will give one in the next chapter while underlining the similarities between Lacan and Gödel.

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[49] It is for sure that, this problem is the same that Kant and Wittgenstein were faced with while they were trying to delineate the limits of knowledge and language.

CHAPTER 4

GENERAL REMARKS ON LACAN'S THEORY:

In this chapter, I will give several critical remarks on the Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis. Some of these remarks were already asserted by several Lacanians or even by Lacan himself. Some of them, at least to my knowledge, have a certain novelty. Through these remarks a certain critical approach towards Lacan will be developed and this approach is supposed to be helpful for analyzing the deficiencies and mismatches of the Lacanian political theories also. Some of them consist of new interpretational tools for understanding the backbone of his theory, and some of them just re-assert the very basic and known facts about his theory, but they are necessary for coming up with a critical approach against him.

My concern in this chapter is more pedagogical than philosophical; therefore, the reader should proceed with caution. I am planning to discuss with an hermeneutical reading of Lacanian theory by which certain weaknesses and points of strength are supposed to be revealed. For that reason, some of my remarks may seem contradictory. For example, when I assert that "Lacan is a structuralist" (see my first remark), what I mean is that his theory has the least properties of being a member of the so called structuralism. But the following remark, which is on the possibility of showing the real, *deconstructs* the previous remark: if the real can be shown, therefore Lacan's structures are not all encompassing structures.

But then I will come back to my claim that no matter whether there are non-structural realms in Lacan's theory, at the conclusion, he is still a structuralist. So one should not make hard-core decisions on Lacan's system before finishing this chapter.

I will sometimes refer to or appeal for the help of other philosophers like Gödel and Wittgenstein in order to elucidate certain facts about Lacan's theory. When I compare one view of Lacan with, say Wittgenstein, I try to keep myself away from falling into simplistic judgments on the similarities between two totally different philosophers. But such comparisons open the field for several other discussions and are helpful for understanding the complex conceptual framework of Lacanian theory.

Basically what I tried to achieve writing this chapter is a radically different reading of Lacan. I will proceed as follows: I will start with a discussion about the structuralism of Lacan. The discussion will be based on the nature of the non-linguistic elements of his theory. I will question whether they are sufficient for him not to be a structuralist. I will present two of these non-linguistic elements: jouissance and sinthome. The discussion will be based on the requirement for these new concepts. Then I will move towards the problem of castration which seems to be a bridge between the linguistic and non-linguistic domains. This problem raises several other questions on the real. I propose one solution for them which is similar with Bruce Fink's solution: introducing two different reals. Then I will start comparing Lacan and Saussure with Wittgenstein of *Tractatus*. The main concepts that I will focus on are "saying" and "showing" which are crucial for *Tractatus*. Then I will continue with their most important difference: Wittgenstein sets the limit which one should keep silence and he was faithful to this limit. On the other hand, Lacan never stops investigating the *beyond*. He had only one chance for theorizing the real: trying to repeat what Gödel has done in mathematics, within the limits of

psychoanalysis. Then I will come with the idea that Lacan is a linguistic reductionist as his theory reduces the non-linguistic into the linguistic. And I will add one more claim that the Lacanian theory is also a representationalist theory. Although he asserts that there is not any harmony between language and world, he puts together a perfectly harmonious theory. And finally, this harmony of his theory is the most important defect of it: if there is a harmony between his theory and its realm of investigation, therefore this is what Lacan calls symptomatic. It is the unexpected and uncontrollable outcome of the theory. The perfect harmony, as I will assert is the most important defect oıf Lacan's theory.

4.1. A well known Truth: "Lacan is a structuralist"

When Lacan began his seminars, in 1953, structuralism had already become popular among some of the French intellectuals. As I have mentioned earlier, Lacan's theory is based on Saussure's structuralistic linguistics. Lacan himself had a major influence on Althusser, who is mostly known as the father of the structuralist Marxism. So the thesis that Lacan is a structuralist does not consist of anything new or unknown.

One may claim —and even Stavrakakis and Žižek do so— that Lacan has a theory of subject which is the most important difference of Lacan from the other structuralist and poststructuralist philosophers. This is an indubitable truth and even Lacanian subject is sometimes considered as a survival kit which helps the poststructuralists not to strive anymore on philosophizing without a subject. However, Lacanian subject has a minimum of autonomy, which means that, the surrounding linguistic structure is not an all governing iron cage for the subject. There is always the real, which is the elusive realm beyond the reach of language.[50]

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[50] Does the real give certain autonomy or freedom to the subject is another question. As I

In general, for structuralists, the subject is merely an effect of the structural relations. "As a pretender to scientific objectivity, structuralism aims at distancing, at objectifying, at eliminating subjectivity from its method." (Holub, 1995: 285) But for Lacan, no matter how deeply the subject is lost and alienated in language, the real —which is the non-structured realm— always shows itself through the fissures of the symbolic. The monstrous and the unbearable Truth of the subject cannot be veiled by the symbolic. In this way, there is always a remainder which escapes from the symbolic castration, which is called the surplus jouissance.[51] Through such a remainder, it seems that Lacan opens a gap in the midst of the symbolic: a hole through which the unexpected elements can invade the symbolic order.

Therefore as there seems to be something beyond the reach of language and this "something" is external to the structure, it might be necessary that I should take my claim on the structuralism of Lacan back. But, in a moment, I will provide some more support on my remark. I will claim that this structural gap is also structurally determined. In other words, Lacan is not only a structuralist; he seems to reduce everything to language also. In the proceeding sections, I will elaborate on the dialectic relationship between the linguistic and non-linguistic elements of Lacanian formulation, and then I will come back once again to this issue.

4.1.1. Jouissance and sinthome:

Dylan Evans points out a shift in Lacan's teaching during 1960's. Before this shift, for Lacan, a symptom was something which requires interpretation. After the shift, the symptom became "something that can no

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will show, at the end, the real is also structured. Therefore, I will assert that there is not any autonomy for the subject in Lacan's theory.

[51] This surplus jouissance is a crucial concept for understanding the Lacanian dynamics of the subject. That is why, I will continue with an elucidation of this concept and then I will come back to my main thesis, the structuralism of Lacan retroactively.

longer be reduced entirely to language." (Evans, 1998: 12) He, after this shift, linked the symptom with jouissance in a way that the symptom is the carrier of the remainder of jouissance after the castration. Lacan displaced the concept of symptom with *sinthome* which "designates a signifying formulation beyond analysis, a kernel of enjoyment immune to the efficacy of the symbolic." (Evans, 1998: 12)

Before this shift, due to Lacan, there was not any way of rejecting the symbolic law without falling in psychosis. A psychotic, basically is the one, who is faced with the real without any mediation of the symbolic law:

> For psychosis to be triggered, the Name-of-the-Father—*verworfen*, foreclosed, that is, never having come to the place of the Other—must be summoned to that place in symbolic opposition to the subject.
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> It is the lack of the Name-of-the-Father in that place which, by the hole that it opens up in the signified, sets off a cascade of reworkings of the signifier from which the growing disaster of the imaginary proceeds, until the level is reached at which signifier and signified stabilize in a delusional metaphor. (EC: 481)

The delusions of the psychotics are based on the loss or rejection of the law of signification, which is symbolized by the Name-of-the-Father. This loss enables the signification process to be based on imaginary metaphors. The mediation of the Name-of-the-Father is the only way that an individual can interact with the reality; it supports the symbolic order to work.[52] Without it, the reality that is constructed is an incommunicable one. For the psychotic, the link between the three registers, the symbolic, the real and the imaginary is broken. This detachment of the registers reveals itself as the loss of social process of signification. For that reason, the

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[52] It should be noted that the Name-of-the-Father is a prohibitive signifier, which says "no" to certain things. The crucial thing is that for Lacan, the Law and prohibition are necessary for human beings not to fall into psychosis. Lacan sometimes uses the 'No'-of-the-Father (*le 'non' du* pére) instead of the Name-of-the-Father (*le Nom-du-Pére*) for underlining this prohibitive character of the symbolic law.

sinthome[53] is introduced as a ring[54] -a ring that links the three other registers together- which avoids the psychotic detachment.

The question that should be asked here is "why did Lacan make such a change in his theory?" Dylan Evans answers these questions as follows:

> This development in Lacan's thought answers one problem, only to raise another. The problem it answers relates to one of the main criticisms levelled at Lacan's work, namely that Lacan reduces everything to language. In developing the concept of jouissance, Lacan rebuts such a criticism, by pointing to a powerful force beyond language. (Evans, 1998: 13)

Similarly the immunity of sinthome from the symbolic access seems to be another property that is introduced to keep Lacan's theory away from being a reductionism to language. Thus there is always a place for the subject, which is out of the control of language, and the introduction of the sinthome claims that some people, —like James Joyce— finds a way of knotting the three registers, without the acceptance of the symbolic law and without falling into madness.

Therefore Lacanian subject does not seem to be a subject which is always *subjectivized* under language. So, what kind of a structuralist is Lacan? Perhaps he is trying to keep the cake and eat it at the same time. The barred subject ($) is alienated in and being captured by the Other, the linguistic realm on the one hand, and on the other hand, —although it is rare— there is always a way of going beyond the symbolic law without

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[53] Lacan's 1975-1976 seminar numbered as XXIII is on sinthome. *Le Séminaire. Livre XXIII. Le sinthome, 1975-1976,* published in *Ornicar?,* nos 6-11, 1976-7. Unfortunately this seminar book is not translated in English.

[54] I will give a glance at the topological relationship between the three registers in a moment.

falling into psychosis. These are crucial questions which at the same time have political allusions.

For me, Lacan's theory of subject is a deterministic theory and through such a determinism, there is not any place for autonomous and even quasi-autonomous subjective positions. Similarly, there is not any openness to the contingent actions which cannot be interpreted by Lacan's psychoanalysis.[55] His theory *could never be surprised*. I will try to develop these arguments in the following way: First I will try to defend the idea that the non-linguistic elements of Lacanian theory are not *really* non-linguistic. I will proceed with a presentation of Lacan's obsession with formalizing the real which is supposed to be beyond the reach of language. The overall discussion in this chapter will be based on this formalization.

4.1.2 Non-linguistic elements in Lacan's theory:

Let me begin with the position of the subject. For Lacan, subject is alienated in language. But this alienation is based on a certain form of acceptance of the symbolic law. One of the purposes of psychoanalysis is to reveal the linguistic dependence of the subject:

> Psycho-analysis is neither a *Weltanschauung*, nor a philosophy that claims to provide the key to the universe. It is governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject. It poses this notion in a new way, by leading the subject back to his signifying dependence. (SEM XI: 77)

The aim of the psychoanalytic session is helping the subject to find its own way in the symbolic. This requires the acceptance of the Law

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[55] I know I am very close to the Popperian attacks against psychoanalysis. But I am not planning to repeat the same criticism. What I aim at is not to criticize Lacanian theory's all encompassing and never fallible nature. What I would like to underline for now is Lacan's introduction of some transcendent concepts in order to prevent such kind of criticisms.

which enables the socialization of the subject. The antipode for this dependent nature is the independent and non-domesticable real. Before the mirror stage, the infant is filled with excitement (jouissance) which is incompatible with and unacceptable by the social life. The socio-linguistic prohibition, in which the infant enters through castration, filters out jouissance which belongs to the real:

> We must keep in mind that jouissance is prohibited [*interdite*] to whoever speaks, as such-or, put it differently, it can only be said [*dite*] between the lines by whoever is a subject of the Law, since the Law is founded on that very prohibition. (EC: 696)

The surplus jouissance after this castration denotes the elements which seems to be non-linguistic and thus they are the subversive holes within this signifying dependence. On the other hand, it gives the dynamism required for the *mechanics* of desire. For Lacan, "[c]astration means that jouissance has to be refused in order to be attained on the inverse scale of the Law of desire." (EC: 700) Therefore, this filtration of the jouissance, this prohibition enables the desire to operate.

Let me continue with the castration as it is the operation that separates the real from the symbolic and at the same which creates the remainder, the leftover that is beyond the symbolization. The castration is the bridge between the ontological backbone of human life —the real— and the ontical-symbolic access of human beings to the world —the reality. But every idea of a bridge which links the two different realms raises the traditional problem of dualism: how could it be possible to bridge two different realms? Or if we translate the same question into Lacanese: how could it be possible to bridge two different realms such that one is *impossible* to symbolize and the other is the symbolic per se? Let me put it this way: due to Lacan, castration is a linguistic operation. It provides a linguistic prohibition which eliminates most of the parts of the unbearable and impossible jouissance. But if it is impossible, then how could the

castration have an access on it? I will come back to this question in a moment but first I will pose another one, which is the other side of this bridge, the effect of the symbolic on the real. For Lacan, jouissance itself is also caused by the signifier:

> I will say that the signifier is situated at the level of enjoying substance (*substance jouissante*). [...] The signifier is the cause of jouissance. Without the signifier, how could we even approach that part of the body? Without the signifier how could we center that something that is the material cause of jouissance. (SEM XX: 24)

This quote implies that the process of castration does not work only one way. But, how could it be true that jouissance itself is caused by the signifier? These paradoxical questions could only be answered by accepting that jouissance is the *name* of the pre-linguistic bodily instincts. This naming, is an answer to the requirement that is produced by the signification. As I have mentioned earlier, the signified, is just an effect of the chain of signifiers and it is also based on an imagined fullness –a fullness which is inexplicably beyond the reach of language. In other words, the fullness is an effect of the signification. Let me put it differently: this signification creates the imagination that there was a fullness of enjoyment once but it was lost. By the acceptance of jouissance as the *name* of a fullness, we also accept that, when we speak about the real, what we actually do is, speaking about its reduced, symbolized name, which is the imagined effect of a lost fullness. And when we speak about the bodily remainders of surplus jouissance, we accept that body can be interpreted like a text: the bodily symptoms are interpreted and body produces signifiers.

This raises one more problem: how can we combine this view with the idea that jouissance is something bodily? This is the final point that I am willing to discuss. The very idea of bodily enjoyment, the body filled with a certain energetic and libidinal flux is also another effect of

signification. So the non-linguistic domain is an effect of linguistic dynamism. As presented by the formula of the paternal metaphor, (see above , Formula 1) the very first feeling of fullness is pronounced as the desire-for-Mother and it is then replaced with the Name-of-the-Father. No matter whether there was a *real* real (a non-linguistic real), such a fullness is imagined as a result of acceptance of the Law of the symbolic register. But if we accept this view, then we should inevitably accept also that there is nothing beyond signification. It seems to be that even the impossible, the real, is also an effect of the signification.

Combining this conception of the real as an effect with the concept of castration, we can claim that there is no such a problem of dualism for Lacan. Because, castration castrates nothing, but it produces retroactively the effect of a loss —the loss of a fullness. There is nothing before castration, quite the contrary, castration is based on our linguistic incapability: we *cannot* pronounce certain things because of the prohibitive character of the socio-linguistic law. In other words, castration does not filter some of the non-linguistic elements. Indeed, it produces these non-linguistic elements as an effect.

This explanation seems to be contradictory with Lacan's conception of the real which is beyond symbolization. But if we look closely, what actually happens is a *symbolic existence* of the real, which means the existence as an effect of the signification: the effect creates the feeling that there is something beyond. The real only *exists* in language. There exists nothing in the real because, to exist is to exist in language. Right after we start naming the real, it loses its unique, singular being —no matter whether there is such a being or not— and becomes trapped in language like any other entities.

Therefore, my thesis that Lacan is a structuralist is rendered to be true for two reasons: first of all, there seems to be one structure in Lacan's

theory which is the linguistic one.[56] The non-linguistic structure is also based on the signification. Secondly, the Lacanian subject does not have any chance to escape from this determined structural network of the signifiers. Therefore, there is not any place for an autonomous subject in Lacan's theory. [57]

The difference between the linguistic and the non-linguistic elements —which do not exist— can be compared with Heidegger's division between ontical and ontological in *Being and Time*.(Heidegger, 1962, §§ 3-4) In order to grasp this we have to divide the real into two pieces: *the real real* and *the symbolic real*.[58] The real real is the amorphous formless backbone of the entities which stands for the ontological side of the subject. On the other hand, the symbolic real belongs to the ontical which is in the symbolic realm in which a lost fullness is produced by the effect of signification.

The problem whether Lacan is a structuralist or not still persists as there is a real, the *real* real which is beyond the reach of the symbolic articulation. It may or may not leave some areas of freedom for the subject. And depending on that result, Lacan might still be a structuralist or not. In the next section, I will continue dealing with this problem. In order to gain a better understanding of the enigmatic nature of the *real* real, I will use the early Wittgensteinian separation between "saying" and "showing". It seems that there must be a way of investigating the real real without reducing it to the symbolic and perhaps Wittgenstein of *Tractatus* might be

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[56] As I will prove, there is also a meta-structure in which all the three registers are placed.

[57] Before settling down these as final claims on Lacan, I would like to focus one the same question from another point of view in a moment.

[58] Bruce Fink poses a similar interpretation in his seminal *The Lacanian Subject*: "We can think of the real as being *progressively symbolized* in the course of a child's life, less and less of that 'first,' 'original' real (call it R_1) being left behind, though it can never all be drained away, neutralized, or killed. *There is thus always a remainder which persists alongside the symbolic*." (Fink, 1995 26-7)

helpful for analyzing such an enigmatic non-linguistic entity.

4.2. The real can only be shown

Wittgenstein in *Tractatus* distinguishes two acts of saying and showing: "What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application says clearly." (*Tractatus*, 3.262) This distinction for Wittgenstein is based on the very idea of the logical demonstration. "[L]ogical form or structure is revealed not by the way signs look or sound, not by what is conventional, but by their *application*." (Mounce, 1981: 129) Logical propositions for Wittgenstein show their senses by the very applications of them (*Tractatus*, 4.022) and they say nothing as they are tautologies. (*Tractatus*, 6.1 and 6.11).

Before proceeding with the details of the similarities between the concepts of saying and showing and Lacan's structural theory[59], I would like to underline some of the similarities between Wittgenstein and Saussure, which are pointed out by Newton Garver:

> In spite of [their] differences, Wittgenstein and Saussure have in common a descriptive approach; a conception of meaning and other linguistic significance as arbitrary (not determined or required for this or that linguistic form by external reality); and a presupposition that the meaning or significance of an expression depends on its place in a system, and in particular on its contrasts with other expressions in the system. (Garver, 1996: 152)

Besides these, probably another point of similarity of Wittgenstein not with Saussure, but with structuralist approach to the reality, is the correspondence between the world and the linguistic form. Both the

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[59] Lacan never mentions the name of Wittgenstein in almost 900 pages of his *Écrits*. In his *Seminar I*, only once there is a reference to Wittgenstein. (SEMI: 259n6) And this reference is to the *Philosophical Investigations*, § 32 which is not illuminating. There are not any references also in his other translated seminars.

structuralists and Wittgenstein tried to find out the formal structure behind the reality through analyzing the structures or logical forms behind language.

Garver reports several differences but one of them is perhaps the most interesting one for our purpose. As I have mentioned previously, for Saussure, the object of linguistic study is *langue*, not *parole*. He gives priority to the formal and static background over the dynamic usage of language. By this, he segregates the linguistic domain from the non-linguistic human activity. On the other hand, for Wittgenstein[60], language games and language are interwoven, thus there is no segregation between parole and langue. (Garver, 1996: 151-2) This isolatedness of langue from parole or "stream of life" is overcome by Lacan with at least two concepts: the button ties and the symbolic law. The former is the signifying action which enables a certain form of individual point of view or decision to enter into the signification.[61] The latter imposes on an agreement to the ones who accept this law.

If we return back to our initial position on Wittgenstein's conceptual separation between saying and showing, we will find more similarities between Lacan and Wittgenstein. For Wittgenstein, logical propositions do not say anything and that is why we are interested in them. Such an investigation of the formal structure of language will reveal the formal structure of the world. (Fogelin, 1995: 86-7) The crucial thing about *Tractatus* is that in it Wittgenstein tries to find a way of showing the logical structure of reality which is unspeakable. This is one possible interpretation of *Tractatus*.

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[60] Obviously it is the later Wittgenstein.

[61] One should always be cautious about the word "individual" as for Lacan, there is no individuality without the symbolic register. Therefore, when I use the word individual, it is the imagined ego that I mean.

Such a view that an unspeakable but showable form of reality should be accepted and passed with silence is criticized by Cora Diamond and she names this type of an interpretation as "chickening out interpretation." For her, such a distinction, is one of the ladders of Wittgenstein, which we should throw away, after climbing it up:

> If you read the *Tractatus* this way, you think that, after the ladder is thrown away, you are left holding on to some truths about reality, while at the same time denying that you are actually *saying* anything about reality. Or, in contrast, you can say that the notion of something true of reality but not sayably true is to be used only with the awareness that it itself belongs to what has to be thrown away. One is not left with it at the end, after recognizing what the *Tractatus* has aimed at getting one to recognize. (Diamond, 1996: 182)

Discussing the coherence of Diamond's interpretation is beyond the scope of this work. But what is crucial for us is the tension between two views. One says that there are some facts about reality which cannot be represented. The others say that this is just a ladder and the acceptance of it will end up with nonsense. No matter which one is true, for both of the cases, there is a separation between saying and showing: the former is, in Lacanese, based on the use of language, the latter, on the contrary, is based on the effects of the use of language. The *effect* of signification and the structural relationship of signifiers reveal what cannot be expressed by signifiers. Returning to *Tractatus*, the similarities are striking:

> [...] What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent. What expresses *itself* in language, *we* cannot express by means of language.[...] (4.121)

The italicized "itself" implies a certain inexplicable truth, which is an unconcealment of certain facts about the reality by the effect of our use of language and can only be shown. On the other hand, there is our subjective relation with language, which delimits the realm of the sayable. The sayable is the limit of language, and the showable is the real, the logical (Wittgenstein) or ontological (Lacan) backbone of this linguistically

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formed reality.

If something escapes from symbolization, although it cannot be said, its lack, the incapability of language and the reason for this elusion can be shown. This is what Lacan handles in his combination of psychoanalysis with linguistics. The real can be *shown* through the fissures in the symbolic. What are these fissures? They are the fallacies that we are faced with and the rhetorical tools that we use while speaking and writing like "[p]eriphrasis, hyperbaton, ellipsis, suspension, anticipation, retraction, negation, digression, and irony [... and also] catachresis, litotes, antonomasia [...]." (EC: 433) These are used consciously or unconsciously in order to keep one away from saying certain things. For Lacan, if we cannot say something (i.e. we repress a feeling) we use something else for denoting its absence. Therefore these replacements or the fissures *show* the exact location where we can find the real which is the repressed truth of our symbolic reality. Similarly Wittgenstein mentions about these which are beyond language and he denotes them as mystical:

> There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into words. They *make themselves manifest*. They are what is mystical. (6.522)

But once again, it seems that we are back to the previously discussed dualism between the pre-linguistic domain of the real (jouissance) and the linguistic domain of the imaginary and the symbolic. As I reported that the real is a symbolic construct, but there is still more which is the real real, the unspeakable real which is pre-linguistic and the problem is that of *showing* it. The above mentioned fissures belong to the *real* real which is inexpressible but can be shown through the inconsistencies, discrepancies and ruptures in our use of language.[62] The

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[62] Therefore there is a main difference with Wittgenstein. Lacan focuses on the use of language in order to point out the unspeakable; on the other hand, what Wittgenstein proposes is a survey on the logical form of language which will give us the form of the

real, if I use Wittgensteinese, makes itself manifest and it is mystical. Wittgenstein adds "[w]hat *can* be shown, *cannot* be said." (4.1212) Therefore, Wittgenstein never tries to bridge the unbridgeable. His warning which delimits what is philosophy and what is not[63], is the subject-matter of the next section. I will discuss the Lacanian decision of continuing to speak about the unspeakable in the next section.

4.3. Lacan never stops

Showing or thinking beyond the boundaries is one of the major problems for both Kant and Wittgenstein. As Joachim Schulte reports, "[i]nsight into limits is not something that can be communicated straight out. It is obtained only at the end of a path paved with senseless elucidations." (Schulte, 1992: 66)

Wittgenstein's ladder cannot be found in Lacan's works. It is true that his seminars are mostly like psychoanalytic sessions and Lacan expects certain transformations on the audiences. He never explains the facts about his theory in a simplified manner. Therefore, his work might be a ladder, but it is never something which should be thrown away. His teaching itself reveals itself slowly to the ones who suffer from his endless puns and puzzles. This is the main difference of Lacan from Wittgenstein. Wittgenstein never tries to explicate the unspeakable by using rhetorical tools. On the other hand, Lacan never stops writing and speaking about the unspeakable. In this section, I will deal with this difference.

Wittgenstein delimits what is sayable from within language and he asserts that he is faithful to this limit by not writing about the beyond of this limit. In a letter to his publisher, Ludwig von Ficker, he claims that the most

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reality.

[63] "[Philosophy] will signify what cannot be said, by presenting clearly what can be said." (4.115)

important part of his work is based on these unwritten parts:

> [...] my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one. For the ethical is delimited from within, as it were by my book; and I'm convinced that, *strictly* speaking, it can only be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: all of that which *many* are babbling today, I have defined in my book by being silent about it. (Quoted in Fogelin, 1995: 99)

This quotation gives us more idea about the difference between Wittgenstein and Lacan on their views on the limits of language. Former speaks about logic and propositions when he focuses on the relation between reality and language and the latter mostly focuses on the structure of our everyday language and its uses. One major difference between them is Wittgenstein seems to be *faithful* to the limits of language that he has set. Lacan on the other hand, although is aware of the dangers of trying to transgress the boundaries, suffers from finding new ways of analyzing the relationships between the real and the other two registers.

Lacan introduces his infamous references to topology and mostly to the *Borromean knots* in order to explore the relationships between the three orders. As mentioned previously, this new topological scheme maintains the dialectics between the three registers. Lacan's dilemma here is the fact that the only access to these three registers is through language. There is no way to encounter with the real immediately unless one is a psychotic. This prohibits anyone, even Lacan from conceptually investigating the real. The real real is there, but that is it. If we use Wittgenstein's famous formula, "[w]hat we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence." (Tractatus, 7.) But *Lacan never stops.* He introduces new concepts in order to conceptualize the "nature" of the real in its fullness. He suffers from finding a way that will allow the real to be *represented* in language or another way by which one may speak the *language* of the real. This paradoxical endeavor ends up with the

introduction of the concept of "sinthome" which I touched previously.

The word sinthome is based on a pun on *synth-homme* –which implies an artificial self-creation- and *saint homme* –implying a new way of using human language. For Lacan, James Joyce found a way of using language through which the symbolic order is invaded "by the subject's private jouissance." (Evans, 2003: 190) The sinthome is denoted by a fourth ring which is added to the Borromean knot and which links the other three in such a way that the detachment of any of them would be recovered. Lacan uses the symbol "Σ" for the sinthome. It is a term which functions in order "to repair, mend, correct, or restore a fault in the knot R.S.I." (Milovanovic, 2004: 373)

The most important point here is not the term sinthome but the reason it is introduced. Lacan tries to find out a way of unconcealing the real. Same can be found in Lacan's introduction of the term *extimacy*[64] for denoting the Other inside us. So Lacanian edifice does not allow any unknowns.

Another strange concept is the "foreclosure". It denotes a certain function by which an element which is foreclosed in the symbolic returns back to the real. It is a process that can be observed in psychotics. The foreclosure of one unique signifier may end up with a loss of all signification. (SEM III: 203) This has a resemblance with the repression in neurosis, but in neurosis, although some of the signifiers are repressed they can still be metaphorically signified. But in case of the psychosis, the reality is totally lost as the foreclosed signifier organizes the whole network of signifiers. For example, "the Name-of-the-Father" —which is crucial for the entrance into the symbolic order— may be foreclosed. As the father is "irreducible to any type of imaginary conditioning" (SEM III: 316), it is

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[64] Another Lacanian pun based on the words "external" and "intimacy".

impossible to be replaced. And as it is the law of signification, the whole symbolic register collapses:

> What is perceptible in the phenomenon of everything that takes place in psychosis is that it is a question of the subject's access to a signifier as such and of the impossibility of that access.[...] After the encounter, the collision, with the inassimilable signifier, it has to be reconstituted, since this father cannot be simply a father, a rounded-out father, the ring of just before, the father who is the father for everybody. (SEM III: 321)

The foreclosed and lost Name-of-the-Father which is the law of signification cannot be replaced with something else, as the foreclosed one is the point of interaction to the society and reality.

In Lacan's theory, there are foreclosures which appear in the real, there are sinthomes which link the three orders, there is also jouissance which is filtered out by castration. This is crucial and symptomatic as in Lacan's theory, every unknown is somehow and someway sorted, linked to language and finally become an area of research. The dualism between the real and language cannot be resolved through a separation of the real into two different parts (the real real and the symbolic real). Lacan still requires more to provide justification for his investigations on the *real* real.

Every time Lacan writes about "jouissance", "the real", "sinthome", "foreclosure" and "topology of the three registers", he seems to be transgressing the boundaries of not only the knowable, but also the thinkable and sayable. But it would be an exaggeration to assert that Lacan's approach to the real is *illegitimate* and fallacious. Lacan is driven by the desire to overcome the incompatibility between the *real* real and its interaction with the symbolic realm. He never followed Wittgenstein's way of keeping silence on the unspeakable. There was only one way left for him which was the way of Gödel. If we re-interpret Gödel's

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accomplishment, we will have the following: A separation and a non-correspondence —or disharmony— between the real (semantics) and the symbolic (syntax) is proven by following the formal way of axiomatic system. In other words, the impossibility of the Truth to be said in the formal language is proven within the limits of the formal system. That is why, especially in his later works, Lacan deliberately pursued a formal language by the introduction of "mathemes".

Therefore, he seems to find a way of formulating the tunnel like structure of the lack: a tunnel which connects the ontical to the ontological—or the linguistic to the non-linguistic. It organizes the linguistic realm and it behaves exactly like any other signifier: it signifies the tunnel to the real. Therefore the lack signifies a lack in language and it is in language.

Lacan's theory is formalized by clearing of any content from the elements. For example, he names the symbolic law as "the name-of-the-Father" which is mistakenly criticized by feminists as denoting the law of the real paternal order. But his use of the term is totally content free. The ordinary meaning of the word "Father" is irrelevant with the Lacan's use of the term. It just denotes the signifier which organizes the symbolic order. It also both names the subject and prohibits the desire-of-the-mother. The bar on the subject is put there by the Name-of-the-Father. Lacan by using such a name alludes a continuity with the Freudian Oedipus complex. Similarly the desire-of-the-mother is also emptied from its content and denotes the mythical pre-linguistic unity of an infant. The symbolic father can be anything which introduces itself as a law to the infant and the symbolic mother is everything that the infant is tied up with before the acceptance of the law of the father. The desire-of-mother does not have anything to do with the real mother. For an orphan, these concepts work exactly the same way as they do for the other infants. In that case, the Name-of-the-Father is stuffed by somebody else, not by the real father,

but say the manager of the orphanage or the other elderly kids. As I have mentioned previously, if the Name-of-the-Father is foreclosed, in other words, if there is not any prohibitive signifier that replaces the desire-for-the-mother then this loss ends up with psychosis.

Such a formalism can be found also in Lacan's formulation for the desire. This formulation and its mechanics is totally independent from the content or the object of the desire. We desire things and when we have them, we are frustrated and we desire for other things. And similarly, the *intensities* of desire are not also taken into consideration for this formulation. Also the cultural differences are ignored and for Lacan, human beings behave exactly the same way no matter what their individual or cultural differences are. It is true that for different individuals, the contents of these *variables* may change, but the exact relationship of the elements remain same. [65]

I would like to return back to the question of non-linguistic elements. Such a formalism, I think, ends up with the elimination of any non-linguistic elements by certain reductions. If the existence of them are proven by a certain formal determination, therefore what we have is not the real real, once again we only could deal with the symbolic reduction of the real: the symbolic real. Therefore, *Lacanian theory is a reductionist theory.*[66]

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[65] I would like to criticize such a formalism for two reasons: first of all, Lacan's mimetic adoption of Gödel's work is illegitimate. His work is not based on axioms and formal rules. Therefore, what Gödel achieved in mathematics could not be repeated in psychoanalysis. My second point is on the content free structures. Such structures could not be empirically tested. No matter what happens, the relational schema between the elements remain same and their descriptive power could never be questioned. I will come back to this subject later.

[66] Lacan's use of Gödel's argumentation does not work for a separation between the non-linguistic and linguistic domains. As for Gödel, there are not any non-linguistic realms. The semantic domain, since Tarski, is meta-linguistically constructed but it is still linguistic.

In the next section, I would like to discuss one of the inconsistencies of Lacanian psychoanalysis which is its rejection of representationalism on the one hand, and on the other hand, falling into the traps of representationalism.

4.4. Lacan's linguistic theory is a representational theory.

It was Saussure who neglected any form of representationalism by clearing of parole and any referents to the world from the linguistic studies. Then Lacan radicalized that view with a bar between the signifier and the signified. This bar gives a primacy to the signifier. Saussure once rejected any reference to the world in his linguistic analyses, and Lacan rejected even the concept of the sign, any reference to the signified or the conceptual side of the sign also. Therefore in Lacan's theory, there is a double rejection of the representation. In this section, I will elaborate on such a rejection of representationalism by the structuralist tradition.

I think, the problem with structuralism is in the claim that we access the world by language. As we access the world by language we construct the world through the linguistic structures. If we focus on the practical results of this statement, they seem to be exactly the same with the results of the statement that language represents the world. In the former, there is the primacy of the construction, and in the latter, there is not any construction, but instead, there is a correspondence or transparency between the world and language. In spite of their differences, if we go into details of the former view, we will come to a point that may provide support for my claim that structuralism is a form of representationalism. If language is detached from the reality and considered as something which has its own rules and if we claim that we construct reality by it, then at the end, what we have is the world constructed by language. This means that there is a correspondence

between reality and language in this theory also.[67]

One may claim that for Lacan, there is the non-linguistic realm of the real which prevents him from falling into the representationalism. But as I reported in the previous sections of this chapter, there are two important facts about the real: there is a symbolic real which is an effect of signification. This is a real which is produced by our symbolic incapability. On the other hand, there is also a real real which is beyond the reach of the symbolic. But its existence is also proven by the symbolic in a Gödelian manner. If we use the model-theoretical analogy, it is the meta-linguistic realm of Truth. But as I have mentioned, it is still in language.

Therefore, both the symbolic and real real are bounded by the symbolic. The real in general is *determined* by the symbolic: we either produce it by and within the limits of the symbolic or the being of it is demonstrated by the symbolic. In both of the cases, there is the reality which is constructed by language and there is a non-linguistic real which is determined, controlled and supported by language. Therefore, for Lacan, language represents both the reality and the real. The real is represented by the lack, or if we use Heidegger's words, it is present as an absence and also language entails the real real. Therefore the real is represented in all its aspects: by its absence, by its elusive character and by its non-linguistic properties.

One may criticize my views as if I am abusing the definition of representationalism. Lacan criticized presumed perfect harmony between the signifier and the signified, the world and language. Due to him, this harmony is something imaginary.[68] Therefore, for Lacan,

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[67] Therefore when I pointed out the similarities between Wittgenstein of *Tractatus* with Lacan in the previous sections, it was not by chance.

[68] As I have previously noted, this is exactly the same presupposed harmony between the signifier and the signified.

representationalism is the belief that there is a perfect harmony between these realms or mainly between the world and language. This view seems to contradict my conception of representationalism. But once again, if we accept that reality is a construct of language, we assert there is a harmony (a constructed harmony) between the world and language. This is the impasse of Lacan's theory: he asserts that the disharmony is inevitable on the one hand, and on the other, he tries to put together a perfect theory on this disharmony. He harmoniously locates the symbolic, the imaginary and the real in a perfectly coordinated system of thought. All of these three realms are represented and there he leaves no gap between his theory and the world it constructs and investigates.

Let me put it from a different point of view. For Lacan, every theoretical approach to the world forgets one thing: the symbolic access to the world produces a gap between language and the world and this gap is inevitable. Lacan's theory belongs to the symbolic also. Therefore his theory should also produce gaps. But his theory even asserts statements on the inevitability of this very gap. As I asserted previously, he never stops at the borders.

His theory belongs to the symbolic and it reflects on the symbolic, the imaginary and the real also. Lacan's theory is based on a certain self-reflectional capability. Now, the crucial point of my attack is based on a logical consequence from Lacan's writings: if Lacan's system belongs to the symbolic, there must be a real at somewhere and this real must be represented metaphorically in his system. But Lacan's theory is a perfect one, which, in a Popperian sense, does not allow any falsification or symptoms. Lacan attains this perfection by clearing out the contents from his theory: He aimed at having a theory which is based on pure form. By that way, there will not be any contents which create the gaps of representation. Therefore, Lacan's theory is supposed to represent the

formal structure behind the human psyche.

In the next section I will examine this perfection: a perfection which even seems to entail its own impasses. I will play with the Lacanian themes in order to put together a defense against my own critical comments on him.

4.5. Lacan's system is self-critical

In this section I will defend that this very perfection of Lacan's theory is the symptomatic appearance of the unrepresented. The perfection entails inconsistencies as I mentioned in the previous sections and these inconsistencies are, if we use Lacanese, due to our symbolic incapability. Even Lacan and his theory are not exempt from such attacks.

Lacan tried to represent the unrepresentable and this ends up with the symptomatic appearance of the contradictory and unexpected fact that his claim on disharmony does not fit in his theory. The disharmonious thing in his theory therefore is the perfect harmony he insists on. In other words, the disharmony in his theory is his assertion that there is always a disharmony between the world and its linguistic access. This latter claim asserts a harmony between the Lacanian theory and the world. Therefore it asserts a harmony which is unacceptable by itself. In other words, Lacan's theory provides enough support for even its own inconsistency in order to prove its very initial claim that there is an intrinsic disharmony between the world and its representation.

Now it is time to compare Lacan's theory with Gödel's first incompleteness theorem. It should be clear now that the real seems to stand for the Tarskian type of model theoretical definition of Truth. It requires a meta-language. Such a separation between the semantics and provability can also be found in Lacan's work. The symbolic –with the help

of imaginary may be- seems to hold for the proof-theoretical side of his framework. On the other hand, the real seems to fit in the realm of truth values. As model theory generally "deals with the relations of language to reality it can represent", (Hintikka, 2000: 17), Lacan's system seems to have similarities with the problematics of logic and foundations of mathematics.

One main point that can be used for attacking Lacan is the truth that psychoanalysis is not mathematics and the results that were proved by Gödel cannot be legitimately used in the field of psychoanalysis. But we should be careful at asserting such a claim as Lacan was quite aware of this truth. This is just an inspiration that Lacan gets from Gödel's results. Although he advised such a mathematization of psychoanalysis, not him, but one of his students, Badiou sets an isomorphism between ontology and set theory. In Lacan's work, there is not such an isomorphism, but there exists only similarities and the influence of the creativity of Gödel's work.

In this chapter, I tried to provide a closer reading of Lacan's work and tried to pin down some weakest points of his theory. As I have mentioned, it seems that, his formalization of psychoanalysis provides him a bullet proof system. There are several points that I disclosed: the representationalism, the linguistic reductionism and finally the harmony as the discrepancy of the system. These were the general problems of his theoretical edifice and mostly based on Lacan's methodology and definitions. In the next chapter, I will focus on mostly three major points of his theory: the signifier, the structure and finally the subject.

CHAPTER 5

PROBLEMS OF LACANIAN THEORY OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

In this chapter I will deal with the problems of Lacanian theory. First of all, I will discuss the idealization of the signifier. I believe that such an idealization restricts Lacanian theory, in a sense that certain non-linguistic and non-structural effects are ignored in it. Such a restriction could be seen in Lacanian ethics which is an ethics without a morality.

Another point that I will touch in this chapter is the formalism of Lacanian theory which is also based on the idealized conception of the signifier. I will discuss the consequences of such a formalism. This approach, as I will try to put together, ignores the richness of the practical use of language. In our everyday relationship with language, we do not use neutral and semantically equal signifiers. What we use do have ups and downs, closer and farther ones. In other words, language that we use does not consist of a homogenous set of equal signifiers.

My purpose of writing this chapter is pointing out the major shortcoming of Lacanian theory which is its ignorance of the practical use of language and certain effects which is based on the non-linguistic side of the human life. Language is not by itself an isolated realm. It is a product of human activities. Therefore, any theory based on purely linguistic elements misses the most important part of human praxis or the power of human creativity on the production of the linguistic relationships.

5.1.On the neutrality of the signifier:

For Lacan, Human beings' encounter with the world is through language and language is based on the logic of signifiers. Although there

are some exceptional and non-linguistic factors affecting the signification process—like the leftovers of the castration— for Lacan, the primary element of this process is the signifier. He considers the signifier as an idealized neutral element, detached from its content (the signified) and which works only by signifying the other signifiers. What is neutrality? It is the presumed equality of the signifiers.

Therefore, for Lacan, in the world of signifiers, there are not any hierarchies, classes, types, ups and downs, external or transcendent characteristics or properties. No matter what the signifying chain produces as the meaning effect, the process of signification works exactly the same way. As there are not any referents, there are not also any measures for the values or the roles of signifiers in the signification process. They exist *homogenously* in language. In other words, they have equal values regarding their usage in language.[69]

For Lacan's theory, such a presupposed homogeneity of signifiers is necessary as otherwise, there would be an other of the Other —the meta-linguistic position which decides on the values and properties of the signifiers. Such an other of the Other will contradict the whole Lacanian edifice. Let me put it this way: there is only one unique relationship between the signifiers which is the purely neutral operation of the differentiation. It is purely neutral as it does not have any presupposed or intended rules which will determine the differences. The operation of differentiation just differs the signifiers from the others. It only inscribes the property of "being different from" to the signifiers.

On the other hand, in order to *inscribe* any other properties — beyond "being different from"— on the signifier, there is a need for a meta-

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[69] There are some special signifiers which consist of certain dominative properties like "the Name-of-the-Father" but their existence is so rare which does not cover the dynamics of our use of language.

linguistic measure which determines these *extra* properties of the signifier. Either the signifier is neutrally determined by differentiation in which there are not any differences between the signifiers except the purely abstract property of "being different from" or the signifier is defined positively by the external properties determined at least up to some proportion by the non-linguistic effects. In short, either the purely abstract *same* neutrality of the signifiers is accepted or the signifier should be reconsidered with the intervention of the non-linguistic effects in such a way that there will not be such an homogeneity between them. In the former, the signifier is identified by its difference from the others, in the latter, the signifier requires something more in order to be identified. The former is in a sense assumes a negative identity, and the latter is based on positive determinants having effects on the signification process.

Lacan chooses the former. In this view, the signifier needs the other signifiers in order to be identified.[70] In order to explicate the uses of such an identification process, I would like to use an example from Žižek:

> [...] the first step towards the identity of the nation is defined through differences from other nations, via an external border: if I identify myself as an Englishman, I distinguish myself from the French, German, Scots, Irish, and so on. (FTK: 110)

Therefore, there is not any essence of being an Englishman. It requires the others in order to set its own identity. This entails a dependence to the whole structure: in order to identify a signifier, the whole structure and its structural relationships should be considered.

Considering this intrinsic gesture of differentiation, one should answer the question that how could it be possible for one to differentiate

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[70] This puts down the traditional identity principle, "a=a" as the identity is based on the difference from the others. I will come back to this problem in a moment.

the different *possible* identities from each other as they do not have any external properties. There must be something which produces a set, say the set of nations, and also that something must produce a differentiating effect of the signifiers. For Lacan, all of these are determined within the domain of signifiers. The symbolic order is the only order that has influence on the signification process.

In Saussure's terminology, a signifier is the sound image. Lacan enlarged this definition which encapsulates the written text also. But in both of the cases, there is still a need for tools of separating the signifiers from each other during a speech. In other words, when someone talks, what is the mechanism which enables the listener to recognize, identify and organize the signifiers. I will come back to this problem which I call as "the problem of separation" in a moment. Right now, what I would like to continue with is examining the signification process with the neutral signifiers.

First let me start with the question of signification of certain properties. In the above mentioned example, in the use of language, some of the signifiers should be designated as elements of some properties. (i.e. the set of nations) As an addition to these, in order to be identified with the signifier "Englishman" one needs more than just the neutral signifiers of other nations. There are feelings against French, German, Scots and there is some sympathy towards say Americans. All of these feelings are linked to certain historical facts which have a determinant role on the symbolic order. Whenever an Englishman enters into the game of identification, he starts form the set of nations, some nations are closer to the signifier "Englishman" and some are far from that. Therefore, the signifying system is not only based on difference but there are other relations which are required. These relations arrange, make available and introduce certain signifiers and they also inscribe certain properties on the signifiers.

Therefore, although all of the signifiers in the symbolic order seem to be equal—regarding their intrinsic values— or homogenously distributed, there are unequal relations between them. The crucial point here is whether or not these relations are caused by non-linguistic realms.

What I am trying to underline here is, although Lacan repudiates the existence of any non-linguistic domains —with the exception of the impossible real— having effects on the signification process, there are several of them. A Lacanian would probably answer this question in the following way: every property assignment and every attempt of including some of the signifiers under a set, every classification are all signifying processes. They could basically be attained by the signifiers: one signifier may produce the effect of a set or a property, and another signifier may signify the elements of that set and so on. Therefore, Lacan's idea that a signifier signifies only another signifier still holds without any appeal for meta-linguistic realms. And one may also add that the so called meta-linguistic domains are also under the determinate power of the symbolic. For example the economic structure is still in the symbolic as the classes, means of production, resources are all linguistic entities as we access them through language and therefore they still belong to the reality.

Such a view entails a certain form of homogeneity based on an ideal evenness between the signifiers regarding their values and locations within language. A signifier may have certain properties which may seem to separate it from the other ones, but as this separation is just a difference, a difference which exists in all of the signifiers as a property, indeed it does not make *a real difference*.

Let me continue with the other side of the algorithm which is the imaginary identity of the ego. In the above mentioned example, the individual imaginarily mis-recognizes himself as an Englishman. This decision is based on two conditions: (i) the whole set of signifiers available

at hand determines the possible decision of the individual and (ii) the imaginary decision. Therefore, even the imaginary decision is bounded by signifiers.

Let me give an example in order to explicate this conclusion. When a Turkish nationalist starts a talk on national identity, the closest ones for his or her use would most likely be "Turk", "Greek", "Arab" etc. This *closeness* is based on the discourse of the Other. Therefore some signifiers are *more available* than the others for the use of the individual. In another condition, say in a talk about the history of Turks, for the same person, the set of the "closest" nations for his use would easily be "Chinese", "Mongolian" etc. And as I have shown, the availability of these signifiers is not based on some non-linguistic effects. The neutrality of the signifiers encompasses the whole linguistic domain. The imaginary decision is determined by certain properties which are still signified by the signifiers. I feel closer to identifying myself as a Turk because there are certain signifiers which are signifying my location in the symbolic order as a Turk.

Still I am back to our starting point. As there are only neutral signifiers without any intervention of the non-linguistic effects, then how could I choose among the whole infinite set of the signifiers? Why at some cases an individual is put before a set of signifiers and another one is not?

It is therefore obvious that accepting a certain neutrality of the signifiers entails a conception of the ego/subject which is lost in language. Every identification process is shaped and bounded by the signification process and if there is a certain neutrality of the signifiers, therefore there would not be any material difference between choosing one identity or the other. If every signifier has the same value, or if their values are determined by other signifiers, therefore there would not be any possible way of criticizing any decision that human beings have already made.

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The dilemma I am trying to point out in the Lacanian theory is either accepting the external factors on the formation of the socio-linguistic discourse which means accepting the existence of the other of the Other, or with a theory of the neutral signifiers, there would not be any possible critical stance against any identities or decisions. As I will discuss in a moment, Lacan as a psychoanalyst chooses the latter in order to keep an ethical distance against the analysand.

The problem of the neutrality of the signifier is caused by the fact that structuralism gets rid of history and referentiality in order to grasp the structural backbone of language. Such an abstraction is necessary in order to analyze certain aspects of the linguistic realm. Saussure, deliberately neglects the use of language as a human praxis in order to focus on the relationships between the elements of language.

Similarly, Lacan tries to find out the structural functioning of the unconscious by studying linguistics. He tries to bring back the neglected practical side of the use of language by the introduction of the Other as the social dimension of language and the imaginary as the individual's access of it. At the level of the Other, language still works exactly the same way: there are only signifiers and signifiers signify other signifiers. Lacanian theory misses the chance to give explanation on the facts that how do we chose one signifier instead of the other, how do we decide on the button ties and how do we relate the temporality of our use of language with the structural backbone of language. The neutrality enables Lacan and Saussure to understand the general framework and structural relationships of linguistic elements, but this does not suffice analyzing language as a human product. In other words, they only focus on the structural effects of language on human beings but that structure is for sure produced by them also.[71]

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[71] Such a critique of Saussurean linguistics can be found in the works of the members of

Therefore, the neutrality of the signifier is a presupposition required by Lacan in order to limit his theory. Such a limitation ends up with a restricted version of the social dimension of the unconscious: the social only acts upon signifiers and there are not any non-linguistic dynamics allowed to intervene in the Lacanian theory or the ones which intervene are considered as linguistic entities.

This restriction enables Lacan to hold a theory which is indifferent to the social dimension which will complicate the formulations of his theory uselessly. This can also be found in Saussure's separation between langue and parole and similarly diachrony and synchrony. Langue and synchrony are purified from the uncontrollable factors of historical (diachrony) and practical changes in the content of the linguistic form. Ricoeur summarizes such a reduction:

> As is well known, the language [langue]-speech [parole] distinction is the fundamental distinction which gives linguistics a homogenous object; speech belongs to physiology, psychology, and sociology, whereas language [langue], as rules of the game of which speech is the execution, belongs only to linguistics. As is equally well known, linguistics consider only systems of units devoid of proper meaning, each of which is defined only in terms of its difference from all of the others. (Ricoeur, 1991: 52)

Therefore, Lacan limits his theory within the boundaries of individual's encounter with the social. The intrinsic problems of the society are considered only if they appear as signifiers in the symbolic. Understanding the social structure will help the analysand to understand the analysand's unconscious. But this does not mean that in a psychoanalytic theory, there is a need for explanatory theses on the

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Bakhtin circle. (see especially Vološinov, 1996) For them, there is always the effect of ideology in communication. They reject Saussure's sharp distinction between the diachronic and synchronic sides of language. (Vološinov, 1996: 81) Due to them, ideologies could be grasped in the sign. (Vološinov, 1996: 34)

formation of the society.

I will continue with focusing on the ethical dimension of Lacan's teaching. We will see, once again the restrictedness of Lacan's theory as his ethics is an ethics of analysis. It is not an ethical theory which has a morality in it. Quite the contrary, it still advises a formal stance to the analyst against the analysand. As we will see, this content-freeness entails an ethics which also assumes and idealized neutrality without any morality. In the next section, I will discuss the ethics of psychoanalysis in Lacan's teaching.

5.2. Ethics, identities and formalism:

Such a formal conceptualization of the human psyche inevitably ends up with a theory which eliminates any fluctuations caused by the changes in the content of the elements of the theory. Whatever the content of the desire (no matter what I desire and how much I desire) the logic of jouissance-objet petit a-desired object works exactly the same way. This allows me to direct some criticisms against Lacan which I will borrow from Hegel. Habermas singles out some of Hegel's criticisms launched at Kant's moral philosophy:

> (1) Hegel's objection to the *formalism* of Kantian ethics. Since the moral principle of the categorical imperative requires that the moral agent abstract from the concrete content of duties and maxims, its application necessarily leads to tautological judgments. (2) Hegel's objection to the *abstract universalism* of Kantian ethics. Since the categorical imperative enjoins separating the universal from the particular, a judgment considered valid in terms of that principle necessarily remains external to individual cases and insensitive to the particular context of a problem in need of solution. (3) Hegel's attack on the *impotence of the mere ought.* Since the categorical imperative enjoins a strict separation of 'is' from 'ought,' it necessarily fails to answer the question of how moral insight can be realized in practice. (4) Hegel's objection to the terrorism of *pure conviction*

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(Gessinnung). Since the categorical imperative severs the pure postulates of practical reason from the formative process of spirit and its concrete historical manifestations, it necessarily recommends to the advocates of the moral worldview a policy that aims at the actualization of reason and sanctions even immoral deeds, so long as they serve higher ends. (Habermas, 1993: 320-1)

I will walk through each one of these claims in order to reveal whether they are also applicable to Lacan or not. First one is on the formalism of Kantian categorical imperative. Although till now I have not discussed the ethical teachings of Lacan, this still seems to be relevant with Lacan's theory. As discussed in detail, Lacan's linguistic approach is based on abstractions and this inevitably ends up with the rejection of several cases in which the sense of the terms and the decisions taken are externally determined. Therefore, without any content, Lacanian theory seems to be tautologous. On the other hand, for the same reason and for the exclusion of the historical situations —by being blind to the diachronic side of language—the fourth criticism also holds for Lacan.

Such an abstraction from the content of parole and everydayness ends up with two separate results: (i) On the one hand, there is the deterministic structural relationships in which there is not any place for the autonomous subject. Every desire which may be considered as a starting point for a free-will is still caught in the determinism of the symbolic order. (ii) On the other hand, there is a contingency in its full sense of the word as all the elements of the structural system are emptied from the contents; they could be filled up with every kind of contents. These two results may seem contradictory but a close examination of them will reveal their causal link. The determinism of (i) is a content-independent (or structural) determinism by which *every possible content* is embraced.

Such an openness to different contents or content-independence is what I will call as a "contingency in determinism": the content of an

element can be freely filled (not by a free choice, but under the conditional restrictions of the symbolic order) and once it is filled, all the other elements could only be filled with these restrictions. Once the initial point is set, the system works in a deterministic manner while producing the causal links between the elements. For Lacanian psychoanalysis, everything can happen but the analyst would never be surprised.

5.2.1.Identities themselves or their causes:

If I go back to the neutrality of the signifiers, I should also add the consequences of such an approach. The neglectfulness of Lacan's theory to different types of relations between signifiers —as I have mentioned, like the relations of inequalities etc.— ends up with a certain blindness to the real causes of these contents. A Lacanian would focus on the existence of certain signifiers, but he or she would never try to grasp the forces beyond the limits of the symbolic or these forces are only considered as signifiers. Such a view is satisfactory for the psychoanalytic purposes. But as I will show in the following chapters, a political theory requires more.

There are determining power, class and stratification relations which have effects on the structure of the signifiers. Let me give an example: in every state in the world, there exists several identities and identity politics has become one of the most important subject-matters of political theory which focuses on the other forms of differences and the differentiating power intrinsic to the society. There are two possible ways of analyzing such differences: (i) focusing on the differences by excluding the real content of the elements. For such a view, identities are considered as authentic and fundamental entities. (ii) Another view which focuses on the causes of the production of the identities. For this view, an identity should be considered with the historical, political and social background which causes such a production. For such a view, there are not only one

type of relationship between the identities (i.e. the general relationship of being different). Instead of trying to explain the social through such a restricted conception of difference which does not say too much, this view explores the different forms of identity relationships without reducing them by excluding their contents. Thus this approach enables an analysis of the causes of these identities. The former view takes the identities as given, the latter criticizes this givenness as behind these identities, it posits the existence of other factors.

The former view fits better to Lacan, and as we will see, Badiou's theory has certain similarities with the latter[72]. For a Lacanian, every identity is based an imaginary gesture which is necessary for making sense of the incessant flux of signifiers. What matters for a Lacanian is not the force behind this decision. In other words, the cause of such an illusory identification is reduced under the traumas of childhood. Such a view has ethical impacts and I will deal with the ethical consequences of Lacanian theory.

5.2.2. Ethics of psychoanalysis:

If choosing an identity is just an illusory and necessary act, then it is impossible to find measures for critiquing these identities. The neutrality of the signifier entails a cold-blooded distancing: no matter what the content of the identity is, it works exactly the same way and as there is no other of the Other, it is impossible to assume an ethical position by which the acts within the symbolic could be criticized or judged.

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[72] As will be explicated, for Badiou and for Lacan also, identities are produced through the symbolic but there is always a Truth beyond them. One may interpret this view as a critique of the authenticity of the identities (the latter view). But at least for Lacan, it is not as the real is inaccessible. Therefore, identities cannot be criticized. But for Badiou, there is always a sameness which can be achieved and which will move one beyond the logic of identities. I will deal with these subjects within a moment.

Although Lacan's theory does not provide an ethics in the classical sense of the term, the job of the analyst is not judging the analyst by their decisions on their identities. Lacan deliberately excludes and reduces the non-structural causes of such decisions as he wants the analysts not to make ethico-political assertions during the analytic sessions. In psychoanalysis, there is no need for the ethical dimension by which the analysand can hold a true way of life. Lacanian theory is basically a clinical theory of psychoanalysis. For that reason, after moving beyond the traditional sense of ethics, Lacan separates the ethics of psychoanalysis into two: the ethics of the analyst and the ethics of the analysand. And the former, although is not based on norms or morality, still aims the analysand to find his or her own way in the life.

Lacan's seventh seminar is devoted to the ethics of psychoanalysis which was given between the years 1959 and 1960. He gives the reason of such an endeavor as follows:

> If we always return to Freud, it is because he started out with an initial, central intuition, which is ethical in kind. I believe it essential to emphasize that, if we are to understand our experience and animate it, and if we are not to lose our way and allow it to be degraded. That's the reason why I am tackling this subject this year. (SEM VII: 38)

Why and how could the psychoanalytic theory be related with the ethical problems? In Freud's work, the role of the *superego* is basically the reproduction of the moral constraints of the society in the psyche. It works as if it is like the agency of the morality. The general sufferings of the neurotics are mostly caused by the repression of their desires in order not to confront the superego. For Lacan, "[t]he status of the unconscious, which [...] is so fragile in the ontic plane, is ethical." (SEM XI: 33) Therefore within the limits of psychoanalysis, the ethical question is limited with the decision between the desire or the superego. And the analyst should always be careful as he or she has not the right to judge the truth

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or falsity of neither the superego, nor the desire of the analysand. The main concern of the analyst is doing what with this dilemma. For that reason, the ethical problem of the analysand is a technical problem for the analyst.

Generally, the claim that psychoanalysis has a normalizing, therefore disciplinary function on the individuals is based on the idea that analysts impose their and the society's moral values on the patients in order to normalize them. That is why Lacan advises the analysts to play the role of the dummy in order to be as neutral as possible to the analysand although he is aware that this is an idealized form of relationship which cannot be fully attained. But the main point that Lacan advises to the analysts in order to act in conformity with the psychoanalytic ethics is not to intervene in between the guilt and the desire of the analysand.

For Lacan, the traditional ethics have mostly focused on a conception of Good which is based on the pleasure principle. The pleasure principle organizes what is good for us and it mostly concentrates on the common interests of the society. On the other hand, there is a "beyond" of the pleasure principle in which the real and jouissance stands. For Lacan, the real causes of our desires are located in there. Therefore, the ethics of psychoanalysis should be freed from the collectivity of the pleasure principle and move towards the singularity of the real. In other words, ethics "is not about our function in the cosmos but about our relation to our own self-representation." (Rajchman, 1986: 46) We have the singularity of the real which is un-representable and the symbolic in which we require to represent ourselves as the cause of this un-representability. The ethics of psychoanalysis is located at the midst of this tension between language and the real.

The ethics of psychoanalysis is not based on any meta-linguistic

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or meta-structural elements. As mostly the psychoanalytic theory is based on the assumption that morality is pathogenic, the analyst should not borrow any external references to the Good or morality.

> Doing things in the name of the good, and even more in the name of the good of the other, is something that is far from protecting us not only from guilt but also from all kinds of inner catastrophes. To be precise it doesn't protect us from neurosis and its consequences. (SEM VII: 319)

Therefore Lacan's ethics is not an ethics with a morality but it is focused on the psychoanalytic technique. Although he criticized the traditional ethics, these are done in order to put together an ethics which is completely different both in its purpose and in its realm of application from the pleasure centered traditional ethics. Such a view is highly compatible with Lacan's conception of the idealized signifiers and structuralism. For instance, in a situation that the analysand feels guilt, there is no possible, meta-linguistic point of view that the analyst can judge the analysand or give him advises on what to do. Instead of that, the analysand should act as if he is the Other. This is the way of protecting the analyst from any disciplinary and normalizational processes.

Such a view which defends a dialogue between the ego and the subject of the analysand, and acting as the dummy might be helpful for the analyst to trace the desires of the analysand. The main question that should be answered by the analysand is "[h]ave you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?" (SEM VII: 314) Such an interrogation might be accepted as an ethical view which is not imposing any external norms on the analysand and seems to be feasible for the psychoanalytic purposes. On the other hand, such a view at the same time, leaves the traditional questions of ethics ("what is good?", "how to behave in order to be a decent person?" etc.) unanswered and beyond the scope of psychoanalysis.

In the next section, I will focus on Lacan's approach to the individual's relationship with the society. This will help us understanding the formational principles of Lacanian ethics of psychoanalysis.

5.2.3. The individual or the social:

If I use the terminology of hermeneutics, Lacan neither moves from part to whole, neither from whole to part. The crucial fact about his philosophy is, as I have mentioned previously, the boundary between the outside and the inside is blurred. That is one side of the truth. On the other hand, Lacan tries to limit his theory within the individual's psychic activities: although he introduces this idea of the blurred boundary, he always seeks the formulations of the individual life. He always starts from the side of the individual. He keeps a certain ignorance towards the external factors those are shaping the social dimension.

One may ask that if there is such an intertwining, therefore does it make any difference whether a theory starts from the individual or from the social. It makes a difference if the final point of this theory is still at the side of the individual. In other words, Lacan's theory ignores most of the fundamental factors acting on the formation of the society which is not required by his professional interests.

For the clinical approach, it does not matter whether an analysand is a racist, a macho, a pervert etc. The analyst should not approach to the analysand with certain critical presuppositions. The analysand should find his or her own way in facing with his or her desire and the relationship with the Other. In other words, one may end up with continuing his or her racist, macho or perversive tendencies at the end of the analytic relationship. The analyst should never bring any meta-linguistic facts for judging the analysts. This is what is *good* for the analyst.

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The other side of this relationship is the *health* of the society. Accepting the fact that the social has effects on the unconscious, there is also a responsibility of the social on the tendencies of the individuals and this is the point I think Lacanian theory has shortcomings. As I have mentioned earlier, the ideally neutral conception of signifiers is the cause of this shortcoming. In order to extend the psychoanalytic theory and give it a critical dimension, the inequality of the signifiers should be focused.

The obvious difference in the quality of signifiers is based on meta-structural facts: one might be a pervert, a racist or a macho because of his or her social conditions and these social conditions cannot be *represented* by the innocent flux of the neutral signifiers. Lacan *castrates* in his theory the most important dimension of the society. The individual's psyche might be blocked because of these excluded functions. In Lacan's theory, they are just other signifiers. They are different but he does not consider the basis and the sort of this difference. Conversion of these factors into the system of language misses their singular material conditions. They should be considered in their non-linguistic and meta-structural natures.

Therefore, although it is beyond the scope of the clinical uses of psychoanalysis, such a critical approach against the social conditioning is necessary for understanding the real position of the analysand in the society. This entails an extended relation between the individual and the society.

As I will show later in this work, the mistake of Laclau and Badiou are adopting this Lacanian theory of the neutral signifiers[73] for analyzing the socio-political facts. Lacanian psychoanalysis, from its ethics to its obsessive idealization of the signifiers aims at understanding the

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[73] Badiou never uses signifiers, but instead, he uses sets.

mechanisms of the individual psyche. The effect of the Other in this projection is denoted by such a neutral flux of signifiers. The historical and social *non-neutrality* of the elements of the society are ignored. As the analytic relationship between the analyst and analysand requires all the presuppositions of the analyst should be put in parenthesis, for psychoanalysis, such an elimination is necessary.

In the conclusion of this work, I will continue with discussing the adaptability of Lacanian theory for understanding social and political questions. I will try to find out the points in his theory that require modifications in order to achieve an extension from analyzing the individual psyche to the society. But before doing all of these, I think I need to introduce the Lacanian political theories.

CHAPTER 6

Radical Democracy and the Lack

In this chapter, I will continue with the Lacanian political theory. First of all, it should be distinguished from Lacan's political theory which I believe does not exist. What I mean by Lacanian political theory is a general extension of Lacanian psychoanalytic theory into the realm of politics. Lacan, I think, was always careful at staying within the limits of psychoanalysis. But, starting with Laclau and Mouffe's influential work *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* and with the popularizing effects of Žižek's works, there has been a major Lacanian movement in the political theory. Such a new movement introduces several major Lacanian concepts to the use of the political thought. In this chapter, I will summarize these concepts and their uses.

Let me first note that there is not only one, unique Lacanian political theory. Laclau and Mouffe's 1985 work was based not only Lacanian notions, but it consists of several other themes borrowed from Carl Schmitt, Jacques Derrida and even Wittgenstein. Their idea was basically an extension of liberal democracies such a way that the pluralistic movements of 20th Century could be analyzed and understood. It is in a way trying to fulfill a requirement which is based on the inadequacy of Marxist theory for explaining these new movements. That is why, their work starts with a discussion of central Marxist theses on the class struggle, economic determinism, and proletariat and its relationship with political parties.

Another major Lacanian is Slavoj Žižek who is the leader of the Slovenian Lacan school. He is, as Terry Eagleton calls him, "the rock star of philosophy" because of his interesting character and writing style. Žižek

tries to combine Lacan's main theses with Orthodox Marxism. Although Laclau and Mouffe call themselves as post-Marxists, they are as I have mentioned, mostly followers of the liberal democratic tradition and in their works, a certain sense of radicalism is missing although they claim the reverse. For Žižek, this is just the opposite: he tries to bring the repudiated concepts and philosophical figures of philosophy back to the core of the contemporary political discussions. He sometimes calls himself as a Leninist, Lacanian, Marxist etc. Such an eclecticism is also mixed with a proportion of German Idealism and an Hegelian interpretation of Lacan. Although his first English work, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989) was supported by Laclau with a preface, nowadays he becomes a severe critique of Laclau and Mouffe's theory of radical democracy.

And the third figure is Alain Badiou. He tries to realize Lacanian dream of formalism but not for psychoanalysis. He equates ontology with mathematics and asserts that philosophy is an ontic discipline. For him, there are four "conditions" of philosophy which produce Truth procedures: science, art, love and politics. His magnum opus, *Being and Event* can be seen an ontologist's comments on Zermelo-Fraenkel's set theory.

For me, although Žižek still calls himself as an orthodox Lacanian and he is the most popular of these figures, Badiou is the most important one. I will spend more pages on discussing his ideas. The most important reason for that is Žižek and Laclau have similar methodologies although their final positions are completely different. On the other hand, Badiou's ontology consists of a brave novelty which is bringing back the certainty and impasses of mathematics to the heart of four different realms. One more reason for my interest in Badiou is, I think, he is the best example of the Lacanian ideal of formalism. Lacan, especially in his later seminars tried to put together such a formalism and I think, Badiou succeeds in that at least to some degree. Therefore his ontology gives us clues about what Lacan aimed at during his life-time.

The general vision of Lacanian political theories is based on

several presuppositions which can be found in these three different philosophical disciples' ideas. I would like to summarize the main claims of these three views:

1. As there is a blurring of the border between the individual and the society, Lacanian theoretical edifice can be used in understanding the socio-political reality. There are not any isolated individuals from the society and society cannot be considered as a separate subject matter of study.

2. The real delimits our symbolic access of the world. It denotes the realm which is impossible to represent. Therefore, every identity, including the political identities has a certain lack which escapes from symbolization and does not allow this identity to be fixed and finalized. In other words, none of the identities are finalized. Therefore, we should think through continuous identifications, instead of considering identity as a fixed entity. For example, being a Turk, a Japan, a Muslim, although are bounded by a signifier, the effects of their significations change with the changes in the discourse. And as an addition to this impossibility of the symbolic identification, no matter how we call ourselves, there will always be an excess which cannot be represented by this identity. Our fixing of identities is only an imagination.

3. The lack of symbolization is constitutive: it constitutes the desire for fullness of both the society and the individual. It creates the desire to achieve a fullness which is necessary and impossible. Therefore this lack is the cause of the process of identification.

4. Fantasies also have a crucial role in this economy of desire.

Although it is impossible to achieve a fullness, fantasies give certain consistency to the reality in such a way that, the reality becomes something bearable. The inconsistencies of reality are covered up by fantasies which gives us the feeling that the constitutive lack can be filled, they are transformed into prohibitions although in truth they are impossibilities. It works as if it is the reverse of the symptom which denotes that there is something repressed, impossible to be represented in reality. This repressed thing is normalized by fantasies. Through fantasy, the symptom is presented as something which is understandable within the limits of reality. It is like the ad-hoc hypothesis which are prepared against the anomalies of a scientific theory.

5. Such fantasies are based on an illusion that is the basis for *all* of the political ideologies which start with the assumption of a lost harmony in society. Therefore, there is an isomorphism between the child's loss of harmony with mother and the mythical loss of a harmonious society in the past. But for Lacan, it is impossible to achieve a perfect harmony. Therefore fantasies have a certain similarity with utopias which offer harmonious futures.

6. There will always be the lack which dislocates and subverts the existing reality. This dislocation opens up the possibility for constructing a new reality which is the point that the hegemonic (Laclau), or subjective (Badiou) intervention is realized. Therefore the lack both dislocates and restores the order of reality and fantasies give consistency to these impossible projects of attaining perfect harmonies. And symptoms represent the anomalies of this reality. They remind us the impossibilities of these projects.

These general points can be found in the works of Laclau and

Mouffe and Žižek although they have certain differences. In the next section, I will go into the details of these post-Lacanian political theories. First, I will focus on Laclau and Mouffe's post-Marxism and then I will elaborate on Žižek's more radicalized theory of ideology.

6.1. Post-Marxism:

Laclau and Mouffe calls their new political theory as post-Marxism in order to denote that their main aim is to go beyond the essentialist and deterministic character of traditional conception of Marxism. Some of the thinkers believe that the "post" of this new name should be italicized as their version of Marxism does not have anything to do with Marxism of Marx.

Laclau claims that this new naming is necessary as they opened a new field which enables them to combine psychoanalysis and Marxism. Such a combination starts with a destruction of Marxist tradition in the Heideggerian sense of the term which means

> a radical questioning of which is situated beyond this tradition
> — but which is only possible in relation to it — that the
> originary meaning of the categories of this tradition (which
> have long since become stale and trivialized) may be
> recovered. (Laclau, 1990: 93)

Laclau and Mouffe starts their *Hegemony* with a critique of traditional Marxist concepts like class, capital etc. Such a critical reading of Marxist tradition ends up with their own theory of radical democracy. I will come back to the details of this new theory but now, I would like to make another quote which I think is symptomatic in understanding the essential character of Lacanian political theory which is based on a rejection of the fact that Lacan's theory is a structuralist theory. For Laclau, the structure could never be able to constitute itself. In other words, there is always an outside that the structure could not be able to represent. If we translate this into the Lacanian terminology, what Laclau asserts is that the symbolic could never itself consistently represent the real. Therefore,

Laclau equates the symbolic with the structure.[74] For Laclau, as the structure could not constitute itself, the identity of the subject is also dependent on this failure:

> The structure will obviously not be able to determine me, not because I have an *essence* independent from the structure, but because the structure has failed to constitute itself fully and thus to constitute me as a subject as well. There is nothing in me which was oppressed by the structure or is freed by its dislocation; I am simply *thrown up* in my condition as a subject because I have not achieved constitution as an object. The freedom thus won in relation to the structure is therefore a traumatic fact initially: I am *condemned* to be free, not because I have no structural identity as the existentialists assert, but because I have a *failed* structural identity. This means that the subject is partially self-determined. However, as this self-determination is not the expression of what the subject *already* is but the result of its lack of being instead, self-determination can only proceed through processes of *identification*. As can be gathered, the greater the structural indetermination, the freer the society will be. (Laclau, 1990: 44)

Such a dense and long passage requires a detailed examination. First of all, Laclau rejects any form of essentialist subjectivity. (i.e. Working class is essentially the revolutionary class etc.) For Laclau, there are no such essences. As an addition to this there are not any essential structures in which the subject is determined. The subject is, like Heidegger's Da-sein, thrown into the world, and the world, or the symbolic if we use Lacan's words, constitutes the subject up to some point. The barred subject ($) is lost in language which is beyond its control. But, there is another side of this relationship between the subject and language which is the imaginary identity. As I have mentioned, the ego is produced as a defense against the flux of uncontrollable significations. The imaginary identity is, like the symbolic identity, a failed identity. These double failures enable us to have some freedom: we have to produce

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[74] I will come back to this point later as for me, the structure is the total relationship between the real, the imaginary and the symbolic. And within this relationship there is not any place for a free subject.

identities and as each one of these identities is itself a failure, we have to reproduce these identities. The freedom here is the fact that it is impossible to pre-determine these identities in the symbolic. No matter what we do, no matter how we identify ourselves, or no matter how we are identified by the symbolic, there will always be a gap between the real and our identities. Therefore, our every attempt is based on two forces: one is the determining force of language, and the second one is the dislocating power of the real.

Such an infinite process of identity production is called as *identification* by Laclau. The inevitable lack in the symbolic order always dislocates each attempt of identification. The identification is based on the tension and relationship between the two sides of the split subject: the ego and the subject of bar ($). "The fullness of identity that the subject is seeking is impossible both in the imaginary and in the symbolic level." (Stavrakakis, 1999: 24) This impossibility, for Laclau is based on the constitutive role of the lack.

Therefore our first important concept is identification. For Lacan, it is impossible to achieve a full identity. This is because of our incapability to represent the real and the singularity of the subject in its fullness. For Laclau and Mouffe, this thesis is extended to the level of the society. For them, *the society is an impossibility*. They claim that all the central efforts of the political discussions and actions are based on this impossibility. In other words, politics is the attempt to attain a fullness of representing the society. The process of identification is basically this process of seeking for a fullness.

Therefore as in the case of Lacan's button ties (Laclau and Mouffe prefers using the term "nodal points"), there will be partial and imaginary identities or fullnesses are achieved:

> The impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations —otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. Even in order to differ, to

subvert meaning, there has to be *a* meaning. If the social does not manage to fix itself in the intelligible and instituted forms of a *society*, the social only exists, however, as an effort to construct that impossible object. Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursive, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112)

In other words, it is impossible to represent the society in its fullness and therefore the button ties are required for at least to achieve an imaginary fullness of the society. Once again, this representational incompetence is based on a lack. Our second crucial concept is *the lack* which determines and organizes the whole problematic of desire and representation. The lack is produced by the inevitable failures of our identifications. The lack therefore constitutes the identification process as because every identification is made in order to cover over the lack and every identification unconceals the lack. In other words, the lost unity produces the lack and the lack produces the dynamics of covering over the lack which is impossible to be achieved. As Laclau puts:

The key term of understanding this process of construction is the psychoanalytic category of identification, with its explicit assertion of a lack at the root of any identity: one needs to identify with something because there is an originary and insurmountable lack of identity. (Laclau, 1994: 3)

Every trial for identification is interrupted by the fissures of language which underlines the lack. Such failures open up the possibilities for other acts of identification. All the political games and fights are based on "identification *and its failure.*" (Laclau and Zac, 1994: 34)

This game of identification requires something surprising and non-Lacanian (at least when we think of the Lacan as a psychoanalyst): antagonism.[75] This concept is borrowed from Carl Schmitt. In order to

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[75] It is true that Lacan borrowed several concepts from Kojève's interpretation of Hegel. For Kojève at the core of the course of history, there stands the master-slave dialectics. Therefore, in Lacan's formulation, the concept of "the desire for the Other" is similar with Kojève's notion of desire for recognition. The latter is based on a certain opposition by which the masters and slaves appear at the scene of history: the master desires the slave to recognize the master with all of its values. For the former, there is

achieve a temporal identity, social forces require something common in between them, which is an enemy. Therefore they gather together not in the positivity of a content, but around the negativity of an enemy and around the positivity of an emptiness.

Such a gathering together is based on a novel relationship between the universal and the particular which will be discussed in the following section.

I would like to add one more comment on the long passage that I have quoted from Laclau which is very important for understanding the extension of psychoanalysis and linguistics into the political theory. For Laclau and Mouffe (and for also Žižek and several post-structuralist thinkers) emancipation is formulated by a representational logic. To be free is to be able to be represented. And as there is not any full representation, there is not any freedom in its fullness. These assumptions enforce us to think emancipatory politics with democracy.[76] I will question the legitimacy of this enforcement later in this work but now I would like to continue elaborating on Lacanian political theory.

6.2. Universal-Particular

Another point that is crucial for understanding Lacanian political thought is the universal-particular dichotomy. For Laclau, this distinction is highly important not only for founding new theories of politics, but for also understanding and criticizing the previous ones. For him, in the history of western philosophy, this distinction appears in two different forms. The first one is the ancient, clear-cut division between the universal and the particular. The universal cannot be reached from the particular. The only

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no such an opposition, but there is always the idea to be the object of desire of the Other.

[76] As we will see, Žižek, in his later works criticizes any democratic politics. But in his earlier works, he defended like Laclau and Mouffe, a certain form of politics based on democratic struggles.

way of reaching it is through reason. Laclau asks a Derridean question for deconstructing this division between two exclusive domains of rational universal and irrational particulars: "Is [the frontier dividing universality and particularity] universal or particular?" (Laclau, 1992: 85) For Laclau, there is not any possible consistent answer to this question at least by the ancient philosophy as such an answer requires thinking on the division between the form and the content.[77] If that dividing line is accepted to be particular, therefore, the universal becomes a particularity also because the universal is supposed to be an extension of particulars. And similarly, if the dividing line is universal, then the particular also belongs to the universal.[78]

Another form of universal-particular dichotomy is, due to Laclau, based on the Christian belief that God is universality and human beings cannot reach this universality through reason. Man is the incarnation of this universal principle, it is "the *privileged agent of history.*" For Laclau, such a view is the first step towards "[t]he modern idea of a universal class and the various forms of Eurocentrism." (Laclau, 1992: 85) For example, in Hegel's philosophy of history, the historical process is the embodiment of the general course of history. Every particular event is determined by this general teleological movement of the Spirit to the self-consciousness. Hegel's main difference is his replacement of the role of God with reason. Although his philosophy is combined with a theological concept of the Absolute, the reason takes the role of God's intervention. The course of history is the development of reason which is seeking the truth which is

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[77] Laclau writes: "[...] the very possibility of formulating this last question requires us to differentiate the *form* of universality as such from the actual *contents* with which it is associated. The thought of this difference, however, is not available to ancient philosophy." (Laclau, 1992: 85)

[78] Such a deconstructive approach can be applied to almost any exclusive dichotomies which is the general character of Derridean type of post-structuralism. The general attitude is based on a critique of normalization of any such forms of divisions. Once we set the line between two domains, we usually do this for practical reasons but later on, this practical need is replaced with a belief that this division is something natural. This idea is compatible with Lacan's rejection of referential conception of language.

lost by the alienation from the Absolute. Therefore at the end, the gap between the universal and particular will be eliminated. The end-state for Hegel is the embodiment of the universal reason therefore it is the point that the universal is embodied in a particularity.

Although being an ex-Marxist, Laclau directs the same attack towards the orthodox Marxism. Due to him, within Marx's work

> [t]he body of the proletariat was no longer a particular body in which a universality external to it had to be incarnated. Rather, it was a body in which the distinction between particularity and universality was canceled; as a result, the need for any incarnation was eradicated. (Laclau, 1992: 86)

Such an essentialist view which claims that proletariat is the universal and privileged class is repudiated by him and instead of that, he proposes a novel conception of universality based on a constitutive lack. But before going that way we have to understand the contemporary requirement for such a novelty. First of all, the rejection of any essentialist political theories entails a multiplicity of subjectivities in the political arena with a rejection of any teleology. From feminism to black movement, several different identity politics replaced the modern conception of the importance of the class struggle especially during the 1980s. This leads to a new model of understanding the political movements which is based on difference, instead of a unique agent determining the course of history.

This displacement was based on several historical reasons like the proliferation of different social movements (feminism, black movement etc.), the establishment of a dictatorship by Stalin in Soviet Union, the two World Wars and the freedom movements in the colonies of the European countries. These caused a critical attitude against any developmentalistic conception of history which is based on an exclusion of the non-European and non-modern cultures.

On the side of philosophy, the critiques of modernity by Nietzsche and Heidegger were also highly influential. Heidegger, following

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Nietzsche, questioned the problem of grounding in Western philosophy. He questions the grounding of being by any transcendent and universal concept. Instead of that, he founds his philosophy on an absent ground of nothing. For him, the human life is determined by the presence of an absence which is death. Death cannot be experienced but it is present as an unknown, as an absence in human actions. In other words, human beings' grounding for their own being is based on their being-towards-deathness. Kojève's Heideggerian interpretation of Hegel and the linguistic turn in France through structuralism leads to a new form of philosophizing which is based on such an absence of grounding.

For Oliver Marchart, such a lack of grounding principle ends up with three different post-structuralist ontologies which are called by him as "unstable ontologies".[79] First one is Lacan's ontology of lack in which the lack is the constitutive principle which triggers the functioning of desire. And desire is the desire for filling in this lack which is an impossible attempt. The second one is the ontology of difference of Derrida which is, I think, among other major differences, a Lacanianism without button ties. For Derrida, there are not any halting points of the signification process. As Marchart quotes from Derrida's *Writing and Difference,* before the absence or presence, the lack or abundance, there is the play of differences. In other words, the lack is constituted by the differential and deferring power of signification. Therefore there is a primacy of difference over lack. And finally, Deleuzian ontology of abundance is based on a critique of Lacan. For Deleuze, desire is not bounded by lack. Desire works as a positivity, therefore it has a primacy over lack. (Marchart, 2005: 26-7)

Laclau and Mouffe in their *Hegemony*, combine one of these unstable ontologies, the Lacanian one, with some of Derridean concepts in order to put together a critique of orthodox Marxism and conceptualizing a

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[79] For Marchart, they are not as different as they seem to be. (Marchart, 2005: 26)

novel approach to the politics. Their approach is based on a repudiation of any given universals without totally giving up the uses of universals. For Laclau, there seems to be two possible ways of theorizing the universal-particular relationship: first one defends the pure particularism with a rejection of any universal values. The realization of such a view is impossible as the identities (or particularities) are based on universal principles. Such an approach tends towards chaos and anarchy. The second one is the Utopian approach that is based on a belief of the possibility of a harmony between the particular and the universal. The lesson that we have learned from Lacan is that such a harmony is impossible. This is the same illusion which asserts the harmony between the signifier and the signified or the truth and language.

Laclau and Mouffe's solution for that is based on two assumptions. First of all, we have to accept that we need the universals. The universals coordinate and give a certain order to particulars. Secondly, we have to accept that a universal is an impossibility. It is not possible to attain any universal position which represents and encapsulates all of the particulars. Therefore we have to reject the very idea of a harmony between the universal and particulars. The universal should be conceptualized as a lack, a location which is open for articulation and filling. But at the same time, we have to give up the idea that any particular can fill in this empty space. Therefore, the politics should be conceptualized as a hegemonic struggle for filling in this empty space. This requires also a new conceptualization of the democracy.

In the next section, I will continue with a detailed presentation of these ideas.

6.3. The Real of the Politics:

The main assumption behind the extension of Lacanian theory of psychoanalysis is the idea that what is true for the reality for an individual "is also applicable to political reality." (Stavrakakis, 1999: 71) This

assumption sets two definitions: (i) Politics is political reality and it is constituted by the symbolic. (ii) The political is the ontological backbone of this symbolic reality which is obviously closer to the real in the Lacanian sense. The former denotes the political institutions, organizations and all the political actions which do not represent the political:

> [...] the political cannot be restricted to a certain type of institution, or envisaged as constituting a specific sphere or level of society. It must be conceived as a dimension that is inherent to every human society and that determines our very ontological condition. (Mouffe, 1993: 3)

Such a definition of the political has two consequences: First of all, this entails a loss of certainty in the field of politics as it is not possible to represent the real of the politics in its fullness. Second, it entails a rejection of the Marxist view that the political as a superstructure is the product of the economic base. Therefore, the economic determinism of the orthodox Marxism is replaced with the impossibility to represent the political. The political should be considered as a realm which escapes any positive founding and determining principle. "The moment of antagonism where the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible constitutes the field of the 'political'." (Laclau 1990: 35) Therefore the political is the dislocating and negating realm behind the field of politics.

We should be careful at equating the political with the Lacanian real. Stavrakakis notes:

> What constantly emerges in these currents of contemporary political theory is that the political seems to acquire a position parallel to that of the Lacanian real; one cannot but be struck by the fact that the political is revealed as a particular modality of the real. The political becomes one of the forms in which one encounters the real. (Stavrakakis, 1999: 73)

Therefore, the Lacanian real is a more general concept than the political. The political is the real which ontologically structures the field of the politics.

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Such a distinction between the political and the politics enables a novel approach to the politics by which the human political praxis and establishments could be understood by the tension between the two. On the one hand, there is the political reality in which all the socio-political institutions and struggles take place. On the hand, the political gives a dynamism to this reality by dislocating it. The political posits itself by inconsistencies and disruptions. Therefore, the political inserts itself through the representational gap between the two and this insertion marks structural failures in the realm of political reality.

After underlining this difference, I would like to continue with Laclau and Mouffe's use of the Lacanian linguistic concepts of metaphor and metonymy in their analysis of the construction of the political reality. They introduced two new terms: the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference. In the next section, I will summarize these two concepts and their use.

6.4. The logic of equivalence and the logic of difference:

Laclau, in his last book, *On Populist Reason* notes that there are three categories which are crucial for his theoretical approach: (i) Discourse, (ii) Empty Signifiers and hegemony, and (iii) Rhetoric. (Laclau, 2006: 68-71) In this section I will summarize the first one of these concepts. In the following one I will elaborate on the second one. I will skip the third one as it is not relevant to the scope of this work.

Discourse, for Laclau is the realm which is constituted for the objectivity. It should be noted that such an objectivity is not an absolute objectivity based on certain transcendent principles. Instead of that, his post-structuralist approach based on Lacan's and Derrida's theories entails the objective realm to be based on signifiers. As I have mentioned previously, the reality is the construction of the relationship between the signifiers. But Laclau adds that discourse is not limited with speech and writing. Lacan's the Other is the name for this discursive domain which

denotes the common denominator of human encounter with the reality. If I use Laclau's words it is "any complex of elements in which *relations* play the constitutive role." (Laclau, 2006: 68) Laclau repeats the general structuralist thesis that this domain works through differences without assuming any positive extra-discursive contents.

Laclau and Mouffe in their *Hegemony* introduce two different logics of discourse which are working hand in hand together in the constitution of the social space: the logic of equivalence and the logic of difference. The former is the struggle for the different demands to be realized in the political reality. In other words, it is the logic of founding a universality from these particular demands. As we will see, one of the particular groups who *represent* these demands becomes hegemonic and seems to fulfill the necessity for a universal. But as we know, this is an impossible project and it is dislocated later on. On the other hand, the latter is the reconstruction and ordering of the differences under the same universality. Their use of these two terms is related with Lacanian use of the metaphor and the metonymy in the structuration of the symbolic and the process of signification:

> We, thus, see that the logic of equivalence is a logic of the simplification of political space, while the logic of difference is a logic of its expansion and increasing complexity. Taking a comparative example from linguistics, we should say that the logic of difference tends to expand the syntagmatic pole of language, the number of positions that can enter into a relation of combination and hence continuity with one another; while the logic of equivalence expands the paradigmatic pole —that is, the elements can be substituted for one another —thereby reducing the number of positions which can possibly be combined. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 130)

Therefore the logic of equivalence is the substitution of differences with a metaphorical representative and the logic of difference is the metonymic extension and dissemination of the differences in the political reality. In other words, for Laclau and Mouffe, the logic of difference is the appearance of the particularities which through differentiation. As in

Saussure's terminology, this is the whole structure of language. The signs differ from each other through negation. There are not any external, positive references which enable these differences. In Lacan's theory, this is the difference between the signifiers. The second one, the logic of equivalence is based on the metaphoric halting of these differences. This is based on an emergence of a universality which is based on what is common between these different particularities. The latter is formed around an antagonistic frontier. (Laclau, 2005: 77-8)

Due to Laclau these two logics cannot work in isolated forms. Remembering our discussion on the universal-particular dichotomy, they always act together. The differences appear and they require a universal and after this universal is set, as it is impossible to have a universality which represents all the particulars in their fullness.

Through this dynamics, the crucial point is the representation of the impossible whole by one particularity. This is done by what Laclau and Mouffe calls empty signifiers which is the centralizing effect of certain hegemonic attempts in the political reality. In the next section, I will focus on this notion.

6.5. The empty signifier:

Although discourse works through differences without any external unifying or centralizing principle, there are, at some instances, certain wholes are established within it. The task for Laclau is to introduce new concepts for understanding this constitution of such a wholeness as an effect. A whole requires two things: a defining center and a limiting outside. Due to Laclau, there is only one way for the constitution of such an exclusion as there are not any external references. Therefore, the wholeness should be a failed wholeness as it excludes some of the elements. Therefore

[t]his totality is an object which is both impossible and

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necessary. Impossible, because the tension between equivalence and difference is ultimately insurmountable; necessary, because without some kind of closure, however precarious it might be, there would be no signification and no identity. (Laclau, 2006: 70)

This is a repetition of the thesis that it is impossible to represent the society in its fullness. But there is something more which is the necessity for an exclusive determination for the identities to be established. How could this be possible if all of the signifiers are neutrally equidistant from the center? As there are not any external references that the signifiers are bounded with, therefore centralizing certain signifiers requires an operation which is called by Laclau and Mouffe as *hegemony*. Such an operation is based on filling certain empty signifiers which temporarily determine the signification. In other words, hegemony is the process of determining the signification process with an intervention. It denotes

> the contingent connection between intrasocial differences (elements within the social space) and the limit that separates society itself from non-society (chaos, utter decadence, dissolution of all social links) [...] (Žižek,2006a: 92)

The concept of empty signifier therefore denotes a signifier which signifies the lack in the symbolic register. The process of hegemony is assuming representatives which are supposed to be filling in this signifier. Laclau notes

> [t]he argument I have developed is that, at this point, there is the possibility that one difference, without ceasing to be a *particular* difference, assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality. In that way, its body is split between the particularity which it still is and the more universal signification of which it is the bearer. (Laclau, 2006: 70)

We can set a similarity between the Lacanian bar between the signifier and the signified and Laclau's empty signifier. The bar denotes two things for Lacan: (i) the impossibility of the meaning in its fullness and

(ii) the requirement for a halting of the continuous flux of signifiers for signification. Similarly for Laclau the empty signifier should be filled as we require universality for the signification and he adds also that such an operation of capturing the empty signifier is a temporary gesture. It is impossible to fill in the empty signifier in such a way that a totality which covers all the particular demands and identities in their fullness. Instead of such a fullness, the empty signifier is metaphorically filled by a signified.

If we combine this view with the previous discussion about the universal-particular dilemma, what Laclau proposes is a new mode of understanding the political reality with the appearance of certain particularities that are assuming the role of universality. This is what Laclau calls the "relative universalization through equivalential logics". (Laclau, 1995: 152)

Laclau and Mouffe uses Lacan's button ties for explicating this relative universalization:

> The impossibility of an ultimate fixity of meaning implies that there have to be partial fixations —otherwise, the very flow of differences would be impossible. [...] Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a center. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, n*odal points*. (Lacan has insisted on these partial fixations through his concept of *points de capiton*, that is, of privileged signifiers that fix the meaning of a signifying chain. [...]) (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 112)[80]

Therefore, the button ties (or nodal points) are used in order to fix the endless signification. They give sense to the reality in such a way that

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[80] I have to note that, for Lacan, the button ties are imaginary knots which establish a stopping for the signification. On the other hand, Laclau and Mouffe's (and also Žižek's as we will see in the next quotation) use of the term is not restricted to the imaginary register. Their use of the term entails a collectivity: a stop of signification in the collective, political reality which can be shared. In other words, their nodal points are operative in the symbolic register. This can be understood in their (mis)use of the term "privileged signifiers" for denoting the button ties. For Lacan, in the symbolic, there are not such privileged signifiers with the exception of the signifier which signifies the bar between the signifier and the signified. I will come back to this point later.

Laclau and Mouffe thinks that this is the place that all the political struggles take place. Similarly, Žižek claims that "[t]he 'quilting'" that is attained by the button ties gives a certain form of totalization to the "free floating of ideological elements". (Žižek, 1989: 87) For Žižek, as for Laclau and Mouffe, such a totalization, such a fixation of the meaning gives certain meaning to the political reality. Žižek gives the following example:

> If we 'quilt' the floating signifiers through 'Communism', for example, 'class struggle' confers a precise and fixed signification to all other elements: to democracy (so-called 'real democracy' as opposed to 'bourgeois formal democracy' as a legal form of exploitation); to feminism (the exploitation of women as resulting from the class-conditioned division of labour); to ecologism (the destruction of natural resources as a logical consequence of profit-oriented capitalist production); to the peace movement (the principal danger to peace is adventuristic imperialism), and so on. (Žižek, 1989: 87-8)

Once the meaning is fixed, all the discursive domain and all the signification is based on this fixation. Such a hegemonization of the signification constitutes the political reality in such a way that some of the identities are excluded. In Žižek's example, the bourgeois democracy is excluded as an enemy of the communist, egalitarian society. Therefore, the process of filling the empty signifiers works not only through centralizing certain signifiers, but it also excludes some of them as enemies or opposing ones. This is because every linguistic and socio-symbolic reality requires limitations. Every identity construction is based on difference. Therefore, there is a need for an excluded enemy for the limitation of the political reality. This exclusion, due to Stavrakakis is similar with the exclusion (or the repression) of the real in a Lacanian sense. "Only the exclusion of this real can guarantee the stability of our reality. Our reality can be real only if the real outside reality is negated, attributed to the Other who somehow stole it from us." (Stavrakakis, 1999: 80) Therefore, the empty signifiers do not only denote a wholeness or fullness which is attained by a particularity which represents the fullness, but at the same time, it fills the signifiers of the excluded ones. For

example, in the case of communism, class struggle fills the empty signifier of the system, the political reality with an exclusion of the capitalistic ideals. In other words, as the signification is based on continuous relationships between signifiers, filling one of them will trigger a chain reaction of quilting other signifieds to several empty signifiers. Therefore the political reality is limited by the determination of "us" and "them". For example, Bush administrations so called "war on terror" is based on two principles: (i) the modern developed West and the most developed of this West, the US is the "us" and (ii) the terrorist regimes and countries who are continuously threatening us are denoted as "them". Both of these empty signifiers are hegemonically stuffed with contents, the signifieds.

The empty signifier works like the objet petit a: it is the object cause of desire. When we capture the object that is desired, we are frustrated. But the objet petit a continuously triggers other objects to be desired. The problem here is it is impossible to represent this objet petit a, therefore, it is another form of impossibility. Similarly, it is impossible to fully determine a content for the empty signifier. It always consists of emptiness which enables the dynamics of filling it in. For example, in Turkey, the Turkish national identity is an empty signifier which is supposed to be so empty that it could grasp everyone. Therefore, the empty signifier is supposed to be filled by an mythical "us". A particularity fills in the place of a universality. On the other hand, such an "us" also depends on another empty signifier, the others. These others are at certain instances determined but their every determination ends up with certain contradictions.

As it is impossible to fill in these two determinants in an all embracing way by the determination of the us and them, every filling of these inevitably ends up with inconsistencies (the symptoms): the good, poor Jewish neighbor who lives an ordinary German life for the Nazi, the "no" for the EU constitution etc. These inconsistencies, or symptoms are usually covered up with fantasies: you see that Jew, he is just acting as if

he is like an ordinary poor German, or this "no" is not against EU constitution, but it is against Turks, against globalization an so on. Therefore, as Stravrakakis notes, "[t]he other side of semiotic emptiness is fantasmatic fullness." (Stavrakakis, 1999: 81)

What is at the core of this fantasmatic fullness? Fantasy is produced in order to give consistency to the reality. Therefore it is based on an attempt of covering over the symptoms and eliminating the gap between the reality and the real. Such a world view could be found in the modern science in which every anomaly is tried to be covered over by ad-hoc hypotheses. Although fantasy seems to be a supportive tool for our symbolic access to the world, it is at the same time conservative in a sense that it tries to cover over the inevitable mistakes of this symbolization. As in the above mentioned examples, this conservatism sometimes has a consequence of dangerous political movements like racism and fascism. The logic always works in the following way: on the one hand, there is trial for attaining a fullness by filling in certain empty signifiers and on the other hand, there is an attempt of excluding some others as every identification requires exclusion of others. This shapes the political reality and every time these meanings are inscribed on the political reality, fantasies are always at work for covering over the inconsistencies of this inscription. Fantasies support us in such a way that we believe in that there is always a possibility to attain a fullness. Due to fantasies, the disorders in the political reality are caused by some of the enemies. None of the symptomatic failures of the system are intrinsic to the political reality.

But then if this is the case, if this is how it usually works, what Laclau and Mouffe offers as a resolution? In the next section, I will continue with their theory of radical democracy.

6.6. Radical Democracy:

For Lacan, we know that it is impossible to surpass the gap

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between the real and the reality. Therefore, it is impossible to fully represent the real. Similarly, for Laclau and Mouffe, the society is impossible which means that the traditional view of the society as fullness in itself, a finished product of identification and representation is impossible. No matter how do we structure the political reality, and no matter how do we define the society and political identities, there will always be a gap between the ontological backbone, the real dimension of this reality, the political and the politics.

Such a view obviously requires a new way of thinking the political and the first step towards this novelty is accepting the structural impossibility of our reality. In other words, the utopian view that a fullness and perfection could be attained should be rejected. This requires two presuppositions: (i) there are not any original, and essential subjects in the course of history that can determine the future of humanity and (ii) there is not an inevitable telos for humanity. From (i), Laclau and Mouffe produced their critique of essentialism and especially the class essentialism of Marxism. And from (ii), they criticized the economic determinism of Marxism: the very idea that at the base, the economy determines the ideologico-political reality, which is the superstructure.

Both of these critiques are characterized by the acceptance of the impossibility. For (i), this impossibility is the impossibility to attain an identity in its fullness and for (ii), this is the impossibility to represent the real in its fullness. Therefore, there is not any universal class and there is not an inevitable future which is determined by a privileged struggle in the political reality. Even for Laclau, in his last book, the universal class is replaced with the people which is a perfect example for an empty signifier: the people is an emptiness which can exemplify the hegemonic struggles for inscribing certain senses to the political reality.

The acceptance of the impossibility as the constitutive property of the reality entails a new characterization of the political reality: the determinism is replaced with contingency, the absolute universal is

replaced with the hegemonic struggles for the relative universals. As Mouffe notes:

> Politics, especially democratic politics, can never overcome conflict and division. Its aim is to establish unity in a context of conflict and diversity; it is concerned with the formation of a 'we' as opposed to a 'them'. What is specific of democratic politics is not the overcoming of the we/them opposition but the different way in which it is drawn. This is why grasping the nature of democratic politics requires a coming to terms with the dimension of antagonism that is present in social relations. (Mouffe, 1996: 8)

The dimension of antagonism is the dimension of the lack. It is the lack that provides the ontological domain of the impossibility of a social fullness and it also enables the constructive role of this impossibility. Therefore, every social consensus is an appeal for overcoming this insurmountable lack and is at the same time fantasmatic procedure for covering over this lack.

Therefore what Laclau and Mouffe offers is going beyond the fantasmatic attempts of institutionalization of the political reality by the very idea of a possibility of achieving a final consensus, or fullness. Stavrakakis notes:

> Democracy entails the acceptance of antagonism, in other words, the recognition of the fact that the social will always be structured around a real impossibility which cannot be sutured. Instead of attempting this impossible suture of the social entailed in every utopian or quasi-utopian discourse, democracy envisages a social field which is unified by the recognition of its own constitutive impossibility. (Stavrakakis, 1999: 120)

Such a view of democracy is not based on the traditional way of approaching the politics as the domain for resolving the conflicts and harmonizing the society. Instead of the promise of certainty and order, harmony and determinism, this new type of democracy offers a new way of thinking with the variables uncertainty, disorder, disharmony and contingency. Thinking through these is at the same time thinking about

their constitutive roles for the political reality.

Therefore we should give up thinking through pre-determined, essential unities and the possibility of a final and conflict-free consensus. This has a similarity with the modernist replacement of the God with the reason. But in this movement, the reason and any possibility of the rational consensus is displaced by lack.

> Democracy, in the modern sense, is going to be the institution of a space whose social function has had to emancipate itself from any concrete content, precisely because, as we have seen, *any* content is able occupy that space. (Laclau and Zac, 1994: 36)

One should be careful as it seems that Laclau and Mouffe's understanding of such a retreat from any harmony and fullness may end up with a total chaos and disorder. As in their references to the relativisation of the universal, they were aware of this danger. The other danger is the absoluteness of the universal which can be seen in the totalitarian societies.

> Between the logic of complete identity and that of pure difference, the experience of democracy should consist of the recognition of the multiplicity of social logics along with the necessity of their articulation. But this articulation should be constantly re-created and renegotiated, and there is no final point at which a balance will be definitely achieved. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985: 188)

Therefore the radical democratic project is a balance between the totalitarian view of a complete identity and the anarchistic losing of any positive referents and orders. What the radical democratic view offers is neither the defensive and fantasmatic filling of the lack with totalitarian strategies, nor totally giving it up in order to achieve a purely differential domain (as in the case of Deleuze and Guattari).

The radical democracy therefore is based on the acceptance that there are differences and there is not any way to close the democratic domain with any form of fullness covering over all of these differences. In

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other words, there is not any universality which can embrace all of the particularities. We need universals but there are not any pre-determined forms of universals. Thus democracy should be based on this ambiguity: the impossibility of achieving fullness and the need for it.

CHAPTER 7

ŽIŽEK: AN ULTRA-LEFTIST INTERPRETATION OF LACAN

The most important and controversial figure of Lacanian political theory is Slavoj Žižek. Starting from his first English written book, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (1989), he combines Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis with theory of ideology and cultural studies. Although in his earlier writings he was defending a certain sort of radical democracy and accepting the fact that he was indebted to Laclau and Mouffe's *Hegemony*, later on, he has started defending a more radical critique of democracy as a formal transcendental matrix that founds the political reality. But for sure, one thing never changed in his theory which is analyzing the character of the lack and the real. In this chapter I will try to put together a detailed reading of his main theses.

Let me briefly summarize his thesis on ideology before going into the details of it. His theory of ideology is based on a critique of the Hegelian Marxist theory of ideology as false consciousness in which the reality is distorted by ideology. According to this view, as there is a false consciousness, there is also a true consciousness which could be attained by proletariat after the development of historico-political facts up to a certain point.

For Žižek, quite the contrary, ideology is what supports the reality by providing a certain consistency to it. (SOI: 45) In other words, ideology presents the reality as an ontological totality which is consistent in itself. This is done by the production of the fantasies. As I have mentioned earlier, every unexpected symptomatic rupture within this wholeness is covered up with the use of fantasies. This is done in such a way that the traces of the real in the political reality are concealed. (SOI: 49) For

example, during the early 1930's, the Nazi ideology succeeded in supporting anti-Semitism as the fantasmatic explanation of the existing economic and political crisis. For Žižek, the triumph of Nazism was won against the socialist-revolutionary narrative. (TS: 179) After the success of Nazism, the real cracks within the social texture are covered up by the fantasmatic production of the antagonism against Jews.

According to Žižek, the normal functioning of the society is a delusion which is supported by these kinds of fantasmatic cover-ups. As an addition to such an act of concealing the abyss in the symbolic order, following Althusser, Žižek asserts that ideologies also produce a certain form of individual which is also supportive to the existing reality. The exemplary figure for such an ideologically produced individual is the *cynic* who keeps himself/herself distance from any structural changes in the society. For a cynic, the liberal-democratic world is the final human achievement which requires only revisions for perfection. According to the cynical attitude, what we should do is to distance ourselves from every illusory belief which gives us a motivation for going beyond and eliminating the existing reality. Therefore, like Laclau and Mouffe, several thinkers are supporting a certain form of fantasmatic perfectionism by defending the liberal democratic visions and certain forms of multiculturalism. Their motto is mainly "we cannot and should not try to transgress the existing reality."

The postmodern and post-structuralist illusions, due to Žižek are based on this act of distancing.[81] For them, every determination, every decision which may take us beyond the dominant discourse of liberal democracy and existing global capitalism is considered as dangerous. According to them, the main danger would be a return to the certain forms of totalitarianism which are similar to Stalinism and Nazism. In most of his books, Žižek attacks such views based on distant political correctness

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[81]   For Žižek, Lacan is not a post-structuralist. see especially Žižek, 1987.

which takes different forms like the political tolerance against others and democratic representationalism. For example, the fashionable idea of tolerance against the others, according to Žižek, considers the other which is totally eliminated from its real otherness. For him, tolerance is the other way of saying the words: "I do not want to touch you." In other words, the other is accepted as an other who deserves respect unless he or she is the real other which is monstrous and dangerous. If he or she behaves as I do, if he or she is as respectful as I am, then he or she deserves tolerance. Otherwise they should be kept away. [82]

In order to give the details of these views, I will start with Laclau-Žižek debate which is on democracy.

7.1. Democracy or beyond:

Žižek, after publishing several English books, started to distance himself away from the school of radical democracy. This movement is supported with a radical supplement of Marxism and even Leninism. According to Žižek, Laclau and Mouffe's and several other thinkers' new models of politics are not as neutral as they present their theses. These new approaches, due to him, are responses to the new form of capitalism and their main impasse is the lack of a critical stance against their founding principle, which is globalization. Such a lack of criticism renders these theses to be supporters of the existing political reality or in Lacanese, the symbolic order.

For example, Laclau and Mouffe's main thesis that the politics is shaped by a struggle for hegemony does not leave us any space for thinking about any models beyond the radical democracy. Therefore the main defect of radical democracy is its immunity from any historical change. (Žižek, 2000a: 106) The first point that Žižek finds problematic is

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[82] As I will show, such a critique of any ethics based on otherness and difference can be found in Badiou.

the ahistorical character of the radical democratic project which conceals any possibility of a structural and real change:

> My first observation here is that while this standard postmodern Leftist narrative of the passage from 'essentialist' Marxism, with the proletariat as the unique Historical Subject, the privileging of economic class struggle, and so on, to the postmodern irreducible plurality of struggles undoubtedly describes an actual historical process, its proponents, as a rule, leave out the resignation at its heart — the acceptance of capitalism as 'the only game in town', the renunciation of any real attempt to overcome the existing capitalist liberal regime. (Žižek, 2000a: 95)

Let me put it differently: the radical democratic project does not entail and enforce any deep radical changes including even the destruction of its own foundational principles. Its duty is, in a way, keeping the radical liberal democratic hegemonic struggle in presence for ever.[83]

For Žižek, the fundamental difference of him with Laclau is based on his rejection of deconstruction of Derrida and Laclau's acceptance of it. In order to grasp their differences:

> one would have to question (or 'deconstruct') the series of preferences accepted by today's deconstructionism as the indisputable background for its endeavour: the preference of difference over sameness, for historical change over order, for openness over closure, for vital dynamics over rigid schemes, for temporal finitude over eternity.... For me, these preferences are by no means self-evident. (Žižek, 2000a: 91n2)

On the other hand, for Laclau and Mouffe, the radical democratic project should put all of its efforts on keeping the democracy alive in a way that is based on the recognition of differences and institutionalization of the lack within the social reality. For them, such an institutionalization will keep the democratic system open for any new forms of political identities. Such an openness goes hand in hand with a closure for any structural and

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[83] This is caused by the hidden Kantianism of Laclau and Mouffe's theory. As I will show later on, Žižek defends a Hegelianism against such a Kantian formalism.

formal changes.

As I have mentioned previously, for Laclau and Mouffe, the political struggles are shaped by a mixture of two different movements: (i) the trial for attaining an impossible fullness with a totalitarian logic and (ii) the radical democratic acceptance of the impossibility for this fullness which entails a political agenda prepared for the democratic struggle of particular demands and their resolution. The first thing that Žižek finds problematic in this schema is the very idea of the impossibility. Žižek asks:

> Does [the hegemonic logic of radical democracy] not involve the resigned/ cynical stance of 'although we know we will fail, we should persist in our search' — of an agent which knows the global Goal towards which it is striving is impossible, that its ultimate effort will necessarily fail, but which none the less accepts the need for this global Spectre as a necessary lure to give it the energy to engage in solving particular problems? (Žižek, 2000a: 93)

In other words, what enforces the agent —who knows the *truth* about the lack which is constituent to the domain of political reality and impossible to fill— struggle for an impossible project? The strangeness of this question is not due to its accurateness. What I think is that this question is based on an intentional misunderstanding of Laclau and Mouffe's theory. The basic answer to it is as follows: the acceptance of the impossibility of fullness leads people not to despair, but to the acceptance of the possibility of hegemonizing their particular demands as a relative universality for the political reality. But as an orthodox Lacanian, Žižek should have first asked this question to Lacan's theory which consists of the original form of the idea of the impossibility: why shall we give our energy in trying to capture certain objects of desire if it is impossible to achieve a full satisfaction? In Lacan's formulation of *objet petit a* (the object cause of desire) and his whole conception of the functioning of desire, there is only one possible answer to this question: no matter whether we know or not the fact that the desire is actually the desire for the impossible, we cannot control the mechanism of desire. What we can

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expect from an individual is to live together with the very idea of the lack, the impossibility to attain a full identity in accordance with the partial satisfactions that are achieved by reaching the desired objects. Therefore as in the case of Laclau and Mouffe and Lacan also, an individual or a group formed around a political identity may give up the very idea of a full satisfaction and replace it with partial satisfactions. Partial satisfactions are as motivating as the full satisfaction —which is impossible— or a radical replacement of the existing reality.[84]

In other words, I think, Žižek's criticism of Laclau and Mouffe for their model lacks the principles for attaining certain dynamism is not appropriate. But what he criticizes is based on his different interpretation of what the Lacanian real is. For Laclau and Mouffe, the real is the impossible limit of the society, that we should leave open. On the other hand, for Žižek, such a view gives a priority to the the symbolic over the real. This is the very cynical distancing that Žižek criticizes. For him, the real is the emancipatory potential within the confines of the symbolic. It is the gap that the symbolic could not represent. What we should do is renounce the "objective" symbolic limits and move towards the new possibilities that the real could give us. The true emancipation is emancipation from the existing symbolic order.

Similarly, another point that Žižek finds problematic in the radical democratic project is its being not as radical as its name alludes. For Žižek, such a project is a type of revisionism (or gradualism) in the traditional Marxist sense of the term, which accepts only particular changes within the society. For example, women's struggle for affirmative action, the ethnic movements for political rights etc. could only change the particular functioning of the democracy but it could never go too far as

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[84] I have to admit that, as will be seen, Žižek does not deny the motivating powers of the partial satisfactions. He repudiates the very idea that changing and the replacement of the existing formal structure of politics need certain objective conditions. Therefore, we cannot say that Žižek's ideas are not as realistic as Laclau and Mouffe's because he finds such a "realism" also as problematic as the partial achievements.

democracy is based on the particular demands which are produced within the symbolic order. Žižek offers a more radical change:

> What about changing the very fundamental *structural principle* of society, as happened with the emergence of the 'democratic invention'? The passage from feudal monarchy to capitalist democracy, while it failed to reach the 'impossible fullness of society', certainly did more than just 'solve a variety of partial problems'. (Žižek, 2000a: 93)[85]

One should be careful at concluding that Žižek defends an utopian position which is founded around the fantasmatic idea that a harmonious society is achievable. He is not merely repeating the classical orthodox Marxist theses —which to my knowledge was never pronounced by Marx himself and today, such a view is not defended even by the most vulgar Marxists— that after the socialist revolution, there will not be left any antagonisms and contradictions. What he is against is limiting ourselves with a gradualism that Laclau and Mouffe defends: a gradualism in a sense that society will demonstrate a certain performative development through particular achievements without any deep structural changes.

Žižek claims that what is wrong in Laclau and Mouffe's model is their "secret Kantianism" with a rejection of the Hegelian notion of "concrete universality". Žižek notes:

> [...] since each particularity involves *its own* universality, its own notion of the Whole and its own part within it, there is no 'neutral' universality' that would serve as the medium for these particular positions Thus Hegelian 'dialectical development' is not a deployment of a particular content within universality but the process by which, in the passage from one particularity to another, *the very universality that encompasses both also changes*: 'concrete universality' designates precisely this 'inner life' of universality itself, this process of passage in the course of which the very universality that aims at encompassing it is caught in it submitted to transformations. (Žižek, 2000c:316)

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[85] As I will argue later on in this work, such a rejection of democracy and the structural principles of it requires a rejection of the very first premises of Lacanian linguistic theory.

First of all, due to Laclau and Mouffe, the constitutional role of the lack is equated with the empty signifiers, which are, after the hegemonic struggles, embodied by certain particularities. This equation entails the universality of radical democracy: no matter what the particularities embodied, the institutionalization of the democracy is never questioned. Therefore the tension between the universal and particular is resolved with, on the one hand through a relativisation of the universality (a particular may attain the role of the universal) and on the other hand, the institutionalization of the lack. In this formulation, there exists only one universal truth which is not open for change, that is the democracy itself. Such a resolution is inevitable if we accept such a static and abstract notion of the universal. On the other hand, what Žižek proposes is a more dynamic and dialectical understanding of the universal by which the tension between the particular and the universal is resolved through sublation (Aufhebung). In such an Hegelian view, the universality itself is open for changes with the change in the particulars.

For example, assume that a certain universal is accepted. Its objectification through a particular, in Hegel's dialectics, always negates the universal. The concrete universal is the dialectical relationship between a universal and its exemplification through particularity. In other words, only one universal remains unchanged in Hegel's philosophy, that is the concrete universal, the dialectical movement from a particular to the universal and vice versa.

Therefore, the concrete universal determines the political reality in such a way that a hegemonic particular does not fill up the empty universal but it determines and asserts its own universality. Žižek gives a perfect example for explicating this notion:

> Take the example of religions: it is not enough to say that the genus Religion is divided into a multitude of species ('primitive' animism, pagan polytheism, monotheism, which is then further divided into Judaism, Christianity, Islam ...); the point, rather, is that *each of these particular species involves*

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its own universal notion of what religion is 'as such', as well as its own view on (how it differs from) other religions.(Žižek, 2000c: 315)

The problematic that Žižek tries to underline is the static and "conservative" nature of Laclau and Mouffe's project. Žižek claims that every particular conserves its own universal and this is what is missing in radical democracy. For Laclau and Mouffe, the differences are constructed within the lack: the hegemonic struggle for attaining the empty signifiers produces oppositions and solidarities. But for Žižek, the difference is produced by the intrinsic dialectical tension of each particular with its own universality. In the above mentioned example, the difference between religions is not produced by the empty core of the symbolic register, but, rather, the difference is based on each individual religions' imaginary institution of itself. In other words, before the hegemonic struggle, there are established universals for each particular point of view.

What Žižek defends is not a democratic communicative openness to the particular demands in which the differences are conserved in an antagonistic formal democracy. Quite the contrary, what he proposes is a possibility of achieving a radical emancipatory project in which the differences are ignored and a sameness of solidarity flourishes. As we will see, such a view is based on Badiou's idea of being indifferent to the differences as every difference is established within a situation (a symbolic order in Lacanese). The truth of these differences could only be achieved by going beyond the dynamics of the existing reality with thinking on a universality in which a sameness is produced.

> What the liberal multiculturalist fails to notice is that each of the two cultures engaged in 'communication' is caught in its own antagonism which has prevented it from fully 'becoming itself' — and the only authentic communication is that of 'solidarity in a common struggle', when I discover that the deadlock which hampers me is also the deadlock which hampers the Other. (TS: 220)

Another issue that Žižek raises against Laclau and Mouffe is on

their conception of the lack which could be institutionalized in such a way that none of the particularities can assert a harmonious and final filling of it. Such an institutionalization, due to Žižek, is at the same time affirming the identities that are produced by the symbolic order and at the same time, affirming the global capitalism itself. Therefore capitalism is the limit of the radical democratic project: once you accept it, you accept capitalism.

Focusing on the existing plurality of identities, for Žižek, does not give us any chance to go beyond the established order. The impossibility of representation in its fullness, in Laclau and Mouffe's work, seems to be equated with the impossibility of transgressing the global capitalism. For Žižek such an acceptance of the existing political framework is the point which establishes a barrier against the human freedom: "*today, actual freedom of thought must mean the freedom to question the predominant liberal-democratic post-ideological consensus — or it means nothing.*" (Žižek, 2002: 545)

In the next section, I will summarize Žižek's alternatives which are supported by a radical rejection of the domination of the symbolic order, with an openness to the real.

7.2. Playing with the real:

Žižek rejects any political formation that is based on the symbolic order in which all the pluralities are produced. Instead of that, he offers another way of approaching the political reality which is through the real. He bases his political philosophy on the "excluded elements" which are for him, the "true representatives of the universal, [those] fundamentally subvert the order, and open up radically new horizons of possibility." (Coles, 2005: 69)

Therefore the main difference of him from what Laclau and Mouffe defends is this focus on the excluded ones: the exclusion due to him, is

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the fissure in the symbolic inscription; it is the opening point for a philosophy of the real. The real subversive philosophy could only be achieved through this evil, unbearable and monstrous real of the excluded ones. For example, in his work on the Christian tradition, *The Fragile Absolute*, what Žižek finds in the Christian motto of "love thy neighbour" a subversive dimension against the symbolic order:

> Is not the opposition between the commandments of the Decalogue and human Rights grounded already in the tension between the Decalogue and the injunction to 'love thy neighbour'? This injunction prohibits nothing; rather, it calls for an activity *beyond* the confines of the Law, enjoining us always to do more and more, to 'love' our neighbour — not merely in his imaginary dimension (as our *semblant*, mirror-image, on behalf of the notion of Good that we impose on him, so that even when we act and help him 'for his own Good', it is *our* notion of what is good for him that we follow); not merely in his symbolic dimension (the abstract symbolic subject of Rights), but as the Other in the very abyss of its Real, the Other as a properly *inhuman* partner, 'irrational', radically evil, capricious, revolting, disgusting ... in short, beyond the Good. This enemy-Other should not be punished (as the Decalogue demands), but accepted as a 'neighbour.' (FA: 111-2)

Žižek finds controversially a symptomatic point in the Christian legacy: On the one hand, there is the Law, the Decalogue. And on the other hand, there is the liberal human rights which contradicts the former. They are both inscribed at the symbolic order. The tension between them could only be resolved through the acceptance of a stance against both which could be attained through a radicalization of loving our neighbours, even with their monstrosities.

Žižek's tries to draw our attention to the impasses of the established order (or the proposed ones as in the case of Laclau and Mouffe) in which a conservative dimension is hidden (i.e. "we should protect liberal-democracy!"). He also repudiates the mobilization of the imaginary order which is, due to him, the cause of all of the nationalist-racist and totalitarian political actions based on the fantasmatic closure of

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the lack (i.e. "we are a big Nation", "we should be united"...). The third possibility is the negation of both which is a reinterpretation of the 1968's slogan: Soyons réalistes, demandons l'impossible! (Be realists, demand the impossible!) [86]

Such a politics of the impossible cannot flourish from the symbolic. Quite the contrary, the subversive dimension of the real should be actualized. For example, loving ones neighbor in his excluded dimension or the affirmation of the negative and subversive dimensions of the excluded ones are some of the possible instances which might be the starting point of a real radical politics. Such a view is the real dimension of love, a love in which one loves the real other: "I 'hate' the dimension of his inscription into the socio-symbolic structure on behalf of my very love for him as a unique person." (FA: 126)

Such an approach to the other person as a radical *real* other, an unknown and impossible to capture figure, has strong resemblances with Lévinasian ethics. For Lévinas, when we understand the other, we kill its otherness by capturing it into the one-sidedness of our knowledge. Therefore, our first step towards the other must not be through knowledge and understanding, but through an ethics of responsibility. The true love is loving someone before knowing him. Similarly, for Žižek, love is not possible within the confines of the symbolic order:

> Only a lacking, vulnerable being is capable of love: the ultimate mystery of love is therefore that incompleteness is in a way *higher than completion.* On the one hand, only an imperfect, lacking being loves: we love because we do *not* know all. On the other hand, even if we were to know everything, love would inexplicably still be higher than completed knowledge. (FA: 147)

Why does Žižek (and Lacan in his *Seminar XX*) focus on love in such a depth? First of all, the Christian-Paulinian tradition, as we will also see in Badiou, is one of the traditional examples of going beyond the

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[86]   As we sill see, the same slogan also applies for Alain Badiou's philosophy.

symbolic Law and knowledge. St. Paul's is one of the examples of acting in accordance with the real as he followed the impossible (the resurrection of Christ) in fidelity with a subversive rejection of the existing symbolic order. He institutionalized the Christianity as a universal religion. According to Žižek, it gives us a clue on how to act with the non-All, the real which is beyond the capture of the symbolic knowledge. The dimension of such a transgression of the symbolic order could be found as it is exemplified in the above mentioned illogical character of the Christian love.

There are two crucial points which are interdependent from each other, that should be renounced for acting in accordance with the real and achieving an emancipation from the mandates of the reality: (i) one should not keep a distance —through the fantasmatic support — to the symbolic (i.e. the utopian approach that seeks for a fully harmonious society, the imaginary socio-political unities as in the cases of totalitarian societies) (ii) one should not fully endorse the reality (i.e. the conservative attitude which claims that the existing global capitalism is the best that we can achieve). The best approach is understanding the *nature* of the symbolic order, accepting the fact that there is and always will be a lack which is constitutive of the symbolic and in order to transgress the symbolic, with an addition to these, one should do the unexpected and the impossible. Žižek gives a perfect example from the prison life:

> The cliché about prison life is that I am actually integrated into it, ruined by it, when my accommodation to it is so overwhelming that I can no longer stand or even imagine freedom, life outside prison, so that my release brings about a total psychic breakdown, or at least gives rise to a longing for the lost safety of prison life. The actual dialectic of prison life, however, is somewhat more refined. Prison in effect destroys me, attains a total hold over me, precisely when I do *not* fully consent to the fact that I am in prison but maintain a kind of inner distance towards it, stick to the illusion that 'real life is everywhere' and indulge all the time in daydreaming about life outside, about nice things that are waiting for me after my release or escape. I thereby get caught in the

vicious cycle of fantasy, so that when, eventually, I am released, the grotesque discord between fantasy and reality breaks me down. The only true solution is therefore fully to accept the rules of prison life and then, within the universe governed by these rules, to work out a way to beat them. In short, inner distance and daydreaming about Life Elsewhere in effect enchain me to prison, whereas full acceptance of the fact that I am really there, bound by prison rules, opens up a space for true hope. (FA: 148-9)

For Žižek, the contemporary postmodern/post-structuralist thought is mostly based on the authority of the Other. The general discourse of these ideas takes the alienating power of language for granted, with an ignorance of the subversive character of the real. The Other, for these thinkers, does not give us any chance to attain a final decision: there is always something missing in our decisions; therefore one should always focus on a certain form of reflexivity with an ignorance to the foundational structure of the Other. For Žižek, reflexivity is bounded by the symbolic order also. Such a reflexive openness, inevitably ends up with cynicism

For example, in our era of global capitalism, the politically correct action is conceived as a passive respect to the multiplicity of identities. Every identity can fight and act for its own particular demands. There is not any privileged norm by which we can judge these struggles for identities. The main aim of liberal democracy is institutionalizing the political reality in such a way that every ethnic or cultural minority could be able to represent its demands. Laclau and Mouffe's theory of democracy is one of these multiculturalist attempts that try to open space for every unrepresented political identity.

For Žižek, such an authentication of identities blinds our eyes to the real causes of inequalities. Due to him, a questioning of these causes inevitably ends up with a critique of democracy. As being an orthodox Lacanian, he accepts that a fullness is impossible to attain but at the same time, he also defends that one should never give up the revolutionary act by which we can go beyond the existing symbolic order: (Žižek, 2000a: 101)

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Let me go back to Žižek's claims against radical democracy as being a secret Kantianism. For Žižek, as in the Kantian categorical imperative and the conception of categories, for radical democratic project also, the structural transcendental matrix of political reality is static. What he proposes is an historical approach which is open for the changes within the social and political reality. Such an approach should also have a self-critical stance against its own limits. Another point which is missing in Laclau and Mouffe's position is such an historical understanding of the place of their own work:

> [T]he problem for me is *how to historicize historicism itself.* The passage from 'essentialist' Marxism to postmodern contingent politics (in Laclau) [...] is not a simple epistemological progress but part of the global change in the very nature of capitalist society. It is not that before, people were 'stupid essentialists' [...] one needs a kind of metanarrative that explains this very passage from essentialism to the awareness of contingency: the Heideggerian notions of the epochs of Being, or the Foucauldian notion of the shift in the predominant *épistème*, or the standard sociological notion of modernization, or a more Marxist account in which this passage follows the dynamic of capitalism. (Žižek, 2000a: 106)

This agenda requires a re-actualization of Hegelian-Marxism by which the global capitalism could be analyzed as one of the instances within the whole course of history. By this approach, the liberal democracy could be tied up to its roots and criticized. As Laclau and Mouffe do not have such a critical attitude against these roots, what they presuppose is an idealized and purely formal conception of hegemonic struggle. In other words, the inequalities which make some of the particulars stronger than the others are ignored on behalf of democracy. Žižek repeats the classical Marxist critique of bourgeois democracy once again:

> In more general terms, my point of contention with Laclau here is that I do not accept that all elements which enter into hegemonic struggle are in principle equal: in the series of struggles (economic, political, feminist, ecological, ethnic, etc.) there is always *the very terrain* on which the multitude of particular contents fight for hegemony. Here I agree with

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> Butler: the question is not just which particular content will hegemonize the empty place of universality — the question is, also and above all, which secret privileging and inclusions/exclusions has to occur for this empty place as such to emerge in the first place. (Žižek, 2000c: 320) [87]

Laclau's final work (*On Populist Reason*) is on populism which is developed from his and Mouffe's idea of empty signifiers. By this work, Laclau proposes a new universal political subject which is "people": a new subject which is produced through the logics of equivalence and difference (the particular demands are linked up to each other by particular groups which ends up with the production of a people). Laclau rejects class struggle, as for him, there is not any privileged social group or identity which has a privileged position within the political reality. His attempt is a purely formal understanding of the politics, that is why he and Mouffe reject using any predetermined contents for the hegemonic struggle. Any group, due to Laclau and Mouffe can achieve a certain form of privileged position after the hegemonic struggle. For Žižek, such a rejection of the positive content on behalf of a transcendental formal structure causes several problems as the content of the hegemonic struggle, for such a formal theory could easily be filled by any social groups. (Žižek, 2006a: 553-4)[88]

Such a formal structure of populism due to Žižek consists of a certain "ideological mystification" by which populism "displaces the immanent social antagonism into the antagonism between the unified people and its external enemy, it harbors in the last instance a long-term protofascist tendency." (Žižek, 2000a: 557) This could also be found in the populist left. Žižek gives the example of Hugo Chavez who, for him, is not

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[87] As I will come back later, such a ignorance towards the inequality between the elements is not based on Laclau and Mouffe's work alone. As I have mentioned previously in my discussion of Lacan's work, it is caused by the linguistic approach to the reality in which every signifier is neutral and in a way equal to the others. I will come back to this point once again.

[88] This thesis is obviously based on Hegel's critique of Kant's categorical imperative as being too formal.

changing the capitalist edifice but instead, uses the populist measures of "us" and "them" with a supported public policy with the help of the oil money. (Žižek, 2000a: 557n4) For Žižek, a real radical change could not be understood with the structural model of Laclau, as such a change, for sure destructs this structure also.

Similarly, as Laclau's theory of populism is based on the very idea of demand which produces the political subject (people) through the logic of equivalences, Žižek claims that demand is a demand from the Other. The true subversive action is not to demand something from the Other but to destroy it. In the next section, I will elaborate on the theoretical background of such a revolutionary action.

7.3. Competing universals instead of competing particulars:

Laclau and Mouffe's position can be summarized as an agonistic democracy which is based on the competing particularities for the empty place of the universality. Due to Žižek, the problematic should not be limited to the competition of particulars under the universal and formal structure of democracy. Using Hegel's philosophy, Žižek defends that, during the course of history, at some points the universal form excludes some of the particular contents (i.e. for Laclau and Mouffe's case, ones who aim at the destruction of democracy are excluded). Such an exclusion does not create the productive and agonistic tensions as guessed by Laclau and Mouffe. The real tension is between the universal logic, (in this case the logic of democracy) and its negation. Due to Hegel, by the dialectical movement, this very universality is also particularized. As a consequence of that, we will not have competing particulars, but the two different particularized universals will oppose each other. Žižek notes:

> the struggle is ultimately between these two universalities — not simply between the particular elements of the universality, not just about which particular content will hegemonize the empty form of universality, but between two

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exclusive *forms* of universality themselves.(Žižek, 2006a: 564)

This is, in other words a contestation between the two symbolic orders: one existing and the other which negates the first one. For Žižek, every realization is negated by its own realization. In other words, there is an intrinsic antagonism which always and inevitably negates whatever is realized. Such a notion of antagonism opposes the Laclau's version of antagonism which is exclusively produced through hegemonic struggles. For the latter, the true antagonism is produced in order to achieve a temporary unity by the constitution of a people. The populist creation of a people is based on the articulation of the heterogeneous demands by filling the empty signifers of "we" and "they" (enemies). Enemies are excluded because they are "the evils of society". This is a purely nominative action which is not ontologically deduced from necessary conditions.

Žižek, on the other hand, repeats the orthodox Marxist theses that the privileged antagonisms are produced by capitalism and we should understand the production of such a multiplicity of struggles as a consequence of the logic of global capitalism. In other words, "the very shift from the central role of the classic working-class economic struggle to an identity politics of recognition should be explained through the dynamics of class struggle [...]" (Žižek, 2006b: 193-4)

In order to combine such a view with the core Lacanian concepts, Žižek asserts a highly controversial and ambiguous thesis which is "the Real is the inexorable abstract spectral logic of capital that determines what goes on in social reality" (Žižek, 2006a: 566). Such a thesis is surprising as the definition of the Lacanian real is, the thing which escapes from symbolization, the primordial unity which cannot be grasped through language as language is the cause of its repression.

Žižek supports his thesis by giving more details on Lacan's conception of the three orders and their interconnectedness. Due to him,

there are three different modes of the real as it has two intersecting areas with the other two orders: (1) *The imaginary real* which "endeavors to stretch the imagination to the very border of unrepresentable" and "dissolves all identities." (2) *The symbolic real* as "the real as consistency, with the signifier reduced to a senseless formula, like quantum physics formulas that can no longer be translated back into—or related to—the everyday experience of our lifeworld." (3) *The real real*[89] "the purely formal gap/limitation that thwarts or dislocates every symbolic identity." (Žižek, 2006b: 195)

Although I leave my critical remarks later in this work, I have to add some notes on this separation between these three modalities of the real: First of all, the third definition covers the first one as the real shows itself as dislocation and interruption in the use of language. Both the imaginary and the symbolic are structured by language, therefore any interruption within language is at the same time an interruption and dislocation of the imaginary and the symbolic identities. But the second one, which equates the real with abstract formulas and especially with scientific formulas, seems to be contradictory with the elusive nature of the real. Žižek appeals to the Lacanian understanding of science for supporting his views, which I think only adds more on our confusion:

> [...] Lacan always insists that modern scientific discourse, in its mathematized formulas, articulates a knowledge in the Real and is not merely another symbolic narrative. (Žižek, 2006b: 196)

What Žižek has in his mind is a reassertion of that the existence of the real could be proven through language. But the problem here is that Žižek intentionally names the elements of language that are used for such a proof as the symbolic real. By such a new definition, he separates the

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[89] I have to note that Žižek's the real real and the symbolic real radically differs from my usage of the same terms. Let me repeat it here: for me the real real is the lost unity through the introduction of the infant to language and the symbolic real denotes the trace, the interrupting power of this lost unity after the introduction to language.

symbolic (the social use of language) from the formal, the content-free, scientific use of language mostly based on generalized symbols and variables. In other words, for him, the use of variables, abstractions and deductive rules of natural sciences belong to the real as they give us a knowledge of the real.

What Žižek misses here is the difference between proof of the existence of the real and the real per se. The former, which is named by Žižek as the symbolic real does not belong to the real, but it is with the help of the symbolic order that we can point the elusive nature of the real. For example, the inevitability of anomalies in scientific discourses should be considered as an evidence of the limited nature of the symbolic order and the existence of the real which cannot be achieved in its fullness by any symbolic discourse.

Another objection that I would like to raise against Žižek is, although he is a subversive thinker, when he asserts that "the Real is the inexorable abstract spectral logic of capital that determines what goes on in social reality", he gives an eternal dimension to the logic of capital which challenges his Marxism. In other words, as the real always comes back, no matter with what kind of symbolic order we try to represent it, our every attempt of understanding the character and the logic of capital, we will always fall short. And also no matter with what we replace the existing political reality, the logic of capital always comes back and intrudes with its truth into this new political reality.

I agree with him as "[d]rawing a clear line between the real and the symbolic is a symbolic operation *par excellence*." (Žižek and Salecl, 1996: 41) But this does not mean that the very well known and analyzed logic of capital could be the real. If we accept this view, all of the works on the logic of capital, including Marx's works will become useless speculations. Perhaps we should consider these as the weaknesses of a theory which is based on such vulgar concepts. When asserting such a new conception of the real, Žižek was trying to underline the forgotten edifice of capitalism in

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liberal democratic theories. He tries to put the logic of capital as the limit of the existing symbolic order. In order to go beyond this limit, one has to question this very logic. Within themselves such views might not be considered as contradictory, but they are not compatible with Lacanian theory.

In the next section, I will summarize Žižek's views on tolerance and democracy.

7.4. Against democracy and tolerance:

Žižek supports his critique of democracy with two claims: first of all the very idea of tolerance, which is at the very core of liberal democracies, keeps our eyes away from the real problems. For him, such things like universal human rights or tolerance to the others are mere floating signifiers. Their senses are ideologically determined. Think about the claims like "one should show respect to the other cultures", "one should show respect to the religious beliefs" and so on. Once their contents are filled, the problems start flourishing. Because every content is filled by the use of button ties, therefore, their senses are imaginary. He concludes that there cannot be any universal form of tolerance as it purely depends on the ideological use of language.

According to Žižek, tolerance is "tolerance for the Other in so far as this Other is not an 'intolerant fundamentalist' — which simply means in so far as it is not the real Other." (Žižek, 2006c: 61) The real Other, which is the Other in all of its monstrosity is intolerable. We can tolerate the Hindu belief in the sacredness of cows. Such kind of tolerance is actually a tolerance towards the fantasy of the others, but can we tolerate the violent practices of Hinduism like burning of wives after their husbands' death. (Žižek, 2006c: 60)

> Here, the tolerant multiculturalist is compelled to resort to a thoroughly Eurocentrist distinction, a distinction totally foreign to Hinduism: the Other is tolerated with regard to customs

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which hurt no one—the moment we touch some (for us) traumatic dimension, tolerance is over. (Žižek, 2006c: 61)

What Žižek tries to point is the impasses of the postmodern ethics which is an ethics of distance. For example, postmodern thinkers advise us to find a middle way between the conflictual multiplicity of cultures and demands. We should not give priority to any of them. Similarly, we have to keep a distance against the totalitarian danger of any forms of politics of truth (asserting universal truths). Such a distance is at the same time a non-relation which destructs any possible form of ethics, as ethics is based on true relationships. As Žižek notes:

> There are two topics which determine today's liberal tolerant attitude towards Others: the respect of Otherness, openness towards it, *and* the obsessive fear of harassment—in short, the Other is OK in so far as its presence is not intrusive, in so far the Other is not really Other. (Žižek, 2006c: 77)

When the liberal multiculturalist conceptualizes the other as vulnerable and after that, when he continues with a narcissistic gesture ending up with the vulnerability of himself, the real cause of the otherness and difference is repressed. This is the very act of fantasmatic covering over the impasses of the reality. If there is a radical otherness which cannot be represented within the limits of our political reality, then the multiculturalist tries to give a certain consistency to the existing reality by defending a cynical distancing.

On the other hand, Žižek reasserts the outmoded *politics of truth*, which should start from encountering with the real, as the real is where the Truth is located. Due to him, the real enemy is not this real, excluded, unrepresented otherness. The real enemy is the structural process of exclusion of the otherness.

The true political act, for Žižek, should not be bounded up with the limits of the so called objective conditions. What it needs is an act which aims the destruction of the symbolic order, instead of finding a way within it.

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7.5. Enjoy!:

How do people behave when they think within the boundaries of the symbolic order? The liberal democracy is one of the outcomes of such thinking. There is more: for Žižek, in our postmodern era, the symbolic order conceals the gap between the real and the symbolic in such a way that the symbolic Law loses its effect and is replaced with another form of symbolic reality in which *everything is allowed*. As at the very core of the dynamics of desire, there stands the Law, which represses the impossible Thing, castrates the jouissance. Therefore the permissiveness of our era changes all the mechanisms of desire and enjoyment.

For the postmodern ethics, as there is a plurality of cultures and as there is not any ethical norm which can encapsulate all of them, the Law is replaced with permissiveness. This is summarized by the multiculturalist motto "tolerance to the other" as I have mentioned. But, such a tolerance is not a tolerance to the real of the other. Therefore, tolerance is an acceptance to be a puppet: "you should tolerate the others because the symbolic order asks you to do that"; "you should be open to the others as there is not any Law by which you can judge them".

The real subject, for Žižek is the subject that fills the gap between the real and the symbolic. In the postmodern conception as there is no real, no beyond of the symbolic reality, there is not any place for the subjective action also. The slogan of such a permissiveness is "If there is no way to get out of our iron cage, why don't we enjoy with it!"

According to Žižek, the other side of this permissiveness is guilt. In classical psychoanalysis, we feel guilty when we act against the order of the superego. In the permissive society, the superego has only one imperative: enjoy! Such an enforcement to enjoy with the existing reality, makes us feel guilty when we do not feel enough happiness.

> Therein consists the opposition between Law and superego: Law is the agency of prohibition which regulates the

distribution of enjoyment on the basis of a common, shared renunciation (the "symbolic castration"), whereas superego marks a point at which *permitted* enjoyment, freedom-to-enjoy, is reversed into *obligation* to enjoy — which one must add, is the most effective way to block access to enjoyment. (FTK: 237)

This is the most brutal form of controlling the social reality: "here we have the most free of our society and we have everything you want, but you still are unhappy! That is your fault!" In other words, permissiveness with the superego is the most supreme form of Law. Žižek comments on this:

> One should recall here Lacan's reversal of Dostoevsky's famous proposition from *The Brothers Karamazov*: 'If God doesn't exist, then nothing at all is permitted any longer.' Is not the ultimate proof of the pertinence of this reversal the shift from the Law as Prohibition to the rule of 'norms' or 'ideals' we are witnessing today, in our 'permissive' societies: in all domains of our everyday lives, from eating habits to sexual behaviour and professional success, there are fewer and fewer prohibitions, yet more and more guilt when the subject's performance is found lacking with respect to the norm or ideal. (Žižek, 2005a: 306)

Therefore, permissiveness is another form of fantasmatic concealment of the lack. That is why Žižek defends that the real subjective action is based on the freedom which is shaped by the abyss between the symbolic and the real. To act freely is not to act in compliance with the symbolic order.

In other words, what superego enforces us is to live with the symbolic order. But in truth, there is no real enjoyment in the symbolic.[90] The real is aimed to be totally excluded from the symbolic order by the superego. The superego tries to eliminate nothing at the level of the unconscious: everything is permitted, therefore nothing remains at the unconscious. One is forced to enjoy and if he does not feel any enjoyment, he feels guilty as if it is his own fault. Therefore we feel guilty not because

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[90] Enjoyment in the sense of jouissance.

of excess enjoyment, but because of the reverse, which is not feeling enough enjoyment. The other side of this logic is that we should be satisfied with the possibilities that we are allowed to do; we should be satisfied with the existing reality. Therefore in permissive societies, the superego acts in such a way that both one should enjoy his duty and one's duty is to enjoy. (FA: 134-5)

The problem with permissiveness is its false definition of freedom. The real freedom is the limit of the existing reality. We could only be free if we really challenge the imperatives of the existing reality. Žižek aims at showing the hypocrisy of the postmodern ethics which is based on permissiveness. Due to him, the elimination of normative rules for value judgments leaves us with one of the most violent forms of oppression. We need the Law which is the collective prohibitive factor leaving an empty space between the real and the symbolic in which we can fill with our subjectivity. In the postmodern permissiveness, there is not any place for subjective decision. In other words, we are the slaves of the permissiveness of the society. We are enforced to forget the most important question that what we really desire: what is the meaning of our subjectivity. Instead of that, we are forced to desire what is offered to us.

Let me combine this view with the previously discussed claims of Žižek against radical democracy. Due to Žižek, Laclau and Mouffe's reduction of the political struggle within the confines of democracy is the loss of the real: you are allowed to be represented in the radical democracy unless you are against it and unless you do not deserve it. You can be represented only if you give up the monstrous real which interrupts the functioning of the symbolic order, in this case, democracy.

Similarly, one should enjoy with one's own duty which is to be represented in the present structure of the symbolic. You cannot demand more like a violent refusal of the symbolic order. This is the freedom offered to us by postmodernism. There are no rules and any transcendent order, except the continuous flux of the symbolic order. One cannot bring

an order from the external monstrous real into the symbolic. What you can do is to let things be and enjoy.

According to Žižek, another consequence of this permissiveness is the paranoiac production of meta-linguistic positions (or the other of the other in Lacanese). As permissiveness is the loss of the big Other, the Law of the symbolic order, the lack of it, (i) produces the cynical indifference to the reality ("if there is not any big Other, than what can I do?")[91] and (ii) the paranoiac replacement of the big Other with the Other of the Other. That is why the conspiracy theory books are becoming more and more popular. In them, the basic theme is the existence of a fantasmatic big Other which pulls the strings of us and which controls everything. Such delusions keep us away from the real cause of the trouble, which is, due to Žižek, global capitalism.

At the very core of Žižek's argumentation, there is a reassertion of the Hegelian critique of liberalism. For liberalism, the individual freedom is defined by the satisfaction of desires without questioning the sources of them. The real question for both Hegel and Žižek is the real cause of these desires. We cannot criticize the desires of individuals but we can disclose the real of their desires.

7.6. Cynicism:

The other side of this loss of the big Other is *cynicism*. Žižek reverses the Marxist phrase "they do not know it, but they are doing it" which is based on the Hegelian notion of *false consciousness*: We do not know the real emancipatory potential in ourselves and we do not know that we are exploited and that is why we continue supporting the existing system. Such a view presupposes that there is a true consciousness which can be attained within the course of history and after a certain level of development is achieved. For the classical Hegelian Marxist view,

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[91] .I will come back to this cynical distance to the reality in the next section.

critique of ideology reveals the mechanisms of this false consciousness as the ideology produces it and is supported by it. After this false consciousness is reversed, the reality that is supported by this false consciousness will dissolve.

As till now, we have seen, for Žižek and for also Laclau and Mouffe, ideology is not anymore a cause of false consciousness but it is the fantasmatic support of the existing reality. Fantasy masks the fissures within the social reality. In order to develop his views, Žižek borrowed a new concept of individual attitude from Peter Sloterdijk, which is the cynical subject:

> The cynical subject is quite aware of the distance between the ideological mask and the social reality, but none the less still insists upon the mask. The formula, as proposed by Sloterdijk, would then be: 'they know very well what they are doing, but still they are doing it'. Cynical reason is no longer naïve, but is a paradox of an enlightened false consciousness: one knows the falsehood very well, one is well aware of a particular interest hidden behind an ideological universality, but still one does not renounce it. (SOI: 29)

Such a cynical distance can be seen in the writings of postmodern and poststructuralist philosophers' writings on tolerance, difference, the otherness and so on. The cynical distance is based on their rejection of the existence of any big Other, any ethical norms and universal truths. If there is not any big Other, then why should one take the reality seriously. Similarly, the other side of the tolerance to the other is the narcissistic vulnerability. The very idea of vulnerability is manifested in the postmodern critical distance to the reality. Every truth assertion is criticized with suspicion; every political assertion of truth is considered as a dangerous and totalitarian attempt: "If we take the reality too seriously by asserting and universalizing certain Truths, Stalinism and Nazism will come back!" In short, the vulnerability of the other, is the obverse of the cynicism. Because, if everyone is vulnerable, then any structural change is useless.

Žižek gives the example of the use of money in order to explicate the cynical attitude:

> When individuals use money, they know very well that there is nothing magical about it — that money, in its materiality, is simply an expression of social relations. The everyday spontaneous ideology reduces money to a simple sign giving the individual possessing it a right to a certain part of the social product. So, on an everyday level, the individuals know very well that there are relations between people behind the relations between things. The problem is that in their social activity itself, in what they are *doing*, they are *acting* as if money, in its material reality, is the immediate embodiment of wealth as such. They are fetishists in practice, not in theory. (SOI: 31)

One of the outcomes of such a cynical attitude is concluding the end of ideologies. If we know and we still continue doing things, what then is the use of ideology critique? Žižek claims that the new form of ideology critique should not be based on knowledge but should focus on activity. The real illusion is not at the side of knowing. The illusion is hidden in activity:

> [T]hen this formula can be read in quite another way: 'they know that, in their activity, they are following an illusion, but still, they are doing it'. For example, they know that their idea of Freedom is masking a particular form of exploitation, but they still continue to follow this idea of Freedom. (SOI: 33)

Žižek's emphasis on acting, instead of knowing is another attempt of locating the political struggle beyond the symbolic. For him, what we need is not to wait for the objective conditions which are the conditions determined by the symbolic order. Instead of that, what we need is a certain decisionism: a way of acting towards the impossible real. But if the real is impossible, how could we act in conformity with it? As I have mentioned, for him the real is the logic of capital. He even sometimes claims that social antagonism is the real. For him,

> what matters is that the very constitution of social reality involves the 'primordial repression' of an antagonism, so that the ultimate support of the critique of ideology — the extra-

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ideological point of reference that authorizes us to denounce the content of our immediate experience as 'ideological'— is not 'reality' but the 'repressed' real of antagonism." (Žižek, 1994: 25)

In reality, we do not experience the class struggle. The fantasmatic supports of the existing reality, conceals this truth. Attaining the truth of the real antagonism could only be possible through political action.

The crucial thing about Lacanian political theory and especially Žižek's interpretation of it is its advantage of having a possible point of exit from the iron cage of reality, which is the real. Since Heidegger, the individual is considered as a being situated with others and bounded by his own life-world. This yields to the famous phenomenological problem of disengagement from the existing life-world. If we are bounded and situated by our life-world, what does it mean to achieve autonomy and how could it be possible to achieve such a form of autonomy? For Žižek, Lacan's theory gives us an unexpected solution to this problem:

This disengagement can only occur because there is from the very outset something in the subject that resists its full inclusion into its life-world context, and this 'something', of course, is the unconscious as the psychic machine that disregards the requirements of the 'reality principle'. (Žižek, 2005a: 296)

But then how could he combine these views with a philosopher of teleology and closure, Hegel? Žižek interprets Hegel as a philosopher who, always leaves an open space for the contingent and irrational events in the midst of the dialectical process of reconciliation and sublation. For example, the Monarch in Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is the irrational gap that is located at the highest point of the rational state. (FTK:94n26) That is similar with how the lack works for Lacan: beyond the infinite signification with signifers and imaginary and illusory stopping of them, there stands the monstrous and irrational Thing, the real.

One of the most important figures for understanding Žižek's

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political theory is Alain Badiou. He provides new concepts of event and situation to Žižek for giving a certain consistency to his political theory. In the next chapter, I will elaborate on Badiou's main theses and perhaps this will be helpful for uncovering the inconsistencies and ambiguities of Žižek's philosophy.

CHAPTER 8

INTERMEZZO

I have arrived at a turning point in this work. I will continue with Badiou's ontology but before going on, I would like to take a retrospective look at the trajectory that I have traced up until now with the help of Lacan's ethics.

For Lacan, the crucial question that an analysand should find an answer is "Have you acted in conformity with the desire that is in you?" and he adds "[t]his is not an easy question to sustain. I, in fact, claim that it has never been posed with that plurality elsewhere, and that it can only be posed in the analytic context." (SEMVII: 314) The only ethical imperative could then be is "act in conformity with your desire!" But if what one desires could only be explained within the limits of the symbolic, how could one find the real of his own desire? This question could only be answered by psychoanalysis.

What is the relationship of such an ethical imperative and our own subject matter, the Lacanian political theory? The problem for both Žižek and Laclau and Mouffe is similar: what is a *true* political action? For Žižek, this is acting inconformity with the real by giving up the imperatives of the symbolic order. For Laclau and Mouffe, the symbolic should be institutionalized in such a way that the real of this symbolic could never be covered over by any utopian theories of fullness.

Lacan, for several instances commented on Kant and almost every time he appeals for Kant, he compares him with Marquis de Sade. Even one of the most important articles in his *Écrits* is titled as "Kant with Sade". Going into the details of this strange comparison between Kant, the moralist, and Sade, the sadist will give us more clues on how to

understand Lacanian action in accordance with the real.

8.1. Kant with Sade:

Due to Lacan, Kant is the first philosopher who tried to put together an ethics beyond the pleasure principle. As the pleasure principle is one of the two principles that are structured within the symbolic order, this attempt is the initial but incomplete step towards an ethics of the real.

The categorical imperative is the basis of the Kantian ethics. Due to Lacan, Kant's main assertion is that "[n]o phenomenon can lay claim to a constant relationship to pleasure." (EC: 646) It is this imperative which puts every human sentiment and interests in question and calls for an order based on duty. As Lacan puts:

> For [the moral judgment] to be valorized as the properly ethical field, none of our interests must be in any way involved. [...]The breakthrough is achieved by Kant when he posits that the moral imperative is not concerned with what may or may not be done. To the extent that it imposes the necessity of a practical reason, obligation affirms an unconditional "Thou shalt." The importance of this field derives from the void that the strict application of the Kantian definition leaves there. (SEM VII: 315-6)

Such a subversive rejection of the pleasure principle is not followed by the rejection of the other side of the symbolic, which is the reality principle. That is why Kantian ethics is denounced by Hegel as being a purely formal ethics. The contents (objects), which are given by the pleasure principle are emptied from the moral imperative. That is the point where Lacan injects his presentation of Sade as Kantian: "it is precisely the Kantian criteria [Sade] advances to justify his position that constitute what can be called of anti-morality." (SEM VII: 78) He adds:

> If one eliminates from morality every element of sentiment, if one removes or invalidates all guidance to be found in sentiments, then in the final analysis the Sadian world is conceivable — even if it is its inversion, its caricature — as one of the possible forms of the world governed by a radical

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ethics, by the Kantian ethics as elaborated in 1788. (SEM VII: 79)

For Lacan, the anti-morality of Sade and the morality of Kant are in perfect harmony and for Lacan, this is caused by the elimination of the real from the ethical realm. For example, our disgust against Sade's work could easily be waved aside by the Kantian ethics; as such a disgust is an act of being sentimental.

Previously I have mentioned Žižek's rejection of both the Decalogue and the liberal ethics of permissiveness. Now it is time to add more commentary, retrospectively on that: the former is similar with the Kantian duty (Thou shalt!) and the latter is with the Sade's (Enjoy!). That is why Žižek refuses both of them. Both are founded within the structural inconsistencies of the symbolic order. That is why Sade is the truth of Kant. Although both of them goes beyond the pleasure principle, they could not transgress the imperatives of the superego.

What Lacan gives us is not an easy to grasp formulation. As I have mentioned, his ethics is limited within the analyst-analysand relationship. During the analytic session, the analyst should focus on the guilt that is felt by the analysand. Because, the guilt is the place where the analysand gives up on his desire. The crucial thing is, finding out what the real desire is which leads us to the objet petit a, the remainder left after the castration. Therefore, the real, as the originator of the desire could be approached through the understanding of the guilt.

Laclau and Mouffe conceive the symbolic order as the place where we set rules, where we found the rationalization of the real. But the real resists such a rationalization. It asserts the *contingency* into the symbolic order by which we understand the world as a realization of certain rational laws. For them, the unconscious is the irrational part hidden behind consciousness. And that is why in our political engagements, we do not make rational decisions. We have to accept the contingency as the way how things work and try to fix it as the main

property of the political institutions. That is why for them there are not any privileged political actors and there is not any predestined telos of the human history. The human history and political actors are contingent in nature and their power and political positions are determined by the hegemonic struggle.

For Žižek, contingency is another delusive form that is imposed on us by the symbolic. Things may seem contingent to us but this is based on the repression of the real character of how things work. What is repressed is the class struggle, the very basic logic of the capital. Therefore, as in the case of both Sade and Kant, being bounded by the symbolic is accepting the very inconsistencies (not dialectical contradictions) and the inevitable impasses of the symbolic order. Every formal principle which excludes the real, is repressive. A perfect society is an impossibility but this should not keep us passive against the existing structural order.

What then is the ethical? This is a complicated question to answer within the limits of Lacanian psychoanalysis. What we can attain might be a sense of how the ethical act might be, by following what Lacan puts together in his works. For Lacan, one should not give up on one's own desire. This is the initial condition of an ethical act. This assertion seems to be paradoxical as the desire is still bounded by the symbolic order. It works metonymically and whatever we desire is, in reality, not the real desired Thing. The object cause of desire, *objet petit a*, which does not have any positive content gives dynamism to the very act of desire. As language could not represent the real desired lost Thing, no matter what do we desire, it is not the real object that we have lost in our primary loss. So the desired object is delusory. Why shall we follow this very delusive object? If we repeat Hegel, how can we be sure that we *really* desire that object if the symbolic order is what conceals the real desired thing? The crucial thing is that what Lacan is after is not the desired object but the hidden kernel behind the desire, which is the objet petit a. The question is not what do we desire but why do we desire? Therefore the problem of

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desire is at the same time the problem of choice: the real desire is a choice which always consists of an excess to the symbolic order.

How can we combine this with the ethical? We should shift to the question of freedom: what does it mean to be free? Once again, we should focus on the nature of the choice. What is a free choice if all of our choices are bounded within the limits of language? For Lacan, every choice within the limits of the symbolic order is not a real choice. One chooses what is put in front of him as the paths of decision. On the other hand, the real choice is choosing the destruction of the symbolic order. And more, as the subject appears in the symbolic order, this also implies the destruction of the subject. (Zupančič, 2000: 215-6) This is the death of the subject in order to achieve an ethical stance. Such a death is necessary for the new subject to flourish. In other words, a free choice is the real replacement of one symbolic order with another one.

Such a view is obviously similar with the Hegelian master-slave dialectics: the Master becomes a master as he could surmount the fear of death and slave becomes a slave as he could not do that. We should be careful at concluding that Lacan is defending that to be ethical is to be a Master. What he uses is the very idea that what makes man as a man is his ability to sacrifice even his own life for the realization of his own desires. To be a true subject is acting in accordance with one's own desires, and even, in order to attain that, one may choose death: the death of the subject and also the death of the desire. Lacan notes:

> For example, *freedom or death!* There, because death comes into play, there occurs an effect with a rather different structure. This is because, in both cases, I will have both. Freedom, after all, as you know, is like the celebrated freedom to work, for which the French Revolution, it seems, was fought. It can also be the freedom to die of hunger—in fact, that's what it amounted to throughout the nineteenth century, which is why, since then, certain principles have had to be revised. You choose freedom. Well! You've got freedom to die. Curiously enough, in the conditions in which someone says to you, *freedom or death!*, the only proof of

freedom that you can have in the conditions laid out before you is precisely to choose death, for there, you show that you have freedom of choice. (SEMXI: 213)

The true freedom is not accepting the freedom of the existing order (freedom to work, freedom to die of hunger) but to reject the symbolic order, which is the very basis of the slavery. In other words, the real freedom could only be achieved by choosing two different forms of death: (i) the symbolic death, which is the refusal of the existing symbolic order, (ii) the real death, which is the biological death. The symbolic death is the absolute rejection of the symbolic reality, a madness by which one is detached from any communicable realm. Such a madness is transitionary as its starts with the acceptance of the impossible as an inevitable fact, continues with the rejection of the existing and dominating symbolic order and then ends up with the establishment of another one.

Lacan gives us the very act of Antigone in Sophocles' play as an example of such an act: Antigone repudiates the symbolic order in order to realize what she desired. Similarly, the scientists rejection of the existing paradigm by following an impossibility (an anomaly in the Kuhnian sense), the madness of the revolutionary's action which aims at the destruction of the existing political reality are further examples.

What Lacan introduces is a novel idea of ethics which is based on desire. But let me remind once again, whenever Lacan mentioned ethics, it was always that of psychoanalysis. Therefore, what he had in his mind was the analysand's desires. The true ethical act for the analyst is being neutral and keeping his own ego at a distance from the analysand. And what analyst helps the analysand is finding the point where he gives up on his desire. That is the point where guilt flourishes.

On the other hand, acting in accordance with one's own desire requires the destruction of the subject also. As the subject is the subject of the symbolic, a real choice, a choice for freedom is the choice for the symbolic death. Therefore the true ethical choice entails (a) the symbolic

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death of the subject, (b) another subject comes out of this decision. (Zupančič , 2000: 235-6)

The new subject could not be attained by any particular enhancement of the symbolic order. Quite the contrary, it requires sacrificing the symbolic order. It is the only possible way of opening up the subject to the new dimension of Truth. In other words, one has to kill his or her own subject in order to have another one.[92] Sophocles' heroine, Antigone dies in order to realize her desire:

> from Antigone's point of view life can only be approached, can only be lived or thought about, from the place of that limit where her life is already lost, where she is already on the other side.(SEMVII:280)

The main difference between Kant and Lacan is that the former insists on the will of the Law, the only ethical willful action is the will which is motivated by the Law. Although Lacan agrees with the elimination of the pleasure principle from the ethical field, he underlines the truth of desire is the objet petit a, which is the remainder from the jouissance.

Kant's duty may end up with Nazi execution camps in which, the officers, like Eichmann were doing their duty. As Žižek puts:

> Kant presupposes that we are dealing with a trustee 'doing his duty', with a subject who lets himself be taken without remainder into the abstract determination of being the depositary[93]. A brief Lacanian joke goes in the same direction: 'My fiancée never misses the rendezvous, because as soon as she misses it, she would no longer be my fiancée.' Here too, the fiancée is reduced to the function of fiancée. (Žižek, 2005b: 130-1)

What Žižek finds problematic here is the abstract determination of

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[92] As we will see, there is a major difference between Lacan's and Badiou's definitions of the subject. For the former, the subject is located and inscribed in the symbolic order. For the latter, subject only temporarily appears during the real transgressive act of going beyond the symbolic order.

[93] Žižek refers here Kant's example of a depository (Kant, 1997:25) and Lacan's use of the same example. (EC: 647)

the subject by Law. For Kant, every desire is pathological, therefore should be excluded from the realm of the moral law. On the other hand, for Lacan, there is something non-pathological in desire which is the objet petit a. Therefore a true ethics should focus on desire as it gives us the hard and elusive kernel hidden behind it.

8.2. The traps of language

The dilemma that Lacan is faced with is finding a way of moving beyond the ethics of the symbolic order without falling into the traps of the contradictory nature of language. When he asserts something in our everyday use of language, he always suffers from this danger. The only way left for him is leaving aside the ordinary use of language and moving towards a more formal language. That is what he tried in his latest Seminars. In the next chapter, I will introduce one of his disciples, Alain Badiou, who puts together an ontology (and an ethics which is an outcome of this ontology) which is based on such a formalism.

Badiou's theory is very important for our work as first of all, he proposes an ethics of the real which is more comprehensible than Žižek's radical and mostly annoying claims. Secondly, Badiou's theory is based on set theory. Therefore, one may claim that he founds a theory which was dreamed by Lacan.

CHAPTER 9

ALAIN BADIOU

9.1. Lacan and Mathemes:

Lacan, especially in his later writings, dreamed about a pure formalization of psychoanalysis. Perhaps there were two reasons for that: (i) his never ending interest in mathematics and (ii) his idiosyncratic passion for an absolute, purely symbolized and content-independent theory of psyche, which includes the formal proofs of the existence of the real. That is why, in his later seminars, he introduced the concept of "mathemes" which are —by the influence of Wittgenstein of *Tractatus* and Gödel's incompleteness theorems—certain elements used in order to show what cannot be said.

The traces of his love of mathematics and formalization could be found even in his earlier writings. For example in one of his earlier essays, "The Subversion of the Subject", he introduced *the graph of desire*[94] which is developed in order "to allow for a hundred and one different readings, a multiplicity that is acceptable as long as what is said about it remains grounded in its algebra." (EC: 691) What he was seeking for was a theory in which the changing contents of the elements (caused by different readings) do not enforce any changes on the structural logic (algebra) of the theory. This might sound contradictory as in his writings, he always states that there is no meta-language. Lacan asserts that this is not a meta-linguistic approach and these symbols that he uses for the

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[94] Due to the limitations of this work, I have excluded the famous "graph of desire" in my presentation of Lacan's work. One can find a political interpretation of this graph in Žižek's *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, Chapter 3. Another interpretation of the same graph in a clinical perspective could be found in Fink, 2004. For some of the commentators, this graph is not as important as its complexity. (Bowie, 1979).

formalization are not transcendent signifiers. (EC: 691) In other words, what he tries to conceptualize is finding a symbolic form by which, both the elusive nature of the real and the inner logics of the symbolic and the imaginary could be pointed out. Is not this the similar project with that was realized by Gödel when he proved the limits of expressions of mathematics? In this section, I will try to present this similarity which is necessary for a better understanding of Badiou's thought.

Mathemes denote the mechanisms of certain variables which can be stuffed with several different interpretations. Such an openness to different interpretations are based on his defensive attitude against imposing any pre-determined truths to his disciples—who were mostly clinical psychoanalysts during his early seminars. In order to attain such a neutral stance against multiple interpretations, he tries to put together a rigorous form which is independent from different contents. First of all, his theory is a theory on psyche but at the same time, it captures also all conscious and unconscious human practices. Thus its realm of interest is vast which renders it to be a meta-theory trying to answer the questions of how theories in the minds of human beings are shaped, how does mind work etc. On the other hand, by adding a formalism which is similar with or at least influenced by the mathematical formalism[95], he tries to add a legitimate self-referentiality. By this insertion, his theory is enabled to talk about its own limits and show these limits in a Wittgensteinian manner. The Lacanian symbolic is structured in a symbolic form. In order to transgress its own symbolic limits, he prefers a formal agenda by which it could point out its own impasses:

> Mathematical formalization is our goal, our ideal. Why? Because it alone is matheme, in other words, it alone is capable of being integrally transmitted. Mathematical formalization consists of what is written, but it only subsists if

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[95] As since Gödel, we know that mathematics is a model for a self-referential system which sets the limits of itself. If his theory gets closer to mathematics, then the meta-theoretical components of it will be eliminated as mathematics is a way of formulating its own limitations and rules.

I employ, in presenting it, the language (*langue*) I make use of. (SXX: 119)

For Lacan, mathemes are not open for understanding in their purest form without any content. They have first to be filled with contents in order to be understood. They are for transmitting: "We haven't the slightest idea what they mean, but they are transmitted." (SXX: 110) There is an obvious paradox in this definition: First of all, mathemes are used in order to go beyond the boundaries of language as they are supposed to be tools for accessing and showing the real. On the other hand, when we use mathemes, we are still bounded with language as they are said in language. Lacan is aware of this fact as a few lines after the above quote he adds: "Nevertheless, they are not transmitted without the help of language, and that's what makes the whole thing shaky." (SXX:110) Or elsewhere similarly: "Therein lies the objection: no formalization of language is transmissible without the use of language itself." (SXX: 119) In a way he repeats his famous paradoxical motto: "there is no meta-language." But such an assertion could only be done by a formal system.

Gödel proved that there are certain True propositions in arithmetic which cannot be proven by the use of the axioms of it. This is, in Lacanese, there is always the real which is impossible to symbolize (formalize), but there are certain formal systems in which this impossibility of formalizing the real can be proven. Gödel's incompleteness theorems proved that it is impossible to represent *the real of mathematics*. In Gödel's achievement, the most important fact is that he did not use meta-Linguistic tools for his proofs. He followed the rules of language of pure mathematics in order to prove what is impossible within it. If we use Lacanese, what he proves is the sayability of a truth which cannot be demonstrated: "Something true can still be said about what cannot be demonstrated." (SXX: 119) Lacan was trying to find out a way to formalize psychoanalysis in such a way that in it, the truth about the real could be shown and at the same time, this truth should be left impossible to say.

9.2. From the symbolic and the real to the Event and Being:

The gap between the symbolic and the real is the central theme that Lacan elaborates on in his later seminars with the help of mathemes. In Badiou's work, the gap between these two realms is replaced with another gap which is between the Event and the Being. Like a Heideggerian gesture, he starts from ontology, by generalizing Lacan's theory and applying it to the real of Being. His ontology is totally different from the traditional ones as he introduces a mathematical ontology. But it should not be conceived of an ontology which is based on mathematical modeling. What Badiou asserts is the equality of mathematics and ontology. This is obviously a bizarre and dangerous equality which I will discuss in this chapter.

9.2.1.Mathematics as pure presentations:

Badiou, in his magnum-opus, *Being and Event* claims that his use of mathematics as ontology is not based on a passion for certainty. Due to him, this is the mistake that has been done throughout the history of philosophy. Traditionally, mathematics is thought of as a discipline *which enables certainty*. The philosophical inquiries which are based on such a belief that the relations between the mathematical objects preserve certainty is misleading. For Badiou, there are not any mathematical objects and also there is no need for a foundation of mathematics, because mathematics is pure presentation and nothing else. (BE: 6-7)

Similar to Lacan's approach to Gödel's incompleteness theorems, Badiou asserts that thinking this way on, mathematics even presents its own inability of representation. In other words, with the works of Gödel and Cohen*, mathematics as the presentation* presents its own impasses. What are these impasses for Badiou? Being a Lacanian, Badiou also rejects a representational theory of language. But he also makes certain changes within the Lacanian theory. For him, every presentation leaves certain portions of the real, unrepresented. This is the primary impasse which

could only be presented by mathematics. In the next section I will summarize his discussion of oneness and the operation of count-as-one which are crucial for understanding how mathematics is equated with ontology.

9.2.2.One is not:

In Badiou's theory, there are not the symbolic and the real orders, but instead of them he uses the concepts of *situation* and *inconsistent multiplicity*. Before going into the details of these concepts and his theoretical framework, we have to answer the very first question about Badiou's equation: "why and how the equality (ontology=mathematics) holds?"

First of all, due to Badiou, there is not *one*. He follows Lacan who once asserted that there *is some oneness, but one is not*. (BE: 23) Since Plato's *Parmenides*, the existence of One is one of the most discussed topics of Western philosophy. For Badiou, the claim that "*one is not*" is an axiom: "My entire discourse originates in an axiomatic decision; that of the non-being of the one." (BE: 31) This main axiom, the non-being of the one, due to him is the implicit law of set theory: Russell's paradox against Frege's axiomatic-set theory is the proof that it is impossible to hold a set of all sets in set theory. Badiou follows the motto of Lacan that the real is the impasse of formalization. Badiou's approach can be translated into plain English as the real is beyond symbolization and it can be shown and circumscribed with the help of the rules and axioms of set-theory: the impossibility or the inconsistency of *oneness*, is implicitly provided by the axioms. Let me put it this way: for the sake of presentation, we produce ones (as we will see, Badiou calls them *situations*), and these ones are not enough to represent the real. There is not a one or a series of ones which cover the whole realm of the real, without falling into inconsistencies.

9.2.3.Sets as multiples and multiples as multiples of

multiples:

In set-theory, every set has elements (with the exception of the empty or null set) which are always already selected as sets. Therefore, every set is a multiple and every multiple is at the same time a multiple of multiples (set of sets, every element of a set is also a set). This well known nature of sets is used by Badiou for the rejection of two types of presentations:

1. Anti-essentialism: There are not any multiples which consist of ones. Every set is a set of elements which are also sets denoting multiples. In other words, there is not any *essential* multiple from which all the set of presentations flourish.

2. Anti-holism: There are not ones. Oneness is just an operation and one is not in set-theory. Therefore there is not any oneness which is not based on the symbolic operation of counting as one. Repeating the claim in 1, there is not any originary oneness which is the ground of all presentations.

Badiou introduces a distinction between one and multiple with respect to the presentation: "What *presents* itself is essentially multiple; *what* presents itself is essentially one." (BE: 23) For Badiou, one exists only as an operation. He combines Lacan's motto "*there is* Oneness" with the idea of presentation: a multiple or some multiples are presented by an operation of oneness, which is called "count-as-one."

Mathematics is the discipline which does not consist of any objects. It presents only presentations and every presentation itself is also a multiple and presented by an operation of oneness or count-as-one. There are not any presentations of ones (there are not any sets consisting of ones). Badiou insists on the fact that his thesis equates being neither with something mathematical in nature, nor with a mathematical object. His thesis is not "about the world, but about discourse." That is why he has

chosen a formal system which consists of variables instead of pre-defined contents. The rules and axioms of set theory implicitly allow the presentation of multiples by avoiding any dangers of the acceptance of the being of One. As essences, by definition, before any presentation, are ones, this rejection of the one is concomitant with the rejection of any primordial essences. For Badiou, *essences are not*, as they are ones.

In the axiomatic set theory[96], there is only one existential axiom which is the axiom of null-set. (BE: 60) And all the other axioms are based on the presupposed existence of certain multiples and that is why they are in the form "$(\forall \alpha)(\exists \beta)$", which only "indicate an existence under the condition of another existence." (BE: 62) In other words, in the "$(\forall \alpha)(\exists \beta)$…" type of axioms, the existence of α is the condition of the existence of β. [97]

Therefore, the null-set is the foundational set, which has the same role similar to the role of lack for Lacan. In order to grasp the background of these strange comments on the axioms of set theory, I will first summarize Badiou's main concepts.

9.3. Main Concepts:

The very first and the most important concept of Badiou's theory is the concept of *inconsistent multiplicity*, which basically defines the "the multiplicity of inertia", which is the state of being before any operation of oneness. The consistency of the multiples are attained through the operation of count-as-one, thus, before that, there exists such a formless mode of the multiplicities which are not presented.[98] (BE: 25) The realm of

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[96] In his *Being and Event*, Badiou develops his theory by using Zermelo-Fraenkel's axioms. Therefore within this text, unless mentioned otherwise, when I use "axiomatic set theory", I am referring to Z-F system.

[97] Axiom of Extensionality, Axiom of Power Set, Axiom of Union are examples of such axioms.

[98] Iam using the word "exists" metaphorically. Once again, to exist means to be counted-

inconsistent multiplicities is similar to the Lacanian real as both are beyond and before any symbolization, presentation or counting operation. On the other hand, both the real and the inconsistent multiplicities are the foundational realms of the symbolization or counting operations.

Badiou in his *Being and Event* discusses Plato's dialogue *Parmenides* in which the paradoxes of thinking about one and the others (the multiples) are presented. Due to Badiou, there is an asymmetry in Plato's argumentation which is the cause of the paradox. First of all, while discussing the non-being of one, Plato asserts that in order not to be, one must *be* a non-being. Paradoxically, in order not to be, one must be. Badiou argues that what Plato misses here is the argumentation about the being of one, but instead of that, Plato argues the concept of "one". "Concerning the one itself, however, nothing is thought here, save that the declaration that it is not must be subjected to a law of being." (BE: 32)

On the other hand, while discussing *the others*, Plato delivers "a complete theory of the multiple." (BE: 33) First of all, he starts with an assertion that 'the others' must be grasped in their differences and heterogeneities: "the others are Other." This necessitates a foundational alterity (the Other) in order to grasp the others as simple alterities. The foundational alterity, the Other, must then designate the gap between the one and the multiples, which is an impossible task as the one is not. For Badiou, this unthinkability of multiplicities without any reference to the one is the proof of the inconsistent multiplicities which "in-consist" without the effect of being or any counting operation.

Badiou avoids any insertion of symbolization to the realm of inconsistent multiplicities by choosing axiomatic set-theory as ontology. Because, for set-theory, every element of a set is itself a set. To exist consistently equals to be a set. In other words, every consistent multiple

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as-one. Therefore, like the Lacanian real, inconsistent multiplicities could only be pointed retrospectively. They could only be *shown* within the impasses of presentation.

consists of consistent multiples. There is not any presentation of inconsistent multiplicities with an exception of the null set. Let me put it differently, the null set denotes the non-represented multiples which are nothing.[99] In other words, the inconsistent multiplicity, as being unknowable and unthinkable can only be represented as a Void, denoting nothingness. It is beyond the reach of the knowledge.[100] This gap between the consistently counted multiples and the inconsistent multiples enable certain unexpected appearances which are named as "events" by Badiou. They are like symptoms in Lacanese as symptoms are also caused by a lack of full representation of the real in the symbolic. I will discuss Badiou's conception of the event in detail later in this work.

The second important concept of Badiou's ontology is *situation*. A situation is "any presented multiplicity." (BE: 24) It denotes any multiple which is counted as one. Thus any set is a situation. So the ontological realm of the beings is divided into two subgroups: inconsistent multiplicities and situations.[101] In order to be presented, a multiplicity should be presented in a situation and in order to be presented in a situation, the multiplicity must be a product of the operation counted-as-one.[102]

It is obvious that, situations are similar to the symbolic order of Lacan's theory. In Badiou's discourse, there is not any place for the imaginary. It is quite possible to assert that he combines the two realms under the concept of situation. For Lacan, the symbolic is based on the continuous flux of signifiers and with the help of the imaginary, a certain

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[99] They are nothing as in order to be, they need to be presented.

[100] As will be clarified, Badiou constructs his ethics around this void.

[101] There is an obvious similarity of such a distinction with Heidegger's introduction of the ontic and the ontological in his *Being and Time*. (Heidegger, 1962: 36-40)

[102] As we sill see, when Badiou moves from ontology to ethics, he continues using situations with a rejection of "ethics in general." Instead of that, he defends a situational ethics. (ET: lvi)

static consistency is achieved. On the other hand, for Badiou, there is not any such flux of signifiers. There are only sets and they are constructed by an operation of counting as one. Therefore, this operation both symbolizes the inconsistent multiplicity and at the same time, gives consistency to this symbolization. I must add that such a comparison and isomorphism between the concepts of Lacan and Badiou is dangerous. On the one hand, there is a theory which is based on linguistic properties and on the other hand, there is a purely formal mathematical approach to the being. And also, one is a theory of psyche, the other is on the being.

Besides these similarities, there are some differences also. For Lacan, the gap between the symbolic and the real is shaped by a subjective operation which is based on an alienation in language. For Lacan, the Thing loses its own singularity by language and such a loss is the foundational principle of all the human activities. In other words, the gap between the ontological (the real) and the ontic (the symbolic) is the location of the subject: the subject is the representation of the gap between the real and the reality. Similarly this gap also fits in the gap between the universal and the particular: the gap between the universal real and the subjective reality. This gap resembles Kantian separation between noumena and phenomena. As will be explicated, the subject for Badiou is elsewhere.

9.3.1. Presentation, representation and the Void:

The difference between the presentation and the representation is a crucial one in understanding the philosophy of Badiou. The presentation is being counted in a situation. On the other hand, representation requires counting one more time. There are two basic operations for multiples. The first one is "belonging". A multiple belongs to a situation if it is counted-as-one. It is obvious that belonging is same with "being and element of". (Set a belongs to set b if and only if a $\in$ b.) The second one is "inclusion" which is same with "being a subset of." (Set a is included in set b if and only if a

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⊂ b.) Thus presentation refers to belonging and representation refers to inclusion. A set (multiple) a is present in situation b if and only if a ∈ b and similarly, set a is represented in situation b if and only if a ⊂ b.

For Badiou, in every positive order of being, in every selection of multiples with an operation of counting-as-one, there is the Void as a representation of the non-represented multiples: the inconsistent multiplicities *are nothing* due to the situation. Thus consistent being is being in a situation and the void denotes the nothingness of the non-counted multiples which are excluded. The Void is the extension of the inconsistent multiplicity and it is constructive for the situation. Žižek reminds us that the Void has been a central category since Democritus' atomism. For Democritus, "'atoms' are nothing but configurations of the Void." (TS: 129) The Void denotes the limit of a situation. It is the beyond of the knowledge shaped by the positive order of being. In set-theory, every set has the null-set (∅) as its subset. In Badiou's terminology, as every set denotes a situation, the null-set denotes the Void which is represented within every situation.

For Lacan, one can find the traces of the real within the impasses of language. Similarly, for Badiou, the null-set appears as an effect of signification: it "is never anything, but a result of the count, an effect of structure." (BE: 66) It always appears as a subset in every set and behind this symbolization of the null-set, there resists the impossible inconsistent multiplicity in its fullness. In other words, every set produces the null set as an effect of counting-as-one.

The tension between the presentation and the representation, or as Žižek names it, the dialectics between the Void and the excess (TS: 129) is the central theme of Badiou's ontology. First of all, what is an excess? These two mechanisms, of representation and of presentation do not have a symmetry or balance. The excess occurs in such cases of a disharmony between the two. There are basically two forms of excess: For the first one, a multiplicity included in a situation but is not represented by

it. (a $\in$ b and a $\not\subset$ b) The second form denotes the excess of representation over presentation by a representation of a multiple without presenting it. (a $\subset$ b but a $\notin$ b)

Badiou combines this distinction between the presentation and representation with the null set (Ø) and asserts the following ideas:

1. The null set or the nothing denotes the non-represented inconsistent multiplicities and they are always represented as Void within a situation. (The null set is a subset of every set thus it is included in every situation.) Therefore, for every situation, there exists *the non-representedness* of the Void.

2. All the number system can be reduced into an expression by null set.[103] Therefore, the null set or the Void is ontologically constructive.[104] In other words, the most basic of mathematical objects, the numbers, can be expressed (and constructed) by the null set. This constructive power of Void will be detailed later.

9.3.2. The structure and the state of a situation:

Another very important concept is "structure of a situation" which chooses the elements of a situation: "it is what prescribes, for a presented multiple, the regime of its count-as-one." (BE: 24) Similarly, Badiou names the power set of a situation as the state of the situation, in which the representations are presented. (BE: 95) Such a naming obviously has political allusions as the state determines what is represented.

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[103] For example, Zermelo used the following definitions in order to denote the natural numbers: $0 =_{def} \emptyset$; similarly $1 =_{def} \{0\}$... Von Neumann used another schema: $0 =_{def} \emptyset$, $1 =_{def} \{\emptyset\}$; $2 =_{def} \{0;1\}$; $3 =_{def} \{0;1, 2\}$... (for further details, see especially Chapter 3 of Smullyan and Fitting, 1996)

[104] As I have previously mentioned, the null set axiom is the only *existential* axiom.

9.3.3. Types of Multiples and Situations:

Depending of the different combinations of presentation and representation, Badiou classifies multiples and situations in the following way:

1. <u>Normal multiples:</u> These multiples are presented and represented within a situation at the same time. In other words, both $x \in y$ and $x \in P(y)$[105] holds for these types of multiples. (BE: 99) It is true that such kind of multiples do not entail any excess of presentation over representation, or vice versa and that is why they are called as *normal*.

2. <u>Excrescent multiples:</u> These multiples are not present within a situation, but are represented. If we use the mathematical notation, then both $x \notin y$ and $x \in P(y)$ holds for these. (BE: 99)

3. <u>Singular multiples:</u> These multiples are presented in a situation, but are not represented. In other words, x is singular if and only if $x \in y$ and $x \notin P(y)$ holds. (BE: 99) If $\alpha \in \beta$ and there are some elements of α which are not contained in β, then α is called as a singular multiple. Badiou gives a family as an example. Assume that this family belongs to the social situation, but one of its members is clandestine in that situation. As there is at least one member of the family who is not present in the situation, this family is a singular multiplicity. (BE: 174)

4. <u>Evental site:</u> Badiou defines a sub-type of singular multiples, which are called "evental sites": "A multiple in a situation is an evental site if it is totally singular", in other words, "it is presented, but none of its elements are presented. It belongs but it is radically not included." (BE: 507) Following the mathematical notation, we will have the following:

Let $x = \{x_1, x_2, ..., x_n\}$ and $x \in y$; then x is an evental site if and only if there exists no $x_i \in y$. In other words, none of the elements of x are

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[105] I use P(y) for the power set of y.

counted-as-one in the situation that x is counted.

Badiou sometimes calls the evental sites as being "on the edge of void" because of its elements' non-presence in the state of a situation. The above example for the singular multiple can be extended for the evental site if none of the members of the family are legally present in the situation. (BE: 175)

An evental site is an "undecomposable term" as none of its elements are present in the situation thus they are nothing for the situation. This property makes the evental sites be foundational as "one cannot think the underside of their presented-being." (BE: 175) The evental sites "found the situation" as they are primary. (BE: 176) The existence of certain situations depends on the exclusion of evental sites.

Badiou uses the following definitions in order to classify types of situations, which are totally three:

1. Natural Situations: These types of situations "all of whose terms are normal" and at the same time, all of the terms of its terms are also normal and so on. (BE: 515) In other words, y is a natural situation if for all $x \in y$, $x \in P(y)$ also holds and also the same holds for all of the elements of x.

Badiou delivers the following which might be helpful for us to visualize these natural situations: "nature is what is rigorously normal in being." (BE: 515) In other words, these types of situations can only be seen in nature. In nature, there is not any gap between the presentation and representation, unless there is an intervention of human thought. For Badiou, "all thinkable situations necessarily contain evental sites." (BE: 177) This is an affirmation of the power of expression in the nature and also the Kantian thesis that the gap between the positive order of being and its representation is caused by the human intervention.

2. Historical Situations: These situations have at least one evental

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site belonging to them. It is strange as Badiou rejects any form of general unique interpretation of history. "We can think the *historicity* of certain multiples, but we cannot think *a* History." (BE: 176) For Badiou, the historical conditions are locally dependent upon the situation, but there is not an overall Universal History which encapsulates all of the positive orders of beings.

If we return back to the initial definition of the historical situations, we may derive the fact that they are the basis for the excess of presentation over representation. Thus they are the sites for the Events to occur. "It is solely in the point of history, the representative precariousness of evental sites, that it will be revealed, via the chance of a supplement, the being-multiple inconsists." (BE: 177) The inconsistency of the situation will be revealed through the chanced encounter of the Event with the ones ready to be subjects.

3. Neutral situations: These situations are neither natural, nor historical situations. (BE: 515)

9.3.4. Knowledge, event and fidelity:

Another concept, which is more epistemological than being ontological, is the concept of "knowledge" (or "opinion"). This concept denotes the limited knowledge realm of a situation. It implies the existence of a certain form of boundedness to the "objective" world of a situation. One cannot know about the Truth of that situation without transgressing it. Thus every knowledge without such a transgression is something expected and determined. But such a knowledge is based on the excluding operation of the count-as-one, therefore it does not involve any knowledge about the non-represented beings.

Transgressing the boundaries of the knowledge and the situation can only be achieved by the help of an event. For an event to occur, what is required is an evental site. An event comes and goes as an expression

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of the inexpressible, the impossible, which is excluded from the opinion within the situation. As a Void denotes the nothing which is at the same time the excluded multiplicities those are not counted-as-one within a situation, then an event is an inevitable *reminder* of such an exclusion.

As an addition to the existence of evental sites, the event should be named and recognized in order to unmask the boundedness of the situation. An event denotes the "beyond" of the realm of knowledge of a situation which comes and if is not *named* by someone, it passes by without affecting the structure of a situation. The process of recognition and naming an event is called "fidelity". An event is a messenger which opens the path for the Truth. A Truth does not reveal itself, but it requires a certain form of human intervention, a fidelity to an event. As being something beyond the knowledge of a situation, an event is something unpredictable, unexpected and impossible.

Event as belonging to and coming from the realm of non-being, combines the two realms: the realm of non-being and the positive order of being —which is the situation. But this combination could only be actualized if the event is named and recognized. This process of naming, the fidelity to an event, enables the appearance of two things: the Truth of a situation and the subject. The very act of fidelity is moving against the currents of the situation. For Badiou, a subject occurs temporarily at the moment of such an intervention.

9.3.5. The Subject of Truth and the Truth of a Subject:

The subject appears after the fidelity to the event is established. Before that, the individuals were bounded by the knowledge of the situation. With the act of fidelity, the individuals who attach themselves to the event are detached from the boundaries and the Truth of a situation is revealed. Therefore, the Truth is a subjective and situational Truth as it depends on a situation and requires the subjects to attach themselves to the event. The Truth is a singularity (as the situation is singular), and at

the same time it is universal (as it is a universal truth of a singular situation). As Žižek comments on Badiou's conception of Truth, Badiou is not a relativist:

> Truth is contingent; it hinges on a concrete historical situation; it is the truth *of* this situation, but in every concrete and contingent historical situation there is *one and only one* Truth which, once articulated, spoken out, functions as the index of itself and of the falsity of the field subverted by it. (TS: 131)

The tension between the knowledge and the event in Badiou's theory of the subject requires further elaboration. As I have mentioned earlier, the event is something beyond knowledge. It is a miracle! But then how could it be possible to name it as an event without knowing whether it is an event, or not. Due to Badiou the individuals can only be sure of that happening is an event retrospectively. After everything is finished and after the Truth of that situation is revealed, the individual(s) who had attached themselves to the event can become sure of that the thing they had defended with fidelity is an event. There is no way to be sure that whether that is an event or not.

In the next section, I will try to put together how Badiou has developed these notions by using set theory.

9.4. Set Theory and Ontology:

The most challenging and at the same time, most important contribution of Badiou is his thesis that ontology is mathematics. In this section, I will outline this thesis with a focus on his magnum opus, *Being and Event*.

9.4.1. Language and existence:

Badiou starts with a discussion of language and existence. For him, existence is beyond the capture of language. According to Badiou, Russell's paradox shows us that, it is not true that for every property, there

exists a set. In other words, properties are not adequate for defining the existence of sets. (BE: 40)

One may translate this in Lacanese as follows: the symbolic register does not cover the realm of inconsistent multiplicities (the real) in its fullness. Such a trial of symbolization always ends up with anomalous, alien intrusions: symptoms. Russell's paradox is one of the examples of such symptomatic intrusions.

There are more links between the core claims of Badiou's ontology and Lacan's theory. For Lacan, the fullness of the real is an effect of signification. Similarly, for Badiou, the null-set, which *names the unnamable*, appears as an effect of signification: it "is never anything, but a result of the count, an effect of structure." (BE: 66) In other words, every operation of counting, an operation which constructs a set (a situation), at the same time excludes the uncounted and unnamed inconsistent multiplicities and they are represented by the null-set. In other words, behind this symbolization of the null-set, there stands the inconsistent multiplicities which resist symbolization (or counting). For Lacan, the lack is a lack of fullness and it appears as an effect of signification. It is the founding principle: through and around lack, the imaginary identities are constructed. Similarly, for Badiou, as the null-set always exists as a subset for every set, it is the foundational set for all sets. Every situation is constructed around this foundational void.

This constitutive role of the null-set at the same time, entails the fact that the property of a set is subordinated under the existence of the set. (BE: 45) Let me put it differently: a set exists and its existence does not depend on certain properties. Quite the contrary, the existence of a property depends on the existence of a set. [106]

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[106] I have to add that this consists of a double symbolization which seems different from Lacan's theory: by the first symbolization through the operation of count-as-one, the sets are constructed. The second symbolization is finding a property for the symbolic existence of such a set. First one delimits what exists and what is consistent and the

Badiou claims that this is what is expressed in the axiom of separation. The historical event behind this axiom is Frege's thesis that a set could uniquely be identified by the property:

$$(\exists \beta)(\forall \alpha)[\lambda(\alpha) \rightarrow (\alpha \in \beta)] \qquad \text{(i)}$$

What (i) tells us is that there exists a β which denotes the set of elements holding the property α. For Badiou, Frege's thesis is an assertion on the completeness of language: a pre-determined property always covers the realm of beings. (BE: 45-46) As we will see, the paradox here is not only based on the inevitable inconsistencies of language. There is one more hidden assertion in Frege's thesis which is the claim of the existence of a certain set. For Badiou, the only one existence claim could be asserted is the existence of the null-set. (BE: 60) It is for sure that by the power set axiom or by the axiom of union and several other axioms, the existence of certain sets are asserted but these assertions depend on the existence of a set (i.e., if a set a exists, therefore, its power set also exists). The only independent existence is the existence of the null-set, which is asserted by the axiom of the null-set.

$$(\forall \alpha)(\exists \beta)(\forall \gamma)[[(\gamma \in \alpha) \wedge \lambda(\gamma)] \rightarrow (\gamma \in \beta)] \qquad \text{(ii)}$$

On the other hand, the axiom of separation (ii) does not assert any independent existence. It presupposes the existence of two sets, α and γ. The existence and the property holding are combined by it. The axiom of form separation entails a unique form of existence, which is the existence of β, a subset of α: "Language cannot induce existence, solely a split within existence." (BE: 47) First of all, in order language to act, there is a need for an existence, therefore there is not any expressible originary

second one finds a way of expressing it in plain language of properties.

existence.[107] Secondly, every property is a property that acts upon an existing set. It introduces a split within the set and there is not any property which determines the existence without referring to any pre-existing set.

9.4.2. The only *essential* existence: the Void

What then is this null-set ($\varnothing$) which has the existence asserted by the void set axiom (iii).

$$(\exists \beta)[\sim (\exists \alpha)(\alpha \in \beta)] \text{ or } (\exists \beta)[(\forall \alpha)(\alpha \notin \beta)] \text{ (iii)}$$

Badiou carefully notes that the null-set is not a being by itself but it is an effect. He repeats the Lacanian claim that the lack is an effect of signification. Therefore, the null-set "is never anything but a result of the count, an effect of structure. [It is a] multiple of *nothing*." (BE: 66) The inconsistent multiplicity, which is left uncounted is "nothing" and is denoted by the null-set. It represents the un-presentable. As the null-set is a subset of all sets, it is represented in all of them.

If we use Heidegger's terminology, the null-set is then the link between the ontological and the ontic. In Heidegger's philosophy, there are certain emotions by which a certain form of a subtractive attitude can be attained. Through this subtractive attitude, a retreat from the world of beings is attained and Dasein can have an authentic way of thinking on its own Being. In a similar sense, Badiou calls the null-set as "ontological

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[107] This is similar to Derridean thesis that there is not any *arche* or essence. Let me repeat once again: in set theory, every element is itself a set, there is not any essential being which gives existence to the other beings. That is why Badiou asserts the non-existence of a One and the existence of nothing else, except consistent multiples. This is a replica of Lacan's thesis that signifiers only signify other signifiers. Similarly, a multiple is a multiple of multiples. "Set theory sheds light on the fecund frontier between the whole/parts relation and the one/multiple relation; because, at base, it suppresses both of them. The multiple— whose concept it thinks without defining its signification—for a post-Cantorian is neither supported by the existence of the one nor unfolded as an organic totality. The multiple consists from being without-one, or multiple of multiples, and the categories of Aristotle (or Kant), Unity and Totality, cannot help us grasp it." (BE: 81) To exist is in a sense to be a set and what is beyond the existence is the realm of inconsistent multiplicities. Badiou replaces the chain of signifiers with the chain of sets which are combined to each other by two properties: inclusion and belonging.

suture" (BE: 67) which sutures the world of presentations and the un-presentable, inconsistent multiplicities.

Through it, "the unpresentable is presented, as a subtractive term of the presentation of presentation." (BE: 67) It is the proper name for the non-being. It is "subtractive" due to Badiou as it subtracts the un-presentable from the scene of beings. The presentational role of the null-set separates itself from all of the other sets. All of the other ordinary sets are presented through an operation of counting-as-one, but the null-set works through subtraction. This unique and different nature of the null-set is expressed in the void set axiom. It is, as I have mentioned earlier, the only axiom that asserts the independent existence of a unique set and this set is so strange that it does not consist of any elements.

There are several other axioms in set theory which are exactly the same form as the axiom of separation: they do not assert the existence of something new but they are constitutive. They are on how new sets are produced. They might be taken as the grammatical rules of language. They define what can be counted as one and what can end up with inconsistencies. It is, due to Badiou, the link between the ontological backbone and the ontic presentation of the multiplicities. They only "indicate an existence under the condition of another existence." (BE:62) They have the general form of "$(\forall\alpha)(\exists\beta)$ ….." which basically starts its main assertion with the presupposition of the existence of α as a condition of the existence of β.

9.4.3. Power set and the Null-set once again:

As I have mentioned earlier, Badiou underlines the difference between the two operations of the belonging ($\in$) and of the inclusion ($\subset$). Although the latter is defined by using the former $((\beta\subset\alpha)\leftrightarrow(\forall\gamma)[(\gamma\in\beta)\rightarrow(\gamma\in\alpha)])$, their difference is critical in understanding Badiou's ontology. The belonging refers to the operation of

count-as-one . For Badiou, the power set, P(α) is based on a second count, a meta-structure. P(α) is distinct from α. In other words, α is not equal to the whole of its inclusions. There is always a gap between *a* and P(α). Due to Badiou, the theorem of point of excess[108] expresses this excessive character of representation. (BE: 83-5) This is the gap between presentation and representation and it implies also a problem of immeasurability of the infinite sets.

Badiou introduces a problematic definition at this point. He calls a multiplicity as "ordinary multiplicity" if it is not an element of itself and he calls it "evental multiplicity", if it belongs to itself. As we will see, the evental multiplicities are not allowed in the set theoretical ontology. They denote impossibilities within the discourse of set theory.

If we combine these new definitions of inclusion and belonging with our knowledge about the null-set, we will have two important features of the null-set: (i) The void is universally included. In other words, the null-set is the subset of all of the sets. (ii) The null-set possesses one, unique subset which is also itself. Badiou notes:

> For if the void is the unpresentable point of being, whose unicity of inexistence is marked by the existent proper name $\varnothing$, then no multiple, by means of its existence, can prevent this inexistent from placing itself within it. On the basis of everything which is not presentable it is inferred that the void is presented everywhere in its lack: not, however, as the one-of-its-unicity, as immediate multiple counted by the one-multiple, but as *inclusion,* because subsets are the very place in which a multiple of nothing can err, just as the nothing itself errs within the all. (BE: 86)

The void is present with its absence like the lack for Lacanian psychoanalysis. The nothing intrudes in the world of consistent beings as something which is included but not presented. It is always in there with its

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[108] The Theorem of the Point of Excess: There exists at least one element of P(a) which is not an element of set a. The interpretation of this theorem is "no multiple is capable of forming-a-one out of everything it includes." (BE: 85) In other words, there are always multiples includes in a situation, in which they are not presented.

absence.

Due to Badiou, the reason why do we need representation is in order to keep the nothing, the suture for the inconsistent beings away from the secure and consistent realm of the presentation. Representation and state determine an imagined fullness against the void. Because, the void should be suppressed, should be structured by the representation in order to avoid any immediate encounter of the situation with its own foundation. For that reason, the real void, the inconsistent multiplicity should be prohibited. Therefore, they could only be represented as the null-set, the Nothing.

There are two operations of count-as-one: First one is the initial count-as-one, required for presentation. The second one is the second count used for keeping the void in a structured form, the operation that produces the power set, the state of a situation:

> The anxiety of the void, otherwise known as the care of being, can thus be recognized, in all presentation, in the following: the structure of the count is reduplicated in order to verify itself, to vouch that its effects, for the entire duration of its exercise, are complete, and to unceasingly bring the one into being within the un-encounterable danger of the void. Any operation of the count-as-one (of terms) is in some manner doubled by a count of the count, which guarantees, at every moment, that the gap between the consistent multiple (such that it results, composed of ones) and the inconsistent multiple (which is solely the presupposition of the void, and does not present anything) is veritably null. It thus ensures that there is no possibility of that disaster of presentation ever occurring which would be the presentational occurrence, in torsion, of the structure's own void. (BE: 94)

The void is dangerous as it is the gate for the inconsistency. As we know from Lacan, encountering with the inconsistent, un-symbolized real immediately ends up with the collapse of the symbolic order, the psychotic rejection of the reality. This is, for Badiou, the catastrophic dissolution of all the effects of oneness. Without the structuration of the Void, there could

not be any situational presentation of the multiples. Therefore, the operation of count-as-one and its repetition in the representational level gives consistency to the realm of being. This double structuration keeps the inconsistent multiplicity and the void of a situation at a safe distance. The representation of the un-presentable multiples by the Null-set, gives the situation a certain safety and consistency. I will use Lacanian formulation of the metaphoric representation of the signified in order to express this representational logic:

$$\frac{\{\varnothing\}}{\varnothing} \cdot \frac{\varnothing}{Nothing}$$

First of all, the inconsistent multiplicities are prohibited by the acceptance of the presentational Law (the Law of sets: multiples could only be presented within other multiples). It enables that the null-set signifies the Nothing as a signified. But as there is not a Nothing as a fullness, this Nothing as a signified is an imaginary fullness. Similarly, the null-set as being the founding principle is replaced with the power set, which re-presents the void. The null-set, although is not presented in the first count-as-one, is included in every set. This inclusion can be interpreted as a repressed existence which is not presented but is always included (through the fact that the null-set is a universal subset). Similarly, during any psychoanalytic session, the suppressed feelings are not enounced. Instead, they are represented metaphorically.

One more reason for the requirement of such a double structuration is the fact that the operation of counting itself is not presented in the situation. (BE: 93) In other words, as we will see, it is not allowed to have a set which belongs to itself in set theory. In order to attain the effect of oneness, the count should be presented and this presentation can be done through representation (as every representation has the set itself as its element). There is not any sets which are presented by themselves. The presentation of a set could only be done at the level of the power set.

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9.4.4.Nature and History:

Badiou generalizes these set theoretical results onto the life in general. He starts with an idea of equilibrium, which is based on transitive and ordinal sets.[109] According to Badiou, "[a]n ordinal ontologically reflects the multiple-being of natural situations." (BE:133) As every element of an ordinal is itself an ordinal, every member of a natural situation is also natural. This is what Badiou calls "homogeneity of nature". At every level of the ordinals, one has the same property, which is $[(\beta \in \alpha) \wedge (\gamma \in \beta)] \rightarrow (\gamma \in \alpha)]$. (BE:133)[110]

Badiou uses the "principle of minimality"[111] for asserting that if a property exists for a natural multiple, then there is an ultimate natural element with this property. In nature, "[w]e are thus now able to identify an 'atom' for every property." (BE: 139) In other words, in nature, if a property holds for a part of the nature, then there exists an atomistic part for this property in which neither of its elements has this property. For natural situations, there is a form of oblivion: "nature buries inconsistency and turns away from the void." (BE: 177) In other words, nature keeps the presentation and representation together.

Badiou asserts another, but surprising idea, which is the existence of a global connection between natural multiples: "every natural multiple is connected to every other natural multiple. There are no holes in nature." (BE: 136) This comes from the property that for ordinals, one of the following is true: $\alpha = \beta$, $\alpha \in \beta$ or $\beta \in \alpha$. They are "co-presented" and they

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[109] A transitive set is a set that everything which belongs to it also is included in it. Similarly, an ordinal set is a transitive set, which has all its elements, transitive sets.

[110] Badiou gives the example of a cell in an organism: "Metaphorically, a cell of a complex organism and the constituents of that cell are constituents of that organism just as naturally as its visible functional parts are." (BE: 134)

[111] Which states that if for an ordinal, a property holds, then there is a (minimal) element, for which the same property holds and for none of the elements of this minimal element, the same property holds.

are "universally *connected*". There is no independence in the nature. (BE: 136)

Finally, as there is not a set of all ordinals, there is not one possible way of denoting the whole Nature. Badiou notes: "Nature has no sayable being. There are only *some* natural beings." (BE: 140) If we use Lacanese, Nature is also barred.

Similarly, Badiou develops the idea of history also from sets. According to him, historical is against natural. (BE: 173-4) As I have previously noted, historical situations are situations in which there exists at least one evental site. Therefore, they are the situations in which the events occur. For Badiou, Nature denotes the omnipresence of normality and History denotes the omnipresence of singularity. (BE: 174) The anomalous tension within the Historical situations gives rise to the occurrence of the new. This is similar with Hegelian separation between Nature and History. For the former, there are not radical changes. Things occur in accordance with the laws of Nature. On the other hand, in history, there is always a tendency towards the new. Similarly for Badiou, the impossible and the unexpected events could only occur in Historical situations as they are the only situations which hold the tension of unrepresented ones against the presentation within a situation.

Badiou claims further differences between Nature and History: For the natural situations, normality is saved in elements and it is absolute. In other words, their normality is globally homogenous as every element of Nature is also an ordinal; ordinality and therefore naturality are preserved for the natural situations. On the other hand, for the historical situations, the property of being singular depends on the situations. The singularity of a multiple may change from one situation to another. This adds the property of relativism to the historical situations while the natural situations are absolute. Badiou claims that singularities can be normalized. But it is impossible to singularize a natural normality: "history can be normalized,

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but nature cannot be historicized." (BE: 176)[112]

As Badiou claims that Nature does not exist, he claims same for History. He rejects the general Marxist and Hegelian idea that there is a History:

> We can think the *historicity* of certain multiples, but we cannot think *a* History. [...]The idea of an overturning whose origin would be a state of totality is imaginary. Every radical transformational action originates *in a point*, which, inside a situation, is an evental site.(BE: 176)

History as a totality or the idea that there is a general course of history is one of the main ideas that was severely criticized by the French structuralist and post-structuralist generations, starting with Althusser. Instead of that, Badiou introduces a situational understanding of the historical change. There are not any general historical processes, but every historical situation consists of its own singularities which have the singular potentials of change.

9.4.5. The Event and the intervention:

The crucial problem here for Badiou is defining event within the limits of the set theory. It is a problem as an event is something inexpressible and impossible. And another point about the event and the Truth procedures is fidelity which is a purely subjective act and it also requires a set theoretical definition.

The initial point that Badiou starts his definition of the event is that it can always be localized within a presentation, but it is not presented.

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[112] Badiou leaves the question "how could such a normalization of the history be possible?" unanswered. One possible answer to this question is by introducing the elements of the singularity into the situation. For the previously given example of the family in France, if all of the members of the family are given legal rights, that historical situation is normalized. I think, for Badiou, such a possibility of normalization of the historical situations leaves open the possibility of revisionism and gradual changes within situations. In other words, there might be *real* changes without any occurrence of events.

(BE: 178) Because, in a situation, the evental site could be located. But this is the presentation of the location of the possible event within a situation not the event itself. An event is an impossibility, which appears totally against the opinions and laws, and also the knowledge of the situation. Thus it cannot be presented in a situation. It is something "anti-empirical". An event "can only be *thought* by anticipating its abstract form, and it can only be *revealed* in the retroaction of an interventional practice which is itself entirely thought through." (BE: 178) In other words, an event requires the intervention of some individuals who attach themselves to it with fidelity. And, this intervention could only reveal an event retroactively. There is no pre-determined way to find out or found a future event.

An event concerns only evental sites. Badiou separates natural or neutral facts from events: the former belongs to the natural situations and they require global criteria as natural facts are globally interconnected. On the other hand, an event is historically and uniquely determined and bounded by the evental site which appears in the situation.

According to Badiou, an event is always an "abnormal multiple". "I term the event of the site X a multiple such that it is composed of, on the one hand, elements of the site, and on the other, itself." (BE: 179) Badiou uses the following "matheme" in order to denote an event:

$$e_x = \{x \in X, e_x\}$$ (BE: 179)

In other words, an event (e_x) consists of all of the elements of the evental site (X) and itself at the same time. It presents all of the non-presented elements of the evental site. As an addition to this, it is the presentation of itself. Badiou gives the French Revolution as an example for an event. For him, it "forms a one out of everything which makes up its site [...]." (BE: 180) In other words, the French Revolution *presents itself* as something totally new in history (it presents itself) and at the same time, it reveals the non-presented multiples which are in its site:

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the electors of the General Estates, the peasants of the Great Fear, the sans-culottes of the towns, the members of the Convention, the Jacobin clubs, the soldiers of the draft, but also, the price of subsistence, the guillotine, the effects of the tribunal, the massacres, the English spies, the Vendeans, the *assignats* (banknotes), the theatre, the *Marseillaise* etc.) (BE: 180)

The event, for Badiou is a "halting point"[113] of signification as the event signifies itself: "*the Revolution is a central term of the Revolution itself*". (BE: 180) The appearance of an event which is disconnected from every previously presented multiple denotes the novelty and the independence of an event. It is something unnamable and impossible which is named by the individuals who attach themselves to it with fidelity. It not only dismantles the previous logic of representation (signification in Lacanese), if accepted and named with fidelity, could be the starting point of a new representation (signification). That is the reason why an event is an element of itself. Such an *illegal* and *abnormal* nature of the event not only denotes its own impossibility, but also its isolatedness. An event needs itself in order to be! This is an immanence:

> The event is thus clearly the multiple which both presents its entire site, and, by means of the pure signifier of itself immanent to its own multiple, manages to present the presentation itself, that its the one of the infinite multiple that it is. (BE: 180)

Why "infinite"? Perhaps because it is a signifier that signifies itself. It presents the presentation, the operation of count-as-one. This renders it possible for an intervention. It opens up a new perspective which gives

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[113] May be one can say that this property of an event as a halting point has a strong similarity with Lacan's points de capiton. Although both of them stops a signification, there are several differences: first of all, the points de capiton work as external meaning-giving mechanisms, which imaginarily tie the flux of signifiers to a signified. The signified appears to be an effect of signification. In the case of event, what Badiou asserts is that the event is the halting point which denotes the fact that there are more on the edge of the void. There are some multiples requiring representation. An event, as well as the points de capiton, is an halting/starting point for the meaning. For example the French Revolution nowadays summarizes lots of multiplicities which were not re-presented. But in the case of points de capiton, the meaning does not reveal the "hidden" side of something although the signified is partly involved in the real.

rise to a critical stance against the presentation. It is a presentation by itself. It requires nothing else in order to be presented except the fidelity of the individuals. That is why it manages to present the presentation itself.

Badiou introduces two opposing hypotheses on the event-situation relationship:

(i) The event belongs to the situation. As for the situation, the event is present, then the event belongs to the situation. It is presented as a singular multiplicity as except itself, neither of its elements are present in the situation. But as the event contains itself, which means that at least one element of the event (event itself) is present in the situation, it is not an evental site. The event is called as "ultra-one" as it is not on the edge of the void because of itself (it has one element which keeps it away from the edge of the void, which is also itself) (BE: 181-2):

> To declare that an event belongs to the situation comes down to saying that it is conceptually distinguished from its site by the interposition of itself between the void and itself. This interposition, tied to self-belonging, is the ultra-one, because it counts the same thing as one twice: once as a presented multiple, and once as a multiple presented in its own presentation. (BE: 182)

(ii) The event is not presented in the situation. In other words, it does not belong to the situation as it does not present anything else, except itself and the elements of the evental site, which are not present in the situation. Thus what it presents is *nothing* for the situational knowledge. This is in a way a rejection of anything has happened as an event.

These two hypotheses contradict the whole logic of presentation of a situation. There is a crucial undecidability between these two hypotheses. In order to decide one of them, what is required is a subjective intervention. The event does not by itself reveal the Truth of a situation. Although the event seems to be something which is messianic and mysterious, there is always the need for an intervention. It is the

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unexpected miracle which opens the situation for such an intervention. It is something unpredicted as the multiples that it presents do not exist for the situation.

The matheme of an event implies $e_x \in e_x$ which is prohibited by the axiom of foundation[114]. Therefore, the event which presents its own presentation is prohibited. It is excluded by the Law of set theory. In other words, according to Badiou, ontology does not admit a theory of the event, "it does not [also] admit historicity." The event is the "first concept *external* to the field of mathematical ontology." (BE: 184) An event is excluded from the ontological discourse due to its unexpected and peculiar nature of being an element of itself.

What else is implied by the axiom of foundation? First of all, it asserts that there is always at least one multiple which cannot be represented. Therefore, an absolute representation is impossible. This the Other, which is unbeknown by the situation: its elements are foreign to the situation.

The undecidability around the belonging of the event to the situation "is an intrinsic attribute of the event [...]" (BE: 201) This undecidability requires an external and unexpected decision: a decision which has effects that are unpredictable within the limits of the situation. This decision, or intervention is defined by Badiou as a decisive procedure by which, an event can be recognized. As the nature of the event is undecidability, when it is recognized as an event, it disappears. (BE: 202)

The event occurs arbitrarily but it occurs at a specific location, the evental site. Through the intervention, it appears as an *interruptor* of the state law; it is an impossibility which occurs unexpectedly. According to

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[114] The axiom of foundation is a formal rejection of a set which is an element of itself. (BE: 185) Mirimanoff calls these types of sets which are elements of themselves as "extraordinary sets" and by the axiom of foundation, all extraordinary sets are excluded from the ontology. (BE: 190) For the ontology, an event does not exist.

Badiou, an event is an "interval", it is not a mere being, but is a becoming. (BE: 206) It occurs as itself, as totally independent from what is known and what is present in the situation. The event —as something beyond the scope of the situation— makes it impossible to be accepted by the others in the situation. Only the ones who made the decision about the event can keep themselves attached to the event by fidelity.

After the interruption of the state law, the state fixes the term {X, $\{e_x\}$} as the canonical form of the event. (BE: 207) For the state, between these two terms, "*there is no relation.*" (BE: 207-8) This is taken just as a novelty by the state with a total refusal of the relation of these two terms, the event and its site. In other words, the event is considered by the state as something which does not denote any unrepresented multiples or an evental site:

> Moreover, empirically, this is a classic enigma. Every time that a site is the theatre of a real event, the state—in the political sense, for example—recognizes that a designation must be found for the couple of the site (the factory, the street, the university) and the singleton of the event (strike, riot, disorder), but it cannot succeed in fixing the rationality of the link. This is why it is a law of the state to detect in the anomaly of this Two—and this is an avowal of the dysfunction of the count—the *hand of a stranger* (the foreign agitator, the terrorist, the perverse professor). (BE: 208)

The event-site couple are represented without being present in the situation; they are inscribed in the situation as excrescent terms. This couple is mechanically represented by the state: the state works as just an inventory keeper. (BE: 209) Their *real link* is repudiated by the state. The state gives an explanation to the appearance of the event by a total exclusion of what the event really represents. Therefore the intervention represents nothing for the situation. [115]

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[115] An example of the externalization of an event: For the Roman Law, the crucifixion of Christ is juts an ordinary "execution of an agitator", which is just a rejection of the event as a singleton. (BE: 213)

The "referent of the intervention is the void", as the intervention is the "representative without representation", thus it cannot be grasped as one-effect. (BE. 209) In other words, the intervention represents nothing, the unrepresented multiples.

The intervention could not be done independently. It requires an event to occur. As there is not any causal link between an event and a fact in the situation, the event does not entail any necessity to the intervention. The intervention, by naming the event, decides the event's belonging to the situation. Such a decision is neither rational, nor deducible. Its rationality could only be grasped retroactively after everything is finished and the Truth of a situation is revealed.

But how could then mathematics has any explanatory role on the nature of this intervention? An intervention is a purely subjective decision which could not be rationally determined within the bounds of a situation. For that reason, in order to give a mathematical explanation to what an intervention is, Badiou relates the "interventional form" with the most controversial axiom of set theory, the axiom of choice. (BE: 223)

The axiom of choice is on the existence of a choice function which picks up a representative from each element of a multiple. The axiom is formulated as follows:

$$(\forall\alpha)(\exists f)[(\forall\beta)[(\beta\in\alpha\wedge\beta\neq\varnothing)\rightarrow(f(\beta)\in\beta)]]$$

$f(\beta)\in\beta$ in the axiom means that for every unique set β, this choice function will find a representative element of β. For the infinite sets, finding such a function is a problem: "Intuitively, there is something *un-delegatable* in infinite multiplicity […] It is not at all clear *how* to proceed in order to explicitly define a function which selects *one* representative from *each* multiple of an infinite multiplicity of non-void multiples." (BE: 225) The axiom of choice only asserts the existence of such a function without giving us any definite method of finding the choice function. The

other constructive axioms of set theory gives us ways of producing new sets (i.e. the power set axiom tells us that the power set of a set is also a set). What the axiom of choice gives us is nothing more than what Badiou calls "a presentability without presentation." (BE: 227) It opens up the possibility of organizing the new.

According to Badiou, as the event is a non-being and excluded by ontology, the axiom of choice is on the being of the intervention: the intervention exists but it cannot be generalized and there are not any predetermined rules for constructing the intervention.

The intervention takes different forms after the occurrence of the event. But there is one unique motto of it, which repeats the slogan "keep going" in such a way that intervention becomes a total repudiation of the opinions bounded within the situation. This slogan is exactly the same with Lacan's "don't give up on your desire!" That is what Badiou calls fidelity.

Badiou delivers important remarks on fidelity:

The "fidelity is particularity," and it "depends on an event." It is neither a capacity, nor a virtue. The particularity is based on the relationship of the particular multiple with the event. Fidelity constructs this relationship: "fidelity consists in employing a certain criterion concerning the connection or non-connection of any particular presented multiple to this supernumerary element e_x." (BE: 233) For the same situation, different fidelities may exist. (i.e. Stalinists' and Trotskyists' established different fidelities to the event of October revolution. Intuitionists and defenders of set theory, the axiomaticians defended different fidelities to the event-crisis of the logical paradoxes.) Therefore, different fidelities establish different relations between the event and the evental sites.

Badiou introduces a new operator, which denotes the operation of being "connected for a fidelity" by which "a presented multiple is declared to depend on the event." " (BE: 234) For example:

$(\alpha \square e_x)$: α is connected to the event e_x for a fidelity.

$\sim(\alpha \square e_x)$: α is *not* connected to the event e_x for a fidelity. ("α is indifferent to its chance occurrence" (BE: 234)) All presented multiples either are connected, or non-connected (BE: 236) and this means that fidelity separates the situation into two realms based on the connectedness and the disconnectedness of certain multiples to the event.

Fidelity is not a multiple, but is itself an operation. It denotes the impossible link with the event within a situation. It works at the level of inclusions, thus it may appear as a "counter-state" or a "sub-state". In other words, it is on the representational logic of the situation. But in general, it is not equivalent to the representation in order to attain an authentic and subversive function.

Badiou warns us against the possibility of the *statist* fidelities. He claims that some of the fidelities may take the form of inclusion or belonging. This is, in a way, re-establishment of the order of the state through fidelity. In other words, a fidelity might operate as a tool which excludes and includes, or determines the multiples which belong to, or not. In such cases, the revolutionary and the subversive character of fidelity is lost and it becomes a fidelity to a new state formation. "It is quite certain that positing that a multiple is only connected to an event *if it belongs to it* is the height of statist redundancy." (BE: 237) For example, if the operator $\dagger$ comes closer to $\in$, then as a result of fidelity, is a singleton of the event, $\{e_x\}$. By that, an institutionalization of the event is obtained. It results with a state which includes only the singleton of the event, and the null-set. (As the power set of the singleton $\{e_x\}$ is $\{\{e_x\}, \varnothing\}$.)

But there is always a possibility to attain a universal conception of fidelity which is not conservative as in the cases of statist attempts:

> A non-institutional fidelity is a fidelity which is capable of discerning the marks of the event at the furthest point from

the event itself. This time, the ultimate and trivial limit is constituted by a universal connection, which would pretend that *every* presented multiple is in fact dependent on the event. (BE: 237)

In this universalized case*, there are no negative atoms* which discriminate the non-connected multiples. In other words, there is always a possibility of such a fidelity which connects every multiple in a situation, with a universal connective to the event. That is why Badiou defines "the Truth of a situation" as a universal singularity. A universal connective is a limiting case, in which the operator ⊦ is kept away from being just a belonging or inclusion. By that, every presented multiple is related to the event with a dependency. This is the inverse of spontaneism in which only the elements of the evental site are related to the event, which is a form of statism. Let me put it this way: a fidelity *should* dislocate the Law of a situation in such a way that it renders possible the unconcealment of the relationships of event with every multiple within the situation.

Badiou defines the universalism as a limit case. This is crucial for understanding his views on politics. He is, by keeping the definition of such operations as limit cases, tries to keep the distance between mathematical world and the real world. The former is an idealization of the latter. But this claim, mathematics as an idealization is just one side of his ontology. On the other hand, what he asserts is that this idealization is the only one by which one can mark the limits of the possibilities of the multiples, the being-qua-being.

In the case of universal form of fidelity, a subversive stance against the state is achieved. Such a fidelity is counter-state in character, through which, "another legitimacy of inclusions" is organized. (BE: 238) This new form of inclusions is a universal one which produces the Truth as a limit of a situation.

As a summary, there are three types of general attitudes towards the appearance of an event: (i) An ontological rejection of the event as it

puts the established order of a situation under danger. This is in a way remaining faithful to the Parmenides' formulation: "one must turn back from any route that would authorize the pronunciation of a being of non-being." (BE: 240) (ii) A fidelity which ends up with an establishment of another state order; a statist fidelity which could be found in the paranoiac repetition of the conservative character of the replaced order. (iii) A universal form of fidelity by which the Truth of a situation is revealed.

9.4.6. The truth and the subject:

For Badiou, a Truth "makes a hole in a knowledge" (BE: 327) which means that it unconceals the deadlock, hidden impasses of a knowledge by combining them with an event. There is not any pre-existing relation between knowledge and Truth. Such a dangerous claim is based on the subversive character of Badiou's conception of the Truth. The crucial point here is that a fidelity is not based on certain forms of knowledge. "It is not the work of an expert: it is the work of a militant." (BE: 329) In other words, it is the revolutionary attempt of breaking with the established Law, order and knowledge: either one decides to be within the limits of knowledge and situation, or to attain a critical stance against both of them. An event ignores knowledge as knowledge ignores the event.

Such a conception of Truth depends on three things: an event, a situation in which this event occurs and the subjective intervention of individuals by fidelity to the event. Therefore, "[i]t is impossible for mathematical ontology to dispose of a concept of truth, because any truth is post-eventual, and the paradoxical multiple that is the event is prohibited from being by ontology." (BE: 355)

The Truth and the being are detached from each other, but Badiou insists on that within the limits of ontology, the being of a Truth could be shown. This is what Badiou calls the "generic multiplicity", which is in the scope of ontology and denotes the being of a Truth. Badiou defines the generic multiple as a multiple which possesses all of the properties which

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are common to every multiple within a situation. Indeed, there is not any such a multiple but it should be produced by a procedure. This is the very being of a Truth. In other words, this procedure constructs the being of the Truth. (BE: 356-7)

Badiou uses the concept of "forcing" in order to explain what a generic multiple is. Cohen introduced the term in order to provide a method of adding new sets to a model of Zermelo-Fraenkel set theory by which an extended model is achieved and this extended model is used by him in his proof of the independence of the continuum hypothesis. This newly produced model is called as the generic extension of the original model. (Drake and Singh, 1996: 154) Cohen *translated* Zermelo-Fraenkel system and Continuum hypothesis into a new model and in this new model, he proved that continuum hypothesis does not follow from the axioms of Zermelo-Fraenkel system. (Smullyan and Fitting, 1996: 190)

The idea that Badiou has in his mind is simple: in Cohen's proof, what is done is moving from one model to another in order to provide information about a relationship which exists in the previous model but which could not be proven (the independence of the continuum hypothesis). Therefore, the generic procedure unconceals the *hidden* relationships for the previous model. An extension is providing new information about the previously hidden relations.

Badiou's use of the terms is a little bit different. For him, adding up a new multiple, —a generic multiple— enables the production of new situations. What he finds in generic procedures is not only information about the hidden relations, but the becoming of the new which is the being of a Truth.

Truth is originated from a subjective intervention which has, due to Badiou, the form of two: one side of the subjectivization is at evental site and the other is at the situation. Badiou distinguishes a Truth and the being of a Truth. They belong to different discourses. The Truth cannot be

expressed within the discourse of ontology. Through ontology, only the being of a Truth which is a generic subset could be captured. The being of a Truth attaches all of the elements of a situation to an event. It negates the ones which ignore the event as they belong to the existing situation. The generic subset is therefore produced by a "generic procedure" which, as Peter Hallward puts,

> element by element, investigation by investigation, […] will add to ♀ [the generic subset] those elements of S [the situation] that connect positively to the event's implications, and it will do so in such a way that these new groupings of elements evade classification by the existing mechanisms of discernment available to the state of S. (Hallward, 2003: 131-2)

I do not want to go into the details of Cohen's proof of the independence of both the axiom of choice and the continuum hypothesis. But what Badiou uses is the extension of one model by the use of generic subsets. The generic subsets have more: they should both consist of elements that exemplify the properties which are determined by the situation and at the same time, they should contain elements that negate these properties. In other words, they should contradict every determination in a situation. "The result will be a subset that, by intersecting with every possible extension of its conditions, includes 'a little of everything' belonging to [the situation]." (Hallward, 2003: 133) The generic subset is an unconstructible set which puts together the most general properties of the situation. It is unconstructible as it is based on an impossibility and it is universal as it collects all the hidden and unhidden general characteristics of the elements of the situation.

Cohen's notion of "forcing" is used in order to denote the movement from the situation to the new formation which is based on the Truth. This enables the unrepresented elements of an eventual site to become members of the situation. It is a new model, a more generalized model based on the acceptance of the event as a fact and the Truth that is produced by the fidelity to an event.

The adoption of forcing from Cohen establishes the relationship between knowledge and Truth also. The forcing relates the effects of a Truth and its verifiability. First of all, the generic subset which was just included in the situation, must be forced to belong to the situation. This could be done only by the generic extension of the situation. By that Badiou's theory is faced with one important problem which is the relationship of the new with the old, the extended situation with the previous situation.

The extended situation with the help of the subjective intervention introduces new terms as "*every subject generates nominations*".[116] (BE: 397) These do not have referents in the situation. They are the terms of a future anterior: "terms which 'will have been' presented in a *new* situation". (BE: 398) In other words, what is introduced by the subject is a new language which does not have any use in the existing situation. This new language is a language of hope and belief for a future establishment of a new situation. Forcing relates the indiscerniblity of the generic subset within the previous situation and the veracity of the subjective statements in the situation to come.

Why does Badiou need such a complex analysis? The most important reason is the need for a methodological description of how the new comes from the old: the indiscernible part of the previous situation, which were foreclosed from the language of the old are inscribed in by the help of forcing.

What is the role of the subjective decision at this point? It starts with the fidelity but it is not limited with that. It produces the Truth of a situation in such a way that the indiscernible part of the situation, the hidden multiples of an evental site are revealed. For Badiou, the Truth is a subjective production but "the infinity of this truth transcends it." (BE: 406)

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[116] For example, Saint Paul introduced "faith", "charity", "sacrifice", "salvation"; Lenin introduced "party", revolution", "politics"; Cantor introduced "sets", "cardinals", "ordinals" etc. (BE: 397)

The magic of forcing is, it bring the verifiability of something which was excluded previously. It links a term of a situation to the subjective statements. But this verifiability does not guarantee the term that forcing links is a term about the foreclosed multiples. The verification of the term will be achieved retrospectively:

> Forcing is a relation *verifiable by knowledge*, since it bears on a term of the situation (which is thus presented and named in the language of the situation) and a statement of the subject-language (whose names are 'cobbled-together' from multiples of the situation). What is *not* verifiable by knowledge is whether the term that forces a statement belongs or not to the indiscernible. (BE: 403)

What subjective intervention could possibly grasp is a link with the subjective statements and the term that forces this statement. Whether this subjective stance ends up with a Truth or not could not be known before the Truth is revealed.

In the next section, I will elaborate on Badiou's ethics in order to exemplify this complex ontology.

9.5. Ethics:

Badiou's most interesting and perhaps most accessible work is his *Ethics* in which, he equates the Good with the fidelity to a Truth. Such an equation enables the link between ontology and ethics. Ontology is the location of the being of the Event which is also the point where Truth is produced. And for Badiou, during this production of a Truth, the way to be taken, the path to be followed gives us the location of the Good. Žižek notes:

> There is ethics—that is to say, an injunction which cannot be grounded in ontology— in so far as there is a crack in the ontological edifice of the universe: at its most elementary, ethics designates fidelity to this crack. (PLF: 214)

Badiou separates two different realms which are related to the human ethical stances: The first one is the realm of opinions or

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knowledge. This realm is the static realm of our ordinary daily practices. It is static because it is bounded by the knowledge shaped by the situation. The second realm is produced by the occurrence of an impossible event, a crack in the edifice as Žižek noted. It cuts the realm of opinion into two. On the one side, people continue doing their own practices with a rejection or blindness to the event. One the other side, there exists some of the individuals, who have encountered *by chance* with the event and have decided to follow the event with fidelity. The individuals who follow the event with fidelity could never be sure of whether the event is a real one, or a pseudo event. There is not any way to know the truth of an event unless everything is finished and the event ends up with a Truth.[117] Knowledge belongs to the realm of opinions. Therefore one could only attach himself or herself to an event with fidelity. There is not other way of relating oneself to an event. We now know that French revolution or Schoenberg's music are real events. But at that time, there is not any way to know that they were events.

9.5.1. Good and Evil:

Due to Badiou, Western philosophy approaches the Good from the wrong side: first they define what is Evil and then with an opposing gesture, defines negatively what is Good. For him, the relationship should be reversed; first we should define what is Good and then Evil should be defined in accordance with that.

For Badiou, the Good is associated with Truth: the Good is fidelity to an event. Any form of betrayal of an event ends up with Evil.

> The logical relation between truth and evil is thus perfectly clear: first a truth, *then* the possibility of its corruption. Evil cannot be something radically other than the good that enables it. There is, in Badiou's philosophy, no place for a

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[117] As we will see, Badiou gives us some hints on discerning a real event from a pseudo one. But these hints are only general properties which do not allow a certainty in recognizing an event.

'radical evil' in the neo-Kantian sense (i.e., some kind of innate, anthropologically constant propensity to evil). Evil is something that happens either to a truth procedure, as its corruption, or in a way that resembles a truth procedure, as its simulacrum. (Hallward, 2003: 264)

According to Badiou, there are three forms of Evil: (i) Following a pseudo event instead of a real, genuine event, as in the case of Nazism. (ii) Betrayal of a Truth procedure because of its difficulties. (iii) Ontologizing the Truth which is in a way the conservative protection of the event from any further changes as in the case of Stalinism. The first one is associated with the event, the second with the fidelity and the third with the power of the truth. (ET: 87)

Such a novel definition of the Evil as something which comes after the Good is based on a critique of the humanist and liberal traditional ethics for which, first comes the a priori acceptance of a certain form of evil, then comes the negative definition of the Good. Such ethics, due to Badiou, are protective in a sense not only they protect individuals from the evil, but also protecting the status quo from any real, radical changes. That is why for such ethics, there are not any events and changes within the existing situation. In the next section, I will deal with two main examples of such types of ethics.

9.5.2. Kant and Lévinas:

Badiou, in his *Ethics*, takes a critical stance against two major approaches to ethics. The first one is based on abstract universals which functions as a Kantian indifference towards the particularities of a situation. Any ethics of general human rights is an example of such a Kantian attitude.

The major difference between Kant and Badiou could be grasped in their act against the One. "Having banished the transcendent One from his ontology, Kant restores it in his morality." (Hallward, 2002: xxi) In other words, Badiou agrees with the existence of the noumenal, the

inexpressible ontological background of the phenomenal world. *One is not*, if we consider One in a sense that it conceptually covers and represents the thing-in-itself. What Kant gives up in his ethics is this rejection of the existence of the One. For Kant, there is the transcendent power of the categorical imperative which rejects any particular differences between the situations. One should do his duty no matter what the situation is. On the other hand, for Badiou, a duty is fixed within a situation, and there is not any transcendent duty which covers all the possible situations. Quite the contrary, what he defends is an ethics of exception and transgression: one should not do his duty but one should do the unacceptable, the impossible. One should attach oneself with fidelity to the event which is totally independent from what is prescribed within the situation.

9.5.2.1. The mortal vs. the immortal:

One of the most important positions that Badiou attacks in his *Ethics* is any form of ethics based on the general universal human rights. Such an ethics of human rights is based on the Western conception of man. Following Michel Foucault, Badiou rejects any form of such a generalized conception of Man. Foucault insists on that Man is a discursively produced concept. Such a view, due to Badiou, is similar with Lacan's split subject which consists of an imaginary unity (the ego) and an alienated symbolic subject. For both philosophers, Man is an imaginary constitution. Badiou develops this thesis as for him, there is no such a conception of Man which could grasp the ethical requirements of human praxis. (ET: 5-7)

Such a view of human rights is one of the outcomes of Kantian philosophy. What is problematic in Kant's philosophy is not only his abstract notion of duty, but also the primacy of Evil over Good:

> Ethics is conceived here both as an a priori ability to discern
> Evil (for according to the modern usage of ethics, Evil — or
> the negative— is primary: we presume a consensus
> regarding what is barbarian), and as the ultimate principle of

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judgement, in particular political judgement: good is what intervenes visibly against an Evil that is identifiable a priori. (ET: 8)

The type of ethics is based on three major presuppositions: (i) a general conception of human subject, the Man; (ii) the Good is derived from the Evil; (iii) the so called "human rights" is also based on such a generally accepted conception of the Evil. All the three are founded by (i) as it is the point where a generalized determination of the Evil is rendered possible and from such an Evil and the general conception of Man, human rights is conceptualized.

Badiou asserts that this conception of ethics "defines man *as a victim*" or more precisely "man is *the being who is capable of recognizing himself as a victim.*" (ET: 10) Badiou uses a Hegelian theme in order to criticize such a conception of Man. First of all, this view reduces man as a pure and simple organism. The vulnerable conception of human beings ignores the subversive potential in them. There is a certain portion of *immortality* which is hidden in this vulnerable creature. The exemplary cases of immortality could be found in the human resistance against the death in the concentration camps.

What then is an immortal? An immortal, for Badiou is:

> what the worst situations that can be inflicted upon Man show him to be, in so far as he distinguishes himself within the varied and rapacious flux of life. In order to think any aspect of Man, we must begin from this principle. So if 'rights of man' exist, they are surely not rights of life against death, or rights of survival against misery. They are the rights of the Immortal, affirmed in their own right, or the rights of the Infinite, exercised over the contingency of suffering and death. The fact that in the end we all die, that only dust remains, in no way alters Man's identity as immortal at the instant in which he affirms himself as someone who runs counter to the temptation of wanting-to-be-an-animal to which circumstances may expose him. (ET: 12)

This conception has certain similarities with Hegel's master-slave dialectics in which in order to be free, one should be able to go against the

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fear of death. In order to be immortal, to be free, one should repudiate being an animal. To be an animal is being bounded by the animal desires: desires which are the natural desires. (Hegel, 1977: 114) Similarly, for Badiou, ethics of vulnerability repudiates any potentiality of human beings that may bring them a life which is beyond the biological life. This metaphorical expression is used in order to give priority to this life, which is named immortality over the ordinary, biological life. For Lacan, when Antigone decided death, she acted in accordance with her own desire. For Badiou, such an act gives Antigone the status beyond bare life: immortality. Therefore, what our ordinary acts gives us at most is being a living animal. The other side of this equation is being an immortal which goes beyond the limits and transgresses the boundaries.

The immortality is attained through the subjective act: a true subject appears only through fidelity to an event, a rejection of the opinions, an illogical belief in the incomprehensible new. Therefore, before the subjective act, there exists only mortal animal being of ordinary life bounded within a situation. Prioritizing Evil over Good is another form of living as a mortal animal. The reason behind such a repudiation of any consensus on Good is in a way protecting the existing order. That is why Church never tried to establish a consensus on what is Good, but the reverse has always been the main aim of it: "For if our agenda is an ethical engagement against an Evil we recognize a priori, how are we to envisage any transformation of the way things are?" (ET: 13-4) Therefore, ethics is not the foundational principle for the politics; in fact, the reverse is true: what is proposed to us as ethical is most of the times, ideologically produced. If we define the Evil in consensus, then we could only protect ourselves against it as the only Good, for this view is negating the disorder of the Evil, and, as there is not any universal Good independent from the Evil, there is no way of affirming something new, a production of the Good for everyone.

As there is not any general conception of the Evil and Man are

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possible, what are we left with is the singular conception of the subjective act of affirming the singular Truths. Acting in accordance with the event, the singular and situated impossibility opens the path for the Good. Therefore, the Good is based on three things: the event, the subjective fidelity and the Truth that appears by this fidelity. Such a subjective approach to the Good and the Truth rejects any form of the ethics of the Other. In the next section, I will summarize Badiou's critical remarks on such kinds of ethics.

9.5.2.2. Responsibility or indifference:

The second type of ethics that Badiou takes a critical stance against is the ethics of difference, which is based on a radical conception of alterity. Such an ethics conceives the other as an other which cannot be reduced under any form of Sameness. Lévinas is the most important figure of such a conception of otherness. According to him, the other does not have any similarity with me. It is a totally other which could not be grasped by the *tools* of my world, like knowledge and understanding. For him, approaching to the other through knowledge is applying a violence to the other as knowledge is shaped by the logic of the sameness. Before knowledge, there stands ethics, in other words, ethics is the first philosophy. (Lévinas, 1991: 46)

According to Lévinas, another dangerous form of approaching to the other is considering the other as an alter-ego. Husserl's conception of the others is an example of such a view. This is also based on the logic of sameness. For Lévinas, one should approach to the other with an infinite responsibility. This is the only way of doing the right thing to the other and is the only possible form of non-violent relationship with the other. For Lévinas, the otherness is the extension of the absolute otherness of God. Every concrete difference of each individual comes from this infinite dimension of God's difference. The other is the face of God. That is the reason why we have an infinite responsibility to the others: we are

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responsible to the others as we are responsible to God. (Lévinas, 1991: 199)

Western philosophical tradition, since Greeks is based on a suppression of otherness. What Lévinas calls "the logic of the Same" has long become the prevalent attitude of philosophy. That is why Lévinas refers to the Jewish theology in order to find out a way of thinking which goes beyond the logic of the Same. (Lévinas, 1998: 205-6)

Badiou repudiates such an ethics for two reasons:

First of all, such an ethics requires the existence of God, the Absolute Other. Lévinas, having deep religious beliefs is consistent with his philosophy. The problem is the secular thinkers' use of his philosophy. Because whenever the central function of God is excluded, there is nothing left consistent in Lévinas' ethics; all of his central assertions are disoriented:

> In Lévinas's enterprise, the ethical dominance of the Other over the theoretical ontology of the same is entirely bound up with a religious axiom; to believe that we can separate what Lévinas's thought unites is to betray the intimate movement of this thought, its subjective rigour. In truth, Lévinas has no philosophy — not even philosophy as the 'servant' of theology. Rather, this is philosophy (in the Greek sense of the world) annulled by theology, itself no longer a theology (the terminology is still too Greek, and presumes proximity to the divine via the identity and predicates of God) but, precisely, an ethics. (ET: 23)

In other words, the ethical becomes religious if it is cleared of from its Greek roots —which gives primacy to the theoretical over the ethical. What we are left with when we conceal the religious side of this ethics is "a pious discourse without piety, a spiritual supplement for incompetent governments, in line with the new-style sermons, in lieu of the late class struggle." (ET: 23)

Like Žižek, Badiou also claims that such an ethics founded on a

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respect to the other or tolerance is hypocritical. He adds that such a view, when combined with the ethics of human rights, is based on an identity: a white, European identity which deserves the human rights. And the practical outcome of such an ethics is a tolerance only to the others which are acceptable and tolerable others. Badiou notes:

> Even immigrants in this country [France], as seen by the partisans of ethics, are acceptably different only when they are 'integrated', only if they seek integration (which seems to mean if you think about it: only if they want to suppress their difference). It might well be that ethical ideology, detached from the religious teachings which at least confer upon it the fullness of a 'revealed' identity, is simply the final imperative of a conquering civilization: 'Become like me and I will respect your difference.'(ET: 24)

Secondly, due to Badiou, an ethics based on otherness or difference misses the fact that these differences are produced within a situation. Therefore such an ethics of difference is at the same time a conservative ethics which affirms the situation that produces the differences. As Peter Hallward puts:

> Since difference or multiplicity is very literally what *is*, what *should be* is a matter of how such difference is transcended in favor of something else — in favor of the generic equality asserted by a truth. (Hallward, 2003: 255)

What Badiou defends is an ethics based on the Good in which the ethical is defined as the affirmation of the Good. According to him, the traditional ethics is conservative and protective in the sense that what is defended against the so called Evil is the existing order. It repudiates the evental changes of what there is. Instead of that, what Badiou proposes is the ethical fidelity to the event with an ethical indifference towards the others and otherness. This a return to the philosophies of the Same not in the traditional sense, but with the primacy of the Good over the Evil.

For Lévinas and Derrida, the other is singular and an ethical act is acting in accordance with this singularity. According to Badiou, the other is not singular but it is presented within a *singular* situation. In order to grasp

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what is excluded form any singularity, we need a universality, which is the universality of a Truth. A Truth is singular in a sense that it reveals what is evental in the singular situation and it is also universal as it is a Truth for everyone. Therefore a Truth is both singular (as it is situational) and universal. In Derrida's philosophy, there is not such a situational conception of event. For him, event is incomprehensible but it is also totally independent from any situational form.[118]

As I have noted previously, Badiou's very basic axiom is the rejection of the existence of One.[119] Therefore, there is no One in the sense of a God, nor there is any all embracing conception of the Absolute Other. Every multiple, without the One, is a multiple of multiples (set of sets). Therefore "[a]ny experience is an infinite deployment of infinite differences." (ET: 25) That is why Badiou repeats several times that the difference is what there is. But these differences do not infer any ethics as any ethics which could be based on differences, inevitably end up with either hypocrisy or contradiction. Ethics should be related with "the coming-to-be", evental appearance of the Truth. And as Truth is universal, it is the recognition of the Same:

> Philosophically, if the other doesn't matter it is indeed because the difficulty lies on the side of the Same. The Same, in effect, Is not what is(i.e. the infinite multiplicity of differences) but what *comes to be.* […] Only a truth is, as such, *indifferent to differences*. This is something we have always known, even if sophists of every age have always attempted to obscure its certainty: a truth is *the same for all.* (ET: 27)

There is not any ethics without Truth and even ethics is the ethics of Truth. The greatest mistake of our era is proposing an unsolvable puzzle of differences: how could we found an ethics which is equidistant to

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[118] Remembering our discussion about the button ties, we can confirm that the major difference between Badiou and Derrida is strictly based on Derrida's conception of meaning as something always evading.

[119] "The 'there-is' of the one has no being [...]" (BE: 37)

every differences? This puzzle is rejected by Badiou and it is for sure, such a rejection is a courageous move against the main currents of philosophy. One is accused of being a Stalinist, a Nazi, a fascist, or a racist if he or she rejects any form of respect to the multiplicity of cultures. What Badiou offers is a pure ignorance to this multiplicity. It exists but it does not give us more. What we need is the repressed Truth of a situation in order to find out what is the Same in a situation. The Same introduced by the Truth of a situation clarifies what the situation was *really* proposing: the pseudo truths of a situation are the cover-ups of the interests of the some elites of the situation. What we have from what there is, is nothing more that the opinions, the conservative affirmation of what there is and what is excluded from the situation. Ethics for Badiou should unconceal what is unknown, what is untried and impossible.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

Lacan's theory has brought a novelty of rethinking two important philosophical problems: (i) the possibility of the autonomy of the subject, and (ii) the possibility of approaching the human psyche by using a formal methodology. In our post-Heideggerian era, the former question might seem to us senseless. If the subject is totally lost within the socio-linguistic realm, or if we use the political vocabulary of Althusser, if the subject is totally determined within ideology, where could there be a possible place of emancipation for the subject? What Lacan introduces regarding the former problem is an unbeknownst realm: the real. In both the works of Žižek and Badiou, this realm is the place for the decision which gives a certain possibility of transgressing the iron cage of the existing symbolic reality. Such a view is, as both of the philosophers assert, is a Cartesian view.[120] What Descartes tried to grasp was an isolation of the cogito from the existing reality in order to attain a purely rational knowledge. Similarly, Lacan dislocates the subject in a sense that there are two basic realms which are main determinants of its acts: the imaginary fullness and the symbolic alienation.

These two realms give us a totally bounded conception of the subject. For the former, the ego is based on a certain mythical belief of unity. For the latter, the subject is totally lost within the socio-linguistic order. There are Laws that are imposed on us and in order to live as a social animal, we have to obey these Laws. The novelty of Lacan's theory is in his definition of a third realm, which is the real, the order that is totally

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[120] See especially TS: 1-5 and BE: 431-5. In section 2.5 I presented Lacan as an anti-Cartesian in a sense that for him, an in general for the Freudian tradition, there is always something beyond the reach of consciousness.

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excluded and prohibited from these two orders. The Cartesian point of Lacan's theses is based on this realm which gives the individuals a possibility of being detached from the existing reality. Therefore, quite the contrary to the general attitude towards Freud as a thinker who introduced the irrational part of the cogito, the unconscious, Lacan's own interpretation is based on a *rationalization* of the unconscious. The unconscious, for him is structured like language. And he adds more, there is a place for the autonomy, which is the real.

In short, Žižek and Badiou injects their political theories into the real. A true decision could not be centered around the other two orders. A true act is acting in accordance with the impossibility. All other forms of actions are in a way acting within the limits of socio-linguistic orders; they do not give us any chance of organizing something totally new.

In this work, I have tried to give the details of how Lacan, Badiou, Žižek, Laclau and Mouffe elaborated on these two major problems. First I started with a presentation of Lacan's theory (Chapter 2 and 3) Then I added my critical remarks on his philosophy on his structuralism, on his passion for the absolute knowledge in Chapter 4 and 5. In chapters 6, 7 and 9 I presented the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe, Žižek and Badiou. In chapter 8, I added my general remarks on Lacanian ethics of psychoanalysis.

In this chapter, I will put together my critical remarks against Lacan's disciples. There are six major problems that I would like to discuss in this chapter:

1. The loss of the singularity: In general, approaching to the human mind with a general theory has its danger of violently neglecting the singularities of the human subject. (sections 10.1 and 10.2)

2. The problem of the closure: Lacan's ideas in general are represented by a theory which is supposed to point out its own impasses as in the case of mathematics. The existence of the real seems to make his theory to be open for the appearance of things those are radically new and beyond the reach of its own discourse. In other words, the real is the location by which the existing socio-symbolic network could be subverted. What I aim in this chapter is, although the Lacanians claim the opposite, to defend that the insertion of the unknown and the impossible into a theory is another form of a conservative closure. (section 10.1)

3. The problem of the extension: Till now, I have tried to present the influence of Lacan on Žižek, Badiou, Laclau and Mouffe's political and ethical theories. What I would like to focus from now on is the legitimacy of an extension of a theory which belongs to the realm of psyche. (section 10.2)

4. The problem of formalism: In order to achieve a theory of the unbeknownst, Lacan and especially Badiou formulate their theses by using mathematical formalization. What I would like to discuss is the compatibility of formalism with psychoanalysis and political theory. (sections 10.3 and 10.6)

5. The problem of the new: The question is whether it is possible to attain something new without referring to the old. What I assert is that there is not such a radical newness. Founding a theory on the appearance of such an unexpected and impossible new, (i.e., an event) is mystical. At the very core of such an approach there stands the messianic idealism of Christian legacy. (section 10.4)

6. The problem of the emancipation considered as representation: The general discourse of Lacanian idea of

emancipation is based on the idea of representation (to achieve emancipation is in a sense to be represented within a discourse). I will argue that such an approach is based on a reductive idea of freedom. Although Badiou and Žižek are against democracy, such a view bounds the idea of freedom within the limits of democracy and representability. (10.5)

10.1. The Singularity of the Subject:

Lacan was quite aware of the fact that each individual is a singularity until it is introduced into language. Through the process of signification, this singularity is lost and that is what Lacan calls "the death of the Thing". (SEM III: 179-180) The real is the fissure in the symbolic register which resists such a loss of singularity that is imposed on the subject through the universalizing function of language. It is subversive in character which functions against the order of the signifier.

This theoretical stance against any *universal closure* of the subjectivity is something symptomatic in Lacan's theory. There is always something which is beyond the reach of language, something inexpressible within the subject. What I would like to underline is a paradox at the core of this idea: Lacan's theory is a *general* theory of the subject which asserts the existence of a location of freedom, a subversive point of excess, the real in the general schema of the human psyche. The paradoxical point is that this general theory points the very singularity of the real. It speaks in a general way on a point of singularity for *every* human being. The sentence "there exists a singularity for every man" is the core of paradox.

Let me put it this way: Lacan's theory is one of the examples of what he calls the symbolic order. It asserts certain relations, identifies some parts and concludes certain remarks. His theory captures not only the life-world of the psyche in the symbolic and the imaginary orders, but it also elaborates on the real of the human beings. Therefore, the singularity

of the real, on which we should not talk about is also considered as an element of his theory. Nothing singular is left beyond the reach of Lacan's theory. As I have previously discussed (section 4.3), Lacan never stops theorizing. Even he himself goes beyond the limits those were set by him. His theory is basically *a theory of the all* —all in a sense that it covers over both the expressible and the inexpressible, both what is inside the limits that were set by itself and at the same time what is excluded.

That is why he combines his theory with a kind of mathematical formalization which claims to have an explanatory power of the all: it is a formal language but it also has the power of pointing out its own impasses, the fissures that points the singularities. Lacan's theory then seems to be trying to keep the cake and eat it at the same time: delimiting the limits of the access of language on then one hand, and by adapting mathematical formalism in order to grasp certain features which are left beyond the reach of language.

The second claim as I presented in detail in Chapter 4 might be interpreted in a sense that Lacan tried just pointing out the impossibilities within the limits of language. But whenever he and his disciples attempted to found an ethics and political theory within this impossibility, once again they transgress their own theoretical limits. What could be founded from the impossibility is in a sense a Cartesian and Husserlian repudiation of the reality. That is why Lacan criticizes Kant as not going far enough: Kant only gave up the pleasure principle, but what should be done is also repudiating the reality principle, the principle by which we access the reality.

This is the general dilemma of pure formalism without any contents. When one tries to get rid of the contents in order to focus on the structural side of any realm of research, this operation usually ends up with a generalization no matter whether it is a generalization involving any discourse on the singularity or not. Once again, the proposition "Every human being is singular in its nature." is basically a paradoxical one. And

that is why Lacanian theory misses the chance to be a theory on the singularity.

Is a theory on the singularity of the psyche possible? The answer of this questions is not an easy one. There are mainly two possible theoretical approaches to the reality: (i) A theory which does not mention about any singularities, trying to capture a general theory without pointing out any possible exceptions or anomalies within itself. (ii) A Theory which has a balanced attitude that tries to grasp both the *normal* workings of the realm of interest with the exceptions, as in the case of Lacan's theory. Although it seems that the former is a conservative one which closes the theory from any future changes, as I will try to present, the latter holds an extreme closure.

First of all, we have to distinguish two things. A theory might not assert any openness to its own impasses and exceptions, but its structure might allow *falsifications* in the Popperian sense of the term. Although the defenders of such theories might hold a self-confidence, the theory is always open for questioning. They do not include any impasses, any unbeknownst, and unexpected things. That is why these theories are open for falsifications and anomalies.

On the other hand, the second type of theories are self-contained and self-referential in a sense that there is always a space for the unexpected things to happen. Any exceptional case for them is already accepted and inscribed within the theory. There are not real anomalies for these theories as anomalies are already involved. Therefore *nothing can falsify these theories.* They are closed from both the empirical and logical testing.

In summary, Lacan's theory, for me, is based on a certain form of determinism which does not allow any real *intrusion of the aliens.* It is a theory which explains every form of such intrusion as some kind of an expected result of the impasses of our access of reality. But these

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unexpected facts are never used for questioning the theory itself. Therefore, although such theories seem to be open for unexpected events, they transpose them as a purely expected and normal functioning. In other words, Lacan's theory itself does not entail any possible dislocation of its own symbolic discourse.

Finally, I would like to distinguish two things from each other: a philosophical approach to a realm of interest and a scientific one. The former fits better for Lacan's discourse although he claims that his theory is a scientific one. Only philosophy can approach both what is within the limits of science and what is beyond it. That is why Kuhn's theory of scientific revolutions is not within the limits of science. It is philosophy in the purest sense of the term. On the other hand, what Lacan holds is a theory which both formulates how the human psyche works and at the same time, it also claims to hold an understanding of the blind spots of any such theory.

Let me use Marshall Berman's words in order to compare Foucault and Lacan for a better understanding of what the closure in Lacan's theory is:

> After being subjected to [Foucault's ideas] for a while, we realize that there is no freedom in Foucault's world, because his language forms a seamless web, a cage far more airtight than anything Weber ever dreamed of, into which no life can break. The mystery is why so many of today's intellectuals seem to want to choke in there with him. The answer, I suspect, is that Foucault offers a generation of refugees from the 1960s a world-historical alibi for the sense of passivity and helplessness that gripped so many of us in the 1970s. There is no point in trying to resist the oppressions and injustices of modern life, since even our dreams of freedom only add more links to our chains; however, once we grasp the total futility of it all, at least we can relax. (Berman, 1988: 34-5)

Due to his disciples, what Lacan offers us is more than a theory of iron cage in which there is no place to move. As there exists the resisting space of the real, there is always a possibility to subvert the existing

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reality.[121] But the problem in that approach is, such an attitude enlarges the cage and even involves what is beyond its own limits. That is why both Žižek and Badiou do not offer us more than a kind of messianic thought (see section 10.4 below) : we should wait for the impossible event to occur; we should act in accordance with the impossibility; we should attach ourselves to the event with fidelity etc. As both of them are seeking for the freedom within the realm of what is inexpressible, they artificially and radically detach the new from the old. The old is located within the symbolic and the imaginary registers, and the new will come from the real. One may ask whether there are not any transitional problems between these two realms. There should be, but both Žižek and Badiou ignores such problems and the reason for that is, for them, there is no need for a transitional mediator as these three realms are always linked to each other by one unique theory. That is why I argue that Lacan's theory has a closure: a closure which is closed by the inscription of the impossibility at the heart of the theory. In general, nothing can surprise a Lacanian theorist as everything is either inscribed within the theory or it comes from the real.

10.2. From the individual to the social:

In a clinical session, there are two major roles: the analyst and the analysand. These two roles are not interchangeable. The analysand pays the bill, seeks for healing and help. On the other hand, the analyst, with the help of a theory, tries to help the analysand. No matter how their relationship is structured, these roles impose on a certain form of inequality: the analyst is similar to the master and the analysand to the slave. But in the pure everydayness, in our life-world, there are not such clear-cut roles. One may be the master and the slave at the same time. Even during a unique dialogue with the same person, these roles could

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[121] Let me repeat once again: the real is not something substantial. It inevitably appears within the symbolic order. Therefore, as in the case of the signified, the real and its lack are both effects of language.

change continuously. When M. Lacan was talking to the maintenance man who was supposed to fix his famous Mercedes, the maintenance man became the master. And when the same man comes to Lacan's office as an analysand, the roles are changed.

This continuous form of the interchangeability of the roles in real life, although there are exceptions as in the case of the employee-employer relationships etc., gives at least a dialogical symmetry in everyday dialogues. Once again, there are still masters and slaves and sometimes these roles are fixed, but in general, there are not such pre-determined roles as in the case of psychoanalytic session. Therefore, the dialogue during the analytic session is restricted in a sense that in it, the richness which we experience during our everyday encounters is lost. Repeating what Heidegger asserts against Husserl, we can claim that the analytic relationship is artificial and it does not have the capability of grasping the richness of life. The theory of psychoanalysis, like Husserl's repudiation of the natural attitude for the sake of certain reductions, is itself a reductive methodology: it reduces the complexity of the psyche to the general rules of a theory. Even for Lacan, this still holds, as in his theory, this richness is left out by the general schema of the three registers. Everyone fits into this general rule.

More important than this, the inequality between these two roles of psychoanalysis does not reproduce the essential structures and properties of society. It is, in a sense neither a mimicry of the external world, nor a representation of it. The psychoanalytic session does not hold a critical stance against the reality which is, for most of the cases, responsible for the mental illnesses. It is for sure that Freud asserted that repression has a primary role on the neurosis, but there is not any place for the critique of society during the analytic sessions. It is an ethical question whether the analyst should hold a critical stance against society, but the truth is, the analytic session does not have enough tools to question the true facts which had effects on the analysand's psyche. To me, what is required is

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not founding a political or ethical theory from psychoanalysis, but both of them should be excluded from the analytic session. They should be thought elsewhere, within the unrestricted and immediate experience of the life-world.

There is another point that might seem irrelevant with the subject-matter of this work which I would like to address as it is another and important dimension of psychoanalysis. For most of the cases, the analysand should have enough money or at least have a health insurance in order to be accepted by the analyst. This makes the psychoanalytic praxis exclusive at the very start. The psychoanalytic relationship is located in a situation where the capitalistic relations continue and at the same time, due to the ethical rules of neutrality, any critique of capitalism should be excluded from the realm of *the healing talk*. Therefore, no matter what Lacan advocates, there is always a presence of the socio-economic factors during the analytic session on the one hand, and on the other hand, these factors should not be taken into account for the sake of neutrality.

Lacan was aware of the clinical dangers of these pre-established roles of the psychoanalysis. That is why he advised the analysts to keep a neutral stance against the analysands. The ego of the analyst should be concealed. If we repeat Lacan, the analyst should play the dummy. Lacan writes:

> We efface ourselves, we leave the field in which the interest, sympathy, and reactions a speaker seeks to find on his interlocutor's face might be seen, we avoid all manifestations of our personal tastes, we conceal whatever might betray them, we depersonalize ourselves and strive to represent to the other an ideal impassability. (EC: 87)

The role of the analyst, for Lacan is to act like the Other, the symbolic order in which the repressions and psychological problems appear. The psychoanalytic session is in a way supposed to repeat what the analysand is faced with in the external reality.

What is problematic here is not only the artificiality of this relationship, but also there is a certain idealization of the neutrality of the analyst. It is obviously impossible to conceal the ego of the analyst from the analysand. Similarly, as there is no neutrality in the world, there exists another form of idealization during the psychoanalytic relationship which excludes any presupposed critique of the reality.

Therefore, after the unequal selective procedure of the medical system, there is another condition which precedes the analytic session: the analyst should keep himself or herself away from the analysand in a sense that their dialogue would be a purely unnatural dialogue. This makes it impossible to repeat what had happened to the analysand in the external world. The singularity of the experience of the reality is lost with this idealized relationship. No matter how strong the analyst tries to do, there is always the shadows of the pre-established roles of the master and the slave and also the inequalities of the medical system. In other words, although Lacanian theory privileges the role of the real, through these pre-established roles, the real singularity is repressed. Therefore, repeating my initial claim that there is a loss of singularity not only because of the generalizing nature of the theory, but also because of the idealizations and the pre-established roles of the analytic relationship.

This may not be a big problem unless we leave the realm of psychoanalysis. The healing dialogue should not necessarily be a normal dialogue. But once we move beyond the realm of the individual's psyche, and assert that the analytic session and the theory of psychoanalysis are at the same time might be used as a model for understanding the society. What we need for understanding the society is not a theory which is based on a theory of the individual and shaped around artificial dialogue and roles.

One may oppose this view by asserting that Lacan's theory could not be criticized from a Cartesian point of view which isolates the cogito from the social environment. What I am defending is not a rejection of the

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effects of the socio-linguistic realm on the human psyche. But what I would like to underline is the fact that psychoanalytic discourse starts from the human individual's development, from the very early days of childhood. If we move from the individual to the realm of the society by basic extensions and analogies, we should answer certain questions:

For the individual, the Name-of-the-Father, the socio-linguistic Law represses the incestuous desire-for-the-Mother. Thus what is the Name-of-the-Father for a society and what plays the role of the mother for the social? This is at the same time a question on self-referentiality: How could it be possible for a society to have an effect on its own life-world? What is the legitimacy of replacing the individual-society relationship with the society-society relationship?

The question is not necessarily founded on an isolation of the individual from the society. One might accept the fact that there is a role of the external world on the development of the human psyche and there is always a blurred non-border between what are the real individual desires and what are based on the socio-linguistic realm that captures the individual. One may even accept the Lacanian idea that the universality of language destroys the singularity of the individual. But one can still insist on asking how we could replace this blurred non-border between the individual and the society with another blurred non-border within the society. If we use Lacanese, the question comes out as "what is the Other of the Other?"

Lacan asserts in several of his works, that the Other of the Other does not exist. For him, as the reality is experienced within the symbolic order, there is not any meta-linguistic point where we can grasp the reality in its fullness. Therefore, the question "what is the Name-of-the-Father for the society?" seems to be a paradoxical question: if there is not any other of the other, then how could there be an other of the society, which is an other itself? If we continue questioning, things will come out as much more complicated: What is a desire of a society? What does a society desire

for? What is the legitimacy of an assertion that a society's desire works in a similar way with an individual's desire?

As an addition to these, one may assert that there is the *real* of the individual which resists the socialization. Therefore, there is always a space which keeps itself away from the blurred non-border between the individual and the society. What mainly a social theory based on psychoanalysis lacks is the *real*. There is no *real* of a society which is excluded from the social discourse. It is true that there are Laws and norms that exclude certain things, but they are for sure not the founding principles of a society. Such repressions from the social order are not required in order to achieve a certain development. The elimination of the real by language for the individual is necessary for it to live within a society. But when we extend this, there is not any necessity for a society *to live within itself*, to impose on rules on itself. There is certainly a paradox in this extension of the model.

Similarly, Lacan's theory is based on an initial trauma of a loss. For the societies there are not such initial losses. One may oppose this by asserting that within every society, there is a lack of harmony. Such view which is hold by especially Žižek is based on the claim that every society has a belief in a historical and mythical unity and harmony which was lost, and all the political acts are based on such a belief.

What Žižek asserts might be true for several nations and societies. But this assertion is mostly based on considering the society within the boundaries of the nation states. Every nation state founds itself on such a discourse of unity which is for most of the cases, lost or at least under danger. But what we experience now in a globalized world is not a loss of the mythical roots. Quite the contrary, one of the major currents of our era insists on the unimportance of such roots. Such a trauma might be seen in countries like Turkey or Slovenia which had experienced a certain form of loss (i.e., a loss of the imperial past, a loss of the fatherland). The main discourse of US, "war on terror" might also be explained by such a theory

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of loss. But such a generalized theory of loss does not explain how new nations and identities are founded. As a Marxist, Žižek knows very well that the main idea behind the October Revolution was not re-uniting a nation which had lost its unity. But quite the contrary, what Lenin was trying to hold was an intentional repudiation of the past. What the revolution proposed is a novelty, a harmony which was not lost but had never been attained previously.

All of these questions entail that the extension of the psychoanalytic realm from the human psyche onto society requires all of the psychoanalytic concepts to be revised. Except Badiou's work, such a revisal cannot be found neither in Laclau and Mouffe's, nor in Žižek's work. For Badiou, the case is different. He is influenced by Lacan's ideas, but his theory is not founded around the very same concepts that Lacan introduced.

Correspondingly such kind of questions were tried to be answered by Freud himself when he extended psychoanalysis from an investigation of the individual neurosis to the communal one:

> What Freud calls the diagnosis of communal neurosis requires an investigation that goes beyond the criteria of a given institutional framework and takes into account the history of the cultural evolution of the human species, the 'process of civilization.' (Habermas, 1971: 274)

In this case, the individual-society relationship is replaced with the society-history relationship. But no matter how do we resolve this problem, there is always a shift of realms, which entails a change at the core of the theory. The question of legitimacy, therefore persists.

I think, Lacan himself was quite aware of this problem and that is why he always tried to keep his theory a limited one. As I have mentioned earlier, that is the reason why the Lacanian ethical theory does not give us an ethics which organizes the social life. It is an ethics of psychoanalysis which only helps the analyst on managing the relationship with the

analysand by keeping a neutral stance.

10.3. The role of formalization:

As I have mentioned in Chapter 5, there is a certain idealization of the signifiers in Lacan's theory. There are several *side effects* of this idealization in the political extensions of his theory. Let me start with Laclau and Mouffe's radical democracy and Žižek's critique of them.

In general, the very idea of democracy is also based on an idealization which presupposes that the elements of democracy —the ones who try to find out a way to represent themselves— are *equidistant* to the core of democracy. Therefore, being a member of a political party, being represented within this party and the free elections guarantee a possibility of representation. Democratic representationalism ignores the other factors of inequality which has certain roles on the elections. What Laclau and Mouffe and in general, the defenders of the idea of democracy misses is this intrinsic inequality of the mechanisms of democracy. One needs money, one needs a large political organization and finally one needs enough energy to be represented within the political system. And there is not any guarantee of such a representation to represent the real demands of the supporters of the parties. When Laclau and Mouffe claim that there is not any way to represent society in its fullness, they point out the problematic kernel of democracy, but then when they defend a radicalization of democracy, they fall into the remnants of the idealizations. First they claim that it is impossible to attain a fully representable society and then they claim that democracy is the best of what we have in our hands. The former does not necessarily entail the latter.

I think, Laclau and Mouffe's theory fits in Lacanian edifice at least for one reason which is, for them, ones to be represented are presumed as neutrally located and equivalent to each other. There is one, unique mechanism, democracy itself, which establishes a formal structure in which, everyone who requires for representation could find a way to be

represented. But the real and deep inequalities within a society are ignored. It is true that they conceptualize democracy as an open project but such an openness is not based on a subversive critique against the economic inequalities that we have now. Quite the contrary, Laclau and Mouffe criticized Marx's model of economic determinism with a repudiation of the primary role of economy on politics. That is why their democracy is based on an idealization in which the economic inequalities are neglected. Therefore what they assert (the impossibility to have a representation of society) is doubled by their insistence on democracy: at the first level, there is the intrinsic impossibility of representationalism, at the second level, democracy as a model which is exclusive in nature, keeps the very inequalities within the society untouched.

Such an attitude is similar with Lacan's conception of the neutrality of the signifiers. Although their theory of democracy is supposed to be a theory open for differences within society, these differences are only formal differences. There are not any hierarchies between them, neither they consider the other properties of these differences and the causes of them. This is the very idealization which can be found in Lacan's reduction of the richness of our use of language to the signifiers by considering them as the equivalent elements of signification. A signifier is just different from another one. There is no need to consider the content of a signifier as there exists no pre-determined contents of them. Without the contents, they are equivalent regarding their functionality.

Similarly, for Laclau and Mouffe, an identity is different from another identity. This *difference* only differs, nothing else. There are not any intensities, properties or quantities of differences. The difference is reduced into a purely formal difference. In other words, what is missing in Laclau and Mouffe's theory is the empirical valuations of certain identities. But how could this be done if every identity is without any critical elaboration considered to be a possible element of democracy? The openness of democracy is not an openness to the real, deep structural

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differences of the identities. The radical democracy project does not consider the historical and social causes of the production of identities.

This is what could be found in Lacan's imaginary identification as he never focuses on the reasons of such a process. It is true that he points the effects of the symbolic register on imaginary identification, but as in his model, every signifier is equally distributed within language, the imaginary decision for an identity is regarded as just a basic selection among a whole series of signifiers. In Lacan's model, for the sake of neutrality, there are not any points of reference which can disclose the other causes of imaginary identification.

Similar problems occur also in Badiou's set theoretical ontology. Sets are neutrally distributed. There are only two relationships between the sets: inclusion and belonging. There are not *master* or *slave* sets in set theory. Things are by nature equivalent. They all should obey the formal laws of set theory. They are just different from each other.

Badiou's difference from Laclau and Mouffe is, although he starts from the differences, he defends a political praxis which will combine these differences within one general truth of a situation. As Badiou discusses in his *Ethics,* every theory which is based on differences inevitably falls in an impasse which is caused by the irreconcilable nature of differences.

I agree with him that an ethico-political theory should focus on the sameness, the similarities between the identities, the hidden core which may allow us to approach them in an egalitarian way. But one should add that this could not be done with a formal approach as in his use of set theory as ontology. An ethico-political theory should also take into consideration the intensities and the contents of these differences also. But the formalism of Lacan and Badiou's theories do not allow such an approach. First of all, they keep a content free formal system which is considered as intact. Therefore, what Žižek finds problematic in Laclau and Mouffe's theory is also problematic for Lacan, Žižek and Badiou also:

as I have mentioned previously, there is not any self-critical point of openness within these theories. For Laclau and Mouffe, we should start with an acceptance of democracy and continue with it. For the other two Lacanians, the general Lacanian edifice is located at a point which is not open for criticism. This could be found in both Žižek and Badiou's accounts of the politics of the real.

10.3. Messianic thinking and the problem of the new:

What Žižek asserts is a political act based on the real should start from the replacement of the symbolic order with another one as Truth comes from the real. That is why he attacks Laclau and Mouffe as not leaving behind the very symbolic register of democracy. Due to him, what they offer is nothing more than a conservative protection of democracy and the existing reality.

Similarly, for Badiou, an event appears unexpectedly and an ethical act is, without knowing whether this is an event or not, attaching oneself to this event with fidelity. Through this process of fidelity, a new point of view will be attained. This is where the subject appears. It keeps the individual away from what Badiou calls the situation. This is the only way to unconceal the Truth of a situation.

In both of the philosophers' approaches, there are two major points that I would like to criticize:

(i) Although they hold a critical attitude against our access of the existing reality (the symbolic order for Žižek and the situation for Badiou) they never question their own adoption of Lacan's theses. It is true that their radical approaches defend the replacement of the symbolic orders, but what is left intact is the Lacanian theory itself.

In Badiou's case, the situation is more complex. For him, what we have learned from Gödel's famous incompleteness theorems is that

mathematics is the only discipline which can point the impasses of its own discourse. The crucial fact about these theorems is that during the proofs, Gödel never refers something external to mathematics. Mathematics stood still after Gödel's proof was established. This gives Badiou's theory a bullet proof strength: it is a theory on the replacement of systems of knowledge without questioning its own foundations. Adopting such a formal methodology, Badiou repudiates any self-critical stance.

(ii) There is a certain form of *messianism* in both Žižek and Badiou's theories. For Žižek, the real should not be covered up by fantasies. He considers symbolic order as the space for the conservatism. The real emancipatory and subversive politics should be based on the destruction of the symbolic reality on behalf of the real. Similarly for Badiou, one should follow an event with fidelity without knowing whether what is followed is a real event or not. We should wait for the intrusion of the real (Žižek) or the appearance of the event (Badiou) which are both unexpected and impossible for the existing symbolic order. In short, the true political action starts with waiting for the appearance of the impossible by chance. The appearance of the impossible points certain inconsistencies and deadlocks of the symbolic order.

Such a rejection of any possible political action within the symbolic order inevitably ends up with a religious conception of the new: the new comes from a place which resists linguistic access and it appears unexpectedly. Following an event or whatever comes from the real, we end up with an unconcealment of the Truth. We can never be sure whether we are following a real or a pseudo event as it cannot be grasped by knowledge. Therefore we should follow something beyond the reach of knowledge.

The new only comes by a rupture, which denotes a total replacement of one thing with another thing. It comes from nowhere, from the totally excluded location of the real. We cannot know the new from within the old and we cannot determine its appearance. I think, such a

view ends up with a certain idea of *destiny*: we have to wait until the event appears. Whatever we try to do within the limits and laws of the symbolic order, nothing really changes, nothing new appears. The new could not be established and it could not be pre-determined.

Such a religious discourse could also be found in their defense of a formal structure which structures the human individual. A formal structure is something which could not be replaced or changed. The real —which produces changes, from which the new comes— is something unbeknownst. It is like the traditional conception of God who produces the reality from nowhere. Through this production of reality, the laws of nature and history are left intact. Similarly, the formal structure in which the human individuals and society act do not change.

There is another problem in especially Badiou's theory which is related to the naming of the event: If an event occurs unexpectedly as an impossibility, how do the individuals share their fidelity to the event with the others? Badiou asserts that naming is one of the steps of fidelity. But then after attaining the new dimension, the new point of view, how could these individuals who became subjects could share this with the others? As every expression is situation bounded, they could not communicate their novel experience, the Truth of a situation with the others. This is similar to what the Japanese mystics calls Satori: a certain religious experience of the wholeness which is inexpressible. How could something new for the society and politics could arise from something which cannot be expressed? This is, I think, an example of a pure mysticism.

These problems are caused by the ultra-leftism of both Badiou and Žižek. The radical repudiation of the existing symbolic order inevitably ends up with such a mysticism. Only some of the elites, only ones who had the chance could experience the totally new and the impossible.

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10.4. Emancipation and representation:

All three theories share one thing which is equating representation with emancipation. For them, if one is excluded from the representational logic of the existing order, one is not free. And the inverse of this equation is also true: the emancipation could only be attained through representation. But if such an equation is set, then one is only left with democracy as it is the only regime that is based on representation. Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe are right in their insistence on a theory of democracy no matter what Žižek holds against them.

The steps that take the Lacanians towards this equation follow a short-circuit: First the existing reality is conceptualized with the help of the process of signification. Second step is naming the unnamable, the real. The main tension of reality is therefore located around these two realms of language (the imaginary and the symbolic orders) and of what is beyond the reach of it (the real). Once these are accepted, we are left with two major stances against the existing order: either we should act within the limits of the existing symbolic order (Laclau and Mouffe), or we should act in accordance with what is unknown, the real (Žižek and Badiou). In both of these options, what is missing is taking into account of language as a human product. For all of these approaches and for Lacan also language is considered as an external framework in which we act or we resist. That is why they have reduced emancipation by equating it with representation and repression with the exclusion from the signification.

There is an important self-referentiality that is entailed by this reduction which is the fact that even such an equation is within the limits of language; this equation *represents* what the emancipation is. But the problem is, it is impossible to have a full representation of the real. The equation becomes a paradoxical one as it asserts a certain formal relationship which cannot be asserted. And as an addition to this, by such a formulation, emancipation is defined as something totally excluded from

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the human reality, a mystical experience which is impossible to attain. First they locate emancipation beyond the reach of language and then they try to express it.

This paradox is inevitable once we do not consider language as a human product. Although it is not an easy task to define what the emancipation is, I have to note that one of the most important processes in which the human beings experience emancipation is the creative production of the linguistic systems. Lacanian political thinking ignores this aspect which cannot be reduced under the representation/non-representation tension. In order to grasp the productive power of human beings, we have to focus one the role of the imagination.

For Lacan and especially for Žižek, the imaginary order has a negative meaning. It is a defensive realm against the alienation in the symbolic. It is the place where the button ties help the individuals to give meaning to the flux of signifiers. And it also conceals the inconsistencies of the symbolic order with fantasies. It is the place where the ideology operates on the individuals.

What is missing in this formulation is the productive power of imagination. Imagination not only gives consistency to the symbolic order, but it also reproduces the process of signification. From Einstein's works on physics to Picasso's paintings, the replacement of the existing reality is not based on the real, something totally alien to the human experience, but is structured around a synthesis of the symbolic order with the imagination of the individual. The re-establishment of the symbolic order in these kinds of creative works is based on imagination.

Similarly, instead of waiting for the unbeknownst, the true political acts are based on imagination: an imagination of the possibility of a different world, an imagination of a different way of life and so on. The reason why Badiou and Žižek end up with a mystical conception of emancipation is their focus on the real, the lack of representation instead

of imagination.

The true definition of emancipation cannot be given without considering the role of human imagination on the production of the linguistic orders. In that sense, emancipation could be located neither within the symbolic order (as in the case of Laclau and Mouffe), nor the real. Former is an acceptance of the existing order, the latter mystically waits for the appearance of what is impossible. Imagination on the other hand is acting within the symbolic by dislocating, replacing and destructing the founding principles of it with a vision of a better future.

Such a forced change does not appear through ruptures. There are always *continuous* changes within the linguistic realm. and these changes do not come from elsewhere. They are very human products. We first imagine change and then, in order to be realists, we articulate these imaginations with the possibilities that are already presented within the symbolic order.

This view is different from Laclau and Mouffe's radical democracy project. They are still bounded by thinking through representational logic. According to them, the politics is shaped around the representation of the identities. For me, imagination is a refusal of the idea that representation gives us the path for emancipation. Quite the contrary, imagination tries to capture what is actual and what could happen. It repudiates the roles and identities that are given in our hands. It is not thinking through democracy by which we can struggle for representation of these given roles. It keeps a critical distance against the roles as it is an awareness of the fact that these roles are also products of human praxis. Thinking through imagination is more realistic than what Badiou and Žižek defend (we can change the world without waiting for something to happen) and at the same time, it is more radical than the radical democratic project (we do not need to represent the roles that are imposed on us; they are the roles that we produce and we can destruct and dislocate them also).

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When Badiou and Žižek defended the logic of sameness against the situation bounded affirmation of differences, they were right. But *the same* could never come from a total repudiation of the existing reality. The same could only be structured around the existing differences. In order to attain a different point of view, we do not need something unexpected to happen. Imagination gives us the power to reorganize the society in terms of differences and identities by a reproduction of them with the aid of new requirements. Imagination is based on a self-confidence that we can change the existing reality to a better one. That will help us not to fall into pessimistic conceptions of linguistic boundaries and mystical leftism.

There is another danger in such a repudiation of language as a human product which is the concealment of *the true enemies* who construct the existing social reality. This only leaves us to beg for the event to come from elsewhere. In such a view, there is not any need to take any critical stance against the existing order as the symbolic order is considered as something which is not produced by us. For such a formulation, there are not any *owners* or responsible ones for the existing order.[122]

I think Badiou's injection of Cohen's concept of forcing in his model is based on his awareness of the dangers of such a total detachment from the existing reality. But although Cohen's forcing explicates how new models within set theory could be produced from the old ones, in Badiou's theory, the event is defined as something beyond ontology (a set which is an element of itself). He uses set theoretical formalization on the one hand in order to explicate the production of the new, on the other hand, he leaves the event, the initiating point of the new beyond the reach of set theory. In other words, there are the forcing and

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[122] I do not mean that Badiou and Žižek do not have a critical attitude against the existing order. Badiou is an activist against the government immigration policies and similarly Žižek is one of the most severe critiques of US invasion of Iraq. But such kind of activisms contradict what they defend theoretically: acting in accordance with the real. What they do is holding a critical stance within the boundaries of the reality. They do not wait for the event to occur.

the fidelity which denote the productive functioning of human individuals for shaping a new model from the old, and at the same time, there is still the mystical existence of the event. That is where his formalism falls short.

I would like to make a final remark on the representation-emancipation equality: there is another hidden presupposition in the assertion of such an equation. This presupposition is based on again certain idealizations. In this case, it is the idealization of non-representation. Let me put it this way, in our everydayness, I agree with Lacanians that there is not a full representation of the world in which we live. But it is also true that there is not a full non-representation. (i.e., the nothing for Badiou, the real for Lacan and Žižek) There is always something missing in representation and something abundant, or represented in the non-represented or excluded ones. Even in Lacan's own theory, through symptoms, the repressed feelings could be traced. Therefore it is impossible to have both a full representation and full exclusion in language.

10.5. Intensities and other qualities:

As I have examined, what is lost in the content-free formalism of Lacan and his disciples is the richness of human reality. Instead of capturing the human praxis with the help of idealized elements of signifiers or sets, we should re-consider approaching the same subject with the help of intensities and qualities of the contents of these elements. For example, for Lacan, the mechanism of psyche works as follows: there exists a primary repression which prohibits an initial unity, this repression produces a feeling of lack. Human beings try to get back to this level of unity by desiring certain objects which are represented in reality, but as reality is based on this very same prohibition, what we end up with is frustration. Within this schema there is not any place for other possibilities which may be triggered by the different intensities of desire. For example, when we desire something *too much*, we may end up with hatred against that

desired object. Or similarly, if our desire for that object is lower than a certain level, we may give desiring it up. It is true that there are not *objective* measures for these thresholds for the change within the mechanics of desire, but it is also true that, human beings do not necessarily obey such mechanistic laws. There are always exceptions and these exceptions are not captured by Lacanian real. (see my previous discussion on closure)

Although Lacan aims at founding a new theory of the subject, at the final instance, he falls in the traps of essentialism. The existence of the real is introduced by him in order to put together a non-essentialist theory of the subject, but the three dimensional relationship between the registers are oriented in such a way that every human praxis is, in a way, *essentially* determined. The power of the unexpected, the surprising appearance of the event and the creativity of imagination are cancelled out by the passion of him for a formalization of the *all*.

Similarly, Badiou's situations which are defined in terms of sets fall short in explicating the richness of the human life-world. Fo rhim, there are only three ways of being in relation with a situation: (i) one is a member of a situation, (ii) one is not a member of a situation, (iii) one is not a subset of (or represented in) a situation. These three types of relations do not cover all the possible ways of human reality. In order to explicate this view, I would like to use an analogy from the separation between the analog and the digital signals in electronics.

By the process of digitalization, an analog and continuous signal is *summarized* by the discreet signals. Several samples are taken from the original analog signal and they are digitalized for the communication. A sampling is done in order to attain a digital *representation* of the original signal. It is easier to process and communicate with the digital signals.

Similarly, what Badiou presents is, in a sense, a digitalization of the reality. In real life, we do not have such clear cut distinctions between

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being a member of a situation or not. For most of the cases, being present in a situation does not express the real life relationships. This is similar to my argumentation on the idealization of the representation/non-representation dilemma: there are always some portions (not parts) of the multiples that do not belong to or not included in the situations. In general, the status of being included in a situation of the cases gradually change between the "members". Some do belong to it *more than* the others. There are different *intensities* of membership relations.

According to Badiou, knowledge is the situation bounded and produces conservative opinions. Such a repudiation of knowledge has the danger —as I have mentioned— of ending up with a certain type of mysticism. But in reality, knowledge consists of the power of subversion. There are always something unbounded, which transcends the limits of a situation within knowledge. That is why we could talk about critical thinking.

Secondly, such a view does not grasp the continuous form of change in the human reality. Human beings and their relationships with reality continuously evolve. Being a member of a situation is something temporal: in reality we are partly members of situations and this changes so fast that such a static conception of relationship (set theory and being a member of a set) could not *represent* the life-world. Such a view only gives us just a portion of human reality. It is just a digitalization of the continuous form of change. In it, the contents of the multiples do not affect or change the nature of them. They remain in nature exactly the same. There are no overdosed inclusions or belongings. To be a set (or being-multiple) remains unchanged.

As a summary, in order to resolve these problems that I presented, we should rethink about the following: (i) The relationship between history and philosophy: how and under what conditions the historical facts have effects on thinking, is it possible to historicize Lacanian formalism in order to add some self-critical points? (ii) The

relationship between form and content: Is it possible to reformulate Lacanian theory in such a way that the qualities and properties of contents may have certain effects on the general form of the theory? (iii) Theory in general: Finally, we have to rethink whether is it possible to have a theory of psyche in which we do not *kill* the singularity of it?

It is beyond my capacity to answer all of these questions as all three of them are tied up to the most important philosophical questions which have been waiting for an answer for centuries. What I tried to do in this work is underlining what Lacan and his disciples propose and what are the difficulties that flourish in their work. Lacan's theory offers a more convenient way of understanding the human psyche than what the psyche itself offers us. The convenience cannot be accepted as a property which halts the philosophical inquiry. Lacan started with a critique of the very idea of essential identities but he did not go too far enough as he stopped his theory at a point where the identity of his own theory is structured. Perhaps what Poincaré claims against axioms is applicable to Lacanian theories: "Such axioms [...] would be utterly meaningless to as being living in a world in which there are only fluids." (cited in Tasić, 20012: 60)

Lacan started his intellectual journey on thinking about a theory which points out its own impasses. Similarly, whether it is possible or not to achieve a theory which points its own becoming is a better question to start new ways of analyzing the human praxis.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. GENİŞLETİLMİŞ TÜRKÇE ÖZET

20. yüzyıl felsefesinde en ilginç figürlerden birisi olarak karşımıza çıkan Lacan, bir yandan klinik bir psikanalisttir, diğer yandan, 1950lerde başlayan ünlü seminerleriyle Fransız düşünsel yaşantısına damgasını vuran bir filozoftur. Kuramının ana çatısı, çok farklı ilgi alanlarından derlediği sonuçlardan oluşur. Dilbilime ve felsefeye duyduğu ilginin yanı sıra, güzel sanatlar ve matematikle de ilgilenir. Tüm bu farklı disiplinleri, insan ruhunun derinliklerini anlamak ve Freud'u bu disiplinlerdeki gelişmelerle yeniden yorumlamak, ya da kendi deyişiyle "Freud'a dönmek" için kullanır. Ona göre Freud, Saussure'un dilbilime katkılarından, ya da matematikteki yeniliklerden haberdar olsaydı, kuramında tam da Lacan'ın önerdiği türden değişikler yapardı.

Lacan'ın belki de en ünlü önermesi, bilinçdışının dil gibi yapıldığı iddiasıdır. Bu iddiasını desteklemek için Freud'un dil sürçmeleri, unutmalar, daha geniş anlamıyla gündelik yaşantıdaki dilsel sakarlıklar üzerindeki çalışmalarına başvurur. Bastırılan duygular, dilsel alanda kendilerini metaforik ifadelerle açığa vururlar. Metafor, bütünüyle dilsel bir ilişki tarzıdır. Benzer bir şekilde, gerçekte arzu edilen şeylerin metonimik bir kayma ile yerini ikame edecek şeylere bırakmasında da bu dil yapılanması gözlenir.

Lacan'ın kuramını dil dolayımı içinde inşa etmesi, hiç şüphesiz onun "gerçek" adını verdiği, dil öncesinde bir bebeğin anne ve dünya ile bir tür bütünlük içinde olduğu, kendisini dışsal şeylerden ayıramadığı bir düzeni tanımlamasıyla başlar. Gerçek, bebeğin "ayna evresi" adı verilen dile giriş süreci ile bastırılır, ya da dile getirilirken, özgün yanını yitirir. Artık anne ile bütünlük yerini "Babanın-Adı" diye adlandırılan dilsel yasaya

bırakır. Dilsel yasa, dilsel bir arıtma ile dil öncesine ait bu ensestik (odipal) bütünlük halini ortadan kaldırır. Dil, toplumsallıktır da aynı zamanda, toplumsallık ise yasadır, uyulması zorunlu ilkelerdir. Ancak dilin bu yasa ve kısıtlama işlevi, mutlak bir başarıyla sonuçlanmaz. Geride her zaman dilin süzgecinden kaçan artıklar bulunur. Bunlar, arzuyu canlı tutarlar, bir anlamıyla arzı ekonomisinin dinamizmini sağlarlar.

Dile giriş, iki yeni düzenin, imgesel ve sembolik düzenlerin oluşmasıyla sonuçlanır. Her ikisi de dil içinde, dille ilişkili olarak ortaya çıkarlar. Sembolik düzen, dili oluşturan gösterenlerin sürekli akışkanlığı içinde, insan bedenini paramparça eden adlandırmalar dünyasında kaybolan bir özneyi üretir. Özne, kendi hakimiyeti dışındaki bu düzende çaresizce geçmişte yitirdiği o mitik bütünlüğü yeniden inşa etmeye çalışır. İşte bu inşa hareketi, imgesel düzen içerisinde ortaya çıkar. Anlama ve anlamlandırma, gösterenlerin durmak bilmez akışkanlığına "dur" diyen, Lacan'ın düğme ilikleri (points de capiton) dediği imgesel durma noktaları etrafında oluşur.

Lacan'a göre, mutlak bir anlam yoktur. Anlam ancak imgesel olarak mutlakmış gibi inşa edilir. Bireyin dünya ile dil dolayımıyla ilişkiye geçişine "gerçeklik" adını veren Lacan, bu ilişkinin ancak imgesel ve sembolik düzenler yardımıyla olabileceğini iddia eder. Bir yanda sonsuz bir hareketlilik, bireyin kontrolü dışında sürekli üreyen, değişen ve dönüşen bir dilsel düzen (sembolik) ve diğer yanda da bu korkunç akış içinde tutunacak imgesel dallar inşa eden bireyin kendiliği (ego).

İmgesel, gerçek içinde, sembolik yasaklama sonucu bırakılmış, terkedilmiş anlamın yeniden, ama bu kez dilsel olanda bulunması için bir tür destekleyici gibidir. Dil içinde yaşamanın bir bedeli olan gerçeğin kaybedilişi, ancak imgesel bir ikame ile tahammül edilebilir bir hal alır. Bu ikame ile gösterenlerin akışından, gösterilenler türer. Ancak bu türeyiş gerçekte kaybedilmiş anlama, ya da Lacancı terminolojiyle söylersek Hakikate bizi ulaştırmaz. Gerçekteki anlam geri getirilemez, toplumsal yaşamın bir buyruğu olarak sonsuza dek uzaklaştırılmıştır. Onun yerine,

gerçeğin kaybıyla ortaya çıkan merkezi yoksunluğu dolduracak fantazmatik anlamlandırmalar inşa edilir. Bireyin kendiliği, bu sürecin inşasının bir sonucudur, çünkü kendilik de, kaybedilen bütünlüğün yoksunluğuna bir tepki olarak ortaya çıkar. Ama her bütünlük, her uyum gibi, imgesel bir bütünlüktür kendilik de.

Lacan kuramını temelde bir psikanaliz öğretisi olarak kurar. Kuramının en ilginç yanı, dil içinde ifade edilebilen ve edilemeyen unsurları bir arada ele almasıdır. Bu bakımdan Wittgenstein'ı andırır. Dilde söylenebilenler olduğu gibi, sadece gösterilebilen ama dille ifade edilemez Hakikatler de vardır. Lacan, özellikle son seminerlerinde, gerçeğin sembolikçe yasaklanmasının yarattığı yoksunluğun gösterilebilmesinin yegane yolunu matematiksel bir formelleştirme olduğunu savunmaya başlar. Gödel, matematik içinde ifade edilemeyen hakikatlerin var olduğunu, gene matematik içinde kalarak kanıtlar. Benzer bir şekilde Lacan da "matheme" adını verdiği, içerikten bağımsız, bütünüyle formel unsurlarla kuramını yeniden inşa etmeye girişir. Ölümünden hemen önceki dönemde çalışmalarının kümeler kuramı ve topolojide odaklanmasının sebebi, işte bu formelleştirme tutkusudur.

Lacan'ın kuramının en ilginç yanlarından birisi de, Sade ve Kant'ı karşılaştırırken ortaya attığı etik ilkelerdir. Bu etik ilkeler, bir yaşam öğretisi olmaktan çok, psikanalistin uyması gereken ilkeleri belirler gibidir. Lacan'a göre Kant hazdan arındırılmış bir koşulsuz buyruk (categorical imperative) etrafında etik anlayışını kurarken, doğruya çok yaklaşmıştır. Ancak, yeterince ileri gitmemiştir. Lacan burada Hegel'in Kant'a yönelttiği eleştirinin bir benzerini yineler: Sade'ın acımasızca ödevini yerine getiren sadist insanın yaptığı aslında koşulsuz buyruktaki gibi bir ödevi koşulsuzca yerine getirmek değil midir? Lacan, Kant'ın yarım bıraktığı ve böyle çetrefil bir benzerliğe yol açan yerden devam ederek, bir "gerçek etiği" kurmaya girişir. Bunu yapabilmek için Freud'un insan yaşamını şekillendirdiği söylenen iki ilkesine başvurur.

Freud'a göre yaşamı yöneten ilkelerden birincisi "haz ilkesi"dir. Bu

ilke, hazzın rahatsız edici olduğu noktalarda bırakılması gerektiğini belirleyen bir ekonomik ilke gibi işler. Bunun yanı sıra, dış dünyayı algılamayı sağlayan ikinci bir ilke daha vardır: gerçeklik ilkesi. Lacan'a göre Kant'ın yaptığı sadece birinci ilkeden vazgeçen bir etik inşa etmektir. Oysa yapılması gereken, ikinci ilkeyi de vazgeçilebilir kılan bir etik üzerine düşünmektir. Bu ikinci ilkenin yıkımı, dilsel düzenin çözülmesi ve psikotik hastalıkların ortaya çıkmasına sebebiyet verir. Ancak Lacan, dilselin analize gelen hasta üzerindeki baskısını sorgulamanın ve hastanın kendi gerçek arzusunun açığa çıkmasını sağlamanın yolunun bu ilkeden de vazgeçmekte yattığını savunur. Hastanın kendi gerçek arzusunun korkutuculuğuyla yüzleşmesi, onu dilsel düzende yeniden ifade edebilmesi için bu kaçınılmazdır. Bastırılan her seferinde geri döner. Ancak bastırmanın kaçınılmazlığıyla beraber, hastanın anlaması gereken şey, mutlak gerçekle yüzleşmenin imkansızlığıdır.

Lacan'ın psikanalizle sınırlı tutmaya çalıştığı kuramı, Laclau, Žižek ve Badiou tarafından başka alanlara da taşınır. Laclau ve Mouffe için toplumun bir bütünlük içinde ifadesi imkansızdır. Marksizme yönelttikleri eleştirinin temelinde kendinden menkul ve özsel bir siyasal öznenin olanaksızlığı iddiası yatar. Buna göre ekonomik alt yapı, ya da başka koşullar, siyasal öznenin oluşumunun tek başına ve öncelikli belirleyicisi değildir. Aksine, siyasal özne bir bütünlük olarak söylem içinde oluşur. Buna göre siyasal mücadele, bir tür hegemonik anlam savaşıdır; siyasal alana kendi anlamını dikte ettirebilenlerin kazandığı bir savaş.

Siyasal mücadeleye, toplumun bütününü bir anlamlandırmalar zinciri oluşturma mücadelesi olarak bakıldığında, Lacan'ın "imkansız"ı yeniden ortaya çıkar. Bu çaba, toplumun bütünü açısından imkansızdır. Söylem alanı ne kadar genişletilirse genişletilsin, bütün farklılıkları kapsayacak bir anlamlandırma ve temsiliyet mümkün değildir. İşçi sınıfı, ya da başka herhangi bir siyasal özne, anlamlandırmalardan bağımsız bir varlığa sahip olmadığından, siyasal alanda toplumun bütününü temsil edemez. Her tür bütünlük iddiası (bir millet olma, bir sınıf olma vs.)

fantezilerle süslüdür ve imgesele aittir.

Bu ön kabulün bir sonraki safhası demokrasinin yeniden tanımlanmasıdır. Buna göre demokrasi biten, sona eren bir süreç değildir: Demokratik kurumlar ve yasalar da bu sonlanması imkansız demokrasi anlayışı etrafında yeniden şekillenmelidirler. Toplumsalın her tür mutlak temsiliyeti iddiasına karşılık, çoğul kimlikler ve öznelere olanak tanıyan, siyasal alanı bütünüyle ve salt ekonomik olanın belirleniminden muaf tutan bir demokrasi anlayışıdır bu. Laclau ve Mouffe, her türden fanteziyle toplumun içindeki kapanmaz gediğin gizlenmesine karşı, demokrasinin koşullarını yeniden düşünmeyi önerir.

Slovenyalı düşünür Žižek ise, Laclau ve Mouffe'un çizgisine yakın başladığı çalışmalarını, daha radikal konumlanışlara yönlendirir. Örneğin Laclau ve Mouffe'un bütünüyle demokrasi içinde düşünmeye bizi mecbur kılan siyasal kuramlarını, Lacan'ın Kant'a yönelttiği eleştiriyi andırır bir şekilde reddeder. Ona göre hakikat ancak semboliğin dışından gelen gerçeğe kendimizi açtığımızda, gerçeğe uygun tavır aldığımızda ortaya çıkar. Laclau ve Mouffe, demokrasiye sahip çıkarak muhafazakar bir söyleme hapsolmaktadırlar. Oysa asıl yapılması gereken şey, varolanın değiştirilebilmesi için sembolik bütünüyle reddidir. Ona göre, Lenin'in Ekim Devrimi sırasında yaptığı, nesnel koşullara (sembolik) dayalı eylemler planlamak değil, bütünüyle o koşulların dışarıda bırakmış olduğu imkansız olanı aramaktır. Ancak, imkansızın peşinde koşmak yeterince radikaldir. Laclau ve Mouffe'un tercihi sembolik alandaki, temsiliyetin imkansızlığının yol açtığı gediğin, yoksunluğun her tür kurumsal, ya da yasal süreçle örtülmesine karşı çıkmaksa, Žižek'in önerisi, bu gediğin açık bırakılmasının ötesine geçip, gediğin oluşmasının sorumlusu sembolik bütünüyle reddedilmesidir.

Alain Badiou, bu düşünürler arasında Lacan'ın seminerlerine katılmış yegane isimdir. Badiou, Lacan'ın büyük hayalinin, psikanalizi formelleştirmenin bir benzerini ontoloji için gerçekleştirir. Ona göre ontoloji matematiktir. Yalnızca matematik kendi içindeki imkansızlığı işaret

edebilir. Yalnızca matematik, temsiliyet ve mevcudiyet arasındaki ilişkiye ışık tutabilir ve bu ilişkinin kaçınılmaz imkansızlıkalrı üzerinde düşünmemizi sağlayabilir.

Badiou'ya göre var olmak, bir durumun elemanı olmaktır; yalnızca bir durumun belirleyiciliği içinde var olunabilir. Ancak her durum kaçınılmaz olarak dışlayıcıdır. Bir durumda ifade bulamayanlar, yani var olmayanlar, çelişik çoğulluk (inconsistent multiplicity) olarak adlandırılır. Bunlara bir tutarlılık verilmesi, onların bir duruma aidiyetleri ile mümkündür. Bir durum içinde mevcut bulunmaları, var olmaları anlamına da gelir.

Bir durum, kendine has bir kanaatler (opinions) ve bilgi düzlemini de inşa eder. Bir duruma ait bireyler, o durumun belirleyiciliği altında bilirler ve kanaatler dile getirirler. Ama her durumun dışarıda bıraktığı, durumun statüsünce (state of a situation) temsil edilemeyen hiçlikler bulunur. Bu hiçlikler, durumun statüsünde boş küme ile temsil edilirler. Lacancı dile geri dönersek, metaforik olarak dilin dışında bırakılanlar, hiçlikle ifade edilirler.

İşte bu dışarıda kalanların durum içinde, hiçlik ile temsil edilmelerinden kaynaklı olarak, önceden belirlenebilir koşullar ve zamanda değil, bütünüyle belirlenimsiz anlarda, *imkansız* ve duruma özgü olaylar meydana gelir. Olay imkansızdır, çünkü durumun dayattığı her türden tutarlı bilgi ve yasayı tehdit eder, bunların dışındadır, kanaatlerce kabul edilemez olandır. Olay, ya durum tarafından reddedilir, onun radikal yanı görmezlikten gelinir, durumun statüsünce duruma içkin bir hale getirilip, uysallaştırılır. Ya da olay, durum içinde bazı bireylerin sadakatle bu olaya tutunmalarıyla, başka bir oluşa olanak sağlanır. Sadakatle olaya tutunanlar, durumun bilgi ve yasa dayatmasının dışına çıkarak, duruma dair bambaşka bir bakış açısı elde ederler. Bu başka bakış elde etme haline Badiou "özne" adınır verir. Özneler, olayın açığa vurduğu temsil edilemezlere dair Hakikati ortaya çıkartırlar. O halde Hakikat, bir duruma özgü olduğu kadar, öznel bir sadakati de gerektirir. Ortaya çıkartılan Hakikat bu nedenle bir duruma ait olmasından dolayı hem tekildir, hem de,

o duruma ait tüm çoğullukları kapsadığı için evrenseldir.

Badiou'ya göre etik, işte bu tanımlamalar ışığında bir hakikatler etiği olmalıdır. Bir yandan içinde kıstırılıp kaldığımız ve bize dilsel tahakkümde bulunan, yanıtlarımızın dizgelerini önceden oluşturan kanaatlerin bir reddinden yola çıkmak, öte yandan da imkansızın peşine takılmak bizi İyi olana taşıyacaktır. İyi, bir duruma ait hakikatin ortaya çıkartılmasıdır. Kötü ise, ancak bu İyi'nin karşıtı olarak tanımlanabilir. Hakikat etiği dışındaki her tür etik ya muhafazakar bir şekilde olanın savunusu halini alır, ya da farklara yönelip bunların birlikteliğini kurmaya çalışırken, kendi kendiyle çelişir. Bunlardan birincisi felsefe tarihinde önce Kötü'nün bir tasviri ile başlar. İyi'nin ne olduğunu ise, Kötü ile mücadelede bulur. Kötü dışarıdan gelen, varolan durumu bozan her şeydir, bu yüzden de onun ne olduğu üzerine fikir birliği oluşturmak, İyi'nin ne olduğunun tespitine göre çok daha kolaydır. Benzer bir şekilde, fark etiği de farklılıklara kendini açmayı, onlara karşı saygı ve sorumluluğu önerir. Ancak bunu yaparken farklılık denilen şeyin durumun bir ürünü olduğu gerçeğini ihmal eder. Bu nedenle de ikiyüzlüdür: etik ilkelerinin arka planında, farklılıkları oluşturan koşulların korunması da yatar.

Bu çalışmada, öncelikle bu görüşlerin detaylı bir incelenmesi ve bu incelemenin sonucunda da, temel açmazlarının neler olduğuna işaret etmeye çalıştım. Öncelikle Lacan'ın kuramını üzerine inşa ettiği gösterenleri ele alışını eleştirdim. Buna göre gösterenler bütünüyle tarafsız bir salınım ve akış içindedir. Lacan'ın bu tarafsızlık iddiası, psikanalizde analistin hasta üzerindeki tahakkümünü engellemeye yönelik bir çabanın sonucudur ve bu bakımdan, işlevsel olarak tutarlıdır. Oysa gerçek hayatta gösterenler ve bunların dilsel kullanımı, hiç de tarafsız bir şekilde karşımıza çıkmazlar. Dil dışı koşulların belirlediği sınırlamalar, gösterenlerin tercihinde ve anlamın belirlenmesinde her zaman etkili olmuşlardır. Yoksul birisiyle, zengin birisinin, iyi eğitim almış biriyle, eğitime erişememiş başka birisinin aynı dili, aynı sembolik alanı paylaştıkları söylenemez. Bu kişilerin önünde akış halinde olan, bu kişilere eşit

uzaklıkta demokratik bir tercihe olanak veren gösterenler yoktur. Aksine belirli kümelenişler, tahakkümler ve olanaklar içinde gösterenler kendilerini sunarlar. Dilsel gösterenler bu anlamıyla masum ve tarafsız değildirler. Lacan'ın sembolik tanımlaması ve sembolığın bir yasa ile kendini kabul ettirişi, tek başına bu durumu açıklamaya yetmez.

Bu tarafsızlık iddiası Laclau'nun demokrasi kuramında da kendini gösterir. Demokrasi içerisinde temsiliyet iddiasında bulunan öğeler, herhangi dil dışı bir eleştiri noktası bulunmadığından, demokrasinin merkezine eşit uzaklıktaymış gibi ele alınırlar. Her türden öge, gösterenlerin basit hareketi gibi birbirinden farkları ile tespit edilirler ve demokratik olanaklara eşit uzaklıkta gibidirler. İnsanlık tarihinden arındırılmış her tür kuramın açmazı da budur. Böyle kuramlar, hem kendi içindeki elemanları, hem de kendilerini tarihsel bir çerçevenin içinde ele almaktan yoksundurlar. Bu tarih dışılık hali, az sonra ele alınacak olan eleştirilemezliğin-yanlışlanamazlığın temel sebeplerinden birisidir.

Lacan'ın kuramındaki başka bir sorun ise, kuramın hem dilsel olanaklara işaret ediyor olması, hem de bu olanakların bir etkisi olarak dil dışının inşasını içermesidir. Böyle bir genişlik, bilimsellik iddiası taşıyan bir kuramı bütünüyle ampirik verinin eleştirelliğine kapatır. Böyle bir kuram için gerçekten imkansız yoktur. İmkansız olan, kuramı yarıp geçebilecek, yanlışlayabilecek her şey, zaten kuram içinde ifade edilmektedir. Lacan'ın kuramı, her ne kadar başlangıçta kuram dışı olana açık olma iddiası içerse de, aslında tam da bu iddia yüzünden kapalı bir kuramdır. Lacan kuramında hem susulması gerekilen alana dair konuşmaya ve yazmaya devam etmektedir, hem de bu alanın sunduğu eleştirellikten kuramını muaf tutmaktadır. Lacancı imkansız her tür sembolik dünyayı ters yüz edebilir. Bunun bir tek istisnası vardır: Lacancı kuramın kendisi. Kuram, hem kendini oluşturan tarihsel koşullardan bağımsız bir formellik taşımaktadır, hem de bu formellik içinde oluşabilecek imkansızı da içerdiğinden, imlansızın dışarıda olma ve yıkma özelliklerini evcilleştirmektedir.

Kuram, dille birlikte yasaklanan tekil bir hakikati yeniden etik alana taşıma iddiasındadır. Ancak tam da bu iddia bir kuram etrafında şekillendiğinden, tekillik kuramın içerisinde bir kez daha kaybolur. Tekil olduğu iddia edilen her şey kuramın kendi mekanik yapısı içinde öğütülür ve yorumlanır. Lacan'ın kuramı için şaşırtıcı hiç bir şey yoktur.

Tüm bu eleştirilere rağmen Lacan'ın kuramı, psikanalizin, hasta ve analist arasında yapay bir şekilde inşa ettiği ilişkiyi ele alışı açısından olumlu pek çok yan da ihtiva eder. Bir kere bu yapaylık baştan kabul edilmiş bir yapaylıktır ve tarafsızlık söylemi, bu anlamıyla analistin hastaya yönelişinde etik bir ilke olarak belirir. Bu açıdan bakıldığında, gösterenlerin eşitliği, yapay bir tarafsızlık ilkesi işlediğinde, kuramsal olarak hasta ile analist arasındaki dilsel ilişkinin öğelerine işaret eder.

Ancak sorun bu ilkelerin psikanalizin sınırlarının dışına taşırılmasında başlar. En başta, bir bireyin psişik dünyasına erişmek amacıyla belirli yaklaşımlar içeren, pratik bazı ilkeler dizini öneren bir kuramın toplumsala yönelmesi sorunludur. Tek bir bireyin ruhsal durumuna ilişkin ilkeler, her ne kadar Freud kendisi de bu konuda çalışmalar yapmış olsa bile, toplumsalı açıklamakta sorunludur. Bireyin kendi arzusu, bastırma mekanizmaları, doğumundan dille tanışıklığına kadar geçen gelişme süreci ile olan ilişkisi toplumsalın kendi dinamiklerine bire bir uyarlanamaz. Toplumsalın böyle bir dışsal yasa buyurucu "baba"sı, ya da yoksunluğunu travmatik bir kaybın sonucunda hep aradığı bir annesi yoktur. Metaforik olarak "devlet ana", "baba ocağı" gibi deyimlerden yola çıkarak, bireyin ebeveynler ve toplum ile kurduğu ilişkinin bir benzerinin, toplum ile devlet veya toplum ile siyasal gerçeklik arasındaki ilişkilerde de kurulduğunu iddia etmek doğru olmaz. Buradaki ilişki ancak kısıtlı bir benzerlik ilişkisidir. Birine dair bir kuram, diğerini açıklamakta yeterli olamaz.

Bu çalışmada değindiğim bir başka nokta da *imkansız* ve dil dışında bırakılan gerçek üzerine kurulan bir siyaset anlayışının sorunlarıdır. Badiou ve Žižek varolana muhalif olmayı bütünüyle dille ifade

edilemez ve bastırılmış olanın alanında ararlar. Ancak bu belirsiz ve muğlak alandan siyasal beklenti, nihayetinde bir Mesih bekleme halini alır. Nesnel koşulların, ya da Lacancı bir dille söylersek, varolan sembolik gerçekliğin reddinin bizi götürebileceği başka bir çıkış noktası yoktur.

Çalışmanın son kısmında, çalışmanın ana hedefinin ötesinde ve bir doktora tezinin kapsamından çok daha derin ve geniş bir çalışmaya ihtiyaç duyulduğundan, Lacancı siyaset anlayışının eleştirildiği noktaların yerine bir alternatif önerilmemiş, sadece alternatiflerin hangi noktalardan aranabileceği belirtilmiştir. Tezde, Lacan'ın kuramının "kurşun geçirmez" bir hal almasını sağlayan formelleştirmeden vazgeçilmesi önerilmektedir. Bunun yerine, zaman ve tarihle ilişkili, nesneleri birbirinden mutlak ve tarafsız farklılılar olarak ele almayan bir kuramın ilk adımı olarak, kendi kendisini sorgulayabilen, yaşamın zengin içeriğine açık ve kurduğu her tür ilişkinin, belirlediği her tür çıkarımın gelip geçici olduğunun farkında olan bir yeniden kavramsallaştırma etkinliği önerilmektedir. Yaşamın sürekli bir akış içinde ve değişken *doğası*, Lacan'ın da aslında tespit ettiği gibi belirli bir sembolliğin içine hapsedilemeyecek kadar zengindir. Ancak Lacan'ın temel hatası, kendi tespiti çerçevesi içine kendi kuramını oturtamamasıdır. Her kuram soyutlamalar içerir ve bu soyutlamalar, tarihsel ve dilsel olarak konumlandırılmışlardır. Oysa Lacan'ın kendi kuramı, bu tarihsel dönüşümlerden payını almamış, dokunulmazlıkları olan ve Tanrısal bir yapı haline gelmektedir.

Tarihsel devingenlikleri olmayan, kendi soyutlamalrına belirli bir ampirik eleştiri olanağı tanımayan her kuram, Lacancı kuramın yukarıda değinilen sorunlarını kaçınılmaz olarak barındıracaktır.

APPENDIX B. VITA

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Surname, Name: Yazıcı, Savaş
Nationality: Turkish (TC)
Date and Place of Birth: 28 November 1969 , Istanbul
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EDUCATION

Degree	Institution	Year of Graduation
MA	METU Philosophy	2001
BS	Bilkent Electrical and Electronics Engineering	1992
High School	TED Ankara Collge High Scool, Ankara	1986

WORK EXPERIENCE

Year	Place	Enrollment
2007, August-Present	Reflex Tech, Prague and Sofia	Snr. Consultant, Business Process Lead
2007, June-2007, August	Türk Telekom, Ankara	Snr. Consultant
2001-2006	Havelsan, Ankara	Snr. Consultant
1998-2001	KPMG Consulting, Philadelphia, US	Snr. Consultant / Manager
1992-1998	Siemens, Ankara	Telecommunications Engineer

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Advanced English, Basic French

HOBBIES

Chess, movies, literature