

# Abdication of the Sovereign Self



*The Psycholinguistics of Invalid  
Synthetic Propositions*

**Andrew Spano**

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# PREFACE

Do I contradict myself?  
Very well then I contradict myself,  
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)

Walt Whitman, “Song of Myself”

The truth is, my notions about things of this kind are so indigested, that I am not well satisfied myself in them; and what I am not satisfied in, I can scarce esteem to fit to be communicated to others; especially in natural philosophy, where there is no end of fancying.

Sir Isaac Newton<sup>1</sup>

## Welcome to Room 102

Two things have become clear to me in writing this book: 1) it is an invalid synthetic proposition for those who live in modern democracies and republics to say that their freedom is being “taken away” from them by the hegemonies and authoritarian states they build and support, and 2) that the idea of the existence of a great global cabal working tirelessly to enslave mankind for its nefarious purposes is a symptom of paranoid schizophrenia.

In this book one will *not* find yet another voice decrying the loss of our freedom at the hands of a rapacious surveillance state hellbent on totalitarian hegemony in order to provide a small group of plutocrats with untold riches and power. Nor will one find revelations about shadowy international organizations working together to create a Slave Planet where one will be forced to labor for a ruthless central government that will track one’s every move and stick one’s head in a rat cage to make sure that happens.

Such propositions, I argue, are products of the same fatal logical contradiction pervading nearly all public discourse in the modern age—whether for or against these propositions and their myriad permutations. *This* proposition about *these* propositions, however, does not allege that

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Sir Isaac Newton to Robert Boyle, 28 February 1679.

they are false. Rather, it means that we cannot *prove*, analytically, that they are true or not. So why waste any more time trying?

If we get nowhere with analytic logic and verification, could we do any better with invalid synthetic logic? The idea that we could do better with faulty logic lacking in evidence than we could with sound logic backed up by irrefutable proof is itself a symptom of the mental illness infecting what is said in the media, the pulpit, the courtroom, the legislative chambers, the street, on the Internet, and at millions of breakfast tables each day.

To understand this book, then, it is critical to understand that an “invalid” proposition is not *ipso facto* false. An *invalid* proposition is not the same thing as a *false* proposition, since whether or not a proposition is true or false must be *proven*, and proof requires a valid proposition. It just means that one is going about trying to prove its premise, or even express it, in a way that is logically doomed because it is based on a fundamental *categorical contradiction of a categorical contradiction*.

However, almost always a *part* of the invalid proposition (subject or predicate) is verifiably true. Otherwise, it would just be the ravings of a madman. Unfortunately, that we use a fatally flawed way to prove what might very well be *true* is an even worse situation than peddling outright falsehoods which time would inevitably discover without a lot of problem solving and fuss. Why? Because it *hides the truth* (which is its purpose) until the consequences of ignoring it are upon us and we can no longer do anything about it or benefit from the truth’s power of revelation.

An example of the difference between an invalid synthetic proposition and a valid one can be found in a legendary but fictitious anecdote regarding F. Scott Fitzgerald and a character in one of Ernest Hemingway’s short stories.<sup>2</sup> In “The Snows of Kilimanjaro,” Hemingway relates the following anecdote: “[P]oor Scott Fitzgerald and his romantic awe of [the rich] and how he had started a story once that began, ‘The very rich are different from you and me.’ And how someone had said to Scott, yes, they have more money.”

Here we have two propositions that look, at first glance, like they are not much different from each other:

1. The very rich are different from you and me.
2. The very rich have more money (than you and me).

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<sup>2</sup> For a thorough description of this story’s provenance, see: letter to the editor, “The Rich Are Different,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1988, National Edition, Archive Page 7007070.

However, there is a significant and categorical difference in the *logic* of the two statements. The first is what is described in this book as an invalid synthetic proposition. The second is what is described as a valid one. Why the difference?

In the first the subject and the predicate disagree in category. “The very rich,” as the subject, establishes the attribute of the category. But the object in the predicate “you and me” fails to show us that it too is in the same category, which would require some indication of relative value based on an attribute of the same class. Therefore, it is in some other, unknown category. (We could quibble about the negligible difference between “the rich” and “the very rich,” but it would belabor the trivial.)

The phrase “you and me” is not to say that “we are poor,” or even that we are only “rich” and not “very rich.” Furthermore, it says nothing about the poor being “different,” an allegation which implies more than the obvious and, to Marx, for instance, a literal and logical class exclusion. In fact, it insinuates that “the very rich” are somehow *categorically different* and not just because of their relative wealth—a difficult argument to make even with *valid* logic.

Put simply, the invalid synthetic proposition, which we shall from time to time call the ISP, is the *third kind* of proposition compared to the analytic and synthetic proposition. Using Aristotle’s Rules of Thought, we can say that the analytic proposition is a tautology and is always true, though trivial:  $A = A$  (or  $B = B$ ). Both elements are drawn from the same class (A, or B, but not both). The synthetic proposition requires a different kind of reasoning because we find ourselves in what Aristotle called the “excluded middle” where two elements of the proposition are drawn from a different class:  $A = B$ . For example, A may be drawn from a class of “real” elements, whereas B is drawn from “imaginary” elements. Therefore, each is in a different universe of discourse. Provided the same degree of verifiability is not claimed for both, they coexist in noncontradiction.

In his poem “The Ballad of East and West,” Rudyard Kipling uses the excluded middle to make a point about what he sees as the incompatibility Eastern and Western culture: “East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet ...” This is not to say that therefore it is invalid for us to argue that perhaps there are cultural intersections where the two “meet” in some way, which sensibility would indicate. If there were such common ground, then in set theory we would say that there is a “symmetric difference” ( $\Delta$ , or sometimes  $\Theta$ ) between them, as there is in the following sets:

$$A = (3,9,14)$$

$$B = (1,2,3)$$

$$A \Delta B = (1,2,9,14)$$

Where set  $A \Delta B$  contains numbers that sets  $A$  and  $B$  *do not share* (and therefore they do not “meet” in this way), though the number they both *do share* is 3. We do not violate Aristotle’s rule of the excluded middle, since we still cannot say that  $A = B$ , though they have a common element. The beauty of the synthetic proposition is that it allows us to begin an argument without positive verification. From there we may form a hypothesis and then go about attempting to see how much of it is verifiable.

Therefore, the excluded middle does not invalidate a proposition; it just makes it impossible to prove, as we could with  $A = A$  which, though always true, is trivial. A symmetric difference in the degree of ready-to-hand verifiability between the analytic and synthetic proposition does not mean that the latter is therefore meaningless and cannot lead us to verifiable proofs of related propositions. If this were not the case, effective language would be impossible.

However, in the ISP, a *fatal contradiction* is added to the proposition, namely that  $A = B$  is the *material equivalent* of  $A = A$ , or what we might call “the same thing” ( $A = B \equiv A = A$ ) and is therefore verifiable as being true or false. In effect, then, it is saying that the universe of discourse of the *real* is the *same thing* as the universe of discourse of the *imaginary*, or that the *imaginary is real* and the *real is imaginary*. The best we can say about such an ISP is that it is a *metacontradiction*. The ISP takes the standard contradiction of the synthetic proposition ( $A = B$ ), which we cannot prove because it embraces the excluded middle and *negates* any possibility of meaning by insisting that it is verifiable. It is one thing to say that a synthetic proposition is unverifiable. It is categorically something else to say that it is verifiable. Here we have a fatal contradiction for reasons it is the mission of this book to analyze.

While this may seem like an abstract argument, the ISP it is indeed *the main form of discourse in the modern age*. It underlies most ideas and statements. It abounds in the so-called news and in nearly all political and public discourse. And, of course (and who would argue with this?) it is the basis of the willing suspension of disbelief necessary for *entertainment* to be a marketable, profitable commodity. Furthermore, the fatal contradiction of the ISP is nowhere more abundant than in the discourse of finance and economics, which, being the so-called dismal science, lays claim to the verisimilitude of “the numbers” and, as we all know, “the numbers don’t lie.”

Around the same time Hemingway and Fitzgerald were having their debate on this topic, John J. Raskob, a political party boss who was instrumental in the building of the Empire State Building and regarded as an authority on the rich, tried his best to arrive at a popular definition of the term.

Being rich is, of course, a comparative status. A man with a million dollars used to be considered rich, but so many people have at least that much in these days, or are earning incomes in excess of a normal return from a million dollars, that a millionaire does not cause any comment. Fixing a bulk line to define riches is a pointless performance. Let us rather say that a man is rich when he has an income from invested capital which is sufficient to support him and his family in a decent and comfortable manner to give as much support, let us say, as has ever been given by his earnings. That amount of prosperity ought to be attainable by anyone. A greater share will come to those who have greater ability...<sup>3</sup>

Raskob's definition, despite its sincerity, deconstructs itself into the proposition that "everybody ought to be rich," thus rendering the term meaningless. He advises investing in the stock market as the shortest path to being "rich" or even "very rich." Never mind the fact that two months after the publication of this article the world is plunged into the Great Depression where new distinctions regarding disparities of wealth emerge.

While Fitzgerald's statement might seem to imply that the rich are in some other category than "you and me," and therefore would justify the violation of the law of noncontradiction of categories, it in fact only serves to invalidate the proposition. Besides, it does not say that. Instead, it just pairs the woefully vague and unverifiable "very rich" with the equally vague and unverifiable "different." As this is a synthetic and not analytic proposition, valid or invalid, there is no possibility of verification, which to a certain extent is Marx's ultimate problem despite the fact that his propositions are noncontradictory.

To say *A* is different in any way at all from *B* we must first specify *in what way*, which requires a specification of attributes of the same class. Otherwise, we simply have to admit they are in different classes and that there is, therefore, no possibility of rational comparison. Maybe they are "very" different in some fundamental way, but this argument is not going to "prove" anything to us unless we already believe it to be true, in which case the argument is specious.

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<sup>3</sup> Samuel Crowther, "Everybody Ought to Be Rich: An Interview with John J. Raskob," *Ladies' Home Journal* (August 1929).

The second proposition, however, while no more verifiable in the analytical sense than the first (since the attribute “very rich” cannot be verified), is nevertheless a *valid* synthetic proposition in that *there is no contradiction*. If I think someone is “very rich,” and I think that person is “different” from me because of it, then the only possibility of “difference” is that I have less money and that person “has more money”—whether it be a little (rich) or a lot (very rich). Therefore, the second proposition is based, at least, on the verifiable fact that I have less money than the person I describe as *A*) different from me, and *B*) rich (or very rich). Therefore, *A* and *B* agree. This fact does not “prove” the proposition, but it does allow for the possibility of *validity*.

Hemingway seems to be deliberately allowing the valid statement to exhibit its blasé banality: “The very rich are people who have more money than you and me.” He also seems to be giving unspoken commentary on the lazy, irrational use of this kind of faulty logic employed to alienate the nominally “very rich” from the equally nominal non-very rich (which is not necessarily to say “the poor”). If Fitzgerald had taken the approach Marx does and called these two groups “classes,” then he would have had the beginnings of the possibility of a nontrivial statement about categorical differences. Hemingway, the author of *To Have and Have Not*, seems to be attempting a correction of this invalid proposition—with some success, judging by Fitzgerald’s frantic attempt to have the publisher strike the alleged conversation from the short story.<sup>4</sup>

Another example is the seemingly sensible assertion some evolutionary biologists make that if humans disappeared from the earth life would likely flourish, whereas if insects vanished it would likely come to an end. “Touché,” we say to the biologist, “you have us there!” Until we realize that *humans* are a *species* whereas *insects* are a *phylum*.

Indeed, removing any *phylum* from the ecosystem will result in disaster—this few will argue against. In this particular invalid proposition, a scientifically verifiable proposition is exploited to form the invalid one. Here we have a typical pattern of invalid discourse where a dubious, unverifiable, or even knowingly false proposition is gussied up by pairing it with the truth. The result is not the “half-truth” of, for instance, the stereotype, which is bad enough, but the ugly aesthetic of the unethical lie.

The extinction argument falls apart when we realize that these same biologists say they have proven that the majority of species that ever existed are now extinct, and yet life goes on. To further push home the point, we must consider that there are over 12,000 identified *species* of ant alone, whereas there is only one species of human, they say. Would the

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<sup>4</sup> Op. cit., “The Rich Are Different,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1988.

loss of any one of these ant species bring about global extinction of all phyla? Here we have a classical category error and therefore an invalid synthetic statement because it violates the law of noncontradiction.

What is most sinister about the rich being “different” in some undefinable but critical way is that it dehumanizes them and therefore sets them up to be targeted for possible inhuman treatment. There is no verifiable, analytical way to tell them apart from the “non-rich,” such as if they had the “rich” virus which we could find in a blood test. It makes the them at best a subspecies of humans which, for all their faults, they are not. Nevertheless, it is the kind of statement that is wielded by the haters of the rich, whoever the rich may be. Consequently, it has from time to time led to the slaughter of both the innocent and not-so-innocent alike.

What is sinister about the evolutionary biology statement is that it leads one to the conclusion, perhaps, that the world would be better *without* humans—or at least so many of them or those of the “wrong” kind. The bumper sticker “Save the world. Kill yourself!” says it all. Therefore, if humanity wipes itself out, or if a certain elite group (the rich?) decides that it is time to reduce the number of those threatening the wellbeing of insects, which by this logic threatens the wellbeing of all creatures, such action is justified by biological science.

In both invalid statements the faulty reasoning goes that since the statement is *a priori* true, then it needs no valid logic to be so nor does it need any logical proof since the “evidence” speaks for itself. Therefore, they are “self-evident.” What is self-evident needs no discovery or challenge of that evidence. In fact, to challenge their *a priori* evidentiality is downright heretical and shall be suppressed and punished. In such a situation, this “evidence” simply becomes an *a posteriori* rationalization for an *a priori* conclusion which, at best, is a fallacy of the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (after the fact, therefore before the fact) sort. However, this is not the same thing as the propositions being false. They could be true. However, it is not even possible to determine their truth value because they are invalid.

While the old saw that one must compare apples to apples and not to oranges is an attempt to explain the law of noncontradiction, it fails because apples and oranges just happen to be in the same class of “fruit.” Not only that, but they have many other attributes (such as their shape) which shows that they are so much alike that their differences are trivial from the point of view of logic. It would be a profitable argument to say that the same is true of the alleged racial differences between human beings, but there is neither the time nor the space here for that one.

Unfortunately, it is typical of prevailing public discourse that even our attempts to explain the law of noncontradiction in everyday idiom is also fatally contaminated with a violation of the law that we attempt to describe! Perhaps the ubiquity of the invalid synthetic proposition gives us an idea of how inescapable it is, while at the same time underscoring the seeming impossibility of the rare attempt to escape.

The object of this book is to show that the faulty, contradictory logic of the invalid synthetic proposition has invaded the territory, or topology, of much of modern public discourse. As such, it has also infiltrated private discourse and, worse, the fundamental schemata of our thought structure. Moreover, I seek to show that it has been institutionalized as the only possibility of The Truth, and that anything which does not conform to its schema is *de facto* False and shall be searched out and silenced.

What is to be found here is an analysis of how we use language in the modern state, East or West. This book also looks at the psychology of the ideas and behaviors of the citizens of the modern empires where the discourse of the invalid synthetic proposition reigns supreme. It is applied to determining all the most important decisions individuals, business, financial markets, policy makers, and states must make. Such an analysis entails also looking at what the discontents of civilization might be and what effect they may have on our wellbeing and intelligence.

As such, you will find here not only a linguistic analysis of the prevailing discourse of modern life but also a psychological probe into the mechanics and motivations of the citizen of the modern state, whom we shall call the “subject.” This creature gets a thorough going over here with little mercy. Therefore, linguistics and psychology find themselves, for lack of a better word, codependent throughout this discussion.

The temptation is to say how I came to conclusions 1 and 2 in the first paragraph. But I think that is what the rest of the book does. To do so here has its limitations and problems. The book is meant to be read more as a scholarly novel with some dramatic characters we have seen before in other guises than as an academic exercise in linguistics or a philosophical or psychological treatise.

I have always thought that what distinguishes literature from entertainment is that the former is discursive while the latter is distractive. Discourse, though, has its dangers. I set out to delight and instruct. My experience is that delight is too often sacrificed for the sake of instruction in purely academic discourse. Therefore, I have done my best here to avoid the academic and go for what I can only describe as the scholarly and thoughtful.



I am inclined, then, to call this preface “Room 102” in homage of Orwell’s infamous Room 101 in *Nineteen-Eight Four*, a book to which this one owes much in spirit *but more importantly in logic*. His book is the perfect unity of discourse, instruction, and delight. It unifies a compelling narrative with an analytical discourse.

In this book I seek to discover how it is possible for a person to accept as “true” in the logical sense such propositions Orwell presents as the foundation of Newspeak and Ingsoc: War is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength.

Aside from eventually sticking Winston’s face into a rat cage in Room 101, an act which his torturer O’Brien refers to as “the worst thing in the world,” O’Brien engages Winston in a remarkable lesson in the importance to the state of the citizen-subject embracing invalid synthetic logic. It is worth quoting this passage in full because it expresses the great drama of what might otherwise seem like the promise of a rather bloodless linguistic argument and clinical psychological analysis, scholarly or academic.

He paused for a few moments, as though to allow what he had been saying to sink in.

“Do you remember,” he went on, “writing in your diary, ‘Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four?’”

“Yes,” said Winston.

O’Brien held up his left hand, its back towards Winston, with the thumb hidden and the four fingers extended.

“How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?”

“Four.”

“And if the party says that it is not four but five—then how many?”

“Four.”

The word ended in a gasp of pain. The needle of the dial had shot up to fifty-five. The sweat had sprung out all over Winston’s body. The air tore into his lungs and issued again in deep groans which even by clenching his teeth he could not stop. O’Brien watched him, the four fingers still extended. He drew back the lever. This time the pain was only slightly eased.

“How many fingers, Winston?”

“Four.”

The needle went up to sixty.

“How many fingers, Winston?”

“Four! Four! What else can I say? Four!”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1949), 315.

Winston's situation, only 20 years after the publication of Orwell's book, would be duplicated in Stanley Milgram's obedience-to-authority experiments we still find shocking today<sup>6</sup>. In these experiments "normal" people, rather than finding themselves faced with Winston's ordeal of holding onto his sanity when confronted with the demand to abandon it, instead *took O'Brien's position* as torturers. They would have obediently harmed or even *killed* the test subjects if the experiment were not ingeniously controlled by Milgram to be covertly staged, leading them into believing that they were shocking the subjects when in fact they were not.

Many years later, Milgram's work is even more relevant to our surrender to the dictates of authority. This book picks up where Winston's dialogue with O'Brien, and Milgram's experiment, leave off, which is why I call this preface "Room 102."

Perhaps one of the greatest acts of literary revenge in history against one's detested employers is Orwell's allusion in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* to the *actual* Room 101 where he worked for the BBC before writing the novel. In the novel, this is the place where Winston faces (literally) "the worst thing in the world." That Orwell is no longer with us but the BBC (and perhaps Ingsoc) is, says something about why such a book as the one you are, I hope, about to read could still find fertile soil to grow more ideas about the systematic, institutionalized manipulation of language.

The purpose of this manipulation today, as it is in Orwell's novel, is the creation of an imaginary and symbolic world that at once gives us what we want the most: to be totally controlled in thought and deed, in exchange for our personal sovereignty and self-determination.

This world, particularly through digital technology, seeks to replace the otherwise unattractive demands the real makes on our ethical aesthetics with the infinitely attractive distractions and titillations of the imaginary and symbolic, which are called here "simulacra." The hallucinatory world of simulacra is much more to the liking not only of the control-loving citizen of today's global Oceania, in thrall to his handheld gadget, but also of the state's relentless attempts to satisfy that love while maintaining homeostasis for its own self-preservation. But I digress.

It could be said that the premise of this story is based on the question of what if Orwell's Room 101 were enlarged to include the whole world in one way or another? How many of us are willing to say "five"? Or better yet, how many are willing to say "*four*"? There is no doubt about it that the idea of living in a global Room 101 is a bit *paranoid*. Also, the

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<sup>6</sup> Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*. (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2009).

metaphor that we are brought *by force* to Big Brother's torture chamber is nothing short of saying just what I say I set out *not* to say here.

Nevertheless, I feel exonerated by my own words throughout this book which work to dispel the effects of both invalid synthetic thinking and the paranoid delusions of the 21st century schizoid man. To think that Big Brother, Ingsoc, and the dystopian state of Oceania are now our daily milieu would miss the point not only of these scenes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, but also of the reality of our situation.

We could even say that Orwell would be astounded at how much farther we have gone in this respect than anything he tried to shock his 1949 audiences with. Had he described our world of today, he would have been considered a crank and a crackpot, never mind just a plain old bad science fiction writer. I think what he would find most disturbing of all is the degree to which we are complicit in this digital totalitarianism, and to what degree we long for, cultivate, and support a kind of fascism that could only have been dreamt up by advertising and marketing departments.

Nevertheless, what we see today as the pan-global society of the modern digital state is a wildly metastatic manifestation of the dystopia he describes. Orwell takes great pains to show that Winston ultimately *chooses* to accept what amounts to O'Brien's invalid synthetic proposition regarding the sum of two and two, though in a much worse form as his ultimate betrayal of his lover Julia to the state, bearing false witness to boot.

O'Brien, for his part, finds no value in torturing someone to the point where he will say anything. What he wants is voluntary, willful, conscious, intentional, desired, preferred, welcomed, chosen *abdication of the subject's sovereignty and self-determination*.

Only abdication has value to Ingsoc, just as it is all that is required from the creature we shall call the Apex Consumer by the commercial apparatus that springs into being to provide for his every need—as long as he makes the monthly payments and maintains good credit. Whatever follows from that, such as a loss of sanity or even schizophrenia, O'Brien rightly understands he really has no control over.

While Winston seems to be able to resist the Milgram-like electrical torture for something as trivial as embracing O'Brien's illogical proposition regarding arithmetic, he finds “the worst thing in the world” too much to bear, compelling him to give false witness against Julia, the woman he loves, by calling on O'Brien to torture *her* in his stead—despite her innocence and his de facto guilt. What kind of “logic,” then, is this that holds such power of persuasion? It cannot be pain, or even terror, since

Winston had already had his share of both up to that point and yet had not cracked.

Instead, Winston *voluntarily abdicates* the last bit of control he has over himself and his actions while at the same time betraying the only person who can confirm his humanity because he wants to be *free* of the burden of self-determination. The “worst thing in the world,” then, is to find ourselves responsible for our own fate in a vast universe of utter mystery and indifference. Worse than rats in the face is the Truth we must face that the universe just does not care if we live or die, if we are miserable or happy, and, ultimately, if we are free or enslaved.

To hold one’s fate in one’s hand is to admit that *one must die*, for the will ceases to function the moment we convince ourselves of the lie that our ego will live forever. If immortality is guaranteed, then why struggle to survive? The struggle to live, on our own terms, is a *de facto* admission that we will die. Therefore, turning this nasty problem over to someone else is our first step toward immortality not only of the ego, but, thanks to the promises of commercial technology, the body as well.

Winston is swayed by an invalid synthetic argument which *negates* his power to act as a sovereign human being. In so doing he *negates himself* and in the process his humanity in favor of the prerogatives of the state. “Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don’t care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!”<sup>7</sup>

We begin face “the worst thing in the world” by discovering how many times a day we betray Julia to the hegemonic powers to which we willingly surrender our self-determination and sovereign humanity. The next step is to acknowledge how blithely we consume the sovereignty and self-determination of others so that we might live in perpetual comfort, convenience, and immortality.

Room 101 is not (just) the BBC, the state, Big Brother, Oceania, or the New World Order. It is *the way we think*. It is in each individual, each person, who carries around in his heart “the worst thing in the world,” which is fear of the death of the ego brought on by the act of self-determination and the maintenance and cultivation of sovereignty. While a rat cage on the face is a strong motivator for anyone (not just rat-phobic Winston Smith), Nonbeing is an even *greater* terror. That it is the only absolute, inevitable certainty in our lives and therefore what might be considered the only thing we know for sure renders us even more ignorant and cowardly.

The purpose of this book, then, is to bring us to look at ourselves and see how culpable we are in this humanitarian catastrophe taking place in

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<sup>7</sup> Orwell. *Op. cit.*, 362.

our own thought process day to day. How far do things have to go before we crack?

To make it interesting, this story has all of the characters anthropologist Vladimir Propp says are necessary for the folk tale: a villain, a hero, the hero's helper, the object sought, the donor of the object, and the receiver of the object.<sup>8</sup> The intent of the narrative, though, is to leave the casting direction up to the reader.

In the meantime, the ensuing scenes are fraught with moral and ethical ambiguity and implicative uncertainty. There are many inversions of the roles, particularly those of the hero and villain, as the narrative proceeds. Also, we sample, in a scholarly way, what many others have to say about these and related matters. But if the reader follows the story, he might just find out something not only about his fellow citizens and the society they comprise, but also himself.

Those who live in modern democracies and republics have a desperate choice to make: whether or not to abdicate their personal sovereignty and self-determination in exchange for the dubious rewards of modern civilization and its digital empires. The machine we typically like to rage against is an expression of our collective schizophrenic hallucination of a great global cabal seeking our universal enslavement. Ironically, this illusion makes it possible to exploit us *en mass* which in turn reinforces this illusion.

None of this would be possible without our willing abdication of our sovereignty. And our abdication itself would not be possible without a prevailing social discourse, embraced in its most fundamental and minute detail around the globe, of invalid synthetic logic. We *choose* the invalid over the valid, the false over the true, because we find that "the truth," whatever it may be, is "the worst thing in the world." If this were not the case, there would be no hope at all.

Shanyang, Liaoning, China  
2018

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<sup>8</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968).

**PART ONE**

**PRELIMINARY:**  
**THE CATEGORICAL EXCLUSION**

# CHAPTER ONE

In the proposition a state of affairs is, as it were, put together for the sake of experiment.<sup>1</sup>

Wittgenstein

So we can envisage the linguistics phenomenon in its entirety—the language, that is—as a series of adjoining subdivisions simultaneously imprinted both on the plane of vague, amorphous thought, and on the equally featureless plane of sound.<sup>2</sup>

Ferdinand de Saussure

In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended.<sup>3</sup>

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,  
Time held me green and dying  
Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

Dylan Thomas, “Fern Hill”

## 1.1 Coming-into-being (*le devenir*)

Why do we talk about reality as if it were something outside of and other than ourselves? To answer this question, we must set aside some assumptions about what reality is and analyze the ideas we use to describe it. By doing so, it becomes possible to see that, psychologically, language has as much to do with what a thing *is* as what it happens to *be* apart from language. Therefore, “reality” has a solid basis in language, which we typically see as something within us that moves outward *toward* reality through the power of our will and thought.

If we begin with what we know, then, we can say with some certainty that things, which must be represented in language, derive a part of their

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<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, C. K. Ogden, trans. (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003), 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Chicago: Open Court, 2008), 110.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar, Self-Reliance, Compensation*, Orren Henry Smith, ed. (American Book Company, 1911), 37.

*being* or *thingness* from what we say and think about them. This is so because our idea of “being” or “thingness” has a psychological component that is as inextricable from phenomenological reality as we are from the idea of our own existence.

To what degree, then, are we responsible for the *coming-into-being* (*le devenir*) of things in a phenomenological sense? Is it fair or even accurate to say that we have *nothing* to do with it, as sometimes religion and science suppose, but in contrary ways? Is the arrival of phenomena upon the plane of reality the result of forces over which language has little or no control? Or does language determine, in whole or part, what we come to regard as phenomena?

Even without giving it much thought, it does not seem possible that we, the creatures who otherwise consider ourselves to be the “masters of the universe,” macro and nano, have nothing to do with the coming-into-being of what we regard as objective phenomena. To leave this matter entirely up to God or Nature seems not only an attempt to dodge responsibility for the way the world is but also inaccurate to some appreciable degree.

Therefore, let us look at what we *can* say about how language leads us to conclude that something *is*. We may then get a better idea of how responsible we are for the world we perceive and our role in it. We will look at three perspectives of the evolution of the language and its relation to the collective idea of reality, as well as how the idea of sovereignty, or self-determination, has migrated from the individual to the state.

(I.) First, it is possible to say that something *comes into being* when it crosses a certain linguistic threshold where it may be said that it *is*. But *where* is this threshold in the topography of our subjective experience? A common example may help us here.

Most of us would say that we know what a unicorn *is*, but none of us have seen one the way we see ourselves in a mirror. We can say that we have seen one in art and movies, and therefore “know” what it is the way we know other facts we may have had direct, empirical experience of or learned in some second-hand way. But seldom do we step back from this knowledge and consider the epistemological difference between such categorically exclusive forms of knowing.

The threshold in this case, then, is clear. We are by necessity forced to maintain two categories of “seeing”: one reserved for the world of what we regard as *imaginary*, and another that we reserve for what we regard as *real*. The two, we think, are mutually exclusive, categorically different, and separated as antonyms in language and thought.



In the case of the unicorn, however, we think of what may be called a *simulacrum* of such a creature, a mental *copy* of the “real thing” that nevertheless does not and never did exist. Despite this obvious difficulty, we are still ready to say that we “know” what a unicorn is, even though we cannot testify to the empirical existence of unicorns as we could to our existence as beings.

However, little of what we consider to be our existence could be verified except for, perhaps, the bare facts of it. These facts we discover such on our birth certificate and other official government and church records. The rest, such as gender, ethnicity, and so on is not in any way unique to us. It therefore belongs to a *type*, as apart from who we are as a unique and discrete entity. It may be said, then, that this image (*imago*) we have of *who* and even *what* we are is, perhaps, even *less* substantial than the evidence for unicorns which, at least, are universally acknowledged in almost every culture (objectively) as being one-horned, horse-like, mythological creatures.

(II.) Second, language does not only indicate, represent, or describe; it *performs*. Consequently, we are performers and, as such, are responsible for the performance of our role in life just as we are for our crimes. Because there are things we know about and can describe that do not exist (such as unicorns) and things we are *certain* exist (such as ourselves), we naturally divide these phenomena into two categories: the *imaginary* and *real*.

This act of dividing the mythical unicorns from the sheep and goats in the pasture has consequences. Mixing them up, we observe, can negatively affect the way we are regarded by society. People might think we are crazy or simpletons for “believing in” unicorns. Conversely, we also observe that it may propel us into a position of power if we can indeed convince others to “believe in” unicorns, whether our performance is honest credulity or an outright act of dissimilitude.

What often matters to us the most, then, is the *social effect* resulting from our perceptive discretions and indiscretions when we profess what we believe in and then ask others to join us in our discrimination between what is real and imaginary. Whether or not this or that notion is one or the other we leave up to the theologians and scientists, depending upon the cultural framework of our belief system.

Regardless, how good are we at distinguishing the real from the imaginary? What empirical and analytic tools have we at our ready-to-hand disposal? Do we even consider ourselves “qualified” to make such distinctions, or do we think it is better to leave it up to the “professionals” such as psychiatrists and physicists?

When it comes to imaginary beasts, we do not hesitate to deny they exist in any way other than as the productions of fantasy, though we will flock to any media representation of them that looks increasingly “realistic” in the hope that we will be distracted from a world that is, sadly, without unicorns in the flesh. But when it comes to distinguishing the real from the imaginary among the myriad manifestations of phenomena, confusion reigns, particularly when we deal with ideas, values, ethics, morals, and aesthetics. But the same confusion may be extended to how we regard various phenomena, as well as strangers, foreigners, and aliens from across the border or even from outer space.

If this were not the case, court trials would not be necessary, experimental results would never be challenged, referees and umpires would not be necessary at sporting events, armies would stand down, fortune tellers would be out of a job, and there would not be such a significant epistemological difference between religious and scientific *knowing*.

We also have a vague sense that giving ideas and things names has a certain magic power affecting the potential verisimilitude of their existence. It is hard for us to escape this impression. It is particularly obvious when it comes to ideas, which do not even seem to exist until they are named, making their *coming-into-being* and their naming a simultaneous and even spontaneous *event*.

As for concrete phenomena, we have a sense that they are just waiting *out there* for us to notice, name, describe, and analyze, them so that they can be logged in the official book of *realia*. The need to refer to them and endow them with our subjective perception arises not only from the utility it thus affords, but also from our ego’s compulsive need to exercise its godlike role as the creator of the world we inhabit.

The performance of a power that has discernable consequences in the world, therefore, is of concern to us all. The process of *naming*, then, gives us yet another dimension of existence which we may call the *symbolic* and add to the *real* and *imaginary* orders of our perceptive experience (as described in the work of Lacan).

Once the symbolic attaches itself to the real and imaginary in our psychology as language and thought, the real and imaginary are never again the same. The effective appearance of *language* and consequently *thought* gives rise to a dimension of experience lying in a metaphysical space somewhere between the real and imaginary. “There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so,” says Hamlet. To negotiate this “zero-width space,” then, we must develop a sophisticated power of what Kant calls

“judgment” which, as he describes it, is largely synthetic in that it may or may not be subject to verification and categorical noncontradiction.

Therefore, our capacity for judgment also gives rise to our ability to take ideas, values, ethics, morals, and aesthetics seriously in the sense that they can begin to seem to be “more real” than empirical reality, natural law, and the law of the jungle. After all, if God created the heaven and the earth, then this invisible Being, all-powerful and all-knowing, *must* be and *has* to be “more real” than that which he created from his imagination. Meantime, science never ceases to remind us that what appears to us as reality is often at odds with the analytical truth of what we see as verified by experiment and mathematics.

Such judgments become the foundation of our social relationship with others and consequently of society, civilization, and empire. For this foundation to be made of more than brute force and de facto affinity there must be a special kind of language which introduces yet another symbolic element into our experience in the form of the Law or *nomos*.

As we enter into this social realm of simulacra, populated with the “unicorns” of religion and technology, anything becomes possible. The physical universe of the real becomes the metaphysical universe of the imaginary, mitigated by the language, and thought, of the symbolic apparatus of conscious awareness in which all is represented to us in various ways but chiefly in words. Society feels the overwhelming need to curtail the infinite possibility of existence not only through the laws of man but the laws of God. Legal codes, such as the Ten Commandments, then, strive to make sense of society’s metastatic impulse to forge reality from the *prima materia* of a universe that is *more real* than what might have existed prior to mankind’s judgment and interpretation of existence.

For example, by the standards of society, we may think it is of greater moral, ethical, and legal consequence to kill another than to kill ourselves. More people, however, make the decision to *kill others* than to kill themselves, despite this apparently greater cosmic consequence. (There is also the matter of “self-murder” which will be discussed at some length later.) The Commandment not to kill (murder), then, far from resolving the matter, *metastasizes* it into a moral and ethical dilemma no civilization since has been able to conclusively resolve, particularly when it feels the urge to go to war.

We are compelled to embrace or reject beliefs about existence based on our judgment, which is in turn ruled by what symbolic universe we are born into or later espouse. While few would make a case for the existence of unicorns, there are many that make a convincing case for the idea that space aliens walk among us. Why would anyone believe such an idea? Is it any

less plausible than the idea that the Devil walks among us, hellbent, as it were, on cheating us out of our reward of eternal life in the heavenly hereafter?

It is easy to make a mockery of such beliefs, but difficult to scrutinize our own unverified and perhaps unverifiable beliefs often of a more ridiculous sort. Meantime, science, which is the prevailing ethical aesthetic of modern society, demands that we accept its ever-shifting and often contradictory paradigms of physical reality as well as whatever speculation it may offer as to what is “really” behind existence (if not God).

No sooner does science raise an objection to, for instance, space travel at the speed of light, than it turns around and suggests, with abstruse math and exclusive movie rights, that there are more imaginative ways to traverse astronomical distances. The public is regaled with worm holes, space-time warps, event horizons, string theory, black holes, and an  $n$ -dimensional “multiverse” where any number of universes exist in parallel to our woefully limited one where such feats of quantum derring-do are simply not feasible.

Each of these exciting possibilities has been deemed credible “in the future” by one Nobel Prize winner or another. All we need is the right equation, which the old college try will eventually reveal. Long-term, at-times publicly funded scientific research projects such as SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) have kept the hope alive for something more entertaining than the human race “out there.” At the same time peripatetic public intellectuals roam the earth hawking their proof that God is a delusion.

It is no wonder, then, that the belief that UFO’s have planted their alien cargo throughout the earth is widespread. The almost constant presence of this topic in various forms of fringe, alternative, and even mainstream media attests to how widely held this belief has become (of course mostly since the time when humans also learned how to fly like their extraterrestrial brethren). To be a “UFO denier” can be a dangerous public position to take for those who like to use this belief as an example of delusional thinking. After all, applying Karl Popper’s principle of *falsifiability*, can we *prove* that UFO’s *have not* visited earth as easily as we seem to be able to prove that God does not exist?

It is the thesis of the present argument that the logic of language and consequently of thought has been fatally corrupted by what will be called invalid synthetic propositions, or ISP’s. Kant indeed makes it clear that natural thought, including the operations of mathematics, depends upon valid synthetic propositions. The present argument, however, asserts that these propositions, for reasons discussed at great length here, have been

corrupted in the mainstream of public discourse in such a way as to render them *invalid*.

We work at this linguistic magic act in our daily transactions with others, as they do with us, which shapes our thoughts and ideas whether we are aware of it or not. It consists, in part, of representations or indications of persons, ideas, phenomena, and things as thought and language with little reference to what kind of logic is being used in the process. What is more important to us than logic is the rhetorical power of a statement: *Is it convincing?* If yes, then it is true. If no, then it is false. Therefore, rhetorical power is greater than empirical or analytical power in the ethical aesthetic of the modern world's epistemology in public discourse.

We might be able to lay the blame for this asymmetry in public communication at the feet of modern politicians, corporate advertising, and the mass media, but that would be too simple as well as inaccurate. Most unfairly, it would place the blame somewhere other than the individual subject who is, after all, the originator of public discourse. State politicians and other mouthpieces of the prevailing hegemony serve at the subject's pleasure, often confining their utterances to what their research data and professional intuition tell them the subject wants to hear.

A great rhetorical communicator, or *rhetor*, is the one-eyed man in the land of the blind. The authority of the academic in these matters is considerable, though indirectly. It is a holdover from a more credulous time, particularly the Middle Ages of Europe, when the *Artes Liberales* of rhetoric, grammar, and logic, were considered the only vehicles worthy of the Truth; whereas the products of the *Artes Mechanicae* of agriculture, industry, commerce and so on were regarded as vulgar and profane and the domain of the simpleton. The chief reason is that the former is concerned with what has long been regarded as the *sacred*, whereas the latter is inherently *profane*.

The concept of a "liberal" education comes to us from the idea of the Greek "freeman" (as opposed to the slave) who must be trained in the *trivium* of grammar, rhetoric, and logic to be a full participant in democratic society; he is "at liberty" to determine his own fate and is therefore the custodian of his personal sovereignty. Without these lawyerly skills, the free citizen of ancient Greece was at a marked disadvantage to his compatriots, particularly in a court of law where the plaintiff (if it was not the state) and the defendant often had to play the role of lawyer.

The idea of the *academic and legal verifiability of truth* and consequently of reality in Western civilization burgeoned into an arm of control in the hegemony's arsenal of public rhetoric. In so doing, it

gradually ceased to be the instrument of the individual's defense of his own sovereignty. The rise of the professional academic and lawyer (*domini*) who spoke the rarified languages of *theologia*, *humanitas*, *scientia*, and the *nomos* (law) came to overshadow the individual's power to defend his own sovereignty. The role of the professional class in society took on a quasi-sacred aura which prevails to this day. It is belied by their ecclesiastic ceremonial attire and grim social gravitas.

Meantime, the *hoi polloi* (οἱ πολλοί) was often unaware that such a concept as personal sovereignty even existed until it was made aware of it through an encounter with the *nomos* or some other official priesthood of sacred and profane knowledge. Therefore, abstract ideas, such as *res publica*, transmogrification, freedom, privacy, government, and sin, "did not exist" until society had words for them handed down from on high by the most convincing rhetors as well as the authorities who codified, enforced, and prosecuted the law. Meantime, discursive orthodoxy determined the linguistic Shibboleths of society so that the hegemony could distinguish the *hoi polloi* from the *domini*.

(III.) Third, since language is, as an expression of the mind, both outside of and within us, then we must admit that part of what we think of as the *being* of things is in *us* as well as in the *thing in itself* (or what Kant calls *das Ding an sich*). However, we must also acknowledge that this power is in *others* in the same way that it is in us and is therefore "outside" of us as well in the form of the social consensus that makes communication possible.

Since others are "outside" of us, what makes language effective and necessary is that we have a technical and semantic *agreement* with others as to how we will communicate. Such a social contract demands that there is also agreement regarding what is real and imaginary. How, then, do we accomplish this task on a massive and popular scale?

In other words, we are responsible to a nontrivial degree as accessories after the fact for the way things are in a phenomenological sense. But we share this culpability with others in the form of social discourse. How much, then, of what we believe something *is* results from our subjective understanding of it and how much results from our unexamined acceptance of what others *tell us* it is, which we may regard as either subjective or objective? Also, how acute are we at distinguishing what we have discovered for ourselves from what we have been told? Is it even possible to discover anything for ourselves without referring to what others have told us?

Regardless of the answers to the above, the fact is that we tend to think of *everything* as being entirely outside of ourselves however it is that we

have come to “know” it; therefore, why should it seem odd that we prefer to be *told* what reality is rather than take the trouble to discover what it is with whatever equipment we may have on board to do so? We interact with it, or it interacts with us. But do we also *call it into being* through language?

As such, things seem to go about their existence quite independently of us until the moment when we decide that we want them to be *different* from the way that we perceive them to be. For example, during one period of mankind’s history (in one part of the world) God may be the most important and adored principle of reality. During another, God may be the most insignificant and even reviled. During yet another the two factions may battle it out on what Matthew Arnold called the “darkling plane” for dominance over civilization’s discourse and *ethical aesthetic*. Therefore, even God is not immune from the ego’s rampage, making science’s “proof” that there is no God seem more an excrescence of the ego’s jealousy and competition with with the idea of a Creator than yet another one of the “cold hard facts” Scientism adores.

By its nature, the ego is autocratic; but it is also pragmatic in that it understands that there are other egos like itself which also long to be Masters of the Universe. It therefore needs from time to time to use them get what it wants for itself. While it concerns itself with orthodoxy, it never loses sight of *praxidoxy*. This situation forces it into a systematic compromise we like to call “civilization” which, through a process of *metastasis*, must and shall seek to be an exclusive Empire “in the future” through perpetual and infinite Progress.

Long before this historic drama plays out, though, *wishful thinking* leads the ego into imagining how much “better” life would be if it could indeed call all things into being (and send them out of it) at will through the power of language—with or without any agreement from its fellow egos. This is the fundamental principle of social and political power. The result is the *nomos*, or the Law, whether it has been arrived at by autocratic fiat or the ritual of democracy. Therefore, it tends to be an expression of the ego’s psychological imperative to get what it wants through the codification of social contracts with others who want the same thing for themselves.

When the nonexistence of God is unthinkable, progress and the social contract is not as big of a concern as it is when when God is dead. But when we consider ourselves to be the lords and masters of the universe, we tend to give more consideration to how things could be bigger, better, brighter, happier, richer, and more to our liking without begging for intercession from the Supernatural. Instead, we turn to the “right of man” to be free to

determine his own fate in a political framework that suits the prevailing ethical aesthetics of the time and place.

With God around, we are more likely to accept what seems to be the wretched state of existence for all living things where not only must they struggle for that existence minute to minute, but, whether they are successful in this quest or not, they must also die. Without God, we believe in free will. With God, we believe in fate. Having been, historically, disappointed by God in this respect, we turn to Science to save us from disaster and create Heaven on earth—never mind that it is Science alone that has given us the power to create Hell on earth.

Such thinking is only possible if behind it there is the assumption that we take much greater responsibility in the *coming-into-being* of phenomena than we did before God was dead in the West. Before that, *He* made most of the effort and took much of the credit (as he still does in theocratic cultures). Today, even without Him, temporal, corporeal immortality is just a hop, skip, and jump away in terms of the “miraculous” developments of medical science reported daily in the news. Considering that we really do think this way, and that the evidence of this thinking is all around us as the *Zeitgeist*, how acquainted with reality are we in making such assumptions?

Under such a regime of invalid synthetic propositions (ISP’s), sacred or profane, superstitious or scientific, does the existence of unicorns seem so farfetched? We all know that “in the future” not only will science synthesize gold from base metal (as has already been claimed again recently) but that through genetic engineering one day every little child will have her own personal unicorn and live forever.

The matter is further troubled by our denial that death is the natural result of being alive. Rather, we prefer to regard it as a *disease to be cured* by scientists at big pharmaceutical firms and in major research universities. Medical science may indeed find a cure for this unwelcome interruption of our unrestricted access to entertainment, consumption, and self-indulgence. But in the meantime, such thinking brings about a strange inversion in the way we traditionally have thought about being and nonbeing.

When we think of our own death, we prefer to imagine that it is matter of the disappearance of the world of *things* rather than the extinction of *ourselves*. To our disappointment, though, we see that others die and yet everything in *their* lives remains behind in the land of the living; someone must still feed the dog and water the geraniums. Not being “superstitious” like the ancient Egyptians, however, we find no consolation in providing the dead with the household goods and treasures they might need in the afterlife. Such behavior would be considered “crazy” compared to hoping



that if we just keep up with the payments on our medical insurance we will live forever.

Therefore, the question of the phenomenological effect of language on the myriad manifestations of objective reality remains difficult to answer. What happens to things when we die if we are in part responsible for their coming-into-being through language? Do they undergo a *petit mort* in our absence? What we see is that fortunately *le devenir* is not entirely our individual responsibility; the collective force of social perception as it is expressed through a common language manages to support the *thingness* of phenomena for us and others *in absentia*. This we accept because we have no choice.

We will never know if this assumption is *false*, though, because to prove it we must eliminate all persons from the universe just to see if the universe is still there without them. But in doing so there would be no one left behind to verify or “see” the result of the experiment.

One of the reasons we accept the social view of reality is because of the existential impossibility of any kind of verification that this view is false. We remain free from the danger that we will be proven, analytically and positively, *wrong* (and even “crazy”). Therefore, any statement we may make about our involvement in the coming-into-being of things must be *synthetic*, since we cannot prove it positively or *analytically*.

What remains in this paring away of the possibilities of *le devenir* is language itself, specifically how it creates a world of its own *mirroring* the world of phenomena while at the same time *molding* it in demonstrable, verifiable, and sometimes mysterious ways. We also must consider the matter of whether we “literally” make things come into being, like magicians pulling rabbits from hats, or if this is all more figurative language describing how language encodes reality, producing a certain psychological effect. *This* essay will leave that debate up to the phenomenologists. Instead, we will focus on the what makes a proposition valid or invalid.

What makes this phenomenological alchemy possible is the infinitive “to be,” or the *copula*. It is no mere figure of speech that it is the copula’s power of *copulation* between subject and predicate that brings forth this mimetic world of language. The copula is a phenomenological force or power that can also be found in the fecundity of the world apart from language, otherwise it would not exist as the infinitive engine of language itself. To better understand this process, though, we must retrace the etiology of its logic through what Charles S. Peirce calls *abductive* reasoning, or reasoning from hypothesis to first causes and tacit assumptions.

Such an adventure demands that we ask a series of questions in the form of hypothesis, identifying a rejection class of invalid propositions while building up a class of valid synthetic and analytic propositions. This is a laborious process. We must then make a rigorous effort to find some effective answers as to whether our hypotheses are valid or invalid, true or false.

But we will do this not by launching a full Congressional investigation into the allegations of the allegations or putting a team of top scientists on the project (as we speak). Instead what is required is discovery of the etiology of our assumptions through Peirce's tool of abductive reasoning. We will then analyze the results using the interrogative and associative methodology of psychoanalysis which allows for exposure to the light of consciousness our unconscious assumptions about language and phenomena.

Finally, by a judicious application of Occam's Razor, we will lay the matter of language's role in *le devenir* open for the reader to decide what is valid and invalid. Therefore, this investigation is a matter of speculation "for the sake of experiment," as Wittgenstein says at the head of this chapter, and not exclusively for the sake of spinning yet another discourse about discourse.

As mentioned in the preface of this book, the invalid synthetic proposition, which we shall from time to time call the ISP, is the *third kind* of proposition among the analytic and synthetic proposition. Using Aristotle's Rules of Thought, we can say that the analytic proposition is a tautology and is always true, though trivial:  $A = A$ . Both elements are drawn from the same class (A).

The synthetic proposition requires a different kind of reasoning because we find ourselves in what Aristotle called the "excluded middle" where two elements of the proposition are drawn from a different class:  $A = B$ . For example, A may be drawn from a class of "real" elements, whereas B is drawn from "imaginary" elements. Therefore, each is in a different universe of discourse.

This, however, does not invalidate the proposition; it just makes it impossible to prove, as we could with  $A = A$ . However, in the ISP, a *fatal contradiction* is added to the proposition, namely that  $A = B$  is the *material equivalent* of  $A = A$ , or what we might call "the same thing" ( $A = B \equiv A = A$ ). In effect, then, it is saying that the universe of discourse of the *real* is the *same thing* as the universe of discourse of the *imaginary*, or that the *imaginary is real* and the *real is imaginary*. Here we have a fatal contradiction for reasons it is the mission of this study to analyze.

To get going on this project, we must look at the origin of the thoughts and ideas we assume to be true (or false) determining our understanding of reality, as well as what happens when our individual responsibility for *le devenir* seeks homeostasis in a society of other individuals doing the same thing. The hope is that we will discover something about how language affects our perception of reality, and what the consequences are of our use of language for our freedom, self-determination, sovereignty, and privacy.

Maybe when we begin appreciating the logic of everyday language, we will also begin understanding how the world has come to be the way it is. Finding out what our active role is in the formation of our worldview should give us some idea of what responsibility we have for the *coming-into-being* of phenomena as well as the role language plays in the psychology of discourse, the enforcement of civilization's prerogatives, and the building of Empire.

Before we get to a more comprehensive view of the psychology of language, though, it is important that we have a definite idea of what role we actively play in the drama of the unfolding of our personal experience apart from society. As what "is" concerns the *copula*, or the infinitive "to be," *being* is, therefore, the proper focus of any effort to understand language's power to determine what is and is not reality.

Where, then, in the semantic landscape, does this threshold lie between being and nonbeing, and what is the linguistic mechanism involved in the process of *becoming*? Why does a thing seem to swim into being based on what we say and do and then float out of it almost unnoticed? Furthermore, does the *mechanism* of this process have any semantic significance to the resulting discourse, or narrative story, of our lives?

To begin with, we must find a reasonable way of expressing what shall be referred hereafter as the *coming-into-being* (*le devenir*). We shall consider a proposition, that the difference between zero and one is greater than the difference between one and any other number. To express this idea, we will use the following notation:  $(0 / 1) > (1 / n)$ .<sup>4</sup> Between the first enclosed part of the proposition and the last lies the threshold where a thing "comes into being" in the linguistic sense. Therefore, we will discuss this matter as a *linguistic* phenomenon inseparable from its psychological effects. We must limit this discussion to linguistics and psychology because

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<sup>4</sup> Mathematical notation (unless otherwise noted) follows the table on pages xii-xvii of *Discrete Mathematics for New Technology* by Rowan Garnier and John Taylor (Bristol: Institute of Physics Publishing, 1999).

any discussion beyond that limit would necessitate a phenomenological metaphysics.

The assumption here is that being (Dasein) has no attribute, therefore we cannot speak of it as we can speak of the thing itself, what it is, where it came from, and where it goes. However, as a linguistic phenomenon we may discuss it in several ways: 1) as the signified, 2) as a “language” (*langue*) and that language spoken (*parole*), 3) as an idea, 4) and as a particle of a syntactic concatenation with other like ideas creating an expression called a *discourse*. It is this discourse that is the *being* of thought. It would be true enough to say that these particles, arranged in a certain way, also produce a *sentence* which we may refer to as an utterance. But the sentence is a trivial matter by comparison to the discourse of language itself in which a sentence’s morphology is subordinated to its meaning.

We may look at “the” discourse, with the definite article indicating a shared understanding of the product of language within a culture, as a unitary monad. It is a monolith, which stands in contradistinction from what Heidegger calls the Monolith of Being (discussed later in some depth). One of its great distinctions from the Monolith of Being is that it is an *apparatus*, or machine, which must be kept in constant oscillation or motion to maintain its potency within the sphere of communication society finds necessary to function. There are three basic positions through which ideas must travel so that they may engender in the subject a sense of identity in the form of discursive chatter (which may or may not contain intelligence or signification):

Thought → Language → World (A → B → C)  
World → Language → Thought (C → B → A)

During the operation of this machine, A is overwritten by C and vice versa (which is the same thing). Meantime, B, which must serve as a frictionless intermediary transmission channel, takes on its own characteristics as the perfect hybrid of the world and thought. *When B reaches the point of least friction given the values expressed by A and C, then we say that a discourse has been created.* What remains, then, is for this latent identity to come into being (*le devenir*) in one form or another, until it may be called an ego.

When an absolute threshold has been crossed and a thing has come into being as the signified, then we have observed a *categorical exclusion* (CE).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The meaning of the term “categorical exclusion” used here is not to be confused with the meaning of the same term found in the U.S. National Environmental Policy

In other words, the category of 0 has been excluded from the category of 1 and any other number, which we may represent as  $n$ . The definition of a categorical exclusion is the crossing of the threshold between 0 and 1 *with no possibility of the negation of the new state to the previous state*. (A common expression of this idea is that someone or something has “crossed the Rubicon,” or the point of no return.) Here are the rules which must be followed for it to be said that there has been a CE:

- A) A thing may *come into being* by crossing the threshold from 0 to 1.
- B) A thing may not *go out of being* by reversing the process of *coming-into-being*.
- C) After the CE, a thing may cross any number ( $n$ ) of thresholds between 1 and  $n$  in either direction without violating A or B.

For example, let us consider “serial-killer” logic. Once a person has killed another person, a person may never return to the state of *never having killed* a person. Therefore, this categorical exclusion of “never having killed” is nontrivial. However, if that person goes on to kill a dozen or more persons, no quantity  $n$  of future killings, even a hypothetical infinity of kills, is a CE. The magnitude of kills is trivial in comparison with the nontrivial fact of the CE. Language based as it is on words and ideas being unique and discrete cannot accommodate the idea of  $n$  killings as a discrete and therefore categorical event.

Though a serial killer may kill a dozen persons, he will only ever be convicted of a percentage of those killings beyond one killing for reasons of sufficiency and efficiency. What is the point of sentencing a person to twelve consecutive life sentences? It would be, at best, symbolic, which under the existential hyperbole of the circumstances succeeds in trivializing the magnitude of the crime. And if the person will be punished by the death penalty for one killing, there is not even the possibility of applying punishment for more than that single event (i.e. punish the killer with twelve death sentences). Certainly, those twelve sentences cannot be carried out under any circumstances except the imaginary and symbolic.

On the other hand, if the killer is a “war hero” who killed tens of thousands of persons by dropping an atomic bomb or tons of incendiaries on a populous city during a war, like the serial killer he has crossed the CE,

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Act (NEPA), which is as follows: “‘Categorical exclusion’ means a category of actions which do not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment and which have been found to have no such effect in procedures adopted by a Federal agency in implementation of these regulations (Sec. 1507.3) and for which, therefore, neither an environmental assessment nor an environmental impact statement is required ...” (40 CFR 1508.4).

which is the nontrivial event. But again, the magnitude of his kills and the method are trivial in comparison to the fact of the CE. At the same time, he is excused from criminal prosecution because of the state of exception of the *nomos* (law) at the time of the killings. Again, the imaginary and symbolic nature of justice reveals itself. The only reality, then, is the CE of “having killed.”

And while we may add the number 0 to create a decimal system among numbers beyond the threshold, it is really homage to the event of *le devenir*, the coming-into-being. Once something has come into being, it may then *not be* at some point; however, this is not a negation of its state of being but rather a new categorical exclusion (0 / 1). The numbers 10, 20, 30, and so on become metaphors for this primal event, never again serving as a threshold except for the sake of trivial convenience. Beyond the singular event of *le devenir* there is an unfolding of implication, which is the beginning of significance. At first, though, this implication is numerical, depending entirely upon the relationship of value between the various possibilities created by a categorical exclusion. As a result, four relational values arise:

- i) 0, representing the negation of 1
- ii) 1, representing the negation of 0
- iii) 1 in relation to 0 as infinitely greater
- iv) and  $n$  (any other number) in relation to 1

We may consider that 0 exists before all other numbers as a number. It does not need to be the predecessor, successor, or in ratio to any other number *to be a number*. Peano, in his first primitive axiom, states as much: 0 is a number.<sup>6</sup> As such, it is in a class by itself, discrete, as all other numbers derive their identity from their relation to other numbers. However, it is an existential without *value* as negation until there is 1. It is this linguistic significance which gives it the value of 0. Therefore, it is dependent for its coming-into-being on its own negation. The same then is true of 1. Despite the reciprocity of their relationship as existentially co-dependent, 1 nevertheless is a categorical exclusion of 0 because it is only through 1 that there can be any relationship to any other number ( $n$ ).

In this way, as a number, 1 is categorically *excluded* from 0. Again, the definition of a categorical exclusion is the crossing of the threshold between 0 and 1 *with no possibility of the negation of the new state to the previous state*. From this phenomenon arises the relationship between 1 and  $n$ . As we

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Halmos, *Naïve Set Theory* (New York: Springer-Verlag. Chapter 7: “The Peano Axioms,” 1974).

shall see, there is no significance to the certain number with which 1 is in relation except to say that it can be any number and not “infinity,” which is much as saying that 0 is somehow related to itself. The common thinking here, however, is that 1 is in direct relationship and categorical contrast to “infinity.”

In this relationship we have the first categorical error revealed by the categorical exclusion that will help lead us to the exposure of the invalid synthetic proposition (ISP). It is also the basis of the use of tautology in language in the synthetic proposition of which most communication, by necessity, consists.

For there to be a definite number after 1, it must be expressed as a certain integer or whole number and cannot simply be termed “infinity.” It is only within the categorical exclusion where one number is either “infinitely” greater or lesser than the other that we avoid the categorical error of describing the “difference” as *infinite*. Again, once this event (0 / 1) has come into being, it is always a fallacy to say that any other number ( $n$ ) is infinitely more ( $1 / n$ )—at least by ratio. If we did say so, we would have two mutually exclusive forms of infinity. (This is furthermore true of fractions which can represent an integer subdivided  $n$  times.) Nevertheless, in the language of the *invalid synthetic* proposition anything becomes possible; indeed, this is the invalid synthetic statement’s greatest linguistic attribute and psychological benefit.

But it is better and more accurate to describe a synthetic statement or proposition as being *valid* or *invalid*. The truth value of a statement is not the same thing as its validity as a statement. We may determine truth by verification, which does indeed begin by asking if the proposition is “valid,” in other words, if it violates any rule the abrogation of which is fatal to its potential truth value. There is nothing mysterious about this process; in a courtroom it would be considered either determining the credibility of a witness (“experts” are another matter) or if evidence was gathered in such a way, or is of such a nature, that it is considered admissible.

Once these critical formalities are out of the way, then, and only then, is it possible to “weigh” the evidence to determine the outcome or disposition of the case. Therefore, we are in a position where if truth is determined using evidence that was illegally gathered or is of such a nature that it can, at some point, be considered invalid for any other reason, then even a verifiable truth can itself be considered invalid.

However, the situation is a bit different with a synthetic statement. It is not analytic because its truth value cannot be verified. But this does not mean that it is invalid. It is only invalid, as is any proposition, if it violates a rule that is fatal to its *potential* truth value. If a synthetic statement is

*potentially* true, even if there is no way to verify whether it *is* true, then as long as its argument is valid it may be taken as “the Truth.” In other words, it is the material equivalent of a T statement, just as a verified analytic statement which has an invalid argument is the material equivalent of a F statement. If validity did not have priority in any argument, but was instead subordinated to verifiability, then many guilty criminals would go free and many innocent prisoners would be convicted.

While we have used jurisprudence as an example here, the matter is far more pervasive than that in public discourse. Our first consideration is of what potential abuse may be possible in presenting verifiable “proof” based on invalid arguments. As we shall see throughout this discussion, the chief use of supposed “verifiability” in public discourse is to engage in what professional magicians call “misdirection” wherein the magician directs the audience’s attention to something other than the mechanics of the trick.

By cluttering up an argument with verifiable facts, and by presenting “proofs” often poached from accidental successes, interested parties usually have enough of an argument to convince the media that the news generated on this basis is *prima facie* “true,” thus helping the media attract a bigger audience and therefore advertisers willing to spend more money. Cash is validation. Meantime, through wishful thinking and the willing suspension of disbelief, the media and their audience embrace the argument without stopping to inspect the validity of the argument.

In other words, whether that argument violates a fatal rule of logic. In this way much of public discourse consists of invalid synthetic arguments gussied up with verifiable facts serving the purpose of misdirection. Apostates, nay-sayers, dissenters, and those who simply “prefer not to” buy into the discourse are treated as cranks, lunatics, lame brains, retards, hippies, and, if they really have figured out precisely what the fatal flaw is in the logic, *enemies* of the hegemonic empire, such as it fancies itself.

The main difference between a false and true synthetic proposition is that the former violates the law of noncontradiction. Since a synthetic proposition is not verifiable, we can, at least, determine if it follows this rule or not. If there is categorical contradiction, the proposition is invalid—whether it may in some other way be proven true or false. Furthermore, if the predicate is based upon a verifiably *false* subject, regardless of whatever verifiable content we may find in that predicate, the proposition is false (F) from the get-go.

The most ordinary form of false, or unverifiable, subject begins with the phrase “in the future . . .” The prepositional phrase “in the future,” modifying the subject noun, immediately invalidates the sentence string as having truth value. It indicates that what is to follow, verifiable or not in itself at some



future date, is corrupted with an injection of *wishful thinking* and irresponsible prognostication. As this phrase is found in most dimensions of public discourse, we accept it with the same sang-froid as the statement that “I am not dead.” However, as what is to follow is in an entirely different and contradictory category than the present in which such a declaration is made, it is invalid.

Whatever verifiability the rest of the subject and its predicate may have, the phrase “in the future” undermines it by categorical contradiction. This is the problem faced by the professional fortune teller who must depend upon the powers of his or her crystal ball. Both the subject seeking a glimpse of the future and the fortune teller must rely on chance “proving” the predication to be true. As with much or what passes for prayer, the rare times these gambles pay off negate, through the great power of wishful thinking, the otherwise overwhelming probability indicated by the times they fail to produce the desired result. If chance is a necessary element of the equation of verification, then all positive outcomes (verifications) are suspect as being mere happenstance. If this is the case, then the subject of the proposition is false (F), meaning that any other part of the proposition which may be verifiable inherits this unverifiability and therefore the negative truth value. It is also a form of contradiction, though in the basal logic of the correlation between subject and predicate rather than the category of the content.

For example, the two propositions below (A and B) are in the same form and contain elements from the same class of *realia*, or what are considered the verifiable objects of the world, in this case humans and insects. *Prima facie*, and taken together, the propositions appear sound. Nevertheless, there is a category error in one which makes the entire proposition ( $A \wedge B$ ) false (F), showing the inheritability of invalidation:

- A. If *humans* vanished, there would be no negative effect on life.
- B. If *insects* vanished, however, life would end.

The *implication* of A is that humans are not necessary for the perpetuation of life, whereas the implication of B is that insects are, which is likely “true” (t) if we ignore the category error. Therefore, we can indicate the truth of the combined proposition of  $A \wedge B$  with a lower-case (t), since A *seems to* (*prima facie*) inherit the probable truth value of B by parallel association. The category error, however, is that humans are a *species* and insects are a *phylum*. For the parallel association to be valid, both must be in the same biological class.

Furthermore, this “truth” (t) is not contained in the proposition because the proposition itself is predicated upon the error of the categorical

contradiction between species and phylum. Consequently, the most we can say for this utterance, for it is no more than that, is that it is a *discourse*. A discourse, true or not, is not a proposition. The *discourse* is that humans are, environmentally speaking, trivial, while insects are non-trivial. While this is indeed “true” (t), the category error invalidates the linguistic logic of the argument. Therefore, the more we build upon this contradictory proposition in the forms of policy and action the less stable it becomes.

Worse, the environment is more endangered because validated threats may be overlooked since those in power seem to have no way of recognizing them, limited as they are by their embrace of invalid synthetic propositions as “the truth.” What is truly sinister, however, is that despite the invalid logic of this statement, the effect of eliminating humans from the environmental equation *would* be beneficial to the remaining life forms. This teleological possibility is then used to justify the faulty logic, with potentially genocidal consequences.

Therefore, the proposition is *false* (F) and not merely invalid because of the contradictory categories of species and phylum placed in disingenuous and even dishonest juxtaposition. The “truth” of the contradiction, however, is more ominous when we look at its schema: (t) = F. The logic of this schema makes such statements from Ingsoc as “war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength” possible and even probable. A little truth is a big falsehood, but only to those who have no way of telling (t) from T. To abdicate at all, one must be among those with this shortcoming, which is to say the majority, as it is the majority that has shaped modern society in its own image through “democracy” and other forms of collective will.

Once one accepts the discourse as the only measure of what is true or not—in any sense, empirical or logical—then one loses the base of the possibility of verification in any positivistic way, accepting in its place a system of faith or belief which is, unlike true religious ecstasy, a mere manifestation of the mind’s propensity for self-delusion.

An error such as this is not merely technical. It is fundamental to the possibility of a synthetic proposition having the *potential* of being true, especially in mathematics. As Kant explains<sup>7</sup>, we know, *a posteriori*, that the sum of 7 and 5 is 12. However, as he points out, there is nothing in the proposition “ $7 + 5 = x$ ” that is *a priori* self-evident. It is not until we turn the gears of the operation that later, at a different point in the operation and therefore at another temporal position, we discover that 12 is the sum, which means that until then it may not be so in our present temporal position. To declare that “at a later time it will be so” is the material equivalent of the

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<sup>7</sup> Kant, *CPR*, Supplement VI, part V, section 1: “In all Theoretical Sciences of Reason Synthetical Judgments a priori are contained as Principles,” 720.

mantra: “in the future” of hegemonic orders relying on hope rather than proof for their credibility.

Phenomenological inconsistencies in Euclidean geometry, impossibilities in Classical (Newtonian) physics, and the problem of incompleteness in arithmetic provide the doubt necessary to pop the balloon of hegemony’s hope cults. It is just such a seemingly insurmountable conundrum during the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century concerning the Ultraviolet Catastrophe, brought about by application of the Rayleigh-Jeans Law to thermodynamics, that led to the breakthroughs in quantum mechanics we take for granted today in such proofs of concept as quantum computing.

As for the proposition regarding humans and insects, if we abide by the rule of noncontradiction and rephrase the proposition, we can say that if a *species* is eliminated life is likely to continue, but if a *phylum* is eliminated life is likely to end. While this is an important and most of all *significant* proposition, worthy of thought and consideration, it entirely lacks any political discourse that might be useful to those who have an agenda which, we may presume, might have led to this violation of the law of noncontradiction. Furthermore, it is so sensible as to be *quotidienne*, and is therefore lacking in the hyperbolic sensationalism needed to attract distracted minds to the chatter of the media.

A further attribute to consider about a synthetic proposition is if its subject is verifiable. If the subject may be verified then it does not matter if the predicate cannot be verified, provided the two parts of the proposition do not contradict categorically. If this is the case, then it is a valid proposition. In the sentence below, the predicate contains an equation which has been verified to the point of being considered a natural law, while it also contains what has earned itself the place of a “constant” in equations in all domains. The subject (in italics), though, contains a fatal error in that it is unverifiable in any domain.

Little green men from Mars told me that  $E = mc^2$ .

The subject, “Little green men ...” cannot be verified, though the predicate in the form of Einstein’s equation, can. Taken altogether, however, the statement is false (F) because the subject cannot be verified. After all, the statement is *not* about Einstein’s equation; it is about the *origin* of the equation. On the other hand, we can say that,

In 1929 Einstein published a series of papers on what has come to be known as the unified field theory uniting the forces of gravity and electromagnetic fields.

In this statement the subject (in italics) is entirely verifiable by examining a list of his publications for that year, whereas to this day, and despite his efforts throughout the rest of his life, Einstein could not *verify* this theory in the way that he could the theories of relativity. Nevertheless, the statement remains true (T) even though the proposition “gravity and electromagnetism are two forms of the same force,” while it cannot be proven false, also cannot be proven true ... *at present*.

But, of course, says the discourse of modern science, it will be proven true “in the future.” Just you wait. It is only a matter of time! Nevertheless, as we have stated, it does not add to the argument to say that “in the future” it will be verified “once we have the technology.” Such a qualifier is the logical material equivalent of “little green men” in terms of its relation to the predicate.

The presence of the phrase “in the future” in the subject of a proposition of predicate logic immediately invalidates the entire proposition as it predicates verifiability on chance, and a chance for which no probability can be accurately calculated. That we must wait around, tapping our foot, for the technology to catch up with the truth is an absurd proposition and is *de facto* a fallacy, though it does not *preclude* the possibility of the mathematical unity of the forces at some later date.

However, to *prove* that the extinction of humans would have no negative impact on life we would first have to eliminate all humans, meaning that there would be no one left to verify the proof. Therefore, it is safe to say that there is no possibility of verification of this proposition. However, regarding the extinction of the insect phylum, we can at least say that the preponderance of circumstantial and theoretical evidence points to mass extinction of other phyla if this phylum is eliminated. What really matters, though, is that the inclusive statement is noncontradictory. At least then we may pursue the truth of it.

In considering the proposition that the difference between 0 and 1 is infinitely greater than the difference between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ), there is neither contradiction nor anything about the subject which cannot be verified, even though the statement is synthetic. We may verify, and in fact it is self-evident, that the difference between 0 and 1 is “infinite” when we consider that in almost any other correlative binary, such as nonbeing and being, the same principal holds to be universal. However, the predicate, that this difference is “greater than” the difference between 1 and  $n$  simply cannot be proven, except by certain modular arguments, thereby forming a synthetic statement.

That 1 is infinitely greater than 0, though, might lead one to understand that therefore 0 is merely the absence of 1 or worse: less than a countable

nothing. It is one thing to say that there are 0 balls in the urn; it is another to say that one does not know if there is a ball in it or not. Therefore, 0 remains a definite number despite its infinitely subordinate relationship to 1, for without it there would be no 1, no coming-into-being, no *le devenir*; it would no longer be possible to know if there are any balls in the urn without the linguistic and psychological concept of 1.

The answer to the interrogation would always be “null” no matter how it was put: how many balls are there, are there any balls, is there fewer than one ball, is there more than no ball, and so on. Nevertheless 0 is *excluded* from all other numbers while remaining a number. Were it not, then we could not say that 1 “is” and there could be no linguistic coming-into-being. In this way the true name of 0 in the proposition  $(0/1) > (1/n)$  is aleph-null (or aleph-naught or aleph-zero):  $\aleph_0$ .

As Cantor points out with the aleph numbers, there coexist different ordinalities of which infinity is not one. To replace the psychological concept of “nothing” as the absence of 1, or of infinity as the endless addition (or subtraction) of  $1 + 1 (\dots)$ , we may treat 0 as a number like any other except that it is infinitely less than its nearest neighbor. It is possible under such a regime that we are left with only two “real” numbers: 0 and 1 which works well enough within a binary system.

While this may not be the limit in the mathematical sense there is no reason why it cannot be the limit in the linguistic and psychological senses if we speak of coming-into-being itself and not how many iterations there are of it. As the number of its iterations is a number which we can never count, it is an imaginary number (like  $\pi$ ), though we treat it as the basis of reality itself. But, in fact, there is never any more than just one thing.

Peano's three primitive axioms give us yet another perspective on the categorical exclusion. First, he nominates 0 as a number like any other. Doing so makes it possible to establish a ratio between 1 and 0 that is nontrivial. It also opens the possibility of Cantor's different cardinalities where  $\aleph_0$  becomes the “least element” in a well-ordered set where the next cardinal number is 1. Therefore, 1 and 0 are in the same infinite set with  $\aleph_0$  providing the smallest infinite cardinal number and 1 the *next* number in the series.

Peano argues that “1) 0 is a number, 2) The successor of any number is a number, and 3) No two numbers have the same successor.”<sup>8</sup> Axioms 2 and 3 establish the cardinality of the ratio between 1 and “any other number,” reducing all successive numbers to mere iterations of the “difference” between 1 and  $n$ . Therefore, the “significance” of the difference between,

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<sup>8</sup> Paul Halmos, *Naïve Set Theory* (New York: Springer-Verlag. Chapter 7: “The Peano Axioms,” 1974).

say, 8 and 23, is trivial compared to the difference between 0 and 1 as both 8 and 23 are in the same class as “all numbers infinitely greater than 0.”

Nevertheless, this does not mean that an iteration (or concatenation) of  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$  violates the second and third axioms. First, 0, 1, 8, and 23 are metonyms for the concatenation of 1 they represent. If this were not so, then I, II, and III would not be translatable into 1, 2, and 3! The only exception to this rule is an imaginary number such as  $\pi$  where, for instance, 3.14159265... is not cardinal, for no matter how many numbers follow the decimal point, they cannot be considered as the formation of a “new number” (successor). In pi, we never reach a whole, countable number (i.e. 4). The same is true of such fractions as one third of 5, which is 1.666666... No matter how many fractional numbers we add to the integer, we never reach 2. Again, we are only considering integers or whole numbers here; for something “to be” it must “be” what it is. If it is not, then the most we can say about it is that it is “becoming,” that it is imaginary, or that it is *part of* something else or some process. (This fact is exploited in Zeno’s Paradox.)

Despite its notorious inconclusiveness, the property of “becoming” is the darling of the purveyors of the invalid synthetic proposition for justifying civilization’s excesses. For example, psychologically and linguistically, civilization is based on what is *becoming* or *imaginary*, rather than what *is* in any kind of sense independent from its own self-proclamation of being. Even its gods are subject to endless morphological permutation.

It has proven itself, time and time again (as seen in the ruins of empires), to be *at best* an imagined concept which vanishes at a much faster rate than it appears. Its fatal flaw is that it is universally predicated upon the illusion of unrelenting “progress” into an ever-elusive destination called “the future” where it will be richer, more powerful, bigger, better, greater, stronger, smarter, and so forth. Periods of uneventful peace, ignored by history, are regarded by civilization’s collective psyche as anathema to its purpose. And yet civilization’s much-touted *raison d’etre* of “stability” seems to be inversely proportionate to its ever-greater claims of burgeoning empire.

As a result, civilization forces the individual psyche to embrace two classes of reality, which we will call realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*. (Despite the Latin plurals, these terms are to be treated as singular nouns.) The former is the stuff of empires, the excrescence of its extravagant claims; the latter is that which we can verify as wholly independent and discrete from our imagination. To make this distinction clearer, we will look at Russell’s approach to set theory.

Russell adds yet another significant mathematical classification to the categorical exclusion, bringing Peano’s axioms out of their “primitive” state

and into the light of ontology proper: “The successor of the number of terms in the class  $a$  is the number of terms in the class consisting of  $a$  together with  $x$ , where  $x$  is any term not belonging to the class.”<sup>9</sup> The logical paradox of  $x$  being numbered among the terms while also being unique (cardinal) and therefore *not* a member of the class provides an example of how 0 can have a successor, making it a “number” in a primitive sense, while *not* being a member of the class of successors  $1n$ . The categorical exclusion (CE) excludes “any other number” from 0 by forming class  $a$  while maintaining the membership of 0 in class  $a$  as  $x$ . Again, the definition of a categorical exclusion is the crossing of the threshold between 0 and 1 *with no possibility of the negation of the new state to the previous state* (sometimes known in mathematics as a “ratchet”). Furthermore,  $\aleph_0$  supplies “infinity” while sustaining the cardinality of 0, forcing the necessity of having “any other number” stand in as an imaginary infinity. Finally, Peano’s first axiom establishes 0 as a number like any other, negating its status as the absence of quantity as it was by default before it was “invented” as a calculable member of mathematics.

As mentioned earlier, though, decimal numbers pay homage to this heritage by inserting 0 where a new cardinality begins beyond 1. If it is true that 1, 2, and 3 are metonyms for I, II, and III, then it is also true that 10, 20, 30 are simply those same metonyms with 0 added for the convenience of calculation and order, expressing magnitude in multiples of 10. After all, can we have I0, II0, and III0? We know we can have X, XX, and XXX, but then, again, the difference between I and X in this system is trivial and equally awkward as a calculable number.

That which comes into being, then, is the singularity of 1, which is an Event which cannot be reversed because it occurs in time, like the ringing of a bell (another form of ratchet). As the saying goes, one cannot “unring” a bell. What can and does happen to the ringing of a bell, though, is that it soon crosses a threshold where the paradoxical situation described by Russell above establishes itself as reality. Class  $a$ , or the time in which the bell may be rung any number of times, soon engulfs  $x$ , the event of the ringing of the bell (CE). The result is a discrete expression of reality independent of imagination. Therefore,  $x$  becomes a “member” of the iterations of the ringing of the bell while retaining its unique status as *that specific ring* of the bell apart from all other rings.

In a more concrete sense this is observable in the birth of a child. We could not say “this child has been born” were it not for the fact that that birth is unique among all births past and future ( $x$ ). At the same time, however,

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<sup>9</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Introduction to Mathematical Philosophy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1956), 5.

that birth also inexorably belongs to the class of all births (class  $a$ ), which is apart from any one birth while being independent of the imagination.

The paradox is that for there to be  $x$  there must be  $a$  as well as the reverse, thus:  $(a \rightarrow x) \rightarrow (x \rightarrow a)$ . In other words, if there is “if  $a$  then  $x$ ,” then there must be “if  $x$  then  $a$ .” While this invertibility is a linguistic matter, it is not language which makes it so, but reality which makes language *perform* in this way – however inadequately. And as this affects language it also affects thinking and therefore the psychology of the thinker. Just as it is a special ontological error to endow a synthetic statement with the verifiability of an analytic one, so too is it an ontological error to endow “any other number” with the power of the difference between 0 and 1, or *le devenir*, which is always a unique event like the birth of a child. In addition, civilization, as the extrinsic expression of language, consists of the excrescence of these two ontological errors combined. A procrustean formation—like coral—civilization is *metastatic*, growing relentlessly on whatever debris drops into the sea from above or happens to be scattered about on its floor.

Fueled by the passion of its metastatic *ethical aesthetic*, it uses language as the apparatus of its eternal quest for subjects willing to abdicate their sovereignty. The consolidated absorption of sovereignty is necessary for it to reign supreme over humanity through the *vis major* of war. Just as power is not power if it is given, however, only if it is taken, so too is sovereignty not sovereignty if it is taken, only if it is given.

The metastatic process grows exponentially until war cools its progress in an orgy of murder. Mass killing, and destruction of the environment and property, is necessary to realize civilization’s need for homeostasis after it loses control of its own compulsive metastasis.

Entirely apart from this *comédie humaine*, though, *le devenir* provides a countervailing stability, insuring that each event is unique. Try as digital technology might to realize the greatest dream of the corporate state’s apparatus: perfect reproducibility, unique, unreproducible singularity creeps in, sometimes as disease and sometimes as revolution. Why? Because an event must occur in “time” which is signaled by the fact that at no “point in time” can we ever measure its velocity and therefore its trajectory.

If it were possible to account for an infinity of variables, then civilization might be able to produce the calculus necessary to make such a prognostication. Naturally, science explains that “it is only a matter of time” until it has the right algorithm for modelling an infinity of variables. Meantime, mankind waits in the wings to be called to the feast that will ensue when this time comes.

Therefore, the ego’s psychology exploits all possibilities of the expansion of fault tolerance necessary to sustain the illusion of free will and



self-determination based on prediction while remaining calculably unsound—even in its overuse and abuse of calculation and quantification. What arises is the endemic misapplication of verification in the form of invalid synthetic propositions as a kind of dogma and belief system. The result is such abominations as attempting to establish if there is or is not a God; predicating the fate of national economies upon derivatives and algorithmic trading; and drugging half the population into convenient docility because it is “mentally ill.”

## 1.2 Iteration and recursion

The closest most get to formulating an idea of the structure of reality is through truisms such as “two and two make four” and that it is faulty logic to “mix apples with oranges.” It is easy enough to go from birth to death with the standard education in a developed society believing that the case for reality is closed once these “laws of the universe” are grasped. Meantime, it nevertheless remains possible to these citizens of the world that space aliens visited this planet and live among them, or that their fate is determined by astrological charts.

Religious beliefs of the wildest and most fantastic sort are common and are still the cause of major wars throughout the world. And even when the dogma of science is exposed as false, conniving, or incompetent, the subject insists on clinging to whatever belief was formed when the fallacious idea first embedded itself in the chaos of its undisciplined mind.

But perhaps the most pernicious form of belief in a modern society is *consumerism*. If mad scientists have ideas that can make money for stockholders and put miraculous new products into the hands of the consumer, like digital gadgets, then maybe they are not so crazy after all. *Prodest vincet omnia*, or profits conquer all doubts, moral and ethical misgivings, and legal nitpicking. Consumerism is an ethical aesthetic. As such, it determines worldview and consequently the subject’s construction of reality. Provided two and two still equal four, all is as it should be, the subject thinks.

Consumerism as described above, however, is based on an invalid synthetic proposition. It confuses an existential ( $\exists$ ) set with the universal ( $\forall$ ) set. In fact, all members of  $\exists$  must be the children of  $\forall$ , while  $\forall$  can never be the child of any set of  $\exists$ . In contradiction to this rule, it assumes that profitability, as an attribute of all members, is the sole determinant of the justification for membership in realia class *a*. Therefore, that which is not profitable is not real because it does not “exist” by this rule.

What, then, of simulacra class *b*? A simulacrum is defined here as a simulation of reality regarded as being “more real” than that which can be verified. Does this mean that that which is not profitable is a member of simulacra class *b*? In the consumer society the universe of discourse ( $\forall$ ) is determined by the existential attribute ( $\exists$ ) of profitability.

This confusion is the fundamental contradiction of a society based on nothing more than the simulation of a universal discourse ( $\forall$ ) as realia class *a*, when in fact it is simulacra class *b* ( $\exists$ ). Therefore, this contradiction can be expressed as  $(\forall) = (\exists)$ , violating Aristotle’s rule of thought which states that  $A \neq B$ , or that A does not and cannot equal B. Here is the essential law of noncontradiction.

The rest of this book could be considered an explanation and justification for this proposition regarding consumerism and the simulated “reality” it impresses upon the subject through the subject’s voluntary abdication.

To further investigate this claim, we begin with the idea that the singularity of the event of (0 / 1) is, by ratio, the smaller part of reality. And that while coming-into-being must be the parent of all events and things, through language as much as thought, it is more likely that reality consists mostly of redundant forms of these singularities which remain, nevertheless, unique. The corporate state’s desire for the perfect reproduction of events and things is not possible.

Time, as the *a priori*, marches on, with or without the subject and its precious civilization. In so doing it leaves a unique “time stamp” on all events from nano to macro. As they all arise from *le devenir*, or the coming-into-being, and as all things arise from these events, all events and things are unique. Even the myriad output of industrial society, ever striving for the perfect copy, reveals its gross singularity over time in the distinct signature of its decay.

But we must add that things are unique *to a point*. While there are no degrees of uniqueness—either a thing is or is not unique—the very possibility that anything could *not* be unique points to the psychological nature of the term. At the same time, the possibility of something being unique means that there is the possibility that something else is not unique. How do we *verify* that an event or thing is unique? Art experts are always on the alert for forgeries, which often enough pass for the real thing.

One might argue that by copying digital data we arrive as a perfect duplication of a thing, but then we must figure in that this copying must be done in time and that digital machines are by their very nature entirely dependent upon their clocks which, in order for the machine to work at all,

must mark off each second as unique in all of space and time! In so doing, all copies become a prime of their original, as in A, A', A", and so on.

A timestamp becomes part of the copy's metadata. Whatever metadata we assign it must then map to a string of characters combined in a unique way to produce yet another form of greater uniqueness as a statement. Furthermore, the system itself demands that *the name of* any one object must be at least one bit different from any other object to be considered data, otherwise it is just noise. We could also say that any string (byte) of characters (bits) is unique until it is not unique. When it is no longer unique, we could say that it no longer exists as data and may be overwritten. Herein we see the interplay between realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*. Based on this property, or attribute, of uniqueness, a thing comes in and out of being in terms of the rules of the system. If the system or ethical aesthetic happens to be consumerism, then that entity which earns a profit is unique; that which does not, is nonexistent and may be destroyed with impunity.

If there are three such objects in the data set it is easy enough to say that each is unique; but when we consider them in relationship to each other, we see that each has more than one identity—just as family members do. If an object has more than one identity, then it is not unique. To say that each identity is unique is nonsense, since even if this is true, the question arises as to which is “real.” Reality has the nasty property of being the singularity of all singularities. There is only one reality, making such terms as “virtual” reality, or “alternative” reality absurd. It is more accurately described as *simulated* reality, but such a description would put the product of VR at odds with what people consider reality to be, which is nearly almost entirely simulated except for, perhaps, death.

Since all objects are in relationship to each other, none is unique in this way except when abstracted from that relationship as the system of the sorting of the data demands from the metadata. Furthermore, as the data set expands at the rate of *x*, there is always the possibility that a singularity will arise as these relationships grow more intractably complex, erasing their uniform uniqueness and putting them all in jeopardy both as meaningless and erasable. The only possibility of a singularity, then, is if the entity is *uniquely unique* rather than *uniformly unique*.

Reality, pinioned as it is within the chaos of simulacra, naturally seeks to be uniquely unique. Its success or failure depends upon language, while the efficacy and meaningfulness of language depends upon the degree to which language consists of invalid synthetic statements. Consequently, whether we experience reality or a simulation as “life” depends upon the logic of the language we use to interpret, describe, process, and construct it.

But what is this singularity? Paradoxically (or we might even say ironically) under such a regime two events, things, or objects may arise that are *not* unique; therefore, a singularity arises which is singular *because it is not singular*. And herein lies Russell's caveat regarding  $x$  being a member of class  $a$  if and only if it is *not* a member of it.

In other words, if members of a class are uniformly unique, then that member of the class that is *not* unique is therefore unique for not being unique. While this is indeed an example of paradoxical language, it is also a critical attribute of all that comes into being (*le devenir*) and consequently may be regarded as a member of realia class  $a$ . That which might be called "uniformly unique," then, becomes a candidate for membership in simulacra class  $b$ .

Consequently, the only way we may accommodate this possibility is through iteration and redundancy. Moreover, when we consider the efficiency of any system, particularly thermodynamic systems, we find that an endless coming-into-being of unique singularities would result in total entropy; linguistically it would be like all words and sentences eventually coming to mean the same thing because the only quality they possessed was that *they were different in the same way*.

A case can be made for nearly all utterances being the same on the deep-structure level, such as in a statement where the structure is n-v-n (noun-verb-noun). "I am a teacher" is, on the deep structure level, the material equivalent of "A teacher is a teacher" and I am I," or, as Aristotle would have it, the rule of thought that states that all tautologies  $A = A$  are always true. And while this truth cannot be refuted, it is trivial and therefore, we might say, meaningless. For something to be true it need not be meaningful, which is expressed in the Latin word "sic," or "thus."

Thusness, while always true, exists with or without consciousness and therefore meaning. As such, it need not be subject to any cognitive process. Therefore, the fabric of reality need only consist of endlessly redundant events punctuated by singularities while at the same time, so to speak, each redundancy is unique because of its "time stamp." It is like the cynical saying that "all men are the same; they just have different faces, so women can tell them apart." The differences are trivial while the copies are redundant and tautological.

Taking the above into consideration, then, what can we say about the psychological and linguistic reality of the way people use the idea that  $2 + 2 = 4$ ? It is not necessary to get mystical or even talk of "other dimensions" to say that while this arithmetic proposition is true (T), its relative T must be considered in the light of whether a person refers to the proposition as an existential ( $\exists$ ) or universal ( $\forall$ ) proposition. There is no doubt about it:  $2 +$

$2 = 4$  is part of a universe of discourse ( $\forall$ ) that is true throughout the universe. And it is this universal proposition O'Brien seeks to undermine in Winston's psyche in Room 101.

However, as we have seen, Kant challenges the *a priori* verifiability of the proposition's predicate of  $2 + 2$ . Until we perform the calculation, it remains unverified. While this may seem silly with such small numbers, and in an equation of addition at that, we could easily enlarge the numbers astronomically and make it a matter of division and possibly even fractions, in which case it would take some work to verify. If the number were large enough—as they are indeed in encryption schemes—then the amount of time needed to verify may be so great that it pushes what we assume to be a universal into an existential.

If no human being could live long enough to receive the verification, and if the machines humans use to calculate cannot operate on their own long enough to complete the operation, then we must admit that there is the possibility that  $2 + 2$  does not equal 4 *under all conditions at all times* because we have not been able to verify it. Herein lies the relationship between what is termed modularity in mathematics to the universe of discourse in what Peirce calls second-order predicate logic, a correlation explained below.

If we assume from the start that  $2 + 2$  is true in an existential set, then it is easily verifiable. Anything can be true in such a modularity provided the rules allow it. This is precisely what O'Brien attempts to impress upon Winston. The difference, though, between Big Brother's set and one that allows for the rules of arithmetic is that arithmetic rules have a basis in objective laws of quantification.

But that is as far as it goes, for the whole idea of "2" (as distinct from 1 and 3) is in part psychological. Furthermore, there is no reason why the rules of an existential set that allows for objective quantification cannot also allow for more subjective, creative, imaginary, and even mystical rules. After all, it is not constrained by the rigors of universal discourse. Never mind that Cantor proved that arithmetic is not a perfect system.

If the subject has never been introduced to the distinction between ( $\exists$ ) and ( $\forall$ ), nor the possibilities of realia class *a* versus simulacra class *b*, nor of that between a valid and invalid proposition, then what is to be expected from the subject's assessment of experience? While anything seems possible in the face of such a lack of analytic equipment, what we can rely on is that the subject will inevitably assume that the attributes of the members of an existential set are *universal*.

As a result, we are left with the fatal contradiction of  $\exists = \forall$ , which is the material equivalent of  $A = B$ . While we might imagine that the subject

would soon employ the heuristics needed to rectify this conflict ( $A = A \vee B = B, \sim A = B$ ), it is not to be; society has failed to equip the subject with all but the most rudimentary and ineffectual heuristics.

While this is in part by design, it is not by conspiracy. Rather, it reflects what the subject itself desires: an infantile psychology where all problems are solved by paid “experts” and the state. To be a good citizen of any civilization, one must assume that society will define reality in such a way as to benefit the metastasis, or continued growth and “progress,” of that civilization. This is not a conspiracy, but a symptom or expression of a burgeoning empire. Therefore, it is the subject’s duty to identify with this mission or perish. Meantime, civilization, which is always striving for empire, acts as the subject’s *existential set* while claiming to be not only the universal set, but the ever-elusive set of all sets. What drives its metastasis is its lust to become an empire. Like all cults, the cult of civilization is in a state of perpetual insecurity because of the presence of other emerging cults challenging its collective egoic supremacy. Therefore, these challengers must be snuffed out by any means necessary, be it economic, technological, or military, before they get the upper hand. This laborious snuffing eventually eats up the would-be empire’s treasure and labor until it reaches a critical catastrophe.

What the subject desires most in this chaotic process is that its mode of verification (such as it is) overcomes all possible conflict, dissonance, and contradiction. As this is not possible in an analytic mode, then, the subject is thereby forced to embrace invalid synthetic propositions. Meantime, it supports the systematic vilification and suppression of any social attempt at instilling effective analytics and heuristics, thus setting the stage for the empire’s final tragic drama.

They key, though, is the invalid synthetic proposition. It has the convenient ability to adapt to any situation, and the magic power to make simulation seem real and reality seem like a simulation. Such a desire, though, forces the subject to rely on unverified verification, emotional and commercial appeals, inherited notions, and, of course, flawed logic.

Obviously, ignoring reality, or making believe it is not real, does not make it go away. The social result is the confusion, or rather conflation, of analytic and synthetic propositions. Like a disease, this unholy alliance inevitably creeps into every domain of society, from the highest peaks of research academe to the lowest depths of violent street culture. For civilization to function as a *hope cult*, it must normalize category errors into the hallmark, rather than the bane, of reason.

Naturally, this affront to reality has profound consequences for the individual, society, and civilization. But even the catastrophes which follow

soon enough upon this maladaptation to reality are incorporated into the agenda and discursive narrative of the corporate state with the full and hearty approval of the mass of subjects comprising its polity, representative or not.

While the social effects are clear—as they populate what is regarded as “the news” in modern states—the correlation between the existential set and modularity is less obvious but no less significant. The circumstances of the successful proof of Fermat’s last theorem by Andrew Wiles touch upon some points of modularity which make the case for what can be considered as the existential mechanics of the relationship between the existential ( $\exists$ ) and the universal ( $\forall$ ) sets. While his ultimate solution is dauntingly complex, it was his ingenious solution to a simpler problem that had stood in the way of a proof for centuries since the death of Pierre de Fermat in 1665 that provided the breakthrough needed to produce the proof.

This solution also gives us a glimpse into how an existential set can serve as a universal set with nearly all the functionality of a universe of discourse. By taking the matter into the existential from the linguistic, we enter upon the phenomenology of the relationship between realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*.

Fermat left the world with his final theorem perhaps as a challenge to future generations to keep pressing analytic heuristics to its limit rather than allow it to lapse into inherited dogma. While the theorem itself has little use in terms of a practical application, Wiles’ proof helped bring modularity into the foreground of mathematics over 350 years later. It is modularity which has made it possible to work with data sets of enormous and complex scale, and to add what Peirce calls an “abductive” method of proof to induction and deduction.

However, for our purposes here, modularity provides a suitable mechanical model to understand how a “world” consisting of simulacra class *b* ( $\exists$ ) can function as realia class *a* ( $\forall$ ), making it possible for  $A = B$  to appear “true,” which we will notate with a lower-case “t” (t).

Fermat’s theorem states that  $A^n + B^n = C^n$  where (n) is any multiple greater than 2. This simple algebraic equation nevertheless presents a seemingly insurmountable challenge in terms of proving that it is true (T). To *prove* the theorem, we must account for *every multiple of 3 or greater, ad infinitum* ... or not prove it at all. Of course, the proof we refer to here is mathematical. Therefore, it does not allow for the liberties of, say, first-order propositional logic where a syllogism might do. For example, the famous syllogism “all men are mortal, Socrates is a man, therefore, Socrates is mortal,” seems proof enough of his mortality until we demand a mathematical proof.

The problem lies in the predicate “all men are mortal.” The “proof” of Socrates’ mortality depends upon the predicate being “true,” but there is nothing in the syllogism to prove it positively. There is much more to say about this problem, but it would lead us astray here. Let it suffice to say that the proof Fermat’s theorem demands, does not allow for any *implicative* proofs such as “all men are mortal.”

All meromorphic (partial) propositions must be proven first before we may prove the holomorphic (whole) theorem. Well, then, in the case of Socrates we find ourselves in the situation where we must account for “all men” past, present, and future, including Jesus, which presents obvious problems just as do all multiples of 3 or greater.

The breakthrough for Wiles came in the form of the Taniyama-Shimura Conjecture which states that rational elliptic curves are indeed modular forms, or for all rational elliptic curves there is a corresponding modular form. In particular, it is the meromorphic property of modular forms which allows them to function, under certain circumstances, as a part of a greater whole in an equation or a theorem (such as in a gamma function  $[\Gamma]$  on an infinitely complex plane). Therefore, what is true of the meromorphic form will be true of the holomorphic form, particularly when we apply this correlation to a modular form which possesses a strict internal symmetry and is therefore not subject to distortion and, consequently, infinite variation.

Finally, it is possible to reduce the infinity of “all multiples of 3 or greater” to a discrete pole, forming what is sometimes referred to as “clock arithmetic” where any number (of 3 or greater) will suffice as infinity not analogically but in truth, thus serving as a positive proof of a theorem.

The application of modular arithmetic using elements of the Tanayama-Shimura Conjecture allowed Wiles to treat a universal proposition as an existential one while proving that it was universal. The difference between the phenomenological quality of Wiles’ proof and the  $A = B$  of simulacra class  $b$  is that in the latter the whole is not holomorphic, it is *holographic*. As such, it is a symmetrical and identical *imago* (idea) of realia class  $a$ .

Furthermore, by imposing its own clock arithmetic upon infinity, simulacra class  $b$  manages to reduce death (the infinitely small existential moment, or  $\aleph_0$ ) to either 1) the possibility of metaphysical immortality in the religious sense, of 2) the possibility of physical immortality through medical technology “in the future.” Either way, the seduction of immortality is enough to make the subject abandon all desire for the truth (T) of its own egoic mortality, which is *inevitable* and therefore “the worst thing in the world.”



More needs to be said about the beauty of clock arithmetic. Rather than multiplying 2 by itself to get 4, which is only true if any number greater than 0 may increase infinitely, Wiles worked within a mathematical system which was “modular” because it is bounded by a limit which can then be applied to all successive iterations of itself: the meromorphic pole. In an infinite system containing only three numbers, multiplying 2 by itself produces 1 rather than 4 (as the system is infinitely cyclic).

This procedure can also reverse the category error typically made in the psychological language of thought where an  $\exists$  is treated as a  $\forall$ . While O’Brien loses the battle with Winston when Winston says, “Four! Four! What else can I say? Four!” to O’Brien’s assertion that  $4 = 5$ , he wins the war when Winston nominates Julia, his lover, to be punished for his crimes. Therefore, O’Brien’s methodology does manage to reduce Winston’s stubbornly universal ethical aesthetic down to Big Brother’s existential one of putting the paranoia of the state before all considerations of personal love, loyalty, and, ultimately, sovereignty.

Furthermore, there are parallels to the function of the categorical exclusion (CE) where the value of infinity is translated from  $(0 / 1)$  to  $(1 / n)$ . We know that  $(1 / n)$  can only lead us to a certain integer, as “infinity” is imaginary when we refer to the relationship between any number  $(n)$  greater than 1. The categorical exclusion, when considered from the position of Russell’s paradox regarding  $x$  being a member of class  $a$  if and only if it is *not* a member, provides the *compression* of infinity necessary to make verifiable statements about reality which by and large confound the notions and truisms everyday “knowledge” is based on.

This “knowledge” suffices as a gamma function on an infinitely complex plane; whether we can say that its truth-value is subject to proof (verification) depends up whether what *appears to be* the holomorphic plane can be positively identified as realia class  $a$  or simulacra class  $b$ . The film *The Matrix* (1999) neatly summarizes the polarities as the “red pill” (realia class  $a$ ) and the “blue pill” (simulacra class  $b$ ). Those who swallow the blue pill have chosen the *holographic* plane over the *holomorphic*. However, as reality is indeed the set of all sets (or realia class  $a'$ ), then it includes the set of class  $b$  which, in the schema of the complex holomorphic plane is therefore merely a gamma function ( $\Gamma = \exists$ ).

Nevertheless, the subject that has chosen to take the blue pill and abdicate its sovereignty tacitly assumes that the holographic plane is the holomorphic plane ( $\exists = \forall$ ), a delusion which must be constantly reinforced by thought and language through invalid synthetic propositions ( $A = B$ ). Otherwise, a “glitch in the Matrix,” as the movie states, occurs through the constant pressure realia class  $a$  exerts on the flimsy nothingness of

simulacra class *b*, causing the subject to doubt the social construct of reality transmitted by the hope cult of civilization. (Note that “matrix” means “womb” in Latin.)

These so-called glitches may bring about a kind of awakening of the subject’s conscious will, provided it has not atrophied beyond the possibility of functioning in any other way than its abdication dictates. The paradoxical situation of the coexistence of the holomorphic and the holographic becomes possible and verifiable where a unique event can be iterated *if and only if it remains unique*. The introduction of blockchain logic in digital systems strives to institute positively verifiable uniqueness into the corporate state’s eternal quest for the perfect copy. This technology positively confounds the ethical aesthetic of consumerism and hegemonic control which strives for the eternal iteration of whatever generates the greatest power and profits.

Variation is suspect and dangerous. It is for this reason that nearly all discourse in the media is now based on *stereotype* and *phenotype*, which can be conjured up by the desires of the consumer and then transmitted electronically because they do not require the laborious and phenomenological “gene” of reality in the process of *le devenir*. They have replaced the *genotype* which cannot be faked (due to its “DNA” profile or private encryption key), and which may only be positively verified to the exclusion of the invalid synthetic proposition. In fact, the matter has been reversed: what must be verified existentially is now the “fake” because of its remoteness, inconvenience, and suspect variability and what is conjured up out of nothing is considered the “real thing” because it is given the valorization of the corporate state’s technological apparatus—the new chariot of the gods.

Furthermore, to qualify for membership in simulacra class *b*, an entity must have the requisite degree of *verisimilitude*, variously defined, that makes it “more real” than the real thing. For example, “AI” robotics strives to create an android that is “more human than human” by deliberately building into its programmed behavior *randomness*—as if what characterizes human behavior is its mechanical, unconscious, flailing about in the precincts of reality.

The simulation of reality, AI or otherwise, is a matter of the generation of a *semantic surface*, which above has been described as a “complex plane,” a service which language readily performs. But this surface must “give off” attributes inherited from realia class *a*, or that which may be objectively verified as extant without the imposition of language and imagination. Verisimilitude appears throughout art history as an aesthetic value engaged in a *pas de deux* with idealism. Cultures vacillate between

valuing realism (the concrete) or idealism (the abstract), usually depending upon how miserable patrons of the arts are. “Good times” tend to favor realism when reality is pleasant, whereas “bad times” tend to favor idealism and romanticism because, life having become *unpleasant*, fantasy provides an escape from it.

The term *verism* describes the aesthetic value of verisimilitude in Roman sculpture of the late Republic between 147-30 BCE, which favored likenesses of important persons with their “warts and all” rather than idealized busts. The aesthetic developed to a point where the texture of living flesh, and the subject’s human flaws, lent gravitas to an otherwise marble physiognomy.

As we can see, then, greater verism allows for what might be called greater symmetry between representation and life itself. The Greek story of the Cyprian king Pygmalion, who falls in love with a marble statue of a woman, which is later animated by Aphrodite into a “real” woman, provides a convenient analog. However, when applied to the holographic representation of reality in the form of simulacra class *b*, verism becomes a semantic surface supported by invalid synthetic propositions about the nature of reality. The most famous of these holographic claims is that it is possible (i.e. “real”) for the ego to live on forever, with all of its foibles, selfishness, and mental illness, in Heaven by the side of Jesus and the Apostles and angels—as if they would welcome such intrusions.

Such mirroring of reality presents challenges for the otherwise primitive, analog, and universally untutored mind of the subject. Therefore, for the time being, let *x* serve as the inheritable attributes of realia. The semantic surface of simulacra *inherits* realia’s verisimilitude in the form of verism (*x*) when the subject abdicates its sovereignty to the corporate state. At the same time, the subject embraces the invalid synthetic proposition as The Truth, relegating valid synthetic propositions and even verifiable analytic propositions to the semantic dustbin.

In effect, then, the subject *assigns* verisimilitude to the simulation of reality by subordinating it to the place once held by childish fantasy and the raving of crazy people. However, for this magic trick to work, much time, money, and power is needed. Therefore, the detritus of reality, in a rather raw form, falls upon the heads of the poor and powerless who are least able to deal with it. Reaching out for the nearest remedy, they often turn to drugs and alcohol which always seem to be in ready supply thanks to the mediocrity and impotence of the state to control them in any meaningful way. Dark days descend upon the social class of those who cannot maintain the economic status needed to provide the consumer goods and digital

gadgetry simulacra class *b* requires to be considered “more real than reality.”

Despite the inheritance of verism by the semantic surface of the complex plane of simulacra, it remains insubstantial. Holographic rather than holomorphic, it is maintained by the voltage of consumerism and the narcotic distractions of the entertainment industry. Therefore, the “plane of ideas” belongs more to the *ideal* than the *real*. And as the ideal belongs to the ego’s idea (imago) of itself, it also belongs to the most rudimentary stage of psychological development of infantile narcissism. This matter is pursued in some depth later. What matters to use now, here, is the possibility of mimesis, or the mimicking of reality, which up until now has also been called simulation.

Simulation belongs to *mimesis* and therefore what Lacan describes as the *spectral* (Ideal-I) state of what he calls the “mirror stage” of early personality development. (This, too, is discussed further later in this essay.) As a phenomenon apart from the development of the psyche, mimesis need not possess inherited attributes. It only needs to *reflect* them. Simulacra, however, must be independent of mimesis, as they do not imitate things but are things in themselves. To attain this exalted status among what Kant calls the “manifold” certain attributes must pass on in the form of inheritance from realia to simulacra.

The chief attribute they seek to manage the process, however, is *meaning*, which is why we say that the surface is *semantic*. If simulacra were meaningless, they would immediately cease to exist. Therefore, they must borrow (inherit) meaning from realia the way a hermit crab commandeers a vacant shell from a snail. Therefore, we can say that realia class *a*, as the parent state, passes down certain attributes (*x*, in the form of verism) to simulacra class *b*, as the child state, through the medium at first of *simulation*, but then of *imagination* alone. Once the threshold from realia to simulacra has been crossed, it is proper to say that the latter is entirely a member of what Lacan calls the “imaginary order” of experience.

As we escalate the relationship between 1 and 0 into sets with dimensions of being without attribute (*n*, where *n* is any number greater than 1), the *x* of Russell’s class (set) *a* becomes the least element of a non-empty subset of a well-ordered set. As a result, the modularity of a subset serves as the existential ( $\exists$ ) of the greater universal ( $\forall$ ) class *a*. Here, then, the *x* of verism and the *x* of the non-empty subset merge into one, which forms *x'*, or *x*-prime.

In *x'*, realia class *a* and simulacra class *b* exchange semantic positions in the personal and collective psyche. In so doing, invalid synthetic propositions and verifiable analytic propositions also exchange position not

only in the language (discourse) of the subject, but also in its thought process. Soon enough, social pressure and the reinforcement of public discourse, infotainment (news), education, and government power propagate the evangel of the category error as *the only orthodox logic*. War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.

Once logic has been inverted, Russell's class *a* could also be a non-empty subset of another greater set (*b*), and so on. The relationships are scalable to prevent the problem of  $2 + 2 = 4$  ever being "false" as an existential proposition in arithmetic, just as the proof of Fermat's theorem must be "true" for every multiple of A, B, and C, greater than 2 without imposing the necessity of having to prove T for any and all multiples. The least element in the categorical exclusion is, of course, 0, or more precisely  $\aleph_0$  which, like a *quantum* in physics, is always the smallest quantity (such as electromagnetic radiation) possible given set S, which is here the set of all sets. Therefore, any other element of the set is greater than 0 if it is a positive integer.

The problem of *le devenir* is solved in this arrangement because anything—even the simulacra of mediated reality—is greater than 0(x). But the new problem arises of the possibility of a number no longer being "unique" in the psychological sense because it contains within it the possibility of recursion to itself later. Moreover, the field of the set soon crowds up with redundant iterations and recursions which nevertheless bring with them the demand to be considered "unique." This is a psychological problem because the ego considers itself unique *under all circumstances* and goes into a kind of apoplectic shock if it suspects that it is not.

The reason for this terror is that the sense of its "special" place in the universe is one and the same as its sense of its own immortality. It sees others around it dying, arousing its terror of nonbeing. "I am not like that" becomes the discourse of its immortality "because *I* do not die. *They* do." And while reason tells it that all other beings from the start of time have faced death the ego nevertheless considers itself to be the one and only exception—in all of past and future history. Therefore, any form of analytical thinking that might bring it to the reasonable conclusion that it is mortal is to be reviled, stamped out, persecuted, and silenced.

From this hubris arises the curious phenomenon in fashion where everyone tries to be unique in the same way based on a style that was invented by someone other than themselves. Under such a regime, one is unique *if and only if* one is unique in the way that *all elements of the set* are "unique." Again, this raises the possibility of being "uniquely unique" or "uniformly unique." Such a distinction is possible because a false V

manifests through a process of collective identity disseminated chiefly through the discourse of mass media and the indoctrination of education. However, this same process of normalization creates an anomaly in the form of a singularity which is, in fact, uniquely unique.

Just as numbers greater than 9 cannot exist (arithmetically) without 0, elements of any subset cannot be considered well-ordered without a *least element* which, by being “least,” is therefore unique. The relation of all other elements becomes one of *succession*. Soon enough the least element becomes the gene of a new modularity which then becomes a non-empty subset with its own attributes.

A discourse may spring up instantly under such conditions because it need only apply to one element of the subset. “All members of  $x$  race have  $y$  attribute.” From this principle we may manufacture the stereotypes and phenotypes populating the realm of simulacra. All other elements of that subset, being iterations and recursions of that one element, are quickly infected with what is popularly called a *meme*, which is a kind of itinerant extension of the mimetic principle.

Nevertheless, despite this metastatic process of manufacturing a simulated universe of stereotypes and phenotypes, simulacra maintain their dependence upon the inheritance of attributes from realia. Therefore, such rules as 2 and 2 make 4, verified or not, remain the kernel of the dogma of the imaginary order. In this way scientific charlatans and wiseacres keep the research funding flowing into universities so that they may pay their bills and live a good life.

Attempts to invade the territory of the semantic plane of simulacra are met with all the heavy artillery these mountebanks can muster. Particularly, they fear the replacement of imaginary infinity ( $1/n$ ) with the simply binary of being and nonbeing ( $0/1$ ). By taking away the subject’s cherished imaginary infinity, we impose upon it the mortality of cats and dogs, which its ego finds intolerable.

For the ego it is not enough to be born ( $0/1$ ); following that event the ego must persist *ad infinitum* ( $1/n$ ). The subject finds it suffocating to think that numbers may recur, that perhaps life is a matter of “eternal return,” and that if anything dies it is the ego, even if the body can be kept alive indefinitely.

While it may seem that a clock cycle could be a reassuring sign that we live forever—though that “forever” is an infinite recursion—the ego finds it to be more like a millstone grinding away at the harvest of its youth, leaving only the chaff of old age in which to wallow, in perpetuum. It wants infinite extension of its youthful domain, as time, space, power, and most of all *empire*. Therefore, the corporate state must find a way to form a

simulated reality that *seems* infinite to the point of verisimilitude but is in fact a modular plane comprised of semantic panels manufactured by invalid synthetic propositions.

In this way, the subject's inevitable observation of what appear like other realities ceases to be threatening. Instead, they are just seen to be "wrong" and dismissed, or (more often) attacked, as anomalous threats. For example, Islam is bad, and Christianity is good; or theism is bad, and atheism is good; or communism is bad, and capitalism is good, and so on. To the ego in each of these domains, it is simply not possible that the designated "other" has anything to offer in terms of humanity except a perpetual threat to its quest for immortality and absolute empire.

Before we arrive at any further linguistic, ethical, social, and cultural implications of these ideas, there is still more to show regarding iteration and recursion. In our minds there are always two competing paradigms of experience: the *recursive* ( $1 \rightarrow 0^n$ ) and *iterative* ( $n + n + n + n \dots$ ). In both cases we crave and loathe the effects they produce.

We crave iterative experience because we want good things to keep happening, but we loathe it when "bad things" keep happening. We crave recursive experience when we want to "reset" events—for instance get remarried—, but we loathe them when we want perpetual "progress" toward the bigger, better, faster, richer, smarter, and more powerful.

However, seen from the strange semantic mélange of our twilight consciousness, they either look the same or compete for priority. Therefore, we tend to conflate them into one foggy farrago we call "experience." The result is that we regard experience as having a kind of "ratchet effect" where the identical process repeats, bringing it with it an increment of "progress" with each turn that we presume defies an eternal return. Things are "the same but different," an experiential program which fits neatly into the logic of an invalid synthetic proposition as  $A = B$ .

It seldom occurs to us that this may be an illusion caused by our interpretation of reality filtered through the simulacrum of our invalid synthetic thinking. For instance, all educational reform is a reform of a reform of a reform, and yet we imagine that with each iteration of "reform," whatever it may be, things mechanically get better with each turn of the screw. Why? Because wishful thinking would have it be so.

Technically, though, all that is necessary for either iteration or recursion is that we return to *at least* the point from which we started, *provided we refer to a certain and specific movement or event*. We casually regard the 12/24-hour cycle of the clock as always bringing us back to the same numerical point in real time. But we seldom regard the fact that this point is always subject to a prime: Point A, A', A" and so on because it is necessary

that each cycle advances us in the greater increment of the week, month, and year—however it is measured. “I wasted time, and now doth time waste me,” says King Richard II in Act V, Scene 5 of Shakespeare’s play. Therefore, time marches on, whether we measure it with clocks or the decay of radioactive isotopes.

Richard, nearing death, suddenly loathes the timelessness of unmeasured reality. “Ha, ha! keep time: how sour sweet music is, / When time is broke and no proportion kept! / So is it in the music of men’s lives.” He craves the comforting repetition of iteration and recursion, knowing that the curtain is about to fall on his act for the final time with no chance of either.

In the 12-hour clock, we must designate ante meridian (a.m.) or post meridian (p.m.) so that we may recycle the numbers twice daily, thanks in part to the base-60 number system ( $12 \times 5$ ) borrowed from the ancient Sumerian civilization. We can say, then, that we have been “brought back to the same place from which we started” except that that place *has a unique time stamp* on it. In other words, its *metadata* have changed without changing its value or quantity (24 hours from its last iteration). Therefore, invalid synthetic propositions offer us a way to reconcile our discontent with time’s relentless arrow by making such magical possibilities such as metaphysical or physical immortality seem within reach “in the future” if we are good enough or rich enough.

The ludicrous irony of modern medical technology is that it creates a social order where immortality for the ego in Heaven with God is for the poor, and immortality for the ego on earth with, one presumes, perpetual material pleasure is for the rich.

Naturally, time is not all that man must parcel up into quanta to feel that the universe is not just one great complicated holomorphic plane of disordered infinity. For example, a banknote has a serial number stamped on it unique to each individual note though all such objects have the same composition and value. Of course, it may be counterfeited, causing the “double spending” problem and obviating its uniqueness and therefore its value. This problem is solved by blockchain logic which, by enforcing digitally encrypted uniqueness that is phenomenologically impossible to duplicate, restores use-value to the unit but makes it impossible for us to hold it *as a thing in space-time*. Consequently, iteration becomes useless and intolerable if there is not some way to “prime” the iteration so that we may distinguish iteration A from B—a problem solved by rational numbers or integers in quantification (1, 2, 3 versus  $1 + 1 + 1$ ).

Recursion, conversely, is bound by its own *rule* of recursion. For example, Peano’s primitive axioms establish that 0 is a natural number. But



since they also establish that each natural number has a successor, all successive natural numbers are also natural.

While we can find analogs of recursion in the linguistic parsing of the deep structures of sentences, what concerns us here is the discourse iteration and recursion evoke from the *meaning* of those sentences. In the case of iteration, the emerging discourse may be called “progress”—the word which above all others defines the ethical aesthetic of the modern industrial-technological age and its politics. The discourse of progress is that the “mere passage of time” (and lots of frantic activity within that time) leads to an increase in all desirable qualities of civilization. But this invalid synthetic proposition merely serves as a cover for civilization’s quest for hegemonic empire. If it makes “progress” toward the goal of totalitarian domination, then it is *progressive*; if it does not, then it is atavistic or, worse, *conservative*.

But does the “mere passage of time” consist of iteration or recursion? It would be safe to say that both occur “in time” and that for there to be recursion we must have iteration. But the fact that they share the same space-time does not mean that with the *mere passage of time* things “ratchet” up into a more refined and “progressive” state that is “better” than the last. Iteration is the ritual of the simulacrum (i.e. A, A', A'') and recursion is the continual augmentation or permutation of itself to create another original (i.e. 0, 1, 2, 3, ...). If there is any “difference” between one iteration (A) and another (A') it is in the metadata assigned to it rather than in the language of its process or its intrinsic value or quantity.

It is in the metadata that the *verism* of simulacra lies as the semantic surface concealing the fact that compared to the manifold of realia class *a*, simulacra class *b* does not exist except as an idea. And this semantic surface consists entirely of invalid synthetic propositions. Whereas, recursion is a continual modification of itself, for instance adding or subtracting a number so that “no number can be the successor of itself.” But in such a case the value or quantity has changed as well, though the algorithm remains the same for each iteration. Therefore, recursion requires an iteration of the algorithm, but iteration in and of itself requires no effective procedure except the exact reproduction of itself.

In its egocentric vanity and hubris, however, civilization presumes that the vast coral reef of its accomplishments represents the ever-increasing wisdom of the ages in all matters—from government to technology. Just as the individual mistakes the existential for the universal and the synthetic for the analytic, civilization mistakes iteration for recursion.

We can play some games which show that what we mistake, psychologically, for *progress* in fact leaves us right where we started: with

a perpetually unfulfilled metastatic desire for *more* of whatever happens to be the object of our value system. Whether it is *more* political correctness, *more* plutocratic power, *more* wealth and possessions, *more* hegemony over our competitors and enemies, or *more* socialism, the invalid synthetic proposition upon which these quests are predicated is the same: the mere passage of time (and lots of frantic activity) results in “progress,” which is inherently, and de facto, “good.” This of course means that anything that does not stink of this progress is inherently, and de facto, “bad” and must be terminated.

The political and social consequences of the progress schema are obvious. They are the stuff of news, speeches, conferences, academic papers, and pulpits. However, they are played out on a more human and ubiquitous scale in the dramas manufactured and broadcast throughout world civilization in the name of “love” by the media apparatus of the official corporate state. Without these romantic dramas there would be no “news” in the forms of scandal and celebrity gossip.

We would be left with the dry-as-dust political pronouncements of the executive caste, public and private. Romantic drama is the foundation of the hopes, dreams, fantasies, and cynical mythologies of the public—despite their complaints about the prurient tabloid titillation they cannot live without. The media, for their part, willingly admit that without this dominant content they could not get the audience necessary to sell advertising and subscriptions and would therefore cease to exist.

Wholly state-run media, such as the modern-day forms of Ingsoc’s Minitru both West and East, have the prerogative of focusing on social issues or grain output regardless of the audience’s attraction to it since their funding is extracted from that audience, in part, at the point of a bayonet in the form of taxes and fees.

Nevertheless, romantic peccadillos are a significant part of the attraction and lure driving people to seek public office, power, wealth, and fame at any cost. Therefore, those upon whom “progress” relies the most are naturally also the most inclined to find themselves the subject of the media’s lust for the sins, big and small, of the personalities the public adores and reviles simultaneously. The media deduct, and the public inducts, whatever evidence can be found that the immortal gods are just as wretched and flawed as mere mortals.

As such, the games of love echo and entwine the great themes of history, literature, statecraft, and ambition. Certain types of games, however, can be scaled to global proportions where the survival of the species is at stake, such as the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union where the former “bet,” using game theory, that a massive military buildup of,

especially, nuclear weapons would bankrupt the latter as it sought to achieve parity or dominance.

If all is fair in love and war, as the saying goes, then it is equally true that love's casino has its winners and losers. In this most intimate of civilization's entanglements we may ask ourselves if any of the individuals involved ever attain the happiness—which we presume is the motivation for possession—they seek.

In the model game below, unfaithful spouses seeking happiness outside of their marriages must progress from unhappiness (0) to happiness (1), dispossession to possession, crossing the threshold of the categorical exclusion by possessing what they desire. "Happiness" here is defined as possessing what one desires. The purpose of this example is to show that the games comprising public discourse, particularly of the romantic sort, exhibit the same coming-into-being (*le devenir*) as the categorical exclusion (CE). Furthermore, that what we consider to be "happiness" is more a matter of possession and dispossession than of sovereignty and bondage.

While reading, it should be kept in mind that for simulacra class *b* to maintain its hegemony over realia class *a*, possession (and possessions) is strictly controlled by the corporate state by requiring abdication of one's sovereignty for access to the largesse of civilization, including food, water, housing, medication, and the work needed to get it. (The reader may skip over the Lovers' Game if the logic proves too tedious without jeopardizing understanding of the argument.)

Game 1 (establish basal relationships):

*a* and *x* establish a romantic relationship though *x* is married to *y*. Now *x* possesses both *a* and *y*. While *x* has *y* to lose if they are found out, *x* also has *y* to fall back upon if *a* no longer desires *x*. The game is asymmetrical because *x* is in a non-zero-sum game; if *x* loses *y* because of *a*, then *x* still has *a*; if *x* loses *a* because of *y*, then *x* still has *y*. *x* can only lose by losing both *a* and *y*, an outcome which has the least probability. (*y*, we may assume, is oblivious that the game is being played, but can nevertheless "win" by default if *a* resigns, though it can be argued that *y* is also in a non-zero-sum game because *y* possesses *x* one way or another.)

What effect do these relationships have on the numbers involved? Any player with "possession" has a value of 1. Provided *x* possesses both *a* and *y*, all players have a value of 1, which gives us the total score of 1, 1, 1. If *x* loses *y* because *y* discovers *x*'s relationship with *a*, then the scores is 1, 1, 0, since *x* still possesses *a* and *a* possesses *x*. If *y* leaves *x* because *x* will not give up *y*, then *x* still has *y* and the score does not change. The only potential remaining score is 0, 0, 0 where *a*, *x*, and *y* part ways, which is the least likely. The most likely score, given the instability and difficulty of

maintaining 1, 1, 1 for  $x$ , is 1, 1, 0. Either  $a$  or  $y$  will resign, bringing equilibrium to the equation. Therefore, in order of probability we have (1, 1, 0); (1, 1, 1); (0, 0, 0). We can say that “some” possession is most likely, total possession is less likely, and no possession at all is the least likely.

Game 2 (potential for non-empty set):

$a$  possesses  $x$ , and but is married to  $b$ , as  $x$  is married to  $y$ . Now the game is symmetrical. The symmetry of the game is that  $a$  and  $x$  possess a lover and are both in a non-zero-sum game individually, even if one of them loses a lover (assuming only one lover may win or lose another lover per play, and there are only three plays). The problem is now one of negation.

Set  $[(a + b) = (x + y)]$  shows a non-zero-sum game where the subtraction of one value from each subset leaves a non-empty set with the least value remaining (1). As subsets of a larger set, the sum is now zero for both subsets. In both subsets,  $a$  and  $x$  have an equal chance of losing  $b$  or  $y$  and therefore crossing the threshold between from non-zero to zero-sum.

Game 3 (introduce logical disjunction):

In the third and last game, either  $a$  or  $x$  loses either  $b$  or  $y$  ( $a \vee x, b \vee y$ ). The problem here is one of negation and not progression, as “either/or” ( $\vee$ ) forces a zero-sum outcome. The progression of  $a$  to the non-zero-sum position creates the possibility of either  $a$  or  $x$  losing a partner in the last play. (As this outcome is undetermined, we can forgo plotting any probability.)

In conclusion, the progression from games 1 to 3 results in the sum of 0 in Game 3. Zero is a “reset,” being the result of iterations which neither gain nor lose value despite their experience in the game. The quest for romantic happiness here—the basis of almost all commercial propositions—is by design eternally frustrated through the necessity of possession, while desire itself can only remain as desire if it is not extinguished in the ritual of possession. Throughout all three games statistical inference points to what might be termed the “compromised” outcome remaining the greatest probability: (1, 1, 0) or (1, 0, 0), with (1, 1, 1), and (0, 0, 0) always remaining less probable.

Another example can be drawn from Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.<sup>10</sup> We may call this the PQR Game after the names of the three columns in the table (which will not be given here in table form). Before we take a closer look at the implications of the PQR game, however,

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<sup>10</sup> Wittgenstein, *TL-P*, 65.

it is important to consider what significance infinite *regression*, such as we find in Zeno's Paradox, has to the idea of infinite *progression*.

In the Lovers' Game above, progression (or "progress") is revealed to be a fallacy if we define progression as the increase (or decrease) of rational numbers. Of course, some of the most famous examples of numerical progression as fallacy are two of Zeno's paradoxes where a value's progression is negated by infinite regression ( $2 / 1 = 1$ ,  $1 / .5 = .5$ ,  $.5 / .25 = .25$ ,  $.25 / .125 = .125$ , and so on), or is taken as a discrete event (such as the point at which a missile is in flight) apart from whatever position it may have occupied or may occupy. In the first paradox, the distance from *A* to *B* is traversed by half of the total distance, and then half of the remaining distance, and then half of that, and so on. Therefore, paradoxically, one never reaches *B* from *A* but is always traversing half the remaining distance of the remaining distance. In the second, if we ask where a missile is in its journey from *A* to *B*, we are obliged to treat it as if it were stationary. "It is half way there" we say, but at the event of utterance it is somewhere else, even if we have timed its trajectory in synchrony with a timepiece based on the data we had at the time of launch. Therefore, our statement is false.

But since we have already agreed that it is in motion, we either must say that we 1) do not know where it is, which is false since, presumably, we can see it; 2) that we cannot know where it is, which is also false, since we can know its relative position, for example on radar; or 3) that it has reached some specific point in its journey, which is also false at the moment of utterance because it has since moved on.

Zeno's infinite regression paradox, and the location-velocity paradox known in quantum mechanics as the Heisenberg undecidability principle, is brought up in a unique context in Lacan's description of the mirror stage when he mentions "the coming-into-being (*le devenir*) of the subject *asymptotically* [*italics added*]." <sup>11</sup> In other words, the personality appears on the scene of reality (*x*) as a rectilinear curve (*y*), at first oblique to it and then ever gradually more parallel but never touching (intersecting) the topology of the social space of the *other*.

Like a body moving through space in the way described by Zeno, the establishment of one's identity in the earliest stages of ego development always retains an element of disintegration. Like the oblique *asymptote* (or "hockey stick" curve) of matter attempting the speed of light (*c*), the subject will always be getting ever closer to the other, but will never touch it, will never be one with it.

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<sup>11</sup> Lacan, Jacques, "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," *Écrits, A Selection*. Alan Sheridan, trans. (U.K.: Associated Book Publishers Ltd., 1949).

Matter cannot attain (c) velocity while remaining matter, though it may approach the velocity of light in an Eleatic infinite progression where it comes infinitely closer without achieving it. In thermodynamics, this creates a “catastrophe” where the impossibility of something becoming infinitely hot is mathematically “possible” (but physically impossible) provided we apply the Rayleigh-Jeans Law and omit any possibility of the quantization, and therefore self-regulation, of energy.

Although  $y$  may go to infinity, and although it may have started at an oblique trajectory to  $x$ , the two never intersect and therefore never come together in any meaningful way. The asymptote of the Ultraviolet Catastrophe (UC) resulting from the application of the Rayleigh-Jeans Law to the corresponding temperature and frequency of radiation led to the establishment of quantum mechanics. While quantum mechanics stands as a refutation of the UC, it cannot help us solve, analogically, Lacan’s problem of our incapacity to merge *with* the other in the development of personality. How, then, is it possible for us to abdicate our sovereignty to another? The fact is that it is not possible.

We immediately run into an asymptote. Undaunted by the limits of reality, the hegemonic powers of the corporate state nevertheless demand full abdication. To what do we owe its confidence and courage in the face of the impossible? Well, *anything* is possible in the world of simulacra where the invalid synthetic proposition reigns supreme. That is its beauty. That is its allure, to the subject that, surrounded by the mass of other abdicated or abdicating subjects, cannot but help be swept away by the social tide and out into the sea of abdication.

But as mentioned earlier, abdication can only be *given*, not *taken*, just as power can only be *taken*, not *given*. In the hegemony’s quid pro quo, though, the subject imagines that the hegemony is “taking” its sovereignty, albeit in exchange for the subject being “given” power, by proxy, by the state—whether it wants it or not. This is the quintessential illusion of the matrix. The sour-puss subject will mount hyperbolic ideological campaigns against this alleged theft of its sovereignty using *the apparatus that the hegemony does indeed own and control*. The hegemony, for its part, considers this a monstrous display of ingratitude for the power that it “gave” (vested in) the subject of full access to the networks, digital gadgetry, and consumer debt that make its campaign of infantile contradiction possible. The nerve of this puny rascal!

Nevertheless, one’s relationship to others, and therefore the mass of subjects known collectively as “the people” or polity or nation, remains in every literal sense superficial. Fantasies of national unity and so forth must be generated by the tireless propaganda of the state and its commercial

media apparatus. One merely skims the surface of society, trapped in a nightmarish asymptote characterized by Aesop's fable of the fox and the grapes, where the fox can never reach the grapes.

Or better yet, like the monkey trap where the monkey can grab the orange through an orange-sized hole in the box but cannot remove it when it is grasped in its paw. Consequently, the monkey, not willing to let go of the orange, gets trapped and eaten. As such, then, the relationship between oneself and realia, and between others and oneself, is strictly topological, confined to the spatial dimensions of the holomorphic plane.

Frustrated, the infantile subject turns to the parental state and its commercial banking apparatus for salvation from a life of monadic isolation and sovereign responsibility and self-determination—the two things it hates and dreads the most because the ego realizes that under such conditions it must perish at death. Therefore, life on the complex holomorphic plane of realia must be abdicated in favor of much greater degrees of freedom available in the realm of the holographic plane of simulacra where old age is treated as a disease that can be “cured.” Once cured, eternal life ensues.

The holographic plane is comprised of conjoining and discrete Hilbert spaces of finite dimensions. The Hilbert space meant here is a Euclidean space of three-dimensional vectors, which we will give the standard notation of  $\mathbb{R}^3$ , producing the dot product of  $xy$  which, we will assume, gives us a real number  $n$ . The degree of freedom most coveted in these spaces is their mathematical potential to assume any Euclidean dimension needed to manifest the illusion of reality. In this way, it is said, the holographic plane “inherits” the Euclidean boundaries of the holomorphic plane, but without the natural limitations the universe otherwise imposes on the hapless citizen of civilization's empires.

None of this is possible, however, without making a sacrifice of one's sovereignty, as it is linked, inextricably, to the realm of realia and therefore its annoying, boring Euclidean limitations, including death. The brave new world of holographic simulacra tiled with fantastic reflections of the subject's narcissistic desires for unending pleasure, consumerism, and wish fulfillment provides the distraction, or “misdirection,” necessary for the corporate state to operate with freedom and impunity. This is not to say that the subject does not willingly, knowingly, deliberately, intentionally, and even *lovingly* enter into this Faustian bargain with the purveyors of the holographic plane of simulacra. Far from it. It is the subject's most fervent, cherished, sought-after hope to leave this nasty, brutish, and short life behind for the unlimited glories of the holographic space—at any price, even the sacrifice of its fellows, far and near.

What the subject hates perhaps even more than death of the ego is *freedom*, particularly the freedom of others. Freedom makes the subject's fellows become unmanageable and unpredictable. Worse, it makes it more difficult to enslave them, which is the subject's ultimate *objet de désir*. The enslaved subject does not want to be free; rather, it wants the same *freedom to enslave* it sees that its hegemonic masters have which, as a slave, it has not. And it wants this freedom to enslave protected by a powerful, militaristic, totalitarian state. It only asks that it not be disturbed with information about and images of the negative effects this choice may have on those who are on the surface of or beyond the subject's narcissistic bubble. Therefore, all news is sanitized to prevent such disturbance, while at the same time feeding the subject ever more intense distractions from the ugly surface of reality it intuitively senses lies just beyond the veneer of civilization.

These "tiles" are what we come to know as the social order. For example, one tile is "rich people." Another is "terrorists." They consist of stereotypes, phenotypes, and artificially engineered genotypes. As they are readymade, they may be reproduced  $n$  times until their complexity reaches such a level of incomprehensibility that they begin to seem unique. This plane, constructed of Euclidean spaces and readymade tiles, forms the "womb" (matrix) manufactured by the digital media apparatus as well as the corporate state's magic ability to conjure "wealth" out of thin air and bestow it upon deserving members of its hegemony.

For this con job to work, though, the hegemony must have the full cooperation of the subject-citizens that matter, such as scientists, politicians, bankers, and engineers, so that it may quite literally interfere with the fabric of space-time in as much as it is possible. Such interference comes in the form of perpetual and methodical *translation* of realia into simulacra.

Most of all, if simulacra class  $b$  is to dominate realia class  $a$ , which, being "real," has by nature infinitely more power than the illusions of class  $b$ , the world it creates must seem *probable*. Keep in mind that throughout history and to this day the wildest visions of a theological cosmos that dominate and characterize the subject's view of its place in the universe seem as probable as any of the fantastic tales science manages to transmit to the subject through the state's media apparatus. Why not, then, some simple ideas about how to conduct oneself in a society, civilization, and empire?

Through statistical inference, both  $x$  and  $y$ , or time and space, allow us to make predictions based on probability—provided they are considered as *space-time* and not as discrete material equivalents. As such, they do not possess equality in all attributes, though it might be argued that time possess



enough of the attributes of space (as they are inseparable) to endow them both with membership in the same class as the *a priori*, which is certainly what Kant does.

In both cases, though, it is a matter of “distance” in the sense meant by Einstein as *space-time*, expressed as “light years” and with the common attribute of (c), or the speed of light in a vacuum. In the case of *space* (v), we have nearly a 100 percent probability of mapping the distance between two points. In our experience we know, often with perfect certainty (and correction for the Doppler effect and gravity) what is involved in getting from point A to B anywhere in the known universe but certainly in the local solar system.

As for *time* (x), however, there is only certainty between the past and the present, but little if any between the present and the future. As *space-time*, the problem disappears because of time’s mathematical dependency upon space and (c), which then becomes the measure of time. This is not to say that there are not arguable variations, recorded and published from time to time, in what are considered to be the “constants” of the universe such as (c). The most we can say for these constants is that they reliably serve as constants, despite minute variations over time. The problem of treating them as absolute constants, however, reappears, in any attempt to construct a field theory unifying electromagnetism and gravity.

Several publications in 1929 such as “*Einheitliche Feldtheorie*,” “*Einheitliche Feldtheorie und Hamiltonsches Prinzip*,” and “*Sur la théorie synthétique des champs*” showed that Einstein was not as quick to embrace the implications of discoveries in quantum physics as his colleagues, such as weak and strong nuclear radiation, which would indeed affect the probability of a constant (c). Rather, he sought the resolution of a hypothesis regarding the unity of physical forces which was perceived by his colleagues as quixotic but, perhaps, no more so than many of their hypotheses.

His quest required the *a fortiori* pursuit of the truth about a synthetic proposition which some regarded as impossible to verify, even by *Gedankenexperiment*, and therefore false (F). While Special Relativity is based on what Kant might recognize as a synthetic proposition, this proposition has been proven true (T). Proof is possible because what unites space and time, (c), is a constant attribute of both elements or members regardless of their existential set ( $\exists$ ), despite that they are categorically discrete and therefore not material equivalents. Therefore, (c), as an attribute of both space and time and therefore everything, is a universal constant ( $\forall$ ).

What distinguishes space from time, and what Einstein believed could be resolved, is time's stubborn *stochastic* advance in a single direction. When we imagine "time travel," we impose upon time the degrees of freedom we have on the spatial plane of going forward and backward. Einstein regarded this fundamental discrepancy as an empirical limitation mathematics could somehow resolve. And while, for instance, light from a star that has reached earth from a million earth years ago may be plotted with absolute certainty from *A* to *B*, it remains theoretical whether this degree of certainty could be projected into an event which has an indeterminate probability of occurring "in the future."

Nevertheless, in the realm of the invalid synthetic proposition, the future and the past have the same *n* degree of certainty or probability. One desires the freedom to move back and forth through time as one does through space. In movies, in dreams, and even in mathematical theorems this is the case. Of course, commercial science promises that "in the future" this too will be "possible" given the steady "progress" science is making toward this laudable goal. Since time and space share the same nontrivial attribute of (c), since it takes (c) amount of time to cross (c) amount of distance at the velocity of (c), what more could one want? After all, the popular discourse goes, Einstein said it is "space-time." Therefore, space and time are in the same universal set and possess the same attributes.

However, in terms of degrees of freedom, they are not equal in the realm of valid analytic propositions. In fact, space's degrees of freedom of moving forward and backward are not shared with the set of time's attributes, whereas there is no degree of freedom that time possesses that space does not possess. Time's relentless arrow pointing toward "the future" makes us refer to it grudgingly, whereas "space" is, if not "the next frontier," then the hope for the future of mankind's survival, if we are to believe the Nobel Prize winners.

If the future were not as "certain" as the past, the financial derivatives market, which amounts to quadrillions of dollars and is the foundation of global wealth, would not be possible. In fact, by this logic it could be said that it is harder to predict the future (*q*) from what we *know*, absolutely, about past (*p*) events than it is to predict it from what we *hope* will happen because we invested money into it. Therefore,  $x$  (certainty) =  $q$  (future) >  $p$  (past). As a result, the "lessons from the past" have less value than "hope for the future" in determining political policy, investment strategy, cultural norms, academic curriculum, and human action.

Still, Einstein, working purely in the realm of theoretical physics, sought a unity of the forces of the universe that would help reconcile the differences between space and time. This ambitious program was so thoroughly ignored

by the physics community that it all but vanished after the publications of 1929, while he did not, dying in 1955. This desire for the unification of gravity and electromagnetism is a clear example of what Kant calls the synthetic propositions of mathematics, if we assume that Kant meant both false (F) and true (T) propositions.

After the world had stopped holding its breath waiting for Einstein to change the world again, he continued with his investigations until his death. His *Gedankenexperiments* and attempted proofs of these investigations were inconclusive. That his propositions therefore remained synthetic and unverified until today does not indicate that they were constructed of the invalid synthetic propositions the realm of simulacra requires to maintain its holographic representation of itself and the collective desires of the abdicated masses of which it is a mimetic manifestation.

Space and time, each from historically unreconciled universal quantifications, find themselves at the crux of the system of invalid synthetic propositions needed to perpetuate simulacra class *b* as the reigning form of “reality.” Einstein, exploited by media and popular imagination as the stereotype of the “genius,” nevertheless eventually changed the psyche of the educated world with the publication of his theory of general relativity in 1916. And while this change certainly saw its consequences in theoretical and applied physics, culminating in the atomic bomb, it also had an impact on the way people regard what was considered in Classical physics as the immutability of space and time.

But this transformation was half baked in part because even the principles of Classical physics were, and are, not generally known and understood except through such trivializations as “what goes up, must come down.” As with all these top-down transformations of the collective psyche, though, it was inevitable that any benefit in the raising of consciousness would be counteracted by the wishful thinking of the mass ego, collectivized by digital media, and networked by the most powerful and rich corporations and states.

What this vast Ego wants the most is *immortality for itself*, with or without the body which it sees as a form of transportation and manual manipulation of the environment in the pursuit of immortality rather than an integral component of the holomorphic psyche itself. Essentially, it sees life eternal as unimpeded, perpetual access to consumer goods and the debt needed to purchase them. And of course, at the core of the issue of immortality, is time itself.

Therefore, if more degrees of freedom could be added to this stubborn, wholly uncooperative principle of the universe to make it more like good, old-fashioned space, then the ego’s immortality would be that much closer.

Einstein's concept of space-time being "relative," then, quickly informed the ethical aesthetic of modern techno-industrial culture. Drugs, entertainment, life insurance, medical technology, cryogenics, psychotherapy (not psychoanalysis), astral travel, beauty products, plastic surgery, vegan diets, dietary supplements, cyborgs, and nearly the whole commercial-industrial apparatus of consumerism has been infiltrated with the "possibility" of eternal preservation of the ego.

In violent video games, for instance, where one identifies with an "avatar" of oneself, death may come hundreds of times during a single gaming session. And yet one lives on, carrying with one the psychological effects of this immersion in a world where one may murder, and be murdered, without the wretched consequences such activity would reap were it exercised in the realm of realia class *a*. Surely popular fiction, such as H. G. Wells' *Time Machine*, and countless Hollywood movies, contributed to this meme wending its way through various mass media and social chatter channels.

Most of all, though, digital technology has enabled one to "exist" in a realm which seems to the untutored user to be outside of time, just as it is outside of what we commonly understand as space and therefore refer to as "cyberspace" (thanks to the coining of the word in William Gibson's novel *Neuromancer* published, appropriately, in 1984; and Vernor Vinge's story *True Names*, published in 1981).

Digital technology solves the "time problem" by fulfilling the subject's wish for more degrees of time freedom. It provides a synthetic space that has none of the limitations of real space. The subject conceives of time and space to be exact analogs of each other, just as it does with the past and future. Consequently, it imposes its tacit conception of space onto time. In this fantasy world, one may move back and forth through time just as one may do so in space.

Generally ignorant of how its precious magic black box works, though, the subject remains oblivious to the fact that there is probably nothing ever created by humankind more dependent on the increments of a timeclock than a computer. It is this ignorance that makes the surveillance state possible as well as enables corporations and black-hat hackers alike to profit enormously from the user's refusal to learn or understand anything about the Pandora's box it uses as its primary interface with the world.

Nevertheless, reality will have its way. Time and space, despite their common attribute of (c) which allows them also to be considered "space-time," have mutually exclusive properties that remain stubbornly resistant to any efforts to manipulate them except by science fiction writers. Despite that though through statistical inference we can predict the path of *space*

(compensating for the Doppler effect and gravity), we cannot predict the path of *time* except to say that it marches on. What Einstein seems to have been seeking is a verifiable analytical statement which would give equal inference to space and time as well as electromagnetism and gravity.

The consequence of what came to be regarded by quantum physicists of the day as a quixotic quest was that the unity Einstein proposed has not and perhaps cannot be verified. Therefore, it must remain a valid synthetic proposition that may, perhaps and someday, be verified. But of course, as we are dealing here with *science*, we can always rely on the canard that “in the future”  $x$  will be “possible,” as time can be relied upon to solve its own problems.

Let us then look at the possibility of absolute verification in an uncertain environment and what that might mean to the epistemology of a proposition. Particularly, we will look at the possibilities of accurate predication that “in the future”  $x$  will be possible. We will do so by working out Wittgenstein’s PQR game (as mentioned earlier).

Unlike Einstein’s synthetic proposition, the beauty of the PQR game is that it is 100 percent verifiable. Therefore, any proposition we make in the form of a predication regarding the outcome of the game can be verified. Are such games trivial forms of truth, like the tautology? Perhaps. However, we tend to favor that which in propositional logic lends itself to verification.

In mathematics, physics, biology, chemistry, geology, meteorology, and so on down into the murky depths of the so-called soft sciences such as sociology, psychology, economics, and political “science,” however, there is the unimpeachable necessity for the valid synthetic proposition (VSP). Why? As Peirce would likely assert, the need for hypothesis is absolute in the sciences if the doors of epistemology are to be opened through analytic inquiry. But as a hypothesis is not a theorem, it must be verified and is, therefore, synthetic.

Of course, it must be a *valid* synthetic statement to be pursued at all. It is perhaps the distinction between a hypothesis based on a valid proposition and one based upon an invalid one that marks the distinction between science and pseudoscience. But as we have seen in the case of Einstein’s unified field theory, an unproven valid synthetic statement is still science. Its truth may ever remain unverified, however, which is only to say that perhaps man invented the idea of an omniscient God simply to acknowledge that there are some things mortal man may never know. This religious humility, however, has been replaced with the hubris and arrogance of the scientific wiseacre know-it-all who confuses the mystic’s love of mystery with the bonehead’s curse of ignorance.

After all, discovery is not made under circumstances where the outcome is 100 percent predictable, such as we have in the PQR game. What we can expect from the exercise of what Kant calls “mathematical judgments” in the sciences is either a true or false synthetic proposition in most cases. The lust for priority, the rush to publish, and the need to gratify one’s grant underwriters, however, pressure the professional scientist into weighting the scale of verification with his finger. The degree to which the preponderance of such judgments may be said to be verified or not determines the relative health of these professions. It is no secret that not too long ago, medical science was more associated with profiteering and quackery than effective knowledge of human physiology. What has changed? Has the medical profession just become much better at public relations?

We like to assume that the “mere passage of time,” or the progressive fallacy, has catapulted us into a future where honesty and truth in the sciences prevail. If psychology, sociology, and economics were in the same class as, for example, quantum physics, though, the whole idea of “class” in set theory would have to be redefined. And yet universities seem indifferent to what could arguably be called the categorical differences between these branches of “science.” Is it that the “soft” sciences are therefore the province of mountebanks and invalid propositions? Or is it that the so-called hard sciences are not quite as unyielding, in terms of their standards of verifiability, as they would like to be considered?

The truth is likely some combination of both possibilities, though neither dominion would ever say so. And therein lies the problem. That there even must be the distinction of “hard” and “soft” science underscores the lack of verifiability even of the exact nature of these professions. What do they want, other than fame, money, prestige, and good benefits? Once again, in the realm of simulacra, appearance is “more real” than substance.

Meantime, a whole new class of seemingly verifiable propositions more closely resembling the PQR game than the outright invalid synthetic proposition dominates the idea of what is verifiably true. They have solved the more traditional problems of verification, such as positive proof, with the logic of the marketplace which is based on the whims of the consumer. The proof-of-concept so treasured in the sciences has been turned into a win-or-lose ethical aesthetic based on game theory.

This “new truth” depends upon *proof of concept*, which is increasingly being played out in the marketplace rather than the laboratory. There is a categorical difference, however, between what science will accept as a verifiable proposition and what the marketplace will accept as the material equivalent. For example, in marketing, if a product dangerous to consumers *sells well*, then it is considered “not too dangerous” for the consumer

marketplace,” particularly if the manufacturer pays out insurance money to the victims as the “cost of doing business.” Its discourse is this: *If it sells, it is true*. If it fails to sell, well then, it is “not true.” In good science, however, proof of concept may require the objective experimental apparatus of the CERN cyclotron, such as in the Higgs Boson proof on 4 July 2012 in the experiments by the ATLAS scientists, in which case it is a positive proof unaffected by the vicissitudes of consumer whim.

The marketplace, though its bean counters like to say that the numbers do not lie, is nevertheless the home province of the invalid synthetic proposition from which it issues forth like the plague. The market’s new-fangled logic of consumer *whim*, and its necessity to whip the consumer into a spending frenzy through *hype* and easy credit, seeks to justify its excesses—moral, ethical, and even legal—by providing investors and shareholders a good return. That government sees this as not only permissible but patriotic, beneficial, and “progressive” belies its collusion with those who profit from a *Zeitgeist* founded upon the ISP.

If we change the rules of verification to include profitability, even if that means consigning losses to accounts hidden off the balance sheet, then so be it. On the other hand, with the advent of algorithmic trading of financial products such as stocks, bonds, and other securities, and especially derivatives, the truth of a proposition depends upon mathematical calculations occurring at (c). Each effective procedure of the algorithm is based upon input data which is presumably “verified,” even if it is entirely speculative in the case of such derivatives as futures. That the value of these futures is calculated by using statistical probability makes it “real” within a range of acceptable definitions of the word as it is applied to the mechanics of the marketplace. Therefore, what is real ceases to be absolute—just as what is good, honest, fair, and true—but rather relative in a corruption of the kind of “relativity”

Einstein applied to the relationship between space and time. Somehow, in the morass of illogic and irrational thinking comprising the bulk of public discourse, a false correlation has been made between mathematical relativity and the contextual relativism of behavioral psychology. In a desperate attempt to seem more scientific, modern culture has branded all moral, ethical, and even categorical absolutes (such as reality) as relative. By vulgar extension, this has opened the door to the attitude that whatever the subject imagines to be true is just as valid as what can be *proven* to be true analytically.

Analytic or positive proof then becomes suspect as the discourse of the chronic party pooper, bean counter, hysteric Cassandra, gloomy nay-sayer, doomsday lunatic, wallflower, nerd, geek, and “denier” of whatever

happens to be the orthodox dogma regarding this or that cultural or scientific myth. In so doing, all absolutes except the absolute that there shall be no other absolutes have become subject to the mischief of convenience and self-interest.

In the age of the algorithm, or the effective procedure that makes it possible for digital technology to act out its task, the ethical aesthetic of right and wrong becomes a matter of *function*. If it works, it is right; if it does not, it is wrong. As such, an algorithm creates its own universe of discourse. Once  $\forall$  has been established, it can be used to determine if a proposition is true or false—but only within the rules of that quantitative domain. The degree to which  $\forall$  may be translated to other domains is the degree to which it is universal. Otherwise, it is in fact an existential set ( $\exists$ ). If we consider it to be discretely modular, then it will reserve all its function for that modularity unless any properties of that modularity may be iterated infinitely as it can be in the Taniyama-Shimura-Weil Conjecture (André Weil, not to be confused with Andrew Wiles!).

Is the dawn of the algorithm the appearance of what Wittgenstein describes as a proposition that makes its own rules (*TL-P*, 3.333) so that it may serve as the proof of itself? An effective procedure, if effective, provides its own “proof of concept” in this way. But when such forms of proof are carried over into other domains of endeavor, such as human services, war, medicine, business ethics, politics, and consumer behavior, are we to accept it as the “new morality,” or are we to question it as a misapplication of mechanical reasoning?

Throughout this discussion we are most concerned with how a universe of discourse can create a self-verified world of simulacra by using invalid synthetic and trivial analytic statements. We can see in Wittgenstein’s criticism of what might be called Russell’s hermetic use of propositional logic, particularly in the statement of his paradox regarding the set of all sets (discussed later), that he doubts the universal translation of self-referential logic to all domains that it may or may not apply to. This is not to say that he regards these propositions of Russell’s as invalid synthetic and trivial analytic statements.

However, he is unequivocal regarding what he sees as an error in this approach. “It can be seen that Russell’s error is shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak about the things his signs mean. *No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself* [italics added] (that is the ‘theory of types’). A function cannot be its own argument, because the



functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself.”<sup>12</sup>

What, then, in an effective procedure lends itself to the manufacture of a universal quantification within the reach of its algorithm, simple or complex? Perhaps it is what might be called the *primitive* nature of the binary system. An effective procedure iterates the relationship between the quantities (0 and 1) beginning with 111 but ending in 000, effectively rendering all relationships as simple as the difference between 0 and 1. Unlike the asymptote, we can and do approach 000 without any effect of the values of the binary numbers becoming infinitely smaller (or larger as the case may be). This is true also in the series of a Merkle tree, where the hash of 1 is the result of the concatenation of the hashes of 1-0 and 1-1, while the hash of 0 is the result of the concatenation of hashes 0-0 and 0-1. In other words, it shows that the only nontrivial relationship in a number sequence is that between 0 and 1, as we have discussed earlier regarding the categorical exclusion (CE), because there is an infinite difference between them; whereas the relationship between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ) is trivial and therefore arbitrary.

What is nontrivial is the coming-into-being (*le devenir*), while the  $n$  quantity of *that which is* (has come into being) remains trivial. The miracle of the simulacrum is its virgin birth; what makes it so adaptable to digital technology and so irresistibly attractive to the consumer is that it has appeared on the existential scene *ex nihilo*, with no *prima causa*. The only justification for its existence is the systemic necessity for a financial transaction which, like Russell’s predicate logic, is entirely self-referential. It is this event of *trans-action* (sic) that the consumer good or service experiences its *spark of value*, which quickly fades as the consumer then desperately tries to pay down the debt incurred to buy it.

The *trans-action*, however, is not all that is necessary to maintain the heady consumer bubble for which the narcissistic subject has abdicated its sovereignty. Simulacra must be hyped up, encoded, propagated, hawked, and transmitted with the least trouble and cost to the unified apparatus of corporation and state that has replaced the historical alliance of church and state. The greatest revenue and therefore power must be squeezed out of the hustle and bustle of the consumer *trans-action* before the consumer wakes up and realizes how much debt he is in because of it. Provided the metadata of simulacra possess the requisite *verism* to be accepted as “more real” than realia, they earn the identity of the elements of class  $b$  as the inherited attributes of class  $a$ . It is rather like a profligate, good-for-nothing son

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<sup>12</sup> Wittgenstein, *TL-P*, 3.333.

inheriting the wealth accumulated by his brilliant and hard-working father, and then being praised for his ingenuity and diligence.

Meantime, simulacra may be consumed with ease, as they lack the complexities and demands of realia, which can be troublesome to digest. Simulacra are existential junk food, consisting of empty calories but possessing the addictive attributes sugar, fat, and salt impart to the otherwise bland and toxic byproducts of the food marketplace. However, as the jaded subject eventually tires of the bogus *verism* of simulacra's inherent insipidity, the marketplace purveyor must then turn to its wizards and technologists for the next "generation" (G1, G2, G3, G4, ...) or "version" (1.0, 1.1, 1.2, 2.0, 2.1 and so on ...) of whatever it is the consumer has grown weary of but nevertheless cannot live happily without. As the consumer is perpetually fleeing from an obsolete version to a newer one, the newer one is *already obsolete* the moment the consumer possesses it because its successor is already in development if not production.

The only exhaustive project in the manufacture of simulacra is the relentless pursuit of ever-greater *verism*, the quality driving all "virtual reality" (VR) technology. The phrase VR is a misnomer, and intentionally so; to use an accurate phrase would deflate the rhetorical power of the idea of something *almost* human in all but name. That VR has so many more exciting degrees of freedom than plain old boring dirty humanity with its tedious needs for food, water, toilets, and love, makes its *more human than human*, in a ludicrous parody of Nietzsche's phrase.

The accurate phrase, however, should be *synthetic* reality or even *artificial* reality. But these just do not look good in marketing material. Also, the adjective "artificial" is already abused in the same way as VR is in the phrase "artificial intelligence," which is yet another oxymoron since cognition without *recognition*, or consciousness, is not considered to be intelligent. And since no one has yet been able to figure out how to prove that a machine is conscious, or even suspects that this is the case (for fear of losing all credibility), we must conclude that machines are not intelligent. But of course, says the discourse of consumer science, "in the future" they will be. It is only a matter of time. Progress will inexorably bring to us all that we cannot have in the here and now. Just you wait!

Therefore, the adjective *synthetic* is most accurate because the realm of simulacra, of which VR is a rather gross and clunky manifestation, is composed of *synthetic* statements. To the consumer, though, the accurate words evoke the thought of synthetic fiber, artificial flowers, and artificial ingredients. Words such as "synthetic" and "artificial" are what are known in the promotional business as *turn-off* words, particularly for the modern consumer who is turned *on* by such words as "organic" and "natural." We

tend to equate them with the word “fake.” Consequently, virtual will have to do.

As a slick, modern, slightly technical adjective, virtual is used to mean “almost,” and is clearly a *turn-on* word. In fact, “almost” can be much better than if something “is.” For instance, it is better to “almost” killed in a video war game than to be killed in a real war, which takes all the fun out of it. It can even get technical sounding as in “virtualization.” While it does have its technical application in such concepts as running a virtual machine within a computer’s operating system, this kind of virtualization does not interest the average consumer since it is the virtualization of something that already seems unreal: software. The phrase then is transmitted and received with the meaning that the products to which it is applied, and which are of wildly varying quality, style, and technology, are “almost” reality and are therefore candidates for reality’s eventual and predicted replacement. The linguistic implication is that all that is necessary to push simulacra over the horizon into the realm of the real is *time*, or, in other words, “progress,” which of course always bears its fruit “in the future.”

How, then, is the scintillating coming-into-being of simulacra class *b* any different from *le devenir* of plain old annoying reality? After all, like realia class *a*, it too seems to have stepped over the threshold of the categorical exclusion from 0 to 1, popping into our ken from nonbeing. It too seems to be infinitely greater than 0. Here we ask the ultimate ontological question: what does it mean *to be*? Is it possible that something that *seems* to be may not be? Is it even fair to say that the objects of simulacra are somehow “less real” than those of realia, which is conceived, patented, produced, and distributed by nature and the universe without the meddling of man?

The object of the PQR game below, then, is to show how we can—perhaps by an algorithmic *reductio ad absurdum*—deconstruct being (111) into nonbeing (000) *synthetically*. If this *trans-action* is possible, then should not coming-into-being (000→111) also be possible in equal measure as an invalid synthetic proposition? The *valid* synthetic proposition here is that realia, or that which has come into being without the manipulation of man, may lay claim to its existence *if and only if* it cannot be reduced to nonbeing. It must follow the fundamental rule of the CE, which is that there is no possibility of reset ( $1 \rightarrow 0$ ) once the threshold of the CE has been crossed.

Conversely, a successful return to the womb for man is blocked by flaming swords and cherubim. Consequently, one must create a *synthetic* womb (matrix) through invalid logic. Abdicated subjects must be united, through a sophisticated language of invalid synthetic propositions, in a

feckless quest for the prenatal state of peace love and understanding they believe is enjoyed by the fortunate fetus. The purpose of civilization, then, is to facilitate and indeed to *enforce* this social construction job, the goal being a womb-like empire unthreatened by the vicissitudes of reality and therefore death.

In other words, the arrow of the threshold of the CE points in one direction only: *being*. It does not point backward to nonbeing (despite certain reversible-repairable thermodynamic processes), else nothing could ever come into being. Furthermore, realia are subject to the second law of thermodynamics, which states that a system in isolation (such as an ideal black body) is not subject to entropy, whereas a system subject to spontaneous interaction with its environment is. In either case, isolated or spontaneous, the process is either steady (with or without a retrograde tendency) or will tend toward entropy or what can be called the absolute dissolution of energy over *time*.

The same cannot be said of simulacra, and herein lies the difference. It is precisely the effects of the second law of thermodynamics the subject despises about reality, since they are the corporeal expression of the thermodynamic engine behind the ego's dissolution and absolute death. Analogically, the difference is, once again, one of class on the scale of organic versus inorganic molecules.

It is ironic that processed foods, which are made to look and taste like food the body expects to be nutritious, are often sweetened and flavored with inorganic molecules and are therefore incapable of being absorbed and therefore used by the body as nutrition. The fact is, once having abdicated, all bets are off; the subject can no longer distinguish the difference between realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*, except perhaps at death when all such illusions fall away in the body-mind's last attempt to awaken the ego to its schism with reality—alas too late.

*Therefore, that which may be reduced to nothingness never existed in the first place.* Naturally, such a notion gives rise to thoughts of an afterlife, the spirit, and other metaphysical phenomena. However, for the time being we need not extend the argument in that direction to make the point that there is a categorical, and therefore existential and *ontological*, difference between realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*. It is by this shibboleth that we may know simulacra from realia. The concluding lines of Lewis Carroll's "Hunting of the Snark" say it more poetically:

In the midst of the word he was trying to say,  
In the midst of his laughter and glee,  
He had softly and suddenly vanished away—

For the Snark was a Boojum, you see.

The goal of the PQR Game is to reduce all three True (T) and False (F) columns to F in *as few moves as possible*, starting with all three columns (p, q, r) containing the value T on the first line of the table. We will substitute the number 1 for T and 0 for F giving the values a certain clarity and continuity in relation to the previous game. This game, however, is not concerned with statistical inference. Rather, we will develop the idea that a progression can be *negative*, reducing all values to nothing. The intent is to provide one more argument against the progressive fallacy which states that the mere passage of time results in a positive, beneficial increase in the commonweal. Furthermore, this game demonstrates that we may synthesize *nonbeing* through a process of a numerical reductio that leaves us, from the point of view of the truth-value of a proposition, at a verifiable proof that the substance of simulacra (111 = T) is false (000 = F).

The progressive fallacy contains yet another fallacy as its algorithmic engine. It is the idea that there can only be two poles of value based on its critical dichotomy of the future always being “better” than the present. The fallacy is obvious to those who care to face up to it: the present shares its identity with the past’s future. Moreover, the present also shares its identity with the future’s past. Therefore, at the same eternal moment the past, present, and future are *better and worse* than each other.

In terms of logic, then, this results in a *null or moot state of no value* for all three states as each lacks a discrete identity and therefore simply does not exist as a set element. No element of any valid set may possess the identity of a categorically opposed set. The exception, perhaps, is in the case of the superimposed quantum state such as we find in the Schrodinger Cat Paradox or in the qubit of quantum logic.

However, Schrodinger was the first to admit that at some point we must observe the state, at which time there can, will, and must be only one or the other state observed. Even in quantum computing there comes a moment of reckoning where the data must be conclusive once the operation has cleared, resulting in a singular and discrete output of no contradiction.

However, this does not preclude the possibility of higher-order logics. While T and F are opposed to each other in the empirical sense—for instance Schrodinger’s cat is either alive or dead—nevertheless there remains the possibility of a *tertium quid* (*tq*), or *third thing*, in the relationship between numbers which tends to exclude the possibility of an absolute binary. The (*tq*) is itself monadic, meaning that it is discrete and without contradiction. That it may share attributes with two other sets does not preclude its membership in its own discrete set. Some examples in history of the (*tq*) include Tertullian’s of the gold-silver alloy *electrum*,

which of course is neither gold, nor silver and yet consists of only those two elements.

Another we find in Christology of the ontology of Jesus as being neither of man nor God and yet being undeniably of both. Campers and trekkers are familiar with the eating utensil referred to as a “spork,” being a spoon with fork tines. A machine programmed to separate forks from knives would either 1) must cease operation when encountering this utensil or, 2) if it were programed properly to handle a (*tq*) would sort the spork into the “unsorted” category bin (as does the eponymous scavenger robot in the 2008 movie *Wall-E*).

We have, at least, the state of “dying” which pitches us into the problem of the semantic and ontological difference between the statements “I am dying” and “I am living.” While they are semantic opposites, it nevertheless remains possible to say, “*While I am living, I am dying.*” Furthermore, this game shows us that the imaginary infinity upon which the progressive fallacy is based, and which is as verifiable as  $2 + 2 = 4$ , is not necessary to create the *gene* generating all numbers greater than 1. For instance, in the relationship is between  $\aleph_0$  (aleph-null, the smallest infinite cardinal number) and 1, infinity need not rely on an infinite sequence of integers greater than one (or prime numbers or whatever cardinality there might be in a Cantor-like concatenation).

The base of  $\aleph_0$  provides an infinite regression (the difference between 0 and 1) without the introduction of an irrational number such as  $\pi$  or the application of an Eleatic paradox. (The reader who would like to like to skip the remainder of this section and move on to the next subhead may do so without damage to his understanding, and perhaps even with some profit to his patience with the mode of explication given here.)

In the PQR game, there is no *ratio*, only a *relationship* apparent in a total transformation of values (True  $\rightarrow$  False,  $1 \rightarrow 0$ , and their reverse, making only the relationship nontrivial rather than the value). While a matrix table might be revealing, for our purposes here it will suffice to describe the transformation of TTT to FFF, or 111 to 000, as a series of statements.

For this to be a zero-sum game, there must be two players. The player who goes first is chosen by calling a coin flip. The goal, again, is to reduce 111 to 000. Note that it does not matter if we play for  $0 \rightarrow 1$  or  $1 \rightarrow 0$ , since either is reversible and therefore not absolute. All that is absolute is that *le devenir* is a unidirectional process; something is *pushed and pulled* into existence by the injection/induction of a *point* on a complex plane of *being*, defined only by other points (and not infinity).

A holomorphic plane corresponds to realia class *a*; a holographic plane corresponds to simulacra class *b*. In both cases, the plane exists only because

there are other points in which all that comes into being through *le devenir* finds itself in ontological relationship. Therefore, as this event represents the *trans-action* between nonbeing and being, it is nontrivial. The exit or disappearance of a point is trivial, since it is only a point in relation to other points. Consequently, even as a discrete point it has no *ontic potential* and therefore no energy in and of itself except in relation to other points (i.e. a point on an infinitely large plane is infinitely small).

Initial State: coin flip.

- a. The first move is set: Player 1 calls 111.
- b. Now there are seven possibilities for the second call, but the rule is that each player may only negate the value of one digit.
- c. There are six possible steps between 111 and 000: 011, 101, 110, 001, 010, and 100.
- d. Therefore, Player 2 wins because his turn comes *after* Player 1 announces the only possibility left: 100, leaving 000.

PQR is a zero-sum game because the sum of 0 has been reached and one player must lose for the other to win. It reveals the generative capacity of the progressive fallacy because in the entire sequence of reduction there has only been one nontrivial transformation:  $1 \rightarrow 0$ . Also, the game could easily be reversed, with the goal of reaching 111 ( $0 \rightarrow 1$ ). Therefore, Player 1 and Player 2 are equal before and after the game ( $P1 = P2$ ). The game's reversibility, while possible under the second law of thermodynamics without the loss of energy if it were a member of the class of realia, is nevertheless the result of its lack of nontrivial directionality along the arrow of time. In the set of realia, though, its directionality would be absolute, immutable, irreversible, and the shibboleth by which we could know the verisimilitude of that which is the product of the *otherness* or *remoteness* of nature.

Furthermore, we must consider the difference between progression, regression, and *retrogression*. A retrogression is a (*tq*). For example, a Fibonacci series is clearly a *progression* with a simple algorithm as its push mechanism: begin with 1, add 1 to itself; take the sum (2) and add it to 1; then, take that sum (3) and add it to the previous sum ... and so on (2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 ...). What, then, is a *regression*? Obviously, we could reverse the algorithm by using subtraction starting with whatever positive number we begin with. If the algorithm is reversible then we have the potential for progression and regression.

*Retrogression*, however, is what we see above in the PQR game: we may begin with 000 or 111; the result is always the same. If we have A, B, C where B and C are the product of A ( $A \rightarrow B$ ,  $B \rightarrow C$ ; if A then B, if B then

C) then we must be able to say that  $C \rightarrow B$ ,  $B \rightarrow A$ , but only as a syllogism:  $A = C$ . Therefore, the difference between  $A$  and  $C$  is *trivial*. The only possible “increase” (progression) is the result of a mistaken implication of Peano’s axiom: that because  $B$  is the successor of  $A$ , and  $C$  is the successor of  $B$ , therefore  $C > A$ . This appears to be  $T$  in the sequence 1, 2, 3, but not in  $1 + 1 + 1$ . There is only a nontrivial difference between 0 and 1 where 0 is an empty set and 1 is a nonempty set. And as such 1 is the least element of the set of itself whereas  $\aleph_0$  is the least element of set 0 (or Russell’s set  $a$ ).

How, then, can a reversible progression have a built-in *ratchet effect*? The fact is, in the set of realia class  $a$ , it is not possible to have a ratchet effect *and* reversibility. In special kinds of logic, such as Merkle Tree blockchain, this effect can be produced without transformation of the element’s unique identity which depends upon its timestamp. However, in simulacra class  $b$  “time,” as an absolute, does not exist, which of course is its appeal since without time there is no death. As a result, we encounter the “uniformly unique” elements of simulacra in the guise of the abdicated subject and its thoughts comprised of invalid synthetic propositions about itself, others, and the world.

Meantime, the uniquely unique element of realia class  $a$  coexists with the simulated uniformly unique element of simulacra class  $b$ . The latter is perpetually irked by a superior sense of being “more real than real” in comparison to the former. The former, for its part, is naturally preoccupied with negotiating the chaotic and complex demands of the holomorphic plane on which it must exist, as these demands typically determine life or death. Its intuitive sense of its surreal counterpart, then, is one of mistrust and instinctive caution, out of concern for its counterpart’s seeming lack of respect for even the most fundamental rules of social sovereignty.

As mentioned earlier, the gene of the progressive fallacy is the idea born of convenience and wishful thinking that civilization’s forward movement is subject to the “ratchet effect”: each increment of the *mere passage of time*, however measured, insures social organization on a large scale that is bigger, better, richer, more enlightened, smarter, more liberal, and in general “superior” to whatever came before. In effect, then, this illusion, easily dispelled, is nevertheless tenacious because it attempts to mimic the arrow of time while in practice confounding it with an algorithmic engine that perpetually reduces all semantic meaning (111) to an empty set (000).

From the perspective of those whose belief system depends on the progressive fallacy, though, the ratchet effect seems to prevent backsliding into the nastiness of the past (religion, superstition, racism, ignorance, fascism) and insures a secure platform for an ever-wondrous “future” the



limits of which are only bounded by the capacity of one's imagination and desires.

This desired realm of peace, love, and understanding which never seems to arrive but is always there, tantalizingly just beyond reach, also contains less altruistic goodies the subject craves even more so such as immortality and unlimited access to consumer goods and debt. Based on the casual observation of recent history, it seems that the abdicated subject is willing to enjoy the latter delights without the former, but not the former without the latter. Such priorities are only natural under the circumstances, as the abdicated subject, being essentially spectral and narcissistic, has no use for its fellows except in as much as they serve its materialistic ends.

Under such a regime, then, the much-maligned past finds itself the victim of a rhetorical *regression* into an imagined atavistic netherworld of greater and greater superstition, oppression, poverty, and "darkness" in the subject's paranoid and malicious interpretation of history. This is a mechanical equal and opposite reaction to the rhetorical *progression* of the future. Naturally, the imagery of this process is the product of the European *Enlightenment*, so named well after it was over and with a heavy dose of the Romanticism that it spawned.

In historical terms this period coined by historians was a mere pimple on the timeline of the great peoples and empires of the past and their staggering achievements, East and West. Nevertheless, the Enlightenment, with such "enlightened" events as the French Revolution of 1789, was fortunate to find itself at the doorstep of the communications revolution where lithography printing, telegraph, telephone, radio, and digital communication soon enough swept in like a purse-sein, scooping up all it its path and depositing it on the slab of modern historiography. The result was the easy, lazy, even sleazy propagation of the idea that the past is a seething miasma of darkness and stupidity while "the future," when it finally comes, will be a radiant paradise of socio-technological brilliance and light.

Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that there is the *regressive* fallacy as well, that as time passes things get *worse* because of the mere passage of time. The tendency here is to harken back to either a specific time when life was "better" (whether or not it might have been in some verifiable sense), or to posit a vague period in the "olden days" when what is most bothersome about the present did not *seem* exist as such. This fallacy, too, is the creature of wishful thinking, but of what might be called a more morbid sort.

It should also be noted that it would be hard to find adherents of the progressive fallacy who would also think that the dinosaurs of the past such as Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Bach, Shakespeare, and Rembrandt are passé

because of the mere passage of time (though we should remember that they all were at one time or another considered old fashioned and irrelevant). As such, the devotee of the progressive fallacy, despite his almost supernatural optimism, must also labor under what has been called the burden of the past.

Nevertheless, the progressive fallacy is no more evident than in the content of institutional learning, which has been turned over almost entirely to the task of indoctrination of the hapless subject into the dogma of the corporate state. The result is, at best, grudging acknowledgment that “in the past” even smart people succumbed to the seduction of the “unscientific” ideas contained in the great canons of civilization’s literature.

Who today takes the trouble to learn Attic Greek to read Homer and Aristotle in the original? It was not long ago when the standard schoolboy was *required* to do so, along with equal sufferings in the Latin tongue. Milton even insisted that one learn Hebrew, too. Sir Philip Sidney said that education was essentially “the learning of foreign languages,” particularly the “dead” ones. We could make a much longer list of civilization’s voices of the past that are not only considered old fashioned but *wrong* or even *bad* today just because they are not *contemporaneous*.

Their work is nevertheless available in many instances for free in modern languages and in accessible translations in most tongues as a byproduct of technology. It is increasingly difficult to find someone who will read with interest and passion the works of Karl Marx (even in China, that Marxian paradise) or de Tocqueville (even in the United States, that bastion of freedom). Freud, Darwin, Jefferson, Gibbon, Voltaire, Hobbes, Thoreau, Josephus, Emerson, Tacitus, Confucius, and even Ernest Hemingway follow close behind in an endless train of those who have been vilified as not being “progressive” in the most up-to-date sense.

If one finds reading the Bible, Torah, or Koran, rewarding and (God forbid) quotes from them in mixed company, one is regarded as being on the fringe of lunacy. Of course, we are not including the zealots of various ideologies and religions who will, by nature, always find refuge in the great works of the past, religious, political, or otherwise and who will tend to gather in protective communities to do so.

The problem is, almost anyone who does, is regarded as an anachronism at best or a “fundamentalist” fanatic at worst. This kind of social pressure reflects the rhetorical mandate of the hegemony the subject has bought into by abdicating which is in direct competition with what might be called “religionism.” In its place commercial-industrial Scientism rises as the state-sanctioned religion, the ascendancy of which is in part enforced by the belittling, ridicule, and ostracization those who dare to cling to their religions as the primary source of truth must endure.

Those who find the worldview purveyed by the mainstream global media to be the benchmark of cultural wisdom and sanity will almost by reflex dismiss the works of the past as being bad because they are “old,” meaning the ideas of their authors have been outpaced by the genie of *progress*. This sort of discourse follows a simple formula: old = bad, new = good. The reason behind it, of course, is that old things generate no new revenue; anchored to past expenditures in a perhaps in a less usurious age, they are indeed relics of a bygone and now reviled era.

This simple-minded formulation is true in the West *and* East where, in the latter, Confucius is celebrated as a historic celebrity and dead ancestor but whose work is seldom read, understood, heeded, or practiced. The same is true in so-called communist countries of the life and work of Marx, a fuzzy Jew, though his “specter” does not lend itself to the same kind of cultural festivities as does the cartoon image of Confucius purveyed by tourism and holiday paraphernalia.

It is perhaps only out of nostalgia or charity that the ideas of Newton have not been consigned to the same dustbin though, curiously, the ideas of quantum physics are even less well known. The best that could be said of the man on the street in modern industrialized society is that he is an enlightened pre-Copernican, despite the patina of education he has received as the benediction of his government.

Furthermore, the general discourse in the realm of higher brows is that Lamarck was wrong and Mendel was right, Marxism is a failure, Freud is unscientific, and by 1929 Einstein was an embarrassing relic. At the risk of sounding fanatical, perhaps the caveat here is that fallacy or no fallacy, “time and chance happeneth to them all” as Ecclesiastes 9:11 rather ominously insists.

### 1.3 Effect of quantization on progression

We have watched the accretion of what is considered here to be the statistical implication of the categorical exclusion (CE): that the difference between 0 and 1 is greater than the difference between 1 and  $n$  (any other number). The difference may be regarded effectively as the categorical ratio between nonbeing and being in *le devenir*. We have looked at the implication of the CE in its application to some foundational notions of civilization, such as the PF. And we have pointed toward what might be a wilder, more feral, perhaps even *fauvist* interpretation of Peano’s primitive axioms, Russell’s paradoxical sets, and Cantor’s alternative cardinalities.

We have also discussed the role of modularity not only in the solution of seemingly infinite problems, but in the formation of discrete Hilbert

spaces in which we may discern either the topology of the complex holomorphic plane of realia or the holographic plane of simulacra. Now we must look at the quantization of values involved in the formation of baseline structures.

The concept of quantization took a significant turn after 1900 with the growing acceptance of quantum mechanics as a viable paradigm for the understanding of the nano universe. The previous paradigm so elegantly expressed in, perhaps, Maxwell's field equation and the Rayleigh-Jeans Law was replaced with a more atomist idea of discrete "packets" of electromagnetic force. Naturally, this revolution was led by mathematics, culminating in the sophisticated manipulation of photons, the construction of cyclotrons to study subatomic particles, and the invention of hypertext packets that make long-range computer networking and communication possible. However, there are certain other implications of this paradigm that are relevant to our discussion of invalid synthetic propositions as well.

Now that this paradigm is well established in the proof-of-concept of everyday life in a modern industrial state, we may look at *force*, and the universal communication it makes possible, as consisting of units of discrete value.

A computer looks at the world it must interface with and process as consisting of bits, bytes, and "words" (a finite series of bits to be computed each second, or the "work" a computer can do in that time). It performs its tasks using binary arithmetic. The numbers we can count in an infinite series or a fluid universe of ebbing and flowing values is alien to this process except analogically in as much as it may be encoded into what the computer can process. Therefore, the base 10 computation we take for granted as the absolute of  $2 + 2 = 4$  means little to the processor of a computer except analogically, though the arithmetic operation (in binary) is essentially the same.

Consequently, we may learn much from the computer's paradigm about other logics that nevertheless rely on strict valid analytic statements, arguments, and interrogations but depart from the tacit norms we insist all reality must adhere to.

Regarding reality in this way, we come to think of it as consisting not only of the content we quite naturally embrace as "the real," but also as the metadata this content brings along with it that can help distinguish whether it is the product of realia class *a* or simulacra class *b*. This mode of thinking may lead us to conceive of types of *meta-states* that will further liberate us from the influence of cardinality on thought—sometimes called linear thinking—as well as freeing us from the *metastasis* of the ratchet effect of the progressive fallacy. In other words, once a computer encodes the reality,

we assume has  $x$  and  $n$  parameters, the data have been removed from the analogic world and now comprise a metastate the machine artificially superimposes upon organic reality. Therefore, a data-driven metastate has the same existential relationship to the organic data set it processes as simulacra have to realia.

The difference is that the most important rule of operation for a computer is that *there shall be no contradiction in the logic of its operation*. Consequently, what may be identified as simulacra, while easily produced by a computer, contain a logic that the computer itself could not possibly use, relying as it does on valid analytic and synthetic propositions *only*. As a result, logic which fails the test of what a computer can effectively use is likely to be invalid. So then why is such logic so pervasive in the thought processes of human beings, and why does it not fail there also? Perhaps the answer lies in a deeper look at metastasis.

An example of a *metastate* is the *byte*. While it appears to be a *certain* quantity, it is in fact whatever grouping of bits (0's and 1's, in multiples of 4) we find convenient for the operation of our system varying with our need for greater computing power or *informational force* or density. In the early days of computing we could find 4 bits to 1 byte. For a longer time, it has been 8 bits. Therefore, if we have a "word" of 64 bits, then it contains 8 bytes. The conventional computer is increasingly better able to compute these discrete units as the frequency (or *word* operations per second) increases with better technology. It is in no danger of these units becoming astronomical as a strict limit is placed on what it can and cannot do.

While this limit has made it possible to have such safeguards as encryption, it has also limited the capacity of computing to handling numbers that are not on an exponential scale, that do not involve too many irrational variables, and that are not, on the other end of the scale, encumbered with nano fractionalization to  $n$  decimal points. Therefore, a metastate is a state of quantity  $n$ , the only characteristic of which is its *quantization* and not a specific quantity. Limits of technology and the logic that governs it determine what  $n$  can be and is.

While quantum computing is beginning to overcome the limits of conventional logic and technology, the computer user is also waking up to the fact that the metadata about him and his use of his device can be as significant or even more so than the content of his encoded discourse. In this sense the trajectory of technological innovation parallels that of what new intrusions are possible into the organic operation of the irrational subject. It is not *what* he said or read on the Internet that is important. Rather it is *to whom* he said it and *where* he got the information that is de facto

“significant” to the computer’s automated parsing of his behavior as a consumer and citizen.

The result is the rise of the automated surveillance state which the surveilled user is responsible for bringing into existence. His mortal fear of losing access to consumer goods and the debt needed to get them, as well as his more primitive terror of ego death, drives him to lobby the burgeoning hegemony he created for ever greater restrictions of his freedom and privacy. Provided he retains the privilege of *complaining* about the metastate he has brought about, he believes he lives in a “republic.” While his complaints remain impotent, even if he lives in a state where there is the ritual of suffrage, he nevertheless may repose upon the truth that he has indeed brought about this (*dys*)utopia through the abdication of his sovereignty. Meantime, the corporate state’s media apparatus keeps him plentifully supplied with tocsins about how “bad” things are getting, even supplying him with readymade caveats about the surveillance state the citizen-subject cannot live without.

None of this is possible without a public and private discourse consisting of invalid synthetic propositions and the abdication of the subject’s sovereignty. With  $n$  as the metastate, we are left with  $x$  as the content which is generally based on the analogical “reality” the subject embraces, whether it consists of realia or simulacra but usually a mélange of both which manages to compromise the former and obscure the latter.

The difference between quantity  $x$  and  $n$  is made more dramatic if we consider what it would be like if people were born with different numbers of fingers on their hands, with the rule being that what is on one hand must be on the other but otherwise any ( $n$ ) quantity will do. Such a “state” of things would not obviate the fact that a hand is a hand, in other words, an appendage where fingers are attached.

Despite the subject’s fantastic hope for a computer-ruled future utopia where anything is possible, the absolute requirement remains that these devices must run on valid logic. As a result, what the subject hopes for and what the machines can do will always be somewhat at odds. Fortunately, this dissonance and disparity is of no consequence since the typical computer user regards his device as a “black box” full of *magic*, not logic. What *does* matter, then, in an existential sense is that we can build a practical system meeting every demand of verification, proof-of-concept, and evidence of realia.

We can say that by endowing 0 with the value of an infinitely small cardinal number ( $\aleph_0$ ) we may extract infinity from any number greater than 1, disabling the progressive fallacy’s assault on reason and ratio. The possibilities of quantum computing, satisfactorily verifiable, shake up the

common-sense truism, also verifiable, that  $2 + 2 = 4$ . While this potential opens the door for ever-greater commercial illusions to impress the subject into giving up its freedom in return for the fantasy realm of simulacra, it also allows scientific exploration into the nature of reality on an unprecedented scale.

How, then, is it possible for two such contradictory motivations to coexist? To attempt to answer this question we must go beyond regarding the device as a magic black box and consider what it really does and how it does it.

Without going into too much depth on a subject outside of our discussion, let it suffice to say that a conventional transistor-based computer consists of switches indicating “on” (1) or “off” (0), like a light switch, to encode information into what the processor can compute. A quantum computer, however, has a kind of encoding system using what has been named a *qubit* that has two physical states which are superimposed upon each other, making it possible for the “switch” to be on and off at the same time. The quantum superimposition of states, a concept which interferes with our conventional paradigm of reality, allows for the possibility of mathematics with much greater complexity and scope.

What does this quantum paradigm do to the progressive fallacy, which depends upon the same kind of one-state linearity we find in the threads of a binary computing operation? Can we progress *and* regress at the same time, meaning that, mathematically, we are in a *static* rather than *metastatic* or *ecstatic* state? The Second Witch in *MacBeth*, Act 1, Scene 1, describes the next meeting time with her colleagues as “When the battle’s lost and won,” implying that in her interpretation of MacBeth’s reality, it is possible for the *two states to exist simultaneously*. This, of course, escapes MacBeth whom, we gather, suffers the consequences of his ignorance of the stakes of his thoughts and actions.

In contrast, the metastasis of the ratchet effect of the progressive fallacy is analogically like that of cancer: it infects every part of the organism of civilization with the idea that each iteration of its infinite series of conditional branches is “greater than” the preceding iteration. But if we look at conditional branching, we see that it is at once *greater* and *lesser* than each iteration of itself. The result is that the progressive fallacy modifies the ethical aesthetic of society the way cancer modifies the blood flow to vital organs: fatally. MacBeth and civilization share a relentless striving for empire at any cost, inevitably sowing the seeds of a catastrophic downfall. A geometric ouroboros, civilization finds itself compelled to begin eating its own tail to survive, which naturally brings about its own demise.

Continuing the analogy, the CE serves to stem the flow of blood to the tumors in the infected parts of the propositional logic in the hope of killing those tumors off. Once cognized, it is introduced into the logic of the proposition, forming, at least, the absolute in a sea of otherwise undifferentiated simulation.

As we shall see later, it is possible to use its heuristic and prophylactic effects to restore reality to the ethical aesthetics of social discourse, wrenching it from the grip of invalid synthetic propositions. In so doing, public discourse, and, consequently, thought, regains its *humanitas*, snatching it from the cynical misappropriation even the simplest, most decent ethical aesthetic is victim to when the subject is in a state of the abdication of its sovereignty. Such a subject, therefore, like a heroin addict, is not to be trusted.

The design of the entire discourse of modern technological culture is a push-pull mechanism exploiting our desire to have our desires exploited. Like the hapless past, ravaged as it is by the propaganda of selective history, the discourse is that we are doomed to infinite regression if we pause even for a moment to reflect upon our condition or dwell in an eternal return of the *present* (also called the “here and now”).

Before we allow ourselves to embrace what we regard as the truth, by decree and fiat both the past and our present state must be subject to *filtration* by the apparatus we have chosen, one way or another, to dictate the terms of our existence. The rule is “that which has not been properly filtered by the corporate state and public media discourse cannot be true.” We are herded forward into the slaughter bay of “the future” by our relentless desire to be herded forward into the slaughter bay of the future. The institutional apparatus of this desire is indeed is the insatiable ouroboros the subject elects as its lord and master.

It has been all too easy to ascribe this volitional motivation to evil conspiratorial forces in the upper echelons of the civilization’s hierarchy—religious, financial, military, and political—than to face the reality of our complicity. To acknowledge that these supra-sovereign entities would not exist without our funding, consent, suffrage, support, defense, and even blood would be to admit that we are mortal. And the ego simply cannot do that.

We have often pitted nature against machines, spirituality against science, and imagination against logic so that we may indulge in a kind of frenzied *dichomania* as we vacillate between our cherished delusions and abhorred errors. But in the end, we are willing to admit *anything* except that the corporate state with its vast surveillance apparatus and military-



industrial infrastructure would not exist if we had not willed it into existence through our own fear.

As a collateral impulse to our fear, we erect an idyllic primeval past which conveniently predates recorded civilization. Like the social worship of children, it harkens back to a time when we were “innocent”—though of *what* is never specified. We reinforce this view with ancient writings such as Genesis. Between that mythical time and today lie the historical, though contested and continually revised, accounts of humankind’s struggle not with nature but with that which he has created to protect himself from the struggle with nature: civilization.

Meantime, cynical assessments of whether things today are better or worse than “those days” are dwarfed by extravagant hopes for a utopian future or fears of an apocalyptic frustration of those hopes. Either way, such events take place “in the future,” which of course never comes; if ever it appears that it *does* come, such as the messianic appearance of Jesus, then within minutes of its advent it is relegated to the past and the process begins anew once the intruder, in this case Jesus, is out of the way.

Of course, while there is little controversy over whether there was a person who came to be called Jesus, the categorical controversy is over whether he was the Messiah predicted, variously, throughout the Old Testament. For example, in Isaiah 7:14, it is written that “the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” As Jesus was not accepted by the Hebrews as this hoped-for messiah, it is accurate to say that the *hope* for the appearance of one “in the future” was simultaneously and ontologically fulfilled and *not* fulfilled.

That there is no place called *the future* for events to occur, as they always occur in the present, escapes us entirely. Why? Perhaps because death also happens “in the future” and therefore we never want it to come. If we want nonbeing never to come, then we must be willing to trade any kind of satisfaction with the present for this imaginary predication.

An integral and emotional component of abdication is the displacement of our natural sense of satisfaction with what could be called “mere being.” Just “to be” should be enough to make us want to *continue to be*. However, any satisfaction with the present also demands acceptance of the fact what some day *we will not be*. Any emotional and spiritual peace, then, is a matter of the embrace of this immutable fact of reality, whether it lives up to our personal and social expectations or not.

Perhaps we become aware of this fact when our lives come to such an impasse or crisis that we are *forced* to face reality. Those who predicate the prosperity and security of the present upon the probability of events in an

imaginary future are called geniuses, visionaries, psychics, or politicians. Those who caution that doing so invites the risk of falling out of favor with reality are called religious fanatics, conspiracy theorists, lunatics, nay-sayers, pessimists, and knockers and are, by this defamation, easily dismissed. The question is, then, once we have created this master discourse through the abdication of our sovereignty, are we forever in its thrall? Is there no hope of a reset of this fateful decision? Is abdication the irrevocable crossing of the threshold of the CE?

To answer such questions, we need tools allowing us a glimpse of the possibility of the *negation of negation*, or of what Hegel describes as the Second Negation. To get a better understanding of what the CE might have to offer us in this way, we can look at its parts and what they might mean to our position as the subjects of a discourse from which we derive our sense of identity. We are disinclined to forsake that self-image for another perhaps less flattering one or even for no image at all, in which case we begin to reflect our environment, spectrally and mimetically, achieving a kind of chameleon-like invisibility by blending into it. In the process, our psyche is propitiated with a *narcotic* homeostasis which helps offset the enervation inevitably arising as a consequence of perpetual metastasis and what amounts to a *synthetic* though nevertheless *psychotic* break with reality.

But to effectively appreciate these tools we must understand the peculiar state to which they apply. As we speak of category, we speak of the existential ( $\exists$ ). First, we have 0 as the set of the smallest infinite cardinal number  $\aleph_0$ . Then, we have 1 as the set of itself and any other number ( $n$ ). In both sets they (0 and  $\aleph_0$ ) are the least element and are therefore cardinal to each other, which they must be so that they may belong to any larger set which, for practical purposes, we will call the universe of discourse ( $\forall$ ). However, for them to be *rational* they must be cardinal and therefore 1,  $n \dots$  must be the successor of 0. Furthermore, we could say that ( $\exists^0 < \exists^{1, n \dots}$ ). In other words, as  $\aleph_0$  is infinitely smaller than 1, then 1 is infinitely greater; and if 1 is infinitely greater, then there is no possibility of *any other number* ( $n$ ) being infinitely greater than 1, which is simply the case. Additionally, as we have “excluded” (in the sense of the excluded middle) the possibility of imaginary infinity to give us the convenience of infinite progression we are left with a universe of discourse in which ( $\exists^0 < \exists^{1, n \dots}$ ) =  $\forall$ .

This universe *must include itself* to be universal, just as the statement “all generalizations are false” must include the specification that some are true. There is nothing particularly mystical or exotic about such a paradox; it is simply a rational necessity which then extends itself into the linguistic discourse of the matter and therefore cannot be avoided without rendering

the statement false. Perhaps Wittgenstein's objection to the logic of Russell's paradox is not that it is false or invalid, but that it is trivial.

The CE consists of the following parts which, taken individually, may lead us to different views of the same conclusions:

- a) The difference between 0 and 1
- b) The difference between 1 and  $n$
- c) The disjunction of  $a \wedge b$  (excluded middle)
- d) The reset of a cardinal to its predecessor (including reset to 0)
- e) The *exclusion* of any such number from reset (regression)

We have already discussed the difference between 0 and 1 ( $0 / 1$ ) and 1 and any other number ( $1 / n$ ). It is possible to say that Peano's axioms, which make a number "real," also restrict it to functioning as the predecessor and successor of another number. Therefore, we may apply Aristotle's rule of the excluded middle and say that  $a \wedge b$  stands for the discrete nature of *any* number in as much as that number cannot be *any other* number in the cardinal sense, though it may be in the ordinal sense.

For instance, 4 is the 2<sup>nd</sup> even number just as 3 is the 2<sup>nd</sup> odd number. As  $1 > 0$ ,  $n$  is always greater than 1. In this way it supplies a forward *tendency* of natural numbers to increase in proportion to their predecessors. But the fact that a number *must* have a predecessor to be a number gives us an excluded middle even when considering the logic of superimposed quantum states. Any number progressing on the line must also be able to regress, with one exception: the cardinal sequence of 0, 1. As the difference between 0 and 1 is infinite, the difference between 1 and  $n$  is trivial.

As we will discuss at some length later, the difference between having murdered and not having murdered is nontrivial. Whereas, the difference between have murdered 1 person and  $n$  persons is trivial, at least according to the law and certainly the logic of the copula "is." For instance, the defense that "My client only murdered one person" has never been a good one. Not to be outdone by reality, though, jurisprudence nevertheless wants to set an example to others that it means business. As a result, we get such absurdities as a multiple murderer being sentenced to multiple "life" sentences to be served consecutively rather than concurrently.

What it comes down to is this: there is no way to un-murder someone, just as one cannot un-ring a bell. Any instance of having crossed the threshold of  $0 \rightarrow 1$  is not subject to a reset in the ontological sense, though one may be "forgiven" for one's sins, restitution may be ordered, charges may be dropped, or a jury may be unable to decide. The fact is, the deceased cannot be brought back to life to obviate the fact. Therefore, the reset and exclusion are exclusive of each other as functions.

There are two types of exclusions here: the coming-into-being of  $0 \rightarrow 1$ , and the point at which there is no possibility of reset (return to a previous state). The CE need not be restricted to the gene of  $0 \rightarrow 1$ . For example, if the odds are 1 in 5 that a person will fall to his death jumping from roof to roof, he may fall on the first jump or not fall at all. However, he has three other chances to fall in his fulfillment of the odds. If he falls on jumps 2, 3, or 4, he has performed  $x$  number of iterations of the jump but has crossed the threshold of  $0 \rightarrow 1$  upon the event of his fatal fall. "Luck" is all a matter of when and where one will invoke the CE, regardless of trivial iterations, discrete though they may be.

There will be a later discussion of what significance the statistical inferences have here to the practice of our ethical aesthetics. Our present concern is for the damage done to this aesthetic by the progressive fallacy. In short, when the distinction of a trivial threshold of 1,  $n \dots$  is mistaken, or deliberately substituted, for the nontrivial threshold of  $0 \rightarrow 1$ , the result is *complete disintegration of the beneficial application of an ethical aesthetic*. In its place the logic of abdication reigns.

The subject, in its abdication of its sovereignty to hegemonic power, sees no difference between, for instance, murdering one person and a thousand. It just changes the nomenclature to "killing" instead of "murder" and then persecutes a "war" for which a nebulous justification has been dashed together by empiric expediency. It should be noted that this predatory hegemony is none other than the handiwork of the abdicated subject itself which has done everything in its power to create this parental overlord to exonerate itself from any responsibility for the existential agony of its natural sovereignty.

Under the subject's own malfeasance, escaping the gravitas of such quaint prohibitions as the Commandment against killing (or murder) is understood as the social progress of civilization. After all, it is a rhetorical and juridical break from the superstitions of the past, which include the Ten Commandments and the Noahide Law. Moreover, language becomes conflated as the discourse of abdication abandons the excluded middle, embracing such contradictions as "we must achieve peace through war." As we shall see, this kind of thinking emulates the programmed cogitation of machines the way an animatron at an amusement park apes Abraham Lincoln.

As mentioned earlier, much of the mayhem of modern life is the symptom of the progressive fallacy's disjunction with reality and its propensity for wishful thinking, utopian or apocalyptic. A "growth" economy is good, says this discourse, when in fact it is the metastatic symptom of a critically flawed economic model (Neo-Keynesianism)

which, nevertheless, manages to benefit a certain class of individuals while perpetuating the subject's delusion that everything will be all right, eventually.

The primary obstructions to what might be called the equalization of thought with the reality of its situation are the progressive fallacy and the Cartesian view of man as the godlike manipulator of a mechanical Nature governed by immutable mathematical laws. That nature has laws just as man does is an excretion of the anthropomorphization of the universe the ego busies itself with in its quest for immortality and total power. Often enough, though, these laws are the codification of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy.

Consequent of this inherent instability, they tend to undergo a periodic overhaul, often transmuted into a contrary paradigm which is considered at last and finally the *really true truth* that shall not change for all eternity, the past truth being, by nature, the product of a benighted and unenlightened race of superstitious monkeys. Having jettisoned religion and the hoary God of Abraham, the ego instead turns to the notion of the Enlightenment positing that the *universe* alone, apart from God, is responsible for laws waiting to be discovered by scientists and their sensitive instruments. That some of these laws, such as the true nature of gravity (gravitons, anyone?) seem to elude our grasp is simply yet another problem time and money will solve "in the future" through the autonomic activity of the PF.

We might ascribe part of this notion to man's penchant for relying upon his computational systems without regard for their need for an internal logic which may or may not be applicable in all situations. The assumption is that such systems are de facto universal ( $\forall$ ) because they are based on positivism. To hint that they might involve a degree of existential variation ( $\exists$ ) and even chaos is heresy, as so much (money and power) depends upon the former proposition being absolute.

If the digital turnstile to the subway system says one's access card is invalid, when one knows it is valid, then *it* is right, and *one* is wrong. Attempts to prove one's case in the face of this "law of nature" embodied in a man-made machine are not only perverse and subversive, they show a lack of fundamental respect for that which the hegemony has installed for one's comfort, ease, convenience, and protection. Such human temerity!

Therefore, rather than uphold the so-called laws of nature, these digital mechanical inventions reverse the natural order. Abdicated man has become the automaton, emulating the wizardry of his gadgetry, all of which is based on mathematics which, as Kant points out, is at best synthetic, though it may be used in an analytic proof. Meantime, objective nature apart from man is regarded (officially) as a wildly out-of-control organic *threat* that must be

alternately propitiated through militant environmentalism or ravaged by war and mass production—at great profit to the hegemony either way.

This arrangement is not a rectification of any Cartesian excess; rather, it is a perverse inversion of it. While a human has become an *asset* as a generator of consumer data, he has also become a *liability* in that he must live, eat, breathe, think, and love. These “all too human” proclivities can be annoyingly unpredictable and demanding from the point of view of the mechanics of the hegemonic corporate state.

It is perhaps in this ecstatic variability, though, that we find any promise of the negation of the negation of the subject’s sovereignty. And it is this promise of a double negation that the hegemony fears the most, despite that it is the subject it fears that has created the hegemony in the first place as just compensation for the abdication of its sovereignty. Therefore, the hegemony *fears itself* in a republic, while the hegemony the public fears is also itself. The only thing we must fear is not fear itself, but fear *of* ourselves since, as Emerson points out in the quote at the head of this Preliminary, “In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended.” If we do not trust ourselves, even in the form of the “other” as spectral analog of ourselves in society, who can we trust? The answer is: machines, but is this a valid or even wise ethical aesthetic of technology and epistemology?

The laws of nature as described by science and the system of values underpinning civilization, while working in an apparently mechanistic way, are ultimately subject to the wild vicissitudes of the organic nature from which all that is human—including computers—is derived. Attempts to encode every smidgeon of reality is a form of existential cruelty not unlike deciding the outcome of a court case with the flip of a coin despite the evidence. For example, the idea of a “free market” would entail the enforcement of none but the simplest rules of honesty between the players themselves.

Instead, so-called controls of the market, which in effect become manipulations favoring the *force majeure* of the ruling hegemony, labor to produce the illusion of freedom within a system that, at best, allows for certain random variables only because it cannot help it. Meantime, these variables are then encoded into algorithms to make, as Aristotle quips in *Poetics*, the improbable highly probable. Why attempt to encode the randomness of reality? Not to control it. Rather, it is an attempt to put a finger on the scale of the equilibrium natural processes stubbornly insist on seeking, especially when attempts are made to manipulate them.

The irony here is that the greater the push for a *predictably unpredictable* outcome by limiting possibilities (say  $x$  instead of  $n$ ) the more unstable the system becomes in terms of how harmonious the outcome is with the needs

of the circumstances. The values  $x$  and  $n$ , then, enter a state of irreconcilable contradiction which, thanks to the artificiality of language, allows their contradictory state to become the norm and noncontradiction to become reviled as abnormal, perverse, subversive, and invalid.

We are left with the illegal “middle” proposition of  $x \neq n \leftrightarrow x = n$ , or,  $x$  equals  $n$  if and only if  $x$  does not equal  $n$ . Here, once again, is the invalid synthetic proposition necessary for any statement to be included in the set of simulacra class  $b$ .

Burdened with the progressive fallacy as its only ethical aesthetic, though, the undaunted subject pushes onward, striving for ever greater predictability and fewer possibilities in the face of the infinite variability of realia class  $a$ . The creative, wild, or *fauvist* element that is at the core of life itself soon departs from the operational circumstances of it, leaving an arid *formula* in its place that is a simulacrum of the real. This formula or algorithm, along with its necessary parametric boundaries, functions to stifle the unpredictable and therefore the spontaneous.

But alas, reality, in the guise of Nature, just will not have it. In its affront to Nature, simulacra class  $b$  attempts to throw an egg at the boulder of realia class  $a$ . While this is an impotent gesture, it nevertheless reveals the social discourse regarding the subject’s orientation to the demands reality inevitably makes on all creatures. As a result, civilization collectively stumbles into disaster brought about by its own efforts to shield itself from the vicissitudes of nature and life.

Catastrophes, such as the collapse of financial markets or military aggression disrupt the economy and disturb the peace. However, far from being a wake-up call, the ensuing pain and suffering are simply integrated into the narrative of the hegemony. The discourse is that chaos has been caused by the “enemies of civilization,” whether these enemies are diseases, natural disasters, terrorists, hippies, kudzu, criminals, or even the “whoopsie daisy” of human and computer error.

Consequently, chaos, disorder, civil unrest, protests, regime change, earthquakes, plagues, economic crashes, and revolution *aid* the hegemony in the enforcement of its tendency toward total control. This tendency would not exist, however, if the subject did not support it with his perpetual abdication.

## 1.4 When there is nothing left to prove

What does it mean to “prove” something? As with so many words today, the word “proof” has sunk into the status of a metaphor, if not hyperbole. It seldom signifies what might be considered its optimum meaning: to show

by logic or evidence that a proposition is verifiably true. Must the assertion that the language of verification is often used symbolically be proven? Let it be made clear now: nothing in this book is meant as proof of anything.

As Kant says of mathematics, the ideas here are based on what he considers to be *valid* synthetic propositions, not valid analytic statements. That any (or many) of them may be proven otherwise says more about language than about the argument. This argument is meant to *show* rather than *prove*. However, this does not exonerate the argument from producing some evidence and positive logic. It only pressures it to avoid contradictory propositions and therefore, in the case of a rather vociferous indictment of civilization, hypocrisy. In as much as it has succeeded in avoiding hypocrisy it has succeeded in *showing* something about the way we think and act.

As Wittgenstein says in the quote at the head of this Preliminary, “In the proposition a state of affairs is, as it were, put together for the sake of experiment.” This argument is (perhaps pathologically) experimental. It is part of the language of metaphorical hyperbole to think that all experiments are meant to “prove” something. Rather, many are meant to *show* something in the sense of generating further hypotheses and more experiments. To prove or to show, *that* is the question.

Certainly, proving is showing; but is showing proving? Certainly not. Perhaps the hardest thing to admit for *homo industrialis*—the self-proclaimed pinnacle of human evolution—is that he does not *know* something. Or worse: that it *cannot be known*, even in the emerald city of “the future” where all (he hopes) will be revealed by the miracles of science—especially the secret of immortality which, every few months, appears in the news media as being “just around the corner” of medical technology.

Naturally, according to the discourse of infinite progress, what cannot be known *now* will, absolutely, always, indubitably, and for *sure* be known in the future. “We have a team of top scientists working on it as we speak,” says the spokesperson for Laboratory X when pressed for results. Once, God was the source of omniscience, if one only knew how to tap into His cosmic power.

Now, it is the infallible Scientific Method which, alas, is only available to the designated eggheads of the positivist establishment who have the funding from the military and corporations to pursue their quests. The new products and weapons issuing from this frenzy of activity, we are told, are only the collateral benefits of what is otherwise mankind’s noble quest To Know, bereft of the contamination of the profit motive and the paranoia of hegemony.



What has done the most to turn analytic philosophy into a kind of cult is the idea that *if something cannot be proven through analytic positivism, it is cannot be true*. The only exception is that which earns a good profit and is, therefore, validated by the “animal spirits” of the marketplace. After all, how else could we know? As there is no other possibility of epistemology except verifiability in the positivist sense, we must dismiss any question that does not lend itself to this mode of inquiry as mere “metaphysics.” Questions about love, God and, strategically, death, are for the dreamers and “unscientific” lunatic fringe.

Everything can and must be analyzed positively, whether it lends itself to such manhandling or not. The discourse is that all that is *valid* must be quantified and encoded into digital information. What cannot, or is not, is *invalid*. The result is a reductive idealism much beloved by the despot, the corrupt politician, the plutocrat, the confidence man, the gambling investor, the mediocre bureaucrat, and their footman: the academic.

It is nearly axiomatic in public discourse, however, that “the truth,” even when discovered in the most scrupulous, unambiguous, affirmative, and absolute way, cannot compete with public sentiment and the verification of profits. What politician would dare, during an election year, to herald an unpopular truth when he could peddle a popular lie? What manufacturer would withhold a popular product, or even not pursue its development, only because it was a worthless piece of junk that only served to further degrade the fabric of society?

Examples abound in history and the cluttered landscape of the holographic plane of simulacra. In fact, the credo of the positivist establishment of *proof, proof, and more proof* provides the perfect veil for the activity of cooking up the next Big Idea that will captivate the heart, mind, productivity, wealth, and sovereignty of the subject. What makes this possible is that the citizen of the modern industrial society is only too willing to abdicate his sovereignty in the hope of attaining absolute security, unlimited access to consumer goods and debt, and medical immortality.

Therefore, the implicit definition of “proof” is often “conforms to the discourse.” That proof is necessary to determine truth, proof and truth then become interchangeable social values which, nevertheless, are *received* rather than *conceived* by the subject from the mouthpieces of the corporate state, its media, and the social chatter masquerading as meaningful human interaction. That which does not conform to the dogma and orthodoxy of the prevailing social discourse is, de facto, false.

How, then, are we to arrive at truth? Certainly not by reading an argument such as this one and accepting it blindly without testing its verisimilitude. That *this* argument regards itself as a counter-discourse does

not, reflexively, make it “true” (T) when it posits that the prevailing discourse is, by the action of the invalid synthetic proposition, false (F). Throughout this argument the burden of positive proof is thrust upon the reader, which is where it should be in strictly philosophical discourse.

We can, however, detect how discourse determines the nature of proof. The wonderful irony—even paradox—of proof is that we cannot prove what proof is. There is no ideal state of “proof” beyond all human corruption. The problem is that we are always subject to the suspicion that what we regard as the universe of discourse, true for all sets (even the set of itself), may in fact be an existential set.

The problem is precisely the situation Wiles found himself in as he attempted to find a proof for Fermat’s last theorem. Can we find a discrete proof for every instance of  $X^n$ , where  $n$  is any integer greater than 2? Therefore, perhaps the closest we can get to the absolute truth is to say that we cannot prove  $X^n$ , in the sense meant by positivists, without indulging in the spectacular feats of mathematical rigor of Wiles and the tragic Yutaka Taniyama who, sadly, killed himself in 1958 at the age of 31. Therefore, positivism’s dismissal of the so-called faith-based proofs of religion would, under such a plausible regime of verisimilitude, be considered *more prone to error* than, for example, religious ecstasy and revelation. How, then, can it claim to be the last word regarding the nature of reality?

Since deviations from the discourse of proof are termed *errors*, there is a structural disincentive to support anything that “has not been proven” which, quantitatively, is likely the vaster part of existence. Therefore, positivism is obliged to dismiss much of experience as “invalid,” which is precisely what it accuses religious cults of doing. To hold up Wiles’ Fermat proof as the evidentiary standard of everyday experience is beyond absurd. Not because it is invalid, but because so-called reality testing needs to be done *on the fly*, not during sequestration in the attic.

Why would the subject wish to live in a universe that was any way other than an endless mystery, to intrigue, fascinate, and motivate with sublime awe? How boring if humankind had, in the earliest days of its coherence, having barely liberated itself from the trees and caves, found the answers to everything? Nevertheless, under the banal formula of the positivist regime as well as classical religious dogma, *boredom = good, uncertainty = bad*.

Here is the basis of epistemology from the view of a mind that is itself a node in the network of the discursive system or constellation of social man, plagued and comforted as he is by invalid synthetic propositions. At all times man’s ego is absolutely convinced that it has a complete understanding of everything in the universe. If an iota of the unknown can be found in this sterilized environment, then the next big (quantum)

computer or the mere passage of time (progress) will surely blow it away, clearing a path for medical technology to declare immortality for everyone and the financial markets to make everyone rich.

At the same time, the ego is certain that it has at last overturned the folly, superstition, and just plain old harebrained stupidity of the preceding generations and centuries which spawned it and its ideas. That it might *owe* its present worldview to these antecedents never occurs to the subject's narcissistic ego which, blind as it is to anything except its own reflection, will have none of it. Having abdicated its sovereign self, and therefore now a particle of the omniscient hegemony it has fashioned in its own image, it declares all mysteries dispelled and all problems solved.

Again, we see the progressive fallacy at work. Mere *succession* (1, 2, 3, 4, ...) is increase in everything and anything that vastly superior *homo industrialis* finds expedient to have increased for one reason or another, such as the trivial but ever-increasing number of possessions he can lay claim to. Therefore, the epistemology of man is the compulsive need for *proof at all costs*, even if it means the sacrifice of the *truth* of that proof itself. In this way it becomes the credo, or ethical aesthetic, of the modern industrial age with its endless spinning of fantastic yarns about the purpose of its existence. That we know that we cannot know something, even if it is verifiably the truth that we cannot know it, is heresy and is dealt with viciously. Couple this compulsion for dogmatic sanitation with the relentless pursuit of progress for its own sake and we have the epic farrago of modern man.

The human desire *to know* is the basis of epistemology. It is also the root of the meaning of "science," a word which hails straight from the Latin *scientia*, or "knowledge." In Latin there is also the additional meaning of being an expert at knowing, which makes sense considering the modern use of both words. The first is the professional knowing of knowing and the second is just professional knowing. Both concern *what* we know. But even more important than what we know is *how* we know it, since the relative quality of what we know has come to depend upon how we have come to know it. Did it come from a vision of angels, or from a spectrophotometer in a scientific laboratory? Epistemology, however, is also concerned with the study of the *methodologies* employed to know.

The how and what of knowing provide us with two vectors,  $x$  and  $y$ . Naturally, they lie at right angles to each other, which then provides us with a third vector,  $z$  after we add them together the divide by 2. Regardless of the angle of attitude of  $z$ , which depends upon the relative positions of  $x$  and  $y$ , we know that whatever values we assign to these two vectors will determine the attitude of the third. Therefore, *how* we get what we know,

and *what* we know and how we got it, result in a different ethical aesthetic,  $z$ .

For example, if what we know ( $y$ ) has come to us through information gained by surveillance, for instance a satellite image ( $x$ ), then the ethical aesthetic ( $z$ ) will differ from knowledge gained by torture ( $x'$ ). Consequently,  $y \wedge x / 2 = z$ , whereas  $y \wedge x' / 2 = z'$ . As to methodology we may add information from our patriot-spy ( $x''$ ), from a traitor-spy ( $x'''$ ), a double agent ( $x''''$ ), and so on. While the information thus gained is constant ( $z$ ), the methodology affects the ethical aesthetic of the nature of our methodology and therefore helps determine *the kind of society* that has gathered the information.

European and North American countries make a great show of how much they abhor using torture to extract information, mostly because in their politics citizens have grown comfortable only with such violence that is used for entertainment or is carried out *beyond* their borders by countries they regard as having a lower standard of “human rights,” even if that torture is performed on their behalf and for their direct benefit and security. “Out of sight, out of mind” sums up this ethical aesthetic (unless it is make-believe torture carried out for the spectacle of it). Furthermore, perhaps all politics are comfortable with the idea that knowledge is knowledge ( $A = A$ ); it does not matter how it came about (ontology), only what *positive* effect it might have in a long run (teleology) for those it benefits.

Therefore, epistemology and the ethical aesthetic of the entity that gathers the knowledge (or information) must be considered together. In the larger and more pervasive ethical aesthetic of the corporate state, positivism holds sway in the form of relentless, universal, and arbitrarily applied *testing* which, appropriate or not, often determines the social and economic fate of the subject tested. The idea is that even if a test is at best a ham-fisted attempt to get at the “truth” of the subject’s fitness for this or that degree of freedom, it is “fair,” since it sets up competition between subjects using an equal standard of evaluation, however mediocre and inappropriate.

The subject of such a society is so inured to perpetual, relentless, and arbitrary testing, that even in its free time away from formal assessment of its knowledge and ability it plays computer games on its digital gadget for hundreds of hours a week and thousands of hours a year. Naturally, its performance in these diversions is, nevertheless, reported back to the game makers vendors for marketing and any other commercial use benefitting the marketplace.

Naturally, there is the appropriate application of testing. It seems reasonable that there are things which *should* be tested, such as vaccines or passenger jets. The question is how far should this extend into other arenas,

such as the subject's psychology, and what are the implications for the ethical aesthetic of the society in which the testing takes place? Short of a definitive answer, observation will lead us to conclude that the seeking and establishment of what is regarded as *proof* of this or that embodies the utilitarian ethical aesthetic of the modern industrial state.

While both are what Ronell calls the "road test" and the bar exam have their place, there is indeed the *tertium quid* of knowledge described by Kant's epistemological ethical aesthetic of *sapere aude*, or to *dare to know*. This kind of knowledge implies risk and sovereign judgment. But what sort of risks, and what is the nature of sovereign judgment?

What makes this kind of knowing so daring is not the relentless pursuit of proof, but rather the *audacity* to know whether we *should* know or *can* know. Therefore, knowing also includes the possibility of choosing *not to know* certain things. In effect, this is an expression of one's lack of paranoia. Furthermore, it also includes the courage and honesty to admit when something is possibly *unknowable*—a heresy in the modern age of Scientism—even with the miraculous passage of time the progressive fallacy relies upon. Therefore, there are, possibly, some things better left unknown or that must simply remain a mystery.

For example, let us consider the ethical aesthetic of a consumer device manufacturer that *seeks to know* a customer's movements, secrets, confidences, pulse, contacts, desires, longings, Internet searches, lovers, body temperature, thoughts, musings, and other telemetry commonly implicated in the EULA (end-user licensing agreement). This contract, which we "sign" without a second thought, is considered a *binding contract* between the user and the vendor as soon as the device or software are used. No pen or fanfare is required for this ceremony. Furthermore, should a government also seek that information only because, piggybacking upon the vendor's telemetry by bureaucratic bullying, it *can* gather such information "just in case" the user turned out to be a threat to the state?

Whether such information is gathered by hook or crook does not really matter. What *does* matter is the so-called end-user's complicity in this agreement, and whether he was truly given a choice to abdicate this information or was railroaded into it, in which case it is no longer abdication but *usurpation*. Furthermore, referring to  $z$ , or the consequent ethical aesthetic indicated by the attitude of  $x \wedge y / 2$ , what do such methodologies say about the legitimacy of the hegemonic order that carries them out? Behind the ugly ethical aesthetic of a hegemonic power is an equally *ugly mass of subjects* cowering in the shadow of the fear of material and social disenfranchisement and ego death.

Just as these subjects abhor torture except as entertainment or if carried out on their behalf by states they regard as cruel and primitive, so too do they condone disruptions of and intrusions into their so-called privacy (which used to be called freedom) if it means that they will be regarded as members in good standing in the universal cult of mediocrity.

The argument that acceptance of the EULA indicates the desire to abdicate one's sovereignty has its merits, but lacks the sinew of credibility, since even those who prefer to rage against the machine also discover themselves effectively forced into a compromising position vis-à-vis the hegemonic state and its commercial vendors. Therefore, they find their self-determination usurped at the sword-point of social and economic manipulation by the hegemony of their ethically *ugly* brethren. Sovereignty depends upon a sense of being *alone* in an indifferent universe where self-determination is one's greatest asset and possession. It is only in such a daring condition that one can objectively evaluate reality, inasmuch as one can.

Such independence need not affront religious sensibility. However, it must embrace the ethical aesthetic of *sapere aude*; if true knowledge is only possible when one's methodology is disengaged from the received discourse of third parties, then *to dare to know* is to *dare to challenge* both the state and the commercial apparatuses, as they both do not benefit from such a method and therefore are at a disadvantage and feel threatened by such disengagement. The storm troopers of the corporate state's hegemony over knowledge are the universities.

These citadels of orthodoxy lord over what can and cannot be said in public discourse, all the while endowed with the holy sanctity of divine wisdom they inherited from their medieval forbears. The media are the running dogs of the hegemony's orthodoxy, transmitting its discourse to every private sanctuary and corner bar where subjects gather to learn what they should do next to remain part of the mediocre realm of simulacra.

Nevertheless, the main social discourse of the state consumer apparatus is that *thou shall put no other gods before Me*, up to and including God Himself. Fear born of weakness, dependency, and confusion are what drive the subject to abdication of its sovereignty while also being the perpetual curse of its wretched, sucker's bargain. If abdication leads to such a lose-lose outcome (a *negative* non-zero-sum game) then why does the subject choose this path in the first place?

Described as it is here, the EULA of abdication seems to offer little except delusion, slavery, and mediocrity. Does not everyone want to be enlightened, free, and unique? The answer is *not if it means limited access to consumer goods, debt, and the possibility of medical immortality*. In

addition, few relish the social and institutional ostracization that results when one is branded a social pariah and even a danger and threat to all that is considered by the prevailing discourse as good, fair, just, and right.

It is disingenuous to argue that one is “tricked” into abdication. Are we to accept that the subject, this apotheosis of industrial civilization which seems to be in continual celebration of its own worth and good luck, is also as stupid as a rabbit in a snare? Perhaps part of the problem is the assumption epistemological man makes that his regime of relentless testing and his compulsive lust for universal quantification has indeed brought him to a state of godlike omniscience. He need not *dare to know* when he is born knowing everything. Besides, he has a university degree to wave in the breeze proving that he is certified omniscient—at least in the discipline indicated on the certificate.

Ronell indicates that scientific discovery, proof, or the truth of a proposition is a *negative* enterprise based on the “overthrow” of the prevailing discourse rather than the continual need for it to be proven “true,” no matter what nonsense it may be comprised of.

The ... scientific stance, then, involves the strength to try to *overthrow* rather than to *establish* the solution at which thought arrives. The point is to let go in good faith of the massive defense mechanisms that attend thought, to allow if not to provoke the dissolution of the solution, to affirmatively invite failure by losing the attachment to a solution made in service to dogmatic principles [*italics added*].<sup>13</sup>

While the biographical details of many great scientists and mathematicians of history support this view, they will also show that these individuals were often tormented by their orthodox peers and the institutions and states with power over them. It is almost axiomatic that they were marginalized or even driven from their professions by those who regard all new paradigms with reactive suspicion. Pilloried on the convulsions of doubt springing from the guardians of cherished and often profitable social, political, and even scientific dogma (which is just a quaint word for discourse), their genius was often diverted into efforts to keep themselves from the dungeon or exhausted in the *auto-da-fé*. Or, if they are lucky, they are *lionized* into conspicuous oblivion (as was Newton), heaped with honors, awards, titles, and Nobel Prizes long after their productive days have passed.

Meantime, their more obscure colleagues on whom the spotlight has never shone labor without encouragement, funds, and with less recognition

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<sup>13</sup> Avital Ronell, *The Test Drive* (Chicago: U. Illinois Press, 2005), 35.

than their discoveries deserve. While this is generally not the fault of their more esteemed colleagues, it does not matter; the damage is often done to what might have come from them had they had better funding, support, freedom, and influence.

The “dogmatic principles” Ronell mentions in the above passage are not the dicta of the professions, or the prohibitions of the church, but rather *metaphysical assumptions* made axiomatically about the world by the dogma of simulacra. Such received “knowledge” is impossible to parse, as it is not self-evident, without analysis of the apparatus of its discourse. As we have been saying all along, this linguistic apparatus consists primarily of invalid synthetic propositions which allow for anything to be possible, no matter how improbable. By nature, then, they are metaphysical as they are also concerned with the metadata the corporate state is so obsessed with. In addition, they tend to defy even the most fundamental natural logic of being and nonbeing such as the phenomenon of death. Consequently, it is necessary that the discourse of simulacra be dogmatic as it cannot be argued, based as it is upon a flawed logic.

Challenging the verisimilitude and validity of these propositions can be dangerous. With or without the threat of a wrathful God, one may find oneself in the throes of the accusation of heresy and burned at the professional and political stake. The so-called hard and soft sciences smugly refer to church dogma as either a relic of a bygone era of scientific darkness or an obstacle in the way of progress.

As their criticism is typically directed outwardly toward their perceived enemies, it is seldom turned in upon itself to discover that its own fundamental propositions are as ineffable as church dogma. The hegemonic overlords of these professions seldom recognize that the subtext of their animosity toward ancient metaphysics, religious or secular, is that they *resent* competition from what they consider to be opponents with a much better record of success. But we do not have to look to the official dogma of religion, science, or politics to find the discourse at the core of the abdicated personality. It is the personality *itself*, even apart from these third-party influences, that provides its own excuse for the ritual sacrifice of its self-determination.

What is the possible epistemology of the abdicated subject? The first thing we can say about it is that most knowledge of any consequence must be *received*, rather than *generated*, by the subject. Received knowledge carries with it the covert imprimatur of the corporate state (or sacred caliphate). Like food for the observant, it must be kosher, halal, blessed by the hegemonic authority in charge of epistemological purity. Nevertheless, knowledge must be generated from time to time; therefore, the subject



reflexively *submits* this knowledge to the authorities for approval before it is released for the public.

The complicated network of received knowledge, transmitted to the subject primarily through the *indoctrination channels* of the education system but also through the *distraction channels* of the media, represents itself as having *already verified* this information. Therefore, the story goes, there is no need on the part of the subject to question the motives behind or details of these data and how they are presented.

The best example is the news media. This form of infotainment can only distinguish itself from more fantastic forms of distraction by insisting upon the absurd discourse that its information, with extremely rare exceptions and then only by freak accident, is 100 percent “true” by any standard of verifiability and verisimilitude. That even scientific exploration and discovery often cannot and seldom does make the same claim gives some idea of how ridiculous this trope is in comparison to the veracity of the “stories” found in the content it sells. Meantime, it remains axiomatic in the annals of scientific literature that for every research study there is an equal and opposite study, and that *no finding or discovery shall go unchallenged*. By comparison, it is equally axiomatic in news reportage that errors are typically ignored or denied, and that corrections are more difficult to wrench from a guilty news source than a confession is from a criminal.

But what really distinguishes the epistemology of the abdicated subject from that of independent analytic verifiability is the ethical aesthetic which says that to challenge the official dogma of the system that has been so generous to the subject by attempting to verify it is at best heresy and at worst apostasy. To doubt the verisimilitude of any proposition issued with the imprimatur of the corporate state and its various apparatuses (such as the education and banking systems) is tantamount to *discursive terrorism* and shall and will be punished.

As a result, the subject conveniently sees no need to submit knowledge to the rigor of analysis in the form of objective verification, provided the hegemony leaves channels open for the vetting of knowledge to be sure it is in sympathy with its prevailing discourse. “I don’t want no trouble,” says the subject under its breath. “Better safe than sorry.” And who would dare argue with such good sense? The subject is further relieved by the fact that it does not have to put in the time, effort, and effective thinking necessary to endure what is invariably the trial by fire information undergoes when it is subjected to objective, positive verification.

Parallel independent studies, revealing secrets to competitors for confirmation, performing the same laborious experiments repeatedly, or waiting years for some celestial event that will prove a theory beyond doubt

(as in Einstein's *Gedankenexperiments*) is too much to suffer for many scientists who must publish or perish. Moreover, universities, public schools, and the media owe their existence to the degree to which they provide predigested information bearing the mark of the hegemony's imprimatur on its forehead. Stepping beyond this boundary is, by design, often suicidal for these social dependents.

Apart from the rigors of positive proof and the restrictions of official dogma, though, there is the epistemology resulting from *valid* logic, defined as a logical thought process which, verifiable or not, is free of fatal category contradictions. Here, then, we approach Kant's distinction, in "System of the Principles of the Pure Understanding," Section II: "Of the Highest Principle of All Synthetic Judgments,"<sup>14</sup> namely that such judgments be *free of category contradiction*. It is this distinction that is at the heart of the difference between valid and invalid propositions, synthetic or analytic.

Applying Kant's definition of these types of propositions (which is made with great clarity in the passage cited below), we could say that the abdicated subject depends entirely upon invalid synthetic *judgment*—Kant's preferred word for *proposition*. To conform to the discourse of simulacra class *b*, namely that "anything is possible" within the topology of its sacred holographic space (regardless of its putative agreement with natural law), the subject must introduce categorical contradiction to what might otherwise be a valid synthetic statement.

By doing so, the subject performs its abdication in a perpetual ritual of the sacrifice of its self-determination through institutional ignorance and obedience. Furthermore, by "doping" synthetic statements with contradiction, the subject succeeds in freeing experience from its dreary reliance on the wretched limitations of annoying reality.

As can be seen in the passage below, what Kant describes as the *valid* synthetic judgement exemplifies what he considers to be "the highest principle of all synthetic judgement," namely *noncontradiction*. Whether a statement is trivial or not is trivial itself compared to this distinction, which is nontrivial; therefore, Kant's principle applies to all statements, trivial or nontrivial, mundane, or profound.

The spiritual quest of life is that it be honest and true. This ethical aesthetic begins with the *language* used to describe it. Nevertheless, he makes it clear that a synthetic proposition or judgment draws from two categories which, though categorically "different," are, nevertheless, noncontradictory. (*Difference is not contradiction*. It is the mixing up of the

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<sup>14</sup> Immanuel Kant, "System of the Principles of the Pure Understanding," Section II, "Of the Highest Principle of All Synthetic Judgments." *Critique of Pure Reason* (MacMillan, 1922), 126.

two ideas that leads to racial, ethnic, political, and economic bias and prejudice.)

For example, prime numbers and numbers which are not prime are in excluded categories but are noncontradictory, since they both are drawn from the greater category of integers. However, to say that an empty set (0) and a set with any more than (0) elements ( $n$ ) are noncontradictory is a false proposition, as *nothing* and *something* are, by existential, phenomenological, ontological, and linguistic necessity, opposite and are therefore in conflict or contradiction, just as are being and nonbeing and life and death. This is despite that 0 may be the “least element” in a well-ordered set. The natural numbers 0 and 1 are in contradiction despite Peano’s primitive axiom stating that they are both “numbers.” The question of whether something is or is not a number, which would be the only possible distinction, is simply not a valid question. Which is why, we may presume, Peano saw it necessary to formulate his primitive axioms to settle the matter, particularly in the case of 0, so that we may get on with the further developments we find in Cantor’s well-ordered set theory.

However, in the case of 0 and 1, the first number is the *absence* of elements and therefore the absence of the attributes necessary to determine its set or category (except that “it” has no attribute), while the second is the *presence* of an element or elements which must therefore have attributes setting them apart, either by difference or category, from other elements and, consequently, other sets. Furthermore, according to Cantor it must remain possible to state that the least element of a well-ordered set (0) has the attribute of having no attribute, otherwise, non-empty sets *with* attributes would lose their meaning.

Consequently, it is also true that we may have a “well-ordered empty set”  $\emptyset$  which, nevertheless, is not meant to be a discrete value except in relation to other non-empty sets, just as  $\aleph_0$  (aleph-null) can only be the *smallest infinite cardinal number* relative to other cardinal numbers that are non-infinite or finite.

For language to function sensibly it must be populated with semantic terms which are categorically exclusive, such as “absence” and “presence,” and being and nonbeing. These values hold true in logic, mathematics, and computer code which are also forms of language. What the ego of the subject finds so intolerable about this rule is that semantic terms in opposition, such as being and nonbeing, depend upon a universe where the ego, by the fact of its existence, sets itself up for oblivion. Just as the information on a unique scroll burned in the Royal Library of Alexandria during its various fires no longer exists in any sense, so too does the ego find itself in the precarious position of being, inevitably and absolutely, in

mortal danger of dissolution upon the demise of the person it believes it inhabits.

A tombstone is more than just the marker of a grave spot; it is all that is left of the ego, which makes a book by a dead author an elaborate tombstone and nothing more, as far as its deceased author is concerned. Consequently, the ego cannot attain a sense of peace and homeostasis without convincing itself that it is *immortal*, despite the overwhelming evidence all around it to the contrary.

Therefore, what Kant describes is what we may call a *valid* synthetic statement, while what is necessary for the realm of simulacra to “exist” as it does, *the element of contradiction* must be introduced so that opposing classes of phenomena (such as life and death) can be neutralized in the acceptance of an invalid judgment as a valid one. However, a distinction should be made here between this and Kant’s idea of *antinomy*, where that which we may perceive through empirical understanding is thrown together as the material equivalent of that which may only be intuited through the *transcendental aesthetic*. To do so is clearly a contradiction of universes of discourse and therefore constitutes an invalid synthetic proposition (ISP). More will be said about this later.

If we begin with the most accessible distinction, we can say that what the subject “knows” does not arise from an *a priori* closed predicate logic. For instance, we may say that for every class  $p$  there is a class  $q$  ( $\exists p \rightarrow \exists q$ ), which would indicate that no class is a class except in relation to another class. Therefore, it is not possible for monadic class  $x$  to exist in this system independently of any other class and still call itself a class.

Still, it remains true that it is possible for realia class  $a$  to exist without simulacra class  $b$ , but not the other way around since “existence,” in its true and denotative sense, requires that all elements of its set possess the attribute of *le devenir*, the coming-into-being, or the crossing of the categorical threshold of  $0 \rightarrow 1$ , which must occur *in time* (Ti). There need be *no other* interval of time than  $0 \rightarrow 1$ , uptick and downtick, for there to be “existence” (Ti<sup>ε</sup>), where (ε) is the fundamental existential attribute. While all other measures of time are iterations of this interval (Ti<sup>n</sup>, or  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$ , and so on).

If  $\exists p \rightarrow \exists q$  is *true*, then  $\exists q \rightarrow \exists p$  is also true, by the law of their reversibility as symmetrical propositions. Why, then, are not realia class  $a$  and simulacra class  $b$  reversible and therefore symmetric in this way ( $a \rightarrow b, \sim b \rightarrow a$ )? Why does the resulting asymmetry favor realia as generative and disfavor simulacra as derivative and dependent? The answer is that *no* element in the set of simulacra class  $b$  may possess the attribute of being

real (<sup>e</sup>). Otherwise, it would be subject to *le devenir* and therefore life and death. *This is precisely what the realm of simulacra wishes to avoid!*

Immortality is not possible with coming-into-being in the existential sense. Therefore, we are forced to state that simulacra class *b*, as a class, possesses the attribute of *not* having the attribute of existence (<sup>e</sup>). Consequently, all elements of this class *do not exist* in the way that all elements of realia class *a* must and do. Moreover, if elements of class *b* did possess (<sup>e</sup>), then they would no longer be members of that class but would, rather, find themselves possessed of the universal attribute of temporal existence ( $\forall T^e$ ) that all elements of class *a* must and do possess.

Nevertheless, what makes the members of class *b* simulations is that, as members of a child class of the parent class *a* in the mimetic sense, elements of class *b* *inherit* the metadata of the parent class to cloak their otherwise empty existence. “And in their show of life more dead they live,” says poet Jones Very, “Than those that to the earth with many tears they give.”

An attempt to “inject” monadic logic into this universe *a posteriori* would result in nonsense because, as Kant points out, negations would have to coexist in a state of the excluded middle ( $A = B$ ). In this way we would be able to say that any proposition can be verified as being T (true) or F (false) in such a universe by whatever expedient is necessary rather than objective criteria such as proof of concept or noncontradictory logic.

Whereas, if we allow the injection of any proposition which is outside of this universe of discourse then the universe itself will be subject to a degree of modification wherein verifiability would depend upon the rules of each new state, which must therefore include states that are unverifiable.

For example, we can verify that a person is dead or alive, but we cannot verify if he has gone to Heaven or that cryogenics will ensure his medical resurrection “in the future.” Kant argues that the synthetic proposition contributes significantly to what we “know” about the world through experience but admits that it lacks what he calls elsewhere the “parsimony” of verification.

In forming an analytical judgment I remain within a given concept, while predicating something of it. If what I predicate is affirmative, I only predicate of that concept what is already contained in it; if it is negative, I only exclude from it the opposite of it. In forming synthetical judgments, on the contrary, I have to *go beyond a given concept* [these italics added], *to bring something together with it*, which is *totally different* [italics added] from what is contained in it. Here we have neither the relation of identity

nor of contradiction, and nothing in the judgment itself by which we can discover its truth or its falsehood.<sup>15</sup>

In the synthetic statement, we must allow that for every class  $p$  there is a class  $q$  if and only if there is no class  $x$ :  $([\exists p \rightarrow \exists q] \rightarrow \sim [\exists x])$ . Class  $x$  would invalidate the proposition since its class of attributes belong to one that is entirely alien, existentially and ontologically, to anything in  $p$  or  $q$  if we wish to form a complete propositional statement or judgment from these disparate elements. It is for this reason that realia class  $a$  and simulacra class  $b$  are noncontradictory (provided  $x$  is not introduced into the statement); they are both *modes of being*, one real and the other simulated. As  $b$  inherits its attributive metadata of “reality” from parent  $a$  as the child, we may safely admit that both are modes of being and therefore are noncontradictory as such. Elements of class  $x$  are regarded by both  $a$  and  $b$  as nonsensible, as they intentionally (as in the language of Dada art) or unintentionally (as in the ravings of lunatics) dissociate themselves from attributes of either class, real or simulated.

Deep down inside members of the realm of simulacra know that if  $b$  vanished  $a$  would remain, whereas if  $a$  vanished so would  $b$ . Consequently, observing the death of others has no effect on the narcissistic subject’s sense of its own mortality, whereas any rather intrusive and concrete intimation of its own impending demise, such as serious accident or illness, may cause the subject some anxiety that it is ill prepared to reckon with. Still, it is because of this asymmetry that simulacra remain so influential and tenacious, as they inherit a mode of being from their parent that appears, *prima facie*, to be genuine.

But the logic *within* the realm of simulacra is, consequently, always  $F$  because no element of this class can make the valid statement that it “is.” Nevertheless, though, all elements are *required to believe* that they “are” to maintain their status as members of the cult of the one and only “true” reality—before which there shall be no other realities.

As such, realia class  $a$  and simulacra class  $b$  remain in the same universe of discourse  $\forall(ab)$  though within that universe  $a = Ti^e$ , whereas  $b \neq Ti^e$ . We can settle all disputes about attribute ( $e$ ) here and now by simply saying that the set of all sets, the truly universal set, must contain not only  $a = Ti^e$  and  $b \neq Ti^e$ , but also *itself* (“if and only if it does not include itself,” says Russell). Otherwise, it is merely yet another existential set. Furthermore, as this is an ontological not mathematical argument, we must, as Wittgenstein says, “for the sake of experiment,” be magnanimous enough to admit that *both* are what are referred to here as “modes of being” within Dasein.

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<sup>15</sup> Kant, *ibid.*

It is not the purpose or the scope of this argument to say more about Dasein than that its only attribute is that it is without attribute. It is also neither the purpose nor the scope of this argument to say that any mode of being is right or wrong. It may very well be, and the inclination here is to admit, that none of us can live without dwelling simultaneously on both the complex holomorphic plane of realia and the imaginary holographic plane of simulacra. After all, the proposition that there is this dichotomy at all is entirely a synthetic proposition, though a valid one, and is not therefore subject to verification, leaving it open to eternal debate.

In addition, it is more likely that it is necessary for us to abdicate our sovereignty if we wish to develop further as human beings by negating this negation. *Power, including the power over oneself, is not given, it is taken.* As we shall discuss later, Hegel's Second Negation, the ultimate seizure of self-determination, is not possible without the penultimate surrender of what we initially come to regard as the power over ourselves by birth. The mere fact of birth, like the mere passage of time in the progressive fallacy, is no guarantee of self-determination. Any prison is a testament to this fact.

Perhaps what truly distinguishes realia class *a* from simulacra class *b*, from a semantic point of view, is that the latter, being predicated upon faulty logic is therefore obliged to insist for its credibility that it is the *only* true universe of discourse. Conversely, realia class *a*, being free from contradiction (by definition) is distinguished, semantically, by its noted *lack* of this kind of dogmatic totalitarianism regarding the possibilities of existence. The propositions of realia are *valid*, though they may be either analytic or synthetic. Simulacra entirely depend upon *invalid* propositions or what are known as "category errors," often injected from alien class *x* as described above.

Though the worldview of class *x* may seem "crazy" (like the "factor *x*" that serial killer Dennis Rader, or BTK, Bind Torture Kill, said motivated him to murder), it does help to explain why psychologists say that psychopaths and sociopaths too often become political, corporate, and social leaders. Nevertheless, both realia and simulacra must and do contain synthetic propositions; the difference is that the latter will contain the invalid ones needed for it to maintain its simulation of its mimetic parent reality.

Furthermore, the invalid synthetic propositions of simulacra must and do tend to contain verifiable statements as the T (true) element of their synthesis. If this were not so, they would 1) *not be synthetic*, and 2) *would not be believable as discourse*. To say that a synthetic proposition is invalid is not to say that it is also crazy (*x*), in which case we would classify it as, from the point of view of information science, "noise."

Kant goes on to praise the role in epistemology of experience as well as the process of adding to what we know from that which we either verify or trust to be verifiable, but which we did not or could not discover for ourselves. Neither experience nor that which others have discovered that we have verified or that is (by some criteria) verifiable can be accused of being “received” knowledge in the sense of being, categorically, without the possibility of verification. Before anyone saw the far side of the moon, it was known that whether it had craters could be verified (as it later was) and that therefore it was reasonable to say that both sides had craters without actually seeing them without fear of invoking an invalid synthetic proposition.

The advantage is clear: we need not continue forever verifying that which has been verified or that which has the characteristics of what *can be* verified (for instance, the moon being a sphere and spheres having two equal hemispheres, we may make a statistically sound inference regarding its far side). There is much we must simply *accept without further verification*, but not before we subject it to, at least, nontrivial analysis to determine either 1) that its method of prior verification is sound by the positive rules of verifiability, or 2) that it *would be* verifiable by those rules were we able to apply them.

In the latter case, Kant sees the *problematic* of synthesis in the exercise of reason where there is “nothing in the judgment itself by which we can discover its truth or its falsehood.” In other words, there is no “key” in the synthetic statement itself by which we may verify it, as that key lies “outside” of the limits of its category. This is not necessarily a problem in a synthetic hypothesis, since what must ensue once we have formed it is indeed that “outside” verification. However, when it comes to certain kinds of propositions, such as a person’s innocence or guilt in a trial, even a valid synthetic judgment will not (or more accurately *should not*) do. The problem is, often enough guilt or innocence must be decided if that key can be found elsewhere.

The introduction of the invalid synthetic statement, though, causes an intractable problem solved only by falsehood and deceit. What the discourse of the abdicated subject has done to overcome its limitations as evidence is exploit and pervert the synthetic proposition by introducing categorical contradiction and then superimposing it upon or even substituting it for what is verifiably analytic and without such contradiction.

Again, this is what the 9<sup>th</sup> Commandment is meant to guard against in its prohibition against bearing false witness toward another in just such a circumstance. In other words, the invalid synthetic proposition exploits the excluded middle, leaving us with  $A = B$  as  $T$ . This is indeed what a con man



does to take advantage of his mark. The difference is that the subject is conning itself.

The monstrous irony of this hustler's shell game is that the prevailing, or "master," discourse works its magic in the name of *the pure analytical reason of science*. How is this possible? Are people this easily conned? While the answer is yes, it is not a satisfactory answer. A more satisfying one is that what might have been, and sometimes is, science, has been replaced or usurped by a kind of sacred hucksterism we could call Scientism, the prevailing and official religion of the corporate-industrial state.

As the free exercise of reason is replaced, in the subject's core identity, with the *a priori* manufactured discourse of consumerism and state control, the subject's entire orientation to realia becomes *inverted*. The closer to reality the subject gets in its processing of experience, the more *fake* "real" reality seems to the subject, and vice versa. Put another way, the fake is *more real* than the real. From this corrupt synthesis of existential elements drawn from two opposed classes of experience or modes of being (within Dasein), the real and fake, springs the imaginary holographic plane of *simulacra* the discourse of which is guarded by the Cerberus of corporate and academic science.

This three-headed dog of Scientism—each head representing, respectively, banking, government, and the media—launches from its miasma of fakery into the life-or-death drama of realia. The result is a kind of hallucinatory experience of existence that may be manipulated with admirable precision by those who stand to benefit from it. While only a fool could not figure out which parties benefit the most from this mass hallucination, the fact is none of these parties would have any power at all if it were not for the voluntary, willful, intentional, desired, preferred, conscious, deliberate, methodical, and systematic abdication by the subject of its self-determination.

Few can resist the lure of the promise of infinite access to consumer goods and debt and the possibility of medical immortality. Moreover, when the opportunity to negate this negation of its self-determination arises—as it typically does even daily in the life of the subject—the subject can be counted on to *fear* what it imagines are the consequences of this opportunity the way it fears its own death. Indeed, accepting responsibility for its own fate *does* require acknowledgement that the ego will, absolutely and inevitably, die, like all the expired egos that came before it.

Those subjects who "prefer not to" abdicate are hounded, so to speak, not only by Cerberus, but largely by the mass of subjects itself to conform to the discourse or perish—if not by the sword, then in other ways. The

preferred method of sanitation is what may be called *denial of access to the food source*. (This form of punishment was called “loathing” in ancient Greece and is mentioned in Xenophon’s *Hellenica*.) Acting instinctively, in concert, and largely unconsciously, the mob of abdicated subjects stealthily manipulates the rogue subject into economic oblivion, one way or another, directly or indirectly.

What, then, can be said of epistemology under such a regime? What can be “known” about a world populated with the imitation of things that do not really exist except as data in the media-saturated imagination? What do we *dare to know* (*sapere aude*) except that, perhaps, we know nothing until it is verified either analytically or as a valid synthetic proposition?

In our attempt to answer this question, we encounter the finer difference between propositions that are *unverified* and those that are *unverifiable*. The unverified is the stock-in-trade of the discursive propositions of the corporate state. A quick parsing of the rhetoric of national political campaigns in any country reveals that much of what is promised to the public and is said about the political situation is comprised of invalid synthetic propositions lying just below the surface of a thin skin of realism. It is a rare politician, subject as he is to the ravages of suffrage, that would *dare* use verified statements as the basis of his platform except if they included the salacious details of a scandal that would hurt the chances of his opponents.

Even in countries without pervasive and ritualistic suffrage, political leaders nevertheless must keep the public in a malleable if not indifferent state of mind to further their agenda. Therefore, they too must say what they think the subject wants to hear, rather than emphasize what the subject needs to know and that has been verified as being true if it is what the subject does not want to hear. This behavior is justified by the invalid synthetic logic that if they did not act this way, they would not get into office where they could ultimately do good for the public. And there is certainly some truth to this, but as with all invalid synthetic statements, it is the truth they contain that makes them such effective lies.

As for the *unverifiable*, the corporate state, operating as it does under the umbrella of the progressive fallacy, need only say that “in the future” it will be known, but that for now, we must accept whatever uninformed and unverified policy it may mete out. Again, those subjects who “prefer not to” buy into the idea that the mere passage of time reveals all truths, or that science would be omniscient if it only had the right tools, might take a different approach to the unverifiable.

The classic case is, of course, the existence of God. The modern corporate-industrial hegemony has pretty much washed its hands, as Pilate

did, of the task of providing proofs of God's existence or lack thereof. For centuries, however, most of these states had been enthusiastically willing to promote their view of God; their relatively sudden reluctance comes from their defense of the new religion that makes the modern empire possible: Scientism.

Nevertheless, they do not take kindly to those who insist that the logic of their so-called scientific methodology is flawed, or that there are some dimensions of endeavor that do not lend themselves quite so neatly to even sound scientific methodology. Positivist attempts to justify the state's necessity for perpetual war or the universal surveillance of its citizens seem ludicrous when subject to what has been, from time to time throughout history, an ethical aesthetic advocating the subject's sovereign self-determination.

It seems implausible, if inexpedient, to the state that the complexity of certain systems and the infinite variables involved defy positive analysis—even with a quantum computer fired up and ready to go and an infinite amount of time to use it. Moreover, the apostate's insistence that these matters are, rather, to be settled by moral, ethical, and maybe even spiritual argument is met with the butterfly net and the straight jacket. Ostracization, loathing, marginalization, disenfranchisement, and even assassination await the foolhardy subject who fails to toe the line.

The fact is, most discourse, most interpretation of experience, and even utterance *is synthetic* (as indeed this discourse is). Therefore, verifiability, even when applied, which is seldom except in the upper echelons of good science, has its distinct limitations. It is not wise to reply to a sincere declaration of love and friendship with the words, "Prove it!" The statement "This is my favorite restaurant" need not be backed up with irrefutable logic and an overwhelming body of evidence. It is "evidence" enough that one frequents it and promotes it by positive association.

Nevertheless, the corporate state's disproportionate need to represent *all* its valid and invalid synthetic arguments as verifiable and even verified belies its insecurity about the truth of *any* of its statements. The more we put these official statements to the test, the more it seems that the corporate state's occupation is systematic dissimulation. But the state knows that if it "told the truth" the public would be outraged. Heads would roll. Perhaps even revolution would sweep over the intricate con games it has set up with great pains, effort, and treasure. Therefore, the truth is the enemy of the corporate state, but is also the last thing the public wants to hear!

If suddenly faced with the awful truth about the state's history, national debt, banking system, national security, immigration policy, incarceration rates, educational system, infrastructure, and the morality and ethics of its

public servants, the subject would be paralyzed with a terror even greater than any that a so-called terrorist might inflict.

What is worse, the subject might even have to sit at home and read a book, make something that is useful to others, or manage its finances without borrowing. Such simplicity is anathema to the wild and crazy “anything goes” simulated universe it has become addicted to like any other dope fiend. Rather than just being sneaky, underhanded con artists, politicians and public officials are, instead, paradoxical realists. They are justifiably *terrified* that disillusioned citizens will trample them underfoot for revealing that the corporate state and its banking, education, media, government, and military apparatuses rely on invalid synthetic propositions to justify their continued existence.

Despite these dangers, it is even more dangerous for the corporate state to slack off in its efforts to *appear* scientific and rational. Therefore, nothing remains immune to its unquenchable *lust to prove* for long. (It should be noted here that proof is rhetorical, and verification is logical.) The public must simply “know” that eventually *all* mysteries will be solved, even that sticky one about God, just as they have been in the past. Mystery, says this discourse, is for losers and lunatics. “The future,” of course, holds the as-yet-unknown means to perform this miracle. The buzzword “quantum” inserted before the name of a futuristic oracle or tool makes the subject feel that things are being taken care of by a team of top scientists *as we speak*.

Considering this situation, Kant’s quaint implication, then, is that therefore the world as we perceive it is largely a creation of our imagination. Experience is as we find it. It is not subject to relentless verification and proof. While he accepts this as a natural (if not a somewhat romantic) state, in no way does he advocate the abdication of man’s ability to reason in favor of a strict diet of received wisdom and invalid synthetic propositions. We might assume that he would be appalled at the state of thought in the minds of those who have taken it upon themselves to make decisions for the greater good of the world’s population.

Nevertheless, humankind has always felt most comfortable in a universe in which the *domini* of authority can explain away in some official and dogmatic way the nagging mysteries which haunt us. It matters little how at odds such explanations may be with even the most common of observations about apparent reality. The world is on a turtle’s back? Sure. Fine. There seems to be no limit, past or present, to how ridiculous official statements about reality can be. The temptation to name some of the current ones has been resisted for fear of changing the course of this argument into an attack on official beliefs. That is not its purpose. Let it suffice to say that the stranger and less probable the explanation of a mystery more exciting and

brilliant it sounds, as that which has a greater potential value of being verified tends also to have a greater potential to be, by association, boring.

Kant, however, remains “parsimonious” by his definition regarding the possibility of verification in the analytic sense. He insists that only *some* of our experience can (or may) be known by the vigorous application of good science and analytical thinking. For him analysis is a special and treasured mode of being, not the everyday fog of the citizen stuck in an early-morning traffic jam. His argument for synthetic judgment is a *negative* proposition, dependent upon the universe consisting of a generous portion of the Unknowable, the truth of which we will *never* know because our apparatus of knowing is “rounded with a sleep” as Prospero observes in Act 4, Scene 1 of *The Tempest*.

Consequently, one must *dare to know* to know anything at all. It is the *act* of knowing, or the getting-to-know, that is exciting and interesting, even if the result is, by the standards of the official explanation of the mysteries of the universe, boring. Furthermore, as this form of knowing remains unpopular not only with one’s neighbors and colleagues but also with the authorities, one can look forward to the rush of adrenaline that comes with high-stake risks.

This impasse of the Unknowable is as absolute as only ever being able to see one’s eyes reflected in a mirror or in a captured image but never being able to see them directly. To the know-it-all modern sensibility, however, that there even exists *anything at all* that is unknowable is not only heresy; it is atavism. In emulation of its predecessor organized religion, Scientism and the corporate state like to invent myriad heresies when feeling threatened that *shall not go unpunished*.

Most of all, they like to think that they are the inheritors of all that was good about the European Enlightenment, which they named. Therefore, they say, the proposition that the universe is disproportionately composed of the Unknown is what made the Dark Ages, variously delimited, so dark. It has not and cannot occur to them that the more that is “known” through the methodology of the invalid synthetic proposition, the less there is that is *understood* about ourselves, society, and the universe.

While astronomers discover wonder after wonder with the new technological and mathematical tools they must work with, the public generally remains ignorant of these discoveries in part because their exact nature is often mysterious even to the scientists themselves. Also, their physical and theoretical complexities chafe ominously at the paradigm of reality the subject so cherishes but which is, upon analysis, largely unverifiable. Therefore, discovery is also a threat to the discourse which is

always referentially backwards and eschews any spontaneous modification with officially sanitized input.

Naturally, such illusions fly out the window when the subject is in the throes of death or “the extreme limit of pain,” says Hölderlin, where “nothing remains but the condition of time [T] and space [S].”<sup>16</sup> Like Kant, Hölderlin regards Time and Space as the *a priori* of existence. All else flows from these *xy* vectors. The abdicated subject, however, conditioned to accept category errors as the mark of the truth, does not discover its own mortality, which is the confluence of *xy*, until it is too late to use it as the baseline from which all valid analytic and synthetic propositions may be understood.

However, the greatest attribute of the social discourse infesting the abdicated subject is a pernicious conflation of invalid analytic and synthetic thinking. In a desperate attempt to live up to the exhausting ethical aesthetic of absolute proof of all things always, the discourse gathers itself into a juggernaut of stereotypes, folklore, truisms, misnomers, notions, half-truths, innuendos, and outright lies—all of which are in turn purveyed by the media apparatus as “facts” and swallowed whole by the abdicated self as “the truth.”

Without a compass, the rudderless self must take any Dog Star that comes along. Ultimately it is this unsavory *mishegas* that replaces the core identity of the ego. Lost at sea, the ego then careens off this way and that, buffeted by the storms of life’s inevitable vicissitudes, which include sickness, pain, and death. The little bit of energy the self contributes to the corporate state’s social apparatus in the forms of taxes and monthly payments for access to it only serves to increase the apparatus’s gravitational field so that it may draw other less engaged subjects into its calculated and debilitating chaos.

The old French principle of *tout se tient*—everything hangs together—unifies the nodes of the discourse into an almost sentient Other, a *le grand Autre*, overshadowing the tender achievements of free sovereign human beings and dragging one and all into its financial crashes, famines, and wars.

In the synthetic proposition the processing of space-time as experience, coupled perhaps with what others have observed about it, may be synthesized into an entirely new idea when introduced as the predicate. The relation between subject and predicate via the copula “is” must be *significant*; in other words, it must signify in some effective sense.

Kant says the predicate must be “somehow connected with” the subject. This is the same thing as *class identification* between two elements of

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<sup>16</sup> Qtd. in Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford U.P., 1998), 185.

different sets. However, there must be signification between the two in order that the statement, which comprises the subject, copula, and predicate, conveys *meaning* in a nontrivial sense. Signification and identification are the poles of semantic meaning. Without their synthesis we can assume that new ideas would cease; the gene of their reflection of each other negates the dogma of discourse. In so doing, what Kant calls a *judgment* becomes a *negation of negation*. Consequently, the negation of negation forces the coming-into-being (*le devenir*) of a thing, as we have described earlier.

It is possible, then, to thus force the coming-into-being of one's sovereignty after it has been abdicated through Hegel's Second Negation. Moreover, in the speech act it is possible for the subject, regardless of the state of its sovereignty in the general sense, to assert its self-determination through language, provided that speech act *negates the negation* of the subject's sovereignty. (Émil Zola's "*J'accuse!*" comes to mind in the Dreyfus Affair.)

Dogma dictates that for there to be *identification* there must be an *a priori* rule about what can and cannot be joined together as subject and predicate. This is commonly called *ensorship*. In other words, sensibility must be verifiable according to that rule and to no other. The matter, then, is one of the degrees of freedom a statement may be capable of. If by the censorship rule it is only capable of limited freedom by fiat, and if that freedom is bought at the expense of the statement's validity, then we can be sure that this judgment will lack the kind of verisimilitude necessary to also identify with the elements of reality which are apart from, and in opposition to, such artificial limitation and political decree.

Therefore, should we not encourage, praise, promote, and exemplify valid synthetic discourse in the hope of spawning ideas, even at the risk of losing some of our control over its effect on thinking and behavior? Certainly, to be unburdened of the need for verifiability can promote creativity in the forms of risk and speculation. However, what Kant describes as being "beyond a given concept" in the synthetic judgment is valid if and only if it shares an identity with the other elements of the statement. Moreover, a judgment has no hope of approximating the truth if it contains no identification with the attributes of reality, which are entirely objective and apart from the wishful thinking of man.

Referring to a previous example, a prime number is a number that can only be divided by itself and 1, though it is also an integer like numbers which can be divided in other ways and therefore have greater degrees of freedom. In the same way, a predicate which is "beyond a given concept" of the subject is, nevertheless, valid if and only if it shares with that subject

the same identification with reality. A statement of one's opinion about horse racing is *invalidated* by introducing a unicorn into the race.

Despite that we cannot know the T or F of a synthetic statement, which is what makes it synthetic rather than analytic, it is nevertheless like the mortar between the bricks of analytic statements which in effect form the shape of the structure of thought. One is not superior to the other, and both depend upon each other to make language effective, sensible, and adaptable to the infinite variety of experience. The processing of empirical data requires a swifter, more complex, form of analysis than the purely analytic, without confounding reason entirely. In fact, like the hypothesis in scientific endeavor, it is the synthetic which makes it at all possible for us to arrive at the analytic, if we ever do. Kant emphasizes two points which make this clear:

- A. That our knowledge is in no way extended by analytical judgments, but that all they effect is to put the concepts which we possess into better order and render them more intelligible.
- B. That in synthetical judgments *I must have besides the concept of the subject something else (x) on which the understanding relies* [italics added] to know that a predicate, not contained in the concept, nevertheless belongs to it. In empirical judgments this causes no difficulty, because this *x* is here simply the complete experience of an object which I conceive by the concept *A*, that concept forming one part only of my experience.<sup>17</sup>

This “something else (*x*)” is not to be confused with the *x* mentioned above indicating statements which lie outside of both analytic and valid synthetic statements. This “something else (*x*)” has been referred to earlier as the *tertium quid*, or the *third thing*. Taken as Kant means it above, then, we are obligated to posit two forms of it: the *x* of the third thing of “something else,” and the *x'* (*x*-prime) of that which lies categorically outside of any valid proposition and is therefore in contradiction with the subject of the statement.

Since *x* is contained in neither the subject nor the predicate, it is introduced as a validation of the category of the predicate. This does, however, make it vulnerable. It is easy enough in the hurly-burly of discourse to slip in that which may resemble, as a working part of the mechanics of the statement's logic, this third thing (*x*), but that is in fact an element belonging to a contradictory set (*x'*).

Kant takes pains to show that while *x* is “different” from the categorical elements of the subject, it does not violate the law of the excluded middle ( $A \neq B$ ). We may conceive of *x* as being the “key” to the validity of the

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<sup>17</sup> Kant, *CPR*, “Introduction,” 6.



synthetic statement which, unlike the self-validation of the analytic statement, lies *outside* of the category of the subject. As a result, from time to time throughout intellectual history this outlying validity of the synthetic statement has been regarded, alternately, as the enemy of orthodoxy or the harbinger of reason. A common example is the Copernican principle versus the mediocrity principle.

For most of its existence, the Christian church machine would not admit a *third thing* into its effective procedure. The fear was that the (*tq*) would “dope” the procedure with an unstable element, like the doping of a semiconductor, causing “movement” in the flow of one thought into another as humanity’s understanding of the world progressed through reason rather than faith. Despite Christianity’s reliance on the third thing in the form of the Trinity as its innovation brought to the Abrahamic religion, it nevertheless could not afford such an affront to the simplistic good-evil, Heaven-Hell, God-Satan, Man-God, sinner-saint, life-afterlife dichotomies that made its dogma coherent to the ignorant and unlettered.

The fossilization of knowledge is impossible when at any time it could mutate into another species through natural selection. It is for this reason institutions and organization so fear change. For example, the official Church labored under an ever-growing burden of maintaining its own fossilization until Martin Luther nailed his *Ninety-five Theses* to the door of All Saints' Church in Wittenberg on 31 October 1517, All Saints Day.

By then the Church was growing almost too moribund to fend off such a challenge from so unruly a province of its empire, though it pursued and prosecuted Luther as best it could for his heresy. While Luther regarded repentance for one’s sins as categorically consistent with the teachings of Christ, he took the greatest of umbrage with the Church’s commercial vending of certificates of indulgence which, in some cases, guaranteed a sinner’s place in Heaven for a price.

While the idea of “sin” can only be a synthetic proposition the predicate of which draws its validity from the doctrine of the teaching of Christ (*x*), paying cash to be exonerated from sin, though the Church had its economic reasons for this practice, was, nevertheless, seen rightly by Luther as being in a contradictory category (*x'*). A sin (the indulgence), his logic goes, cannot be used to expiate a sin.

Rather, only through sincere repentance can a sinner hope to be forgiven. Therefore, sin and repentance are in the same category, though it is only through the doctrine of Christianity (*x*) that we can “know” this. Whereas, an indulgence is a sin *in and of itself* and therefore is *in contradiction with the concept of repentance* (*x*). One cannot repent for a sin by sinning.

There is a clear incentive, then, for the hegemonic power dependent upon the fossilization of knowledge to favor what its own dogma has established as the analytic rule of verification even if it is indeed based on the faulty logic of  $x'$ . Naturally, the progressive fallacy makes one epoch's truth the next epoch's lie, since neither proposition is drawn from a category where the elements possess the attributes of the universal set of all sets, which must and does include reality. Therefore, the fossilization of institutions and organizations owes its immutability not to the universal attributes which would validate their claims, but rather to a shell game where they have duped the public into accepting  $x'$  for  $x$ , or  $A = B$  for  $A \vee B$  ( $A$  or  $B$ ).

We perhaps find it difficult in modern Western epistemology to understand how the same Aristotelian logic in the hands of the Medieval Churchmen of Europe was considered positive proof of, for example, the existence of angels. But just as we wonder at their irrational use of rational thought, today's abuse of the laws of verifiability, particularly in academic science, will amuse and shock future generations. There is no doubt, though, given what history we have at hand, that future generations will find it necessary and expedient to adulterate knowledge with the prerogatives of special interests, dubious financial motives, political power games, incompetent errors, cultural myths, mystical beliefs, outright falsification of data, the notorious "hacking" of P-values, and plain old wishful thinking.

What remains the same epoch after epoch in human history is the ego's terror of its own death. In the face of this fear the mind is unwilling to accept the validity of the argument that what we come to regard as "ourselves" will, someday, be no more.

Without accepting this simple proposition which is supported by the fact that all life around us dies, it is not possible to embrace one's self-determination and, consequently, one's ability to distinguish between realia and simulacra. No negation of negation is possible without embracing this fundamental truth. Why? Because we have forsaken truth, our sovereignty, and our self-determination to run from death and into the promise, offered by the corporate state, of infinite access to consumer goods and debt, and medical immortality. Our membership in this cult of mediocrity requires the abdication of the sovereign self.

Nevertheless, for Kant the *dynamic* between analytic and synthetic thinking leads to knowledge. Both are necessary if we are to make sense out of our empirical existence. The only possible obstacle is the introduction into the mechanics of this logic of the invalid synthetic proposition. For a better perspective of this problem we will look at the differences between

analytic statements, valid synthetic statements, and invalid synthetic statements.

To begin with, a tautology is a pure *analytic* statement and is always true (T). But how could we say that the embrace of such a trivial proposition as  $A = A$  in any way extends our knowledge? As Kant says above, “our knowledge is in no way extended by analytical judgments.” Perhaps, then, it is that we need a *baseline* from which to build a proposition, no matter how trivial. It must have a subject and predicate as well as the copula “is” as in  $A$  is  $A$ , or  $A$  is not  $B$ .

Once we have constructed this proposition, we may attempt its verification and then accept or reject it. We could, then, build a *synthetic* statement where  $x$  and  $y$  are in the same relationship as  $p$  and  $q$  if and only if  $x$  and  $p$  are not in the same relationship as  $y$  and  $q$  [ $(x \wedge y) = (p \wedge q)$ ]  $\leftrightarrow$  [ $(x \wedge p) \neq (y \wedge q)$ ]. In this case, the truth of the first enclosed part of the proposition depends upon the truth of the second enclosed part which consists of what Kant calls “something else ( $x$ ).” Now the situation has become more complicated.

The first enclosed part is what can be regarded as a tautology. Therefore, it is verifiably and true (T). But what of the second enclosed part, and how is it that the second part effectively qualifies the truth-value of the first part? In this case the *third thing* is the unknown  $x$ , which is the nature of the relationship not only between the elements of the first set, but between the elements of both sets.

Naturally, the sets as they stand *seem* satisfactorily symmetrical. But when we mix up the elements ( $x \wedge q$ ) and ( $y \wedge q$ ), however, and add the condition ( $x$ ) of the first enclosed set being true *if and only if* the enclosed elements of the second set are *not* equal as they are in the first, we begin to approximate the kind of nontrivial complexity we must confront in reality-based problem solving. Below, Kant describes the difference between an analytical judgment, which contains the key to its own validity in the categorical consistency of its elements (bodies + extend), and a synthetic one which does not (bodies + heavy).

If I say, for instance, All bodies are extended, this is an analytical judgment. I need not go beyond the concept connected with the name of body, to find that extension is connected with it. I have only to analyse [sic] that concept and become conscious of the manifold elements always contained in it, to find that predicate. This is therefore an analytical judgment. But if I say, All [sic] bodies are heavy, the predicate is something quite different from what I think as the mere concept of body.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 6.

While “to extend” is an objective property of a body, being independent of any other attribute, and is contained within the concept of a body, “heavy” is an attribute that is *relative only to some other attribute in its category*, such as being “light.” This “other” category of “something else (x)” is the density of matter relative to gravity.

We could say that one man’s heavy is another man’s light, but we could not say the same thing about extension. In the case of extension, it is true, fair, and accurate to say body = extension without contradiction, whereas we could not possibly say that body = heavy without contradiction of the categorical terms and, at the same time, producing a false (F) statement. Therefore, to avoid saying that  $A = B$ , we make it clear that while a body may be “heavy” under certain circumstances, under other circumstances (such as using a crew to lift it) that same body without any change may be considered light. Therefore,  $A \neq B$ , or  $A \vee B$ . The disjunction eliminates contradiction, though the attribute of “heavy” must remain, forever, unverifiable.

The matter, ultimately, is one of ontology and therefore of *le devenir*. For a body to be a body, phenomenologically and linguistically, it must *extend*. Consequently, its ontological “being” is tied up in this property, whereas regarding the *weight* of a body, the only significant, nontrivial property associated with its existence is that a body has weight (0 / 1), not whether that weight is small (1) or great ( $n$ ), (1 /  $n$ ). Therefore, from the perspective of the categorical exclusion (CE), the difference between 0 and 1 is, ontologically and categorically, infinitely greater than the difference between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ).

Furthermore, “heavy” is significant because it *signifies*. But it is does not *identify* with a universal property. What makes a thing a *thing*, without the use of figurative language, is that it extends in space. Considering that what Heidegger calls the “furniture of the world” consists of things, that which extends in space shares this attribute of extension with all objects of the set *realia*. Heavy, as mentioned above, is a relative property known by its *sign*, which indicates that if we have two elements  $x$  and  $y$  of the same volume but of different mass they will not be of the same weight. If “heavy” is  $h$ , then existential set  $\exists(h = x \vee y, \sim x \wedge y)$ . One *must be* heavy for the other to be “not-heavy,” or “light.”

Therefore,  $x$  and  $y$  achieve their respective identities *from each other* (in other words, from “something else”), but not from some universal attribute both share, which would be therefore inherent and contained within each element of the proposition in a discrete sense. Whereas extension is an attribute which any unitary body *must* possess, with or without dependency upon any other body. If “body” is  $b$ , and “extension” is  $ex$ , then  $\forall(b \rightarrow ex$ ,

$\vee ex \rightarrow b$ ); either way, they are symmetrical. As attributes (<sup>att.</sup>), “heavy” is existential (<sup>att.</sup> $\exists h$ ) while “extends” is universal (<sup>att.</sup> $\forall ex$ ). Therefore, there is also a categorical difference between the two. Mix these terms up (<sup>att.</sup> $h = \text{att.}ex$ ), and we form a statement in categorical contradiction ( $A = B$ ).

To say that something “is” it must have identification with the property of extension, whereas to say that something is “heavy” it need only have relationship with another thing or class of things (e.g. the class of things that are not of the same mass for the same volume, such as the atomic weight of elements).

To understand the analytical statement and how the synthetic statement can be formed from it, with it, and by it, we must grasp Kant’s meaning of the *a priori*. The argument of so-called existentialists that existence precedes essence is a kind of pseudo *a priori*, just as is the contrary argument of the so-called religious, that essence precedes existence. Neither can be proven the way a tautology can and, consequently, we are left with a sophomoric argument, which is to say, nothing at all. To say that a thing must extend to “be” is a tautology in that for it to extend it must be and for it to be it must extend. The neat symmetry of conjunction belies its tautological structure. For a thing to be a member of the class of realia it must *a priori* possess the universal attribute of extension.

Typically, though, in what might be called “synthetic thinking,” we tend to embrace a kind of perversion of Platonism and insist that it is the *idea* (*eidos*) of the thing that exists first, or apart from the thing-in-itself, before the thing extends and is. But how could we possibly have an idea of a thing in the linguistic sense before it exists?

To insist upon such a phenomenon is like the musician who thinks he has written an original song—until he is sued by the songwriter who created it at some earlier point in time. Analysis then shows that he absorbed it “unconsciously” earlier in his experience, because he liked it, only later recreating it as his own with no conscious memory of having heard it. In addition, a *thing* must be subject to *le devenir* in the phenomenological sense rather than being merely *imagined* into existence as simulacra are.

One could argue that, for instance, a replica of a Greek temple (of which there are many) is both a simulation and a thing-in-itself (Kant’s *das Ding an sich*, or Gr. *nooumenon*). As “a replica of a Greek temple” it certainly extends and therefore has membership in the class of realia due to this fact and other perhaps reasonable attributes. It might even have a street address and be something people can enter and enjoy.

But what makes it different from the Parthenon in Athens on the Acropolis (also, of course, a Greek temple) is that it is a *simulation* of something that does not exist and is therefore a simulacrum first and

foremost and a *real thing* second. Its physical properties, then, such as extension, are *collateral forms of identification* and are therefore subordinated to its property of *das Ding an sich*.

As a thing-in-itself it is a simulacrum, or a tourist trap, or a Las Vegas icon, or whatever it has been purposed for. As its purpose is bound up with language and therefore what it *is*, we must consider what effect language has on the Dasein of a thing. But it cannot be a “replica of a Greek temple.” Why? Because there is no such thing as “a Greek temple.” Therefore, it cannot be a “replica” of something that does not exist. The phrase itself is an invalid synthetic statement, though we accept it with the *Sang-froid* with which we accept our gambling loses at the casino next door.

There is this or that historical Greek temple, and there is, in the form of *nooumenon*, the idea or perhaps even ideal of such a thing (but only if it does indeed “exist”). But the replica of the generic “Greek temple” is not the thing itself because it *cannot be* that thing. Therefore, it must remain in the class of simulacra class *b* and not enjoin, as *das Ding an sich*, the class of that which we may regard as realia class *a* except in as much as simulacra fall under the universal category of *phenomena of some sort that we may recognize in some way*. Those who would argue otherwise must consider that without such distinctions there would be no categories, and that without categories we lose the power of thinking, language, and concept, all of which are critical to the idea of not only civilization, but also of humanity.

What, then, is the similarity between the “replica of a Greek temple” and what Kant calls a “mathematical judgment”? It seems that the argument for the former being synthetic is more accessible (after all, it is a “replica”) than that which we traditionally regard as the standard not of synthetic reasoning, but verifiable, analytical reasoning: mathematics. “The numbers don’t lie” we like to say.

In the passage below, Kant exposes what he sees as the synthetic nature of a “mathematical judgment.” In so doing, he extends the definition of synthetic thinking out past the boundary of the simulacrum, showing that it is a more fundamental part of our rational thought process than we might have intuited thus far. He also shows us that we tend to make inaccurate assumptions regarding what is and is not synthetic:

*All mathematical judgments are synthetical.* This proposition, though incontestably certain, and very important to us for the future, seems to have hitherto escaped the observation of those who are engaged in the anatomy of human reason: nay, *to be directly opposed to all their conjectures* [italics added]. For as it was found that all mathematical conclusions proceed according to the principle of contradiction (which is required by the nature of all apodictic certainty), it was supposed that the fundamental principles

of mathematics also rested on the authority of the same principle of contradiction. This, however, was a mistake: for though a synthetical proposition may be understood according to the principle of contradiction, this can only be *if another synthetical proposition is presupposed* [italics added], from which the latter is deduced, but never by itself.<sup>19</sup>

The form of “contradiction” meant here by Kant is that which is inferred by the fact that such a predicate as “heavy” must refer to “something else” to be valid, such as things that are “light.” It is not what we have been calling in this Preliminary the invalid synthetic proposition. While it is true that, categorically, any synthetic proposition, valid or not, can be expressed as  $A = B$  as opposed to the analytic  $A = A$ , the difference between the valid and invalid proposition is that in the valid one there is what Kant calls “something else” or (here) “another synthetical proposition”; the invalid proposition relies on either 1) what we have called  $x'$  (as in fiat, dogma, or the raving of a lunatic); 2) nothing at all, in which case we have what the magician, con man, and liar reply upon; or 3) both. A good example of 3 is fiat currency, which relies upon both 1 and 2 for its nominal “value.”

Here, though, Kant takes the matter a bit further than previously by adding that “another synthetical proposition” must be “presupposed,” particularly in the case of mathematics. Why? Because of the *apodictic*, or self-evident, nature of the relationship between values in mathematics, we must take into consideration that for any mathematical system to work it must be underpinned with a significant substrate of “presupposed” synthetical propositions. For example, we take it for granted that 0 (zero) is a number, but this has not always been so, for example in the number system of the Romans. Furthermore,  $\pi$  (pi) was not known for much of the history of the ancient Egyptians, and yet they were able to calculate with great accuracy the dimensions of farmland without it that was inundated seasonally by the Nile reestablish property lines after its annual flooding.

We presume that if the sum of an equation such as if  $n + n = 2$ , then  $x = 1$ . Any method of verification will prove that this is so. As a result, we assume that all equations are likewise *apodictic* or self-evident. But in the equation  $nn = 4$ , we cannot know if either  $n$  is 1, 2, or 4, since both  $1 \times 4$  and  $2 \times 2$  have the same sum.

By this we learn that the *idea* of a number, which must be unique to be a number, is not contained in what amounts to the *subject* ( $nn$ ) of a simple equation. If it may only be deduced by working backward from the sum, and since the sum is *a posteriori* of the subject in time, we must admit that

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<sup>19</sup> Kant, *CPR*, Supplement VI, part V, section 1: “In all Theoretical Sciences of Reason Synthetical Judgments a priori are contained as Principles,” 720.

a mathematical judgment is synthetic. Like “heavy,” it must rely on what Kant calls “another synthetical proposition,” such as  $0$ ,  $\pi$ ,  $nn$ , or  $\aleph_0$ , or even the methodology of working backward from the sum (*abduction* in the sense meant by C.E. Peirce).

In mathematics, the idea or value of a number is contained in the elements of the predicate but is not contained anywhere (as itself) in the subject of the statement. Or, as Kant puts it above, its value is deduced “from another synthetic proposition” but “never from itself.” This fact Kant makes clear in the following passage (mentioned earlier in this Preliminary):

[T]he concept of the sum of 7 and 5 contains nothing beyond the union of both sums into one, whereby nothing is told us as to what this single number may be which combines both. We by no means arrive at a concept of Twelve, by thinking that union of Seven and Five; and we may analyse our concept of such a possible sum as long as we will, still we shall never discover in it the concept of Twelve.<sup>20</sup>

The concept of 12, then, is not contained within the subject in any form which we would recognize as such. Left with just these two numbers, 7 and 5, the most we can say, analytically, is that if they were added together there is a 100 percent probability that they would equal 12. But this is not the same thing as saying that they contain that number, or that that number is therefore apodictic, which, as we have seen, requires an operation “in the future” to be “deduced.”

While this is a rather simple operation of arithmetic, we assume, falsely, that therefore the matter is the same with all numbers and, by extension, all equations. We need only look at the time and effort a computer must put into attempting to “crack” an encryption key consisting of 256 prime numbers to understand that perhaps the solution will not be revealed, perhaps, in one’s lifetime. If this is the case, how then does the solution “exist” in an *a priori* state as a “presupposed,” apodictic truth? It does not. We must agree, then, with Kant that “*All mathematical judgments are synthetical.*”

If we magnify this example of the synthetical nature of mathematical judgment into more complex arithmetic and on into higher mathematics the principle holds true. It is not clear if theoretical mathematics has ever claimed to be much more than a tool of discovery, which would fit it neatly into the agenda of the synthetic statement as, to quote Wittgenstein, “a state of affairs ... put together for the sake of experiment.” Wiles’ breakthrough in the Fermat proof came when he stepped outside of the analytic framework

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 721.



of the mathematical apparatus he had been constructing and that others had in part pursued in the same quest and risked a special application of the modularity theorem of elliptical curves.

It is fortuitous that this occurred in the application to the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem (FLT), as the problem in this case speaks to the heart of Kant's observation regarding the synthetic nature of a mathematical judgment. After scribbling the theorem in his notebook, Fermat famously wrote, "I've found a remarkable proof of this fact, but there is not enough space in the margin to write it." Indeed, Wiles' proof is over 100 pages long. Were the proof of FLT what might be called an analytical problem from the point of view of predicate logic, there would have not been such a need of space!

Again, though, the proof had been so elusive precisely because in mathematics we cannot "presuppose," as Kant says, that proofs and solutions will be the consequence of our apodictic, *a priori* assumptions of even such an apparently simple sequence as FLT's  $x + y \neq z$ ,  $x^2 + y^2 \neq z^2$ ,  $x^3 + y^3 \neq z^3$ , ...,  $x^p + y^p = z^p$ . The same holds true for the Rayleigh-Jeans Law and its application to the frequency of energy in an ideal black body where, again presupposing that radiation behaves the same way at all frequencies, we discover that at some point we encounter an asymptote in the form of the Ultraviolet Catastrophe (UC).

Such encounters can force mathematics out of its current paradigm. This is precisely what happened to Wiles, leading him to try a special application of the modularity theorem. In the same way, the Planck constant provided one of the cornerstones of quantum mechanics in its effort to find a solution to the UC. The latter solved some serious theoretical problems in the distribution of radiation throughout the spectrum, and the former solved the most famous of previously unsolved problems in mathematics.

How, then, do these examples of the synthetic nature of mathematics apply to the logic of the subject's abdication of its sovereignty? More importantly, what can we learn from these examples that will help us understand the effects of the invalid synthetic proposition infecting the discourse of civilization's quest for absolute empire? For one thing, we can be sure that any application of invalid synthetic logic will lead only to an invalid, and provably so, false solution to a problem. Does this happen in mathematics? Certainly. But examples are so common in everyday life in the modern empire that it is a wonder it has not already reached a catastrophic and irrevocable collapse.

Regarding the apparatus of the discourse, we may say that its ethical aesthetic is predicated upon the assumptions that 1) no idea outside of the framework of its *a priori* rules will be admitted to the equation of reality,

and 2) that any statement conforming to those rules is *a priori* analytic and therefore verifiable according to those rules. The hegemonic authority to which the subject has willingly submitted by abdication of its self-determination consequently defines the rule of what shall be called “a rule.” (We will discuss this matter later in some depth as the “state of exception” or the hegemony’s exemption from its own rules—a feat it could not possibly accomplish without the subject’s full complicity.)

As mentioned earlier, Wittgenstein, referring to what he sees as an error in Russell, points out that this self-referential rule-making is not the same thing as the apodictic character of the analytic statement in first-order logic. Therefore, assumption 2 (above) regarding the ethical aesthetic of the hegemony’s discursive apparatus is, and can only be, *false* (F). “It can be seen that Russell’s error is shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak about the things his signs mean. No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself .... A function cannot be its own argument, because, the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself.”<sup>21</sup>

As a result, the subject, weary of the duties and responsibilities of self-determination even before adolescence is over, creates its own mousetrap to unburden itself of the drudgery, uncertainty, discomfort, and sacrifice freedom demands. And what bait would be enough to motivate the subject to walk into this trap knowing full well that it will likely never escape from its mechanism of debt, ignorance, and belief?

Of course, the corporate state, having learned its lesson well from the great empires and hegemonies of the past, particularly those created by the Abrahamic religions, promises a fantastic life everlasting of security and prosperity—provided the subject can make the monthly payments. And just to ensure that there will be no second thoughts once the deed is done, the hegemony sees to it that the consequences for dissent, apostasy, heresy, and blasphemy are well propagated through the agency of its media and education apparatuses.

The adventures of Winston Smith in George Orwell’s novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* provide many examples of these dramatic ordeals and dilemmas. In the scene below, he is being tortured by Big Brother’s henchman O’Brien, who implies that he wants Winston to “see” five fingers, if that is what the Party wants, when O’Brien is holding up four. Winston, however, resists, not out of any fierce sense of defiance, but only because he seems to be incapable of “seeing” the five fingers. As O’Brien turns up the voltage, though, Winston starts to see the light.

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<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein, *TL-P*, 3.333.

O'Brien reminds him that his definition of freedom expressed in his diary is "to say that two plus two make four." Pushed beyond what he can endure, though, Winston lies, as O'Brien points out, and says "Four! five! Four! Anything you like. Only stop it, stop the pain!" What he does not know, though, is that O'Brien has much bigger plans for him. O'Brien knows that abdication under torture is no abdication at all. He knows that, historically, under such circumstances anyone will say anything. What good is it, then? What the state needs to progress, and to grow in a metastatic frenzy, is the *free-will surrender of the self-determination of a significant mass of sovereign subjects*. Otherwise, it will be opposed by them and consequently be in danger of being ruled *by* the people rather than rule *over* the people.

Later, O'Brien unveils "the worst thing in the world," which is what is supposed to be in Room 101, the torture chamber of Big Brother (BB). He explains to Winston that it is different for everyone.

As it turns out, Winston is terrified of rats. Affixing a rat cage to Winston's face with a trap door that can be opened to let the rats attack, O'Brien offers Winston a chance to put his lover Julia in his place. Terrified beyond measure, Winston relents.

While this too is torture, O'Brien is satisfied. Winston has chosen, freely, to subject the person he loves the most to what his ego regards as "the worst thing in the world" to escape it himself. His complete betrayal of Julia, in the face of his worst fear, confirms to O'Brien that he has indeed extracted a voluntary abdication from his subject. "Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia!" screams Winston. "I don't care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!"<sup>22</sup>

## 1.5 Manufacturing discursive worlds (simulacra)

In *Language, Truth, and Logic*, A.J. Ayer takes up the truth of the proposition that "to every word or phrase that can be the grammatical subject of a sentence, there must somewhere be a real entity corresponding." This proposition he calls "superstition."<sup>23</sup> Of course, superstition is Public Enemy #1 of the new religion of Scientism. Anything smacking of mysticism or faith, such as various incarnations of Semitic religion (meaning Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) and the great non-Abrahamic creeds, falls into the hopper of the dust bin of *superstition*.

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<sup>22</sup> Orwell. Op. cit., 362.

<sup>23</sup> A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., ND), 43.

But is this fair, considering that the mission of Scientism is to enforce the code that “every word or subject” must have, to be “scientific,” a corresponding “real entity”? After all, now that science has answered all questions and dispelled all mysteries, we can be sure that what we put into the grammatical subject of a sentence *has a better chance of being true than it ever did*.

As a result, utterances of the past—from folk medicine to philosophy—are almost always *de facto* false because of their unfortunate historical proximity to the enlightened *present* and the bigger, better, brighter *future*. That we might find some truth or wisdom in these archaic utterances, the discourse goes, is simply part of the atavistic dissimilitude of their authors and the stubborn need of the “old” to cling to the benighted past. For example, Ecclesiastes 9:11 (King James) is, according to this ethical aesthetic of Scientism’s cultural Zeitgeist, not only heretical but downright *subversive*:

I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race *is not to* [italics added] the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favour to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all.

Like every word of Karl Marx is to the capitalist, and every word of Adam Smith is to the communist, every word of the subject of this sentence from Ecclesiastes is superstitious and therefore false (F) according to the ethical aesthetic of the progressive fallacy. The phrase “is not to” cannot be, according to the discourse of statistical science, paired with swift, strong, wise, understanding, and skill. All five are, quantitatively, far more likely to produce a positive outcome in the endeavor indicated than their opposite, as this proposition from Ecclesiastes insinuates. Lies and propaganda at best, superstition and pessimism at worst, says the secular discourse.

However, the predicate must give even the most diehard priest of Scientism pause. At gunpoint few would deny that “time and chance” tends to “happeneth” to us all. But denuded of the rambling subject of this sentence (the four things that he “saw”), the predicate withers into a trivial statement that is as true as a tautology but insignificant from the point of view of the social discourse that says that the swift, strong, wise, understanding, and skillful always come out on top. Those who fall by the wayside simply do not have these essential qualities, either because they do not “try,” or because they have some genetic defect due to race or ethnicity.

Any idiot can see that “the swift” are the ones who win the race and so forth. If Ecclesiastes were not blinded by the fact that he lived in the dark,

stupid Past (according to the discourse of Scientism), this fundamental error might have been avoided.

But *back in his day*, before everyone knew everything all the time (just search the Internet on your digital gadget) people only had superstition to cling to. And besides, this is a “holy book” for the weak minded. It gives the defective and primitive members of society some comfort to know that, at least according to this book, their betters are also subject to chance, even though this proposition is false.

Until the life raft of science was set into the shark-infested waters of superstition, says the discourse, people were prey to the predators of religious Belief. Now, under the aegis of the progressive fallacy’s limitless metastasis, the mere passage of time is all that one needs to live forever and be happy; it means increase, not decrease, profit not loss, improvement not decay, wisdom not ignorance, and immortality not death. Chance? As with all of Nature’s wretched shortcomings, it is “only a matter of time” before chance too is brought into line by technology. Therefore, the atavistic fatalism of Ecclesiastes is embarrassingly out of place in the mindless optimism of the present with its reliance on a bigger, brighter, better, smarter, richer “future.”

Ayer’s more colorful example is the statement “Unicorns are fictitious.”<sup>24</sup> Prima facie this statement may seem to hold as much truth as the statement “all dogs are faithful,” but a look at the predicates—*are fictitious* versus *are faithful*—reveals the respective priority of the statements. *A priori*, unicorns are fictitious. *A posteriori*, a dog may or may not be faithful. To house its wealth of synthetic propositions presented as analytic propositions, the hegemonic discourse creates a world where such utterances are commonplace. “For there is no place in the empirical world for many of these ‘entities,’ *a special non-empirical world* [italics added] is invoked ...”

With the proliferation of digital gadgetry this non-empirical “special world” has become *implicitly* empirical as digital chatter and imagery to the point where the *verifiably* empirical world is de facto suspected of being fake! Moreover, this verifiable empirical world—like dirty, nasty, Nature—brings along with it the discomfort, inconvenience, and, yes, “time and chance” that flesh is heir to.

Nature is at best a remote abstract idea to be worshipped through the ritual of environmentalism or despised through the environmental ravages of consumerism. But not, under any circumstances, is it to be *embraced* as reality. That it has an ethical aesthetic all its own vastly superior and more powerful than man’s is a heresy to be stamped out by the basic credo of

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<sup>24</sup> Ayer, *LT&L*, 43.

Scientism and consumerism. The fantastic metastasis of this credo is that *if it cannot be digitally encoded and transmitted through the network as data, it is not real.*

This special world becomes the business of the corporate state's hegemonic discourse, fully approved, promoted, supported, and signed off on by the subject at every stage of the game through the agency of the promissory note and the subject's resulting indebtedness. This includes indebtedness accumulated on the subject's behalf by the state it approves of and, in some cases, elects. Indeed, it is also Big Business (BB) to feed a "special world" with the work and treasure of the subject's Dasein. He who does not embrace this special world as "real" is anti-business and therefore anti-state, anti-law, and is a danger to his comrades and to the integrity of the social fabric of society.

To insist that wealth be "real" is a heresy not to be endured by the state-controlled marketplace. For example, today most of the world's wealth is in the form of financial derivatives, which are speculative at best and imaginary at worst. As these financial products, in one form or another, have been around for 5,000 years, there is nothing particularly surprising about their presence in the marketplace.

However, the extent to which they *dominate* that market, and the volume of derivatives used to *speculate* for profit rather than hedge for security, is truly unprecedented in that long history. The wealth "generated" by the derivative's payoff "in the future" is traded as a "real" asset today and can be exchanged for land and gold even before it yields its imagined fruit.

It is not necessary to understand economics to understand that if the value of a product is *derived* from its underlying asset then that product itself has no value of its own. If a person is valuable because he is best friends with the king, who is the underlying asset, then if that king is overthrown or dies this person loses his value.

On the other hand, if he is valuable because he can raise food, set a broken bone, or fix a car, then he has real (inherent) value which is not affected by such outward circumstances as being friends with someone rich and powerful. *The difference is precisely the same as that described by Kant as the difference between the synthetic and analytic judgment.* The former derives its truth value from "something else" ("heavy," to speculate) whereas the truth value of the latter is inherent ("extends," to hedge).

What, then, can we say about the *invalid* synthetic statement? In financial terms, this is the equivalent of fraud, for example the various Ponzi schemes of national and international banking. There is an ontological contradiction of category, therefore, when one considers wealth that "might

be” if all goes well by date  $x$  “in the future” to be the material equivalent of, for instance, an existing factory or a tract of land one purchases with it *now*.

It should be added that if access to an individual’s real value depends upon wealth, influence, or membership in an elite caste, then the situation compromises his real value and he becomes yet another form of underlying asset. For instance, a concert pianist without a concert hall to play in and earn money loses his real value in the process. In this way social inequality in the effective sense can mitigate even real value, rendering it as imaginary as being dependent upon *who* you know rather than *what* you know—though significantly more pernicious. An example is the practice of government paying farmers *not to grow* certain crops to control the market price.

How, then, does the discourse busy itself convincing the mainstream population of the reality of unicorns? There are countless ways, from everyday language to advertising. It is a mistake to point to the mass media as the culprits, since they must make a living too and therefore only do what they are told or suffer the consequences. What all efforts to ingratiate the public into abdication share is the metastatic frenzy of the progressive fallacy’s ethical aesthetic. It does not matter if anything is not perfect *now*, it *will be* “in the future” where we will all ride unicorns into a beautiful sunset. Therefore, everything is all right now because all we must do is stand and wait for the future to come to us.

Before we say anything further about this con job, though, it should be made clear that there is no Puppet Master behind such a discourse. It is the collective will of the people. The people con themselves, whether they enjoy the ritual of suffrage or not. If the public perceive that their life is “better” under the imaginary regime of a con man, they will eschew any attempt to impose reality upon them. At any moment they could chose to change their lives by gathering together in a mass to overthrow the system of the discourse that, many contrarians agree, has strayed a too far from what might be in the public’s best long-term interest.

However, provided one is indebted to the past through the promissory note, and promised a big payoff “in the future,” whether it comes or not, then one will not disrupt the system that holds these obligations and makes these promises. After all, such promises include *medical immortality*, provided one is able to make the monthly payments on the insurance premium. As Hamlet reflects, “Who would fardels bear, / To grunt and sweat under a weary life, / But that the dread of something after death, / The undiscovered country, from whose bourn / No traveller returns, puzzles the will, / And makes us rather bear those ills we have / Than fly to others that we know not of?” (Act 3, Scene 1).

To the subject, the realm of reality (horse) = death, poverty, and “bad credit”; the realm of simulacra (unicorn) = eternal life and perpetual access to consumer goods and debt. A horse with a horn is so much more *stimulating* than a dray horse. Never mind that one can lay hands on a horse more easily than a unicorn; “in the future” *everyone*, even the millions of people who are now starving and dying of curable diseases in third-world countries, will have access to unicorns. It is only a matter of time and technology, maybe even biological engineering, before this happens.

Meantime, in countries which have governments that understand the public’s psychological need to complain about the choices they themselves have made, the subject may bemoan its insurmountable debt, the constant intrusions into its privacy, big-ticket-item inflation, unstable economy, debilitating taxes, selective law enforcement, mass incarceration, and the burden of perpetual war.

In response, the purveyors of the prevailing hegemonic discourse shrug their shoulders and say, “You come to us and tell us to spy on you and your neighbor to protect you from yourself and him, to fight your imagined enemies on all fronts, to jail social miscreants, to allow you to gamble in the markets, and to provide you with a social safety net when you fail, and then you turn around and tell us that we, *we*, *your* creation, *your* servants, ‘oppress’ you? The temerity! The affrontery! The ... *ingratitude!*”

Upon analysis, this is an argument which cannot be refuted. In a land of invalid synthetic propositions, this is a rare statement of one that is verifiably analytic. Therefore, the mass of subjects in their endless complaining about the system that they themselves wished into existence belie their fundamental hypocrisy.

From one angle it may seem that they are “victims” of this cabal. But when we consider the millions, at home and abroad, who *they know* are suffering unfairly at their expense to provide them with the illusions and consumer goods they cannot live without, even this potentially valid argument vanishes into the ether of their self-delusion. Their disingenuousness, though, is justified in the mind of the hegemony by the truth that if one voluntarily abdicates one’s responsibility to another, then one must accept that ultimately one’s personal responsibility is nontransferable.

One has abdicated this responsibility to the other *by proxy only*; the other does not and cannot assume the same level of assiduity. There is no such thing as a truly “trusted third party” (TTP), though when we *exchange* (swap) sovereign trust with another we at least approximate the stakes we held in the first place but never quite replicate them.



As the abdicated subject's only concern is the pursuit of *future* pleasure and immortality, such contradiction escapes the grip of whatever faulty logic it can muster in its intellectually flaccid state. Uneducated but well indoctrinated, brimming with buzzwords and ad pitches, and haunted by its ever-increasing personal and national debt, the subject defaults to the collective position of social and political submission as the path of least resistance.

While this may *look like* "oppression," it is in fact *submission*; if there is any oppression going on it is *by proxy*, on the subject's behalf, among the disenfranchised of its own society and the millions abroad whose only use-value is to serve the whims of the consumer in the burgeoning empire.

The mass of subjects would sooner risk the consequences of cheating on their income tax or stealing from their employer than face the discomfort and inconvenience of *negating the negation* of their sovereign core identity, individually or collectively. Advertising, books, periodicals, speech, architecture, public relations, mass media, legislative conclaves, music, education, clothing, money, art, elections, technology, protests, lifestyle—there is no end to the *modes of discursive encapsulation* that must be commanded to maintain the edifice of the discourse.

And because it is not *real* (in the sense of belonging to the class *realia*), it must maintain a vastly inefficient state of perpetual growth (metastasis) and national debt to effectively buttress its façade of legitimacy. The vast enterprise of the manufacture of a discursive world is a collective effort, the goal of which is the seamless expression of simulacra class *b* as the holographic plane of *being* (Dasein).

## 1.6 Beyond the synthetic world of the artifice

We may see what Ayer calls this *special world* as a kind of veil hanging between the explicit (analytic) and argumentative (synthetic) modes of language. The language of this magical universe of discourse is a conflation of the two, brought together by what will be called here *force majeure* rhetoric. In the resulting special language, then, a predicate belonging to the class (*a*) of its subject  $a(s + p)$ , is superimposed on one that does not (*x*):  $a(s) + x(p)$ , with the rather confused result of (where  $\equiv$  indicates "material equivalence"):  $a(s + p) \equiv a(s) + x(p)$ . Using  $\equiv$  for superimposition is about as close as we can get to the *state of affairs* (as Wittgenstein describes it) existing in the psychological effect of discourse, which is nevertheless "for the sake of experiment."

Here we see how the linguistic value determines the psychological value. Many psychologists would find the sincere statement from a client

that “unicorns are real” as a significant attribute of that person’s ability to parse the real from the unreal. By themselves, the explicit and argumentative statements above have their own justifiable logic. It is only when we *conflate* them, resulting in their confusion, that we have a *psychological* effect. Confusion is not only a state of mind, but an emotion. It is often difficult to tell which is the cause of which, since confusion can cause distress and distress can cause confusion.

O’Brien *superimposes* the political *idea* that he is holding up five fingers upon the phenomenological *reality* that he is holding up four. What he attempts to show Winston in this superimposition is that *under certain conditions*, such as when one is held captive by an agency that has the legal right to kill its subjects, four “can be” five even in an empirical sense. It just depends upon how we define “empirical.” Such a “fact” is typically not any more degraded than Winston’s usual processing of reality. That Winston “loves” Julia cannot be verified, like the sum of two and two can be, although he may profess as much. His later betrayal of Julia belies his disingenuous stand.

Does the subject in a modern democracy have any more ethical integrity than Winston? Is the “right” to say that two and two make four the material equivalent of the “right” to also say that “I love Julia”? Furthermore, he never seems to have much of a problem working for Minitru distorting history by altering the facts of a news story on file to further the political aims of BB and to do his part for society. Provided it is his patriotic duty and, after all, his *job*, how could it be “wrong”? Here, again, the Milgram obedience-to-authority experiments haunt us. If we confuse a synthetic with an analytic subject ( $4 = 5$ ,  $A = B$ ) and provide sufficient quantity of rhetorical force, which includes torture as a form of “speech,” we can at least raise the question, as Pilate does, of “What is truth?”

The truth is, Winston is *wrong* in assuming that “Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four.” What he thinks is that it automatically makes him a sovereign individual to be able to write and think that way. But how? In fact, it just makes him the same kind of smug hypocrite as the rebellious intellectual who like to rage against machines, on the right or the left, while engaged in the identical sort of manufacture of reality he thinks he is fighting against. O’Brien sets out to prove this point with the rhetoric of torture.

It is *O’Brien* who understands the psychological and phenomenological nature of language, not Winston, who is just a tool of the state he hates. It is Winston who has made the fatal mistake in thinking, in the way intellectuals tend to do, that accurately describing the world through language ( $7 + 5 = 12$ ,  $2 + 2 = 4$ ) is the material equivalent of being in the world of realia itself

as a sovereign entity. Winston mistakes the signifier for the signified, which is precisely what Kant attempts to *prevent* in saying that mathematical judgments are synthetical.

Rather than rage against machines, Kant rails against “those who are engaged in the anatomy of human reason” for their obstinate insistence upon confusing the explicit with the argumentative. Again, coupled with the progressive fallacy, the conflation or superimposition of analytic and synthetic propositions produces a *false* “third thing,” or *tertium quid* (*tq*). This *tq* is what we have identified here as the product of the invalid synthetic proposition: the simulacrum, which is nothing more than a “special world” existing only in the mind of those who have abdicated, and continue to abdicate, their sovereignty.

While this world is full of unicorns, it also renders the subject vulnerable to the whims of those it has placed in power as proxies for the abdication of its responsibility. The *tq* mentioned earlier, though, as Kant’s “something else” of the valid synthetic proposition, is merely successfully *simulated* by this *tq* produced as the excrescence of the act of abdication to the corporate state, which we may properly then call *tq'* prime.

Winston’s helpless position in contrast to O’Brien’s dominant one provides an emblem for Winston’s intellectual error and vindication of O’Brien’s superior understanding of language, phenomenology, epistemology, and psychology. Moreover, as an official of Minitru, the Ministry of Truth, Winston should know better. His job is to edit articles about news, events, and history for *The Times* so that they conform with the government’s party line, even if it means altering the truth. Minitru’s ethical aesthetic as well as algorithmic method is embodied in its credo, namely that “He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past.”

Despite the blatant psychological nature of this manipulation of Kant’s empirical *a priori* of time and space, Winston at first fails to grasp the lesson O’Brien and BB set out to teach him. He *does* know that the ultimate purpose of this synthesis of imagination and reality is to win the psychological obedience and “happiness” (docility) of the citizenry. Once he decides to take up the crusade to negate the negation of his personal sovereignty, however, he learns, perhaps not fast enough, that he is naïve about the nature of language as a purely psychological phenomenon.

Before his venture into the possibilities of negation (and perhaps his job training contributed to this) he thought that language *was* reality. After all, it seemed to him that by changing the facts in a news story for Minitru he was indeed changing the *nature of that reality* in as much as it exists in the minds of men. O’Brien soon disenchants him of the notion that he, Winston,

knows what the “right” of freedom is, while also showing him how effectively the explicit can be confused with the argumentative.

In existential class  $x$  one could argue, perhaps even without the stigma of seeming “crazy,” that unicorns “exist” with only a slight (though categorical) modification of what it means “to be.” Again, the crux of reality, in as much as it is expressed in language, is the *copula*. However, if we have any respect for Kant’s view, the fact that we explicitly state that unicorns *do not* exist without the possibility of proof (which we, after all, do not have) is just as synthetic as its opposite: that they do.

A greater question arises, then, of what right to any of us have in going around assuming the psychological and phenomenological norm we have absorbed from the discourse of society but have not necessarily discovered for ourselves is any kind of verifiable, analytical baseline of what is and is not. Furthermore, have we any right to impose it on those who might think otherwise or who, for instance, *believe* in unicorns? When it comes to something as silly as a unicorn, an imaginary beast, it seems like a trivial argument. But when it comes to who is and is not the “Prophet” come to enlighten mankind to the “right way to live and think,” then things get grimmer. For example, to around “making the world safe for democracy” is a kind of secular jihad that rivals anything in history for its bloody disregard for the sovereignty of those never asked to be given this “choice.” Are we going to tell a child who believes in unicorns, then, that she is “wrong” and therefore bad and stupid?

The culprit in these crusades, however, is language itself, which, alas, does not exist without a subject to propagate it in one way or another. The temptation of the synthetic proposition is to exploit the possibilities of  $A = B$ . It is our ethical and aesthetic responsibility, however, not to give in to that temptation if it means exploiting others for our personal gain in the process. The development of such an ethical aesthetic in an individual and a society is a fragile thing but is nevertheless significant enough to determine whether a civilization survives or perishes.

In an *Esquire* magazine article written by Ernest Hemingway in 1926 titled “The Rich Boy,” a character, presumably Scott Fitzgerald, observes, “The rich are different from you and me.” Hemingway replies, “Yes, they have more money.” This scene is later found in Hemingway’s Paris memoir *A Moveable Feast*, where it is, explicitly, Fitzgerald. This dialogue is interesting in part because Fitzgerald begins with a synthetic statement which is instantly swatted down by Hemingway with an analytic one, though it is a banal tautology. What Hemingway shows him is that there is a logical error in his proposition; the error is the conflation of  $x$ , which

signifies but does not identify, with what Russell calls class  $a$ , which identifies but does not signify.

The result is that Hemingway shows Fitzgerald, the way O'Brien shows Winston, that he has mistaken a synthetic proposition for an analytic one. The Kantian twist, though, is that Fitzgerald's proposition, broken down into its deep structure, is also tautological:  $A = A$ . The rich are rich. Therefore, in its deep structure it *is* analytic (explicit), but trivial. The way in which Fitzgerald thinks it to be analytic, though, is in the typical way the smarter set makes social observations: uttering a banal tautology in the belief that something original has been said.

$A =$  The rich ( $s$ ) + are different from us ( $p$ ).

$B =$  We ( $s$ ) are poor ( $p$ ).

$A > B$

$A > B =$  They ( $s$ ) have more money ( $p$ ).

While  $A > B$  is true, it is trivial. Trivial is here defined as a value which is tautologically self-evident (apodictic). The difference between 1 and  $n$  is trivial because aside from any discrete number having a successor, the difference between one countable number and another is a matter of concatenation:  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + \dots$ , or, in other words, *tautology*. This is like the difference between the "rich" and "not-rich" (poor): one is just greater or lesser than the other in terms of its relative position on the number line but has no value in and of itself. Therefore, it relies on what Kant calls "something else" for its value and is, then, what he would call a synthetic judgment.

Unlike a discrete number, however, greater or lesser ( $A > B$ ) is not countable, further weakening the claim that there is a significant "difference." The only possible nontrivial difference, then, is that between those who have *no* money and those who do have *some* money ( $0 / 1$ ), which is not the same thing as being *not-rich*.

In fact, in this scene Hemingway may have two dollars in his pocket while Fitzgerald has none. Therefore, Hemingway has *infinitely more* money than his friend. But does this make him "rich"? On the other hand, Hemingway might have \$10,000 in his pocket and Fitzgerald only \$100. Does this make Hemingway "rich" and Fitzgerald "not-rich"? Would not an *infinite* difference in wealth be a better qualification of the distinction between rich and poor than two relatively "large" amounts? And what of a person who, at point  $q$  in time has \$0, but a limitless line of credit? Is that person rich or poor?

We may assume from this dialogue that Hemingway was aware of the significance of the difference between being rich or not-rich and "to have

and have not,” a phrase he later uses as a title of a novel (first as a short story in 1934, then 1936, and as a novel in 1937, *op. cit.*). Hemingway<sup>25</sup> could buy himself a drink and his companion could not. Therefore, the nontrivial difference is between 0 and 1, not 1 and  $n$ .

Fitzgerald conflates  $0 / 1$  with  $1 / n$ , as we naturally do when in the psychological state of abdication to help reinforce our sense that this “special world” is indeed *a* reality rather than *the* reality—for in the realm of simulacra “realities” are *countable* too (for example, the virtual and non-virtual “real”). The idea of being “rich” is therefore a purely psychological state usually reserved for (perhaps) grudging observation by those who regard themselves as not-rich. What they fail to understand is that, in turn, *they* may be regarded as fortunate by those less fortunate than they are and so on.

Because of this state of *absolute relativity*,  $A > B$  as an explicit statement nevertheless has the deep structure of  $A = A$ . While Fitzgerald uses  $A > B$  as an attempt to prove the disjunction of  $A \vee B$  (in other words, that the rich are *categorically different* from the not-rich or “us”), he only succeeds in saying that  $A = A$ , which is not in need of proof because it is self-evident. With subtle sarcasm, Hemingway corrects him by pointing out that  $A$  and  $A$  are in the same class; therefore, there is no disjunction.

We learn from Ayer that we can always rely on tautologies to be true because, as Kant describes, a thing that extends exists, which is as much as invoking Aristotle's first Law of Thought:  $A = A$ , or, in this case, extension = existence. However, discerning a real from an apparent tautology also lies on the borderline between the explicit and the argumentative (rhetorical), making the obviousness of tautology easy bait for the invocation of the discourse of abdication. The synthetic statement  $A = B$  is readily exploited into an invalid synthetic proposition in fatal contradiction where the “something else” of the “if and only if” ( $\leftrightarrow$ ) conditional operation is omitted by enclosing it in rhetoric which represents it, falsely, to the subject as the analytic statement “ $A = A$ .”

Therefore, the true contradiction is not between  $A$  and  $B$ , provided there is the “third thing” (*tq*) to validate the statement; rather it is the following statement, used universally throughout the discourse of the ISP:  $(A = B) \equiv (A = A \vee B = B)$ , which is false (F). In other words, it is F that:  $A = B$  is the material equivalent of either  $A$  equals  $A$ , or  $B$  equals  $B$ . Whereas, the only T statement here is:  $(A = B) \neq (A = A \vee B = B)$ . It is the first statement O’Brien attempts to get Winston to accept in the invalid synthetic proposition that 4 fingers equal 5 fingers—if BB says it is so (which, as  $4 =$

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<sup>25</sup> Letter to the editor, “The Rich Are Different,” *New York Times*, 13 November 1988, National Edition, Archive Page 7007070.

5, seems easily and immediately ridiculous). That this is what O'Brien describes as the "party" line belies its nature as a *force majeure* rhetorical gesture rather than a logical argument deriving its truth value from its apodictic verisimilitude.

English vernacular is riddled with allusions to tautological truisms such as to "call a spade a spade," "seeing is believing," "what goes around comes around," and the more colorful "if it walks like a duck, and quacks like a duck, it's a duck." But what is a "false" tautology? "Seeing is believing" comes close, since it attempts to appear to be a valid tautology ( $A = A$ ) but attempts to conjoin two elements of different classes: seeing (empirical) and believing (theoretical), and is therefore, at best, synthetic ( $A = B$ ). Again, the problem is not in the fact that it is a synthetic proposition, but in its attempt to appear to be analytic when it is not.

For example, if we want to know whether a machine is on or off, and the only way for us to "know" this is by observing the position of the switch, then we may "see," and consequently "believe," that the machine is on or off. But if we cannot see the *machine* itself, can we verify its state? Then we go on to the next level and see the machine. It appears to be on because it has an illuminated indicator light. But perhaps that light indicates that it is plugged in rather than on, and so forth.

The only possibility of positive verification, then, is if the machine *does what it is supposed to do*, producing concrete proof of its function that will be understood, universally, by anyone who analyzes the *evidence*, whether they see the machine, the light, or the switch or not. From the point of view of analytic verifiability, then, the statement, "The machine is on" is in synthetic contradiction with the phenomenological truth of the machine's actual state, which we can only then approximate by looking at the switch. Analogically, the position of the switch presents us with a synthetic reality which, nevertheless, is in a reasonable state of statistical agreement with what we may assume is the "reality," in a verifiable sense, of the machine's state.

Therefore, verification is not a matter of believing what we see, but of objective evidence of the machine's state, such as a diesel locomotive pulling a train of freight cars up a hill. It is not necessary to "see" or "believe" anything; it is only necessary to verify that the freight in the cars got from point A to point B.

Ayer allows for the human proclivity of expediency where, for instance, we are willing to suspend disbelief if it is in our interest to do so at the time. A person who has paid for entertainment seems more credulous than one who comes upon the same spectacle for free; the latter is likely to walk out

if self-deception requires too much voluntary effort. The former simply wants to get his money's worth and will stay until the end of the show.

The Lumiere Brothers' 1896 movie clip "*L'Arrivée d'un train en gare de La Ciotat*" is said to have frightened viewers into "believing" that what they "saw" was the train about to crash from the stage into the audience. This seems ridiculous to us now, but at the same time we seek ever greater and more convincing illusions in the form of so-called virtual reality (renamed here "synthetic reality") so that we can "really experience" killing people without going to jail. For this marvelous experience we seem to be willing to pay any price, as the rich computer gaming industry throughout the world drives almost all graphics technology into the future and requires the most powerful and sophisticated computers to do so.

"A man can always sustain his convictions in the face of apparently hostile evidence if he is prepared to make the necessary ad hoc assumptions" says Ayer.<sup>26</sup> The question is what *kind* of assumptions are we willing to make in the moment and what *sort* of evidence are we willing to ignore to make them? The answer seems to change with the gadgetry involved. It is hard for us to imagine a clickety-clacking Cinematograph, hand cranked, with no sound and in black-and-white scaring people out of a theater because they suddenly think a train is entering it. Surely this contradiction with the empirical assumptions people made in 1896 about what they "see" of and "believe" about reality soon became the main attraction of this novel sensation.

How much easier is it now to *transfer* the sense of empirical verisimilitude to the panoply of digital gadgetry the citizen in modern technological countries cannot live without? (It should be remembered, however, that nearly one-quarter of the world's population lacks electricity.) The great Quest in digital entertainment is to find the algorithms it is believed Nature employs (such as, they say, the Mandelbrot set) to make things "real." The ethical aesthetic is that these algorithms can then be encoded into products created by the distraction industry to power ever-more-distracting (and violent) commercial forms of simulacra. As mentioned earlier, if it is not, or cannot, be encoded, is it "real" or even *legal*? The ethical aesthetic not only of the entertainment industry but of government casts doubt on that which cannot be ensnared profitably in the spider web of the Internet and a searchable database.

What citizen, consumer, or organization has the *temerity* to resist (or evade) the encoding of its *holometric* by the great technological empires of the universe? "Non-encodability is an outrage against the peace and prosperity of the social order!" say the increasingly greedy and paranoid

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<sup>26</sup> Ayer, *LT&L*, 95.



protocols of commerce and government. Does the subject seriously think that it can abdicate its self-determination as the requirement for life eternal on the holographic plane of simulated existence without surrendering ownership of the degree of freedom it refers to as its “privacy”?

Meantime, authorities complain that “terrorists” use digital gadgetry with great aplomb to perpetrate their nefarious deeds while they simultaneously complain that their *own* use of this technology is ineffective against these threats because there is “too much freedom” and “not enough funding” for them to cast a bigger net with an ever-finer mesh to “catch those guys.”

Which brings us back to Kant's statement that mathematical judgments are synthetical. If Kant declares that experience is an *a posteriori* negation of the explicit nature of an analytical proposition, wherein lies the experience in abstract mathematics or number theory? Empirical methods of calculation such as counting fingers, beans, or heads of cattle show us that concrete methods, with a high and efficient degree of verifiability, are reliable. This is the stubborn fact standing in the way of Winston “seeing” five fingers when O'Brien hold up four. But the difficulties of abstract methods of calculation, particularly with so-called astronomical numbers and quantifications outside of the Normal or Gaussian distributions, make us gladly fall back on machines not only for the convenience of their swift and mechanical operation but also because they seldom make *the kind of* errors humans do.

This “faith” in the infallibility of the computing machine, though, has two problems: 1) the so-called p-hacking problem where wishful thinking interferes with the objective interpretation of data it produces, and 2) the tendency to enter data into the processed data set which have been obtained based on a proposition (hypothesis) consisting of invalid synthetic logic. These problems are also related in some obvious ways, since both are caused by the misapplication of synthetic thinking. But each has its own special problem, too.

The former, whether it is by the sin of omission or commission, is dishonest. The latter, however, is systemic and chronic since it has to do with the old saying in computing “garbage in, garbage out.” All that matters in both cases, though, is that at some point the data are framed in such a way that the machine is able, given the limited mechanics of its own Boolean logic, to process them. The ethical aesthetic of computational Positivism says that this is enough, whereas the caveats of ethnical Humanism caution that such an assumption is far from apodictic.

To go around claiming that the sum of  $2 + 2$  is a number other than 4 is not advisable if one wishes to be taken seriously. But on a macro or nano

scale one must be willing to do more than suspend disbelief about the behavior of numbers and their supposed absolutes, such as the “completeness” of arithmetic. It for this reason scientists look to quantum computing, with its superimposed states that significantly modify traditional Boolean operators, for a solution to some of these problems. While certainly some real problems of this nature will be and are being solved in this way, the specters of p-hacking and other forms of data manipulation, as well as invalid propositions issuing from hypotheses serving a master other than truth, will not go away.

In fact, it is becoming even more difficult for a disinterested third party to verify data when to do so means laying one’s hands on sophisticated technologies or complicated data sets available only to the few in the priesthood of a technological establishment threatened by any attempt to challenge its conclusions or methods.

There is the added problem of being willing to prove something is true (T) *on those scales* (macro or nano), even if it is “not true” on a human Newtonian-Cartesian scale. Can there be “two truths” about things? No, not if we wish to maintain the basic integrity of language. However, it *is* possible that *we cannot know* if something is true even if we once, under another paradigm, managed to prove, analytically and verifiably, that it was T. Therefore, admitting that “we do not know” in the light of a new paradigm is a kind of discovery of the truth and should be honored and regarded as such.

The problem, though, is that stating that “we cannot know,” especially when we once were sure we did, is *the greatest heresy under the ethical aesthetic of the progressive fallacy*. “Ye of little faith,” saith the discourse of progressivism, “must trust that the mere passage of time (and a lot of money) will discover the truth of even this mystery, verily.”

Discoveries in physics, number theory, and cognitive science often show a clear, demonstrable, and sometimes categorical break with long-sustained paradigms of truth while at the same time building upon the verified discoveries of the past. This seems to be the ideal engine of the ethical aesthetic of *discovery* rather than of mere *progressivism*. But whatever icons they may shatter, or notions they may nudge, they are also not saying that the worldview of the past should now be seen as a falsehood in light of what they have found; rather, it is more of a case where *there is more to the truth than may have originally met the eye of reason*. While there cannot be two versions of the same truth, particularly in opposition, and remain the truth, what has been proven to be true can be modified, enlarged, and made more effective and comprehensive. Certainly, the reverse is true.

Does this priority that the accomplishments of the past give the efforts of the future *to know* also give us the right to look smugly back upon the past as a benighted age of ignorance and superstition? Perhaps. But it seems unfair and even unreasonable not to also consider that what we regard as the present will be some other future's distant past of equally benighted ignorance and superstition. It is just pure unadulterated *hubris* to think otherwise.

Conversely, if we were not so dismissive of the past as the progressive fallacy demands of us, then it is possible to see the matter as a *continuum* where all points equal in some fundamental ways. It is not necessary to make a big case for this option when we consider that if we carry on with the assumptions of the progressive fallacy, then we must also admit that there cannot possibly be anything such as the truth. The inherent error of the PF is that if the proposition of its ethical aesthetic is correct, then the pattern of affirming and negating what we know would continue forever, in which case we would have to conclude that every truth would have to coexist with its own negation. Once again, we find ourselves in an invalid synthetic proposition where T and F are in a fundamental contradiction which succeeds only in negating both:  $(T = F) \rightarrow (\sim T)$ , if truth equals falsehood, then there is no truth.

Would it not be more in the spirit of *sapere aude* to admit that maybe, just maybe, we are subject to the same potential for self-deception as those who came before us, and that perhaps we should question what we are most certain of in terms of our dismissal of the past and our blind acceptance of the present? Certainly, our predication of all that is wonderful, good, and true (if not immortal) on "the future" deserves more scrutiny than it gets.

If we did "dare to know" in this way, we would be forced into admitting that not only is there actually little we know, but that there is a vast category of phenomena the truth of which, by the disinterested application of reason, we will find that we *can never know*. For example, we will *never* know how others actually "see" (as in regard) us because we are faced with the insurmountable obstacle of not being someone other than ourselves.

## 1.7 Lifting the veil of the linear equation

Let us return to the original proposition of this discussion: the categorical exclusion, or  $CE = (0 / 1) > (1 / n)$ , that the difference between 0 and 1 is infinitely greater than the difference between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ). As a modification to what which we have considered as lying outside of the proposition as the *tertium quid* (*tq*), or third thing, we are forced by necessity to state that if there is indeed something as truth, then it

must not and cannot be affected by either 1) the progressive fallacy (PF) that states that the mere passage of time leads to the truth, and 2) fiat by the hegemonic authority.

If this is the case, then we must further conclude that truth is a form of objectivity transcending all subjectivity, including the “objectivity” that we regard as the polar opposite of our subjectivity. For example, while one is the subject and another is the object of one’s relations, one must also be the object of the other’s subjectivity.

Consequently, this form of the subject-object dichotomy is *synthetic*, just as the properties of being “heavy” and “light” are, according to Kant. Therefore, transcendental objectivity can be found in a body’s property of extension, as without this property it would not be “a body.” Its Dasein, or being, as a body *depends* upon its property of extension. This property transcends all possible contradiction. As a result, it is not a product of the imagination, faulty logic, or the ethical aesthetic of simulacra.

Nevertheless, the transcendental object is not something we can point to and say, “There it is!” For example, the property, or attribute, of extension is entirely abstract, made concrete only by an associative phenomenon that manages to *em-body* it, such as the body described by Kant. Unless it is *em-bodied*, it does not “exist” as such. (Note that we are not here referring to what Plato describes as the *eidōs*, noumena, the ideal *idea* of phenomena which do “exist” in that sense apart from phenomena. The difference will be discussed soon when we consider the *transcendental aesthetic*.)

First, consider that this objective property, according to Kant, cannot be seen in the way anything else can be seen. That is, it is not subject to the rules of empirical phenomena. As such, we tend to dismiss the suggestion that the transcendental object “exists,” since by default we define existence as something which can be appreciated empirically.

To “see” the transcendental object in any way that might be considered verification of its existence is a *lifting* of a certain empirical veil which immediately engages our subjectivity, producing an illusion of what we imagine the transcendental object to be and no more. It is precisely this “lifting” that the object transcends. However, we also tend to consider anything decreed to be an “object” to also be a member of the class of empirical phenomena. So how do we reconcile this seeming conflict?

Kant replaces the raw empirical category with “the transcendental object = *x*.” In so doing, he allows the object to transcend the empirical *without sacrificing its value as that which underlies all phenomena*. “The pure concept of such a transcendental object ... is that which alone can give to all our empirical concepts a relation to an object of objective reality.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 90.

In other words, contrary to our tacit assumption, phenomena extract their existence from the transcendental object; its apparent invisibility, therefore, has to do with the fact that this extraction is a negation of the positive effect of  $x$  as the gene of phenomena, for the gene and its expression could not both have the same value empirically. As a result, to be conscious of reality is to accept the “unity” of the empirical perception of the object and its transcendental nature, though what passes for reason often rejects such a view in favor of a synthetic schism.

That relation is nothing else but a necessary unity of consciousness, and therefore also of the synthesis of the manifold, by a common function of the mind, which unites it in one representation. As that unity must be considered as a priori necessary (*because, without it, our knowledge would be without an object* [italics added]), we may conclude that the relation to a transcendental object, that is, the objective reality of our empirical knowledge, rests on a transcendental law, that all phenomena, if they are to give us objects, must be subject to rules *a priori* of a synthetical unity of these objects, by which rules alone their mutual relation in an empirical intuition becomes possible: that is, *they must be subject, in experience, to the conditions of the necessary unity of apperception quite as much as, in mere intuition, to the formal conditions of space and time* [italics added]. Without this no knowledge is possible.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, if we are to *dare to know*, then we must accept this “unity of apperception” as we do the *a priori* of time and space; and in such acceptance—which means the inclusion of  $x$  in our calculations regarding the verifiability of anything—we subvert our tacit assumption regarding phenomena with what amounts to a synthetic proposition regarding reality.

Here Kant extends his argument that mathematics is based on synthetical judgments. Consequently, to “verify” anything mathematically is to do so not with an analytic but with a synthetic proposition. He makes it clear, however, that it is *valid* synthetic reasoning leading to the “unity of apperception” in part because it includes the necessary function of intuition and therefore space and time. Earlier he had stated that analytic reason “has contributed little” to our understanding, which is obvious in the trivial verifiability of the tautology ( $A = A$ ).

The danger, though, is that this fact presents the apparatus with an opportunity to exploit the fundamentally synthetic nature of reason through the introduction of the invalid synthetic proposition (ISP). The ISP draws its subject and predicate not from two “contradictory” ( $A = B$ ) existential categories in the same universe of discourse, but *from two contradictory universes of discourse*, for instance one in which unicorns are possible and

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<sup>28</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 90.

one in which they are impossible. And it does so by claiming that proof relies on the priority of all ISP's over any other proposition, analytic or synthetic. Just as the proposition "there can be no life without death" seems like a contradiction, its truth value is, nevertheless, apodictic. Objective verification is not necessary in the positivist sense.

Undaunted, the discourse that makes simulacra class *b* possible is in universal contradiction with this (quite literally) existential contradiction. Rather, the discourse of simulacra labels death a "disease" that medical science will "cure" in "the future" for *everyone*, including all of those who will be born thereafter as well the 25 percent of the world's population that must now do without electricity and clean drinking water. While this flawed proposition is ludicrous, it is, nevertheless, swallowed hook, line, and sinker by the mass of subjects in the modern technological society.

Why? The entire apparatus of consumer society, and all of its ubiquitous digital gadgetry, is aimed at *glorifying* and *aggrandizing* the narcissistic ego to such an extent that the subject will *do* anything, *buy* anything, *accept* any amount of debt, *believe* anything, and *kill* anyone to achieve what it thinks is absolute, seamless, hermetic *immortality* "in the future." And while it is waiting for this big payoff, it wants unrestricted access to consumer goods and services without the need to pay for it except through the accumulation of more debt by the mortgaging of this magical future.

But as we have already discussed, the discourse of abdication demands recantation of our sovereign core identity. This sacrifice can only be accomplished through the conflation and substitution of an invalid synthetic with valid synthetic and analytic propositions. In other words, the subject must be *confused* regarding its relationship to the transcendental object to complete the process of abdication.

So how does the synthetic (*x*) accomplish the opposite, acquainting us at last with the reality that *to know* is to intuit the unity of phenomena and its underlying gene of the transcendental object (which, by definition, is not of class *a*)? Herein lies the crux of the mechanism of abdication. The subject subsumes a nominal social identity as a negation of its native identity, which it has been convinced is the imposter. It does this by also accepting an invalid synthetic *a priori* of time and space manufactured by the apparatus which is presented as analytic, or "the truth," about organic reality. In fact, though, it is the mere *simulacrum* of the synthetic, *mathematical*, reality of *x*. Therefore, according to Kant's assertion that "without this [unity of apperception] no knowledge is possible," the subject is left without self-knowledge and therefore without effective self-consciousness.

The subject possesses *mere awareness* of its biological, emotional, and psychological wants and needs, but remains ignorant of the fundamental

nature of its own reality. Any intuition of the transcendental object, through the agency of what Kant calls the unity of apperception, is simply not possible on any conscious and therefore effective level. The subject is unconscious, and therefore lacks understanding, though it may be stuffed, like a Christmas goose, with what passes for knowledge in the form of useful and useless data by the education system and the ubiquitous infotainment apparatus. *Negation of negation*, or Hegel's Second Negation, then, seen from the point of view of the subject's state of unconscious awareness, is a threat to the worldview it has bought with the money it borrowed from the corporate state.

Without the negation of the negation of its self-determination, the subject remains impotent vis-a-vis the world. In its flaccid progenitive power, it becomes *an imposter of itself*, a robotic *Doppelgänger*, programable but incapable of self-consciousness. The only possibility now of what Kant calls "knowledge" would be a negation of this negation. But such a reversal of its state is nearly impossible since, once having abdicated, the subject is locked into its choice by an inversion of the fear of death where the ego interprets the possibility of the Second Negation as *death itself*. Furthermore, the apparatus the subject has become a mere expression of is entirely constructed of diversionary and discursive injunctions *against* negation of the negation of the subject's indigenous core identity.

By allowing its attention to be absorbed into its digital gadgets every waking minute, the subject never finds the time for apperception never mind intuition which is all but smothered, like its defunct Eros, in the suffocating womb (matrix) of simulacra. The subject then dwells in a deadly cul-de-sac it does not even know exists and which it sees as a kind of paradise—at least by comparison to the third-world shitholes those it ruthlessly exploits must suffer and die in. In fact, it regards its indenture to the hegemony as the only possibility of life itself because, after all, at the end of this Skid Row of existence is a mirror reflecting its own sacred image.

In abdicating its sovereignty, the subject abdicates its capacity for consciousness, apperception, and intuition and therefore *understanding* in the holistic sense. Mere awareness of its biological needs, then, serves as a simulacrum of the consciousness it flushed away like used toilet paper. Mere awareness is the wooden leg of what could have been, perhaps, a distance runner. It is something to which the subject can point when pressed on the topic as its cross to bear.

While there is no solemn ritual to mark one's membership in the Cult of Mediocrity, there are certain requirements that must be maintained. For instance, the "dues" are the minimum payments on the debt amassed in the process of acquiring what one does not need or deserve based on one's

dubious earning record. The annual fee is paid through taxes which are then passed on to the friends and cronies of one's government at home and abroad to be sequestered into investment in real assets such as land and gold. Finally, and most importantly, one must demonstrate an almost limitless capacity for being what we shall call here an *apex consumer*, a rapacious shopper online and off who, like the compulsive gambler, does not know when to quit.

It is sufficient, even required, for one to be an *apex consumer* before the Cult of Mediocrity will grant one the full rights and privileges of membership, which include access to immortality "in the future" as well as the kind of social standing that will assuage one's fears of becoming an economic pariah. Before abdication, the subject's psyche was configured in such a way as to involve it in the dialectic of understanding, which is a messy, dirty, shameful process of relentless and frustrating self-discovery, failure, and doubt. This dialectical movement of cognition, though it has analogical parallels throughout the processes of the natural universe, is the very anathema of civilization and its ruthless striving for the artifice of Empire.

Civilization, to protect its market share and cult of social metastasis, becomes a generator of what Freud calls "*Unbehagen*" (uneasiness, or discontent) legislated by the *nomos*, or its law-giving apparatus. What is forsaken in abdication, then, is, among other valuable assets, the ability to discover something new, unthought of, unheard of, unrecognized, and formerly opaque to the understanding. In short, all that makes one a disturbing pariah in the mainstream of society by the standards of *Unbehagen*.

The great totalitarian states of the East and West have achieved this suppression of creativity and inventiveness to an extraordinary degree already. When challenged on this observation, however, they immediately point to the proliferation of clever digital gadgets scattered and tossed throughout society to maintain submission, obedience, and fealty to their agenda of empire—as if this were the ultimate sign of creative, inventive thinking. If pushed for more impressive evidence, they take the coward's way out and say that "in the future" artificial intelligence (AI) will "make all our lives better." How, for whom, and in what way is seldom specified despite serious doubts raised by what are regarded by the mainstream media as the various public cranks, crackpots, knockers, Luddites, and nay-sayers of society.

It should be considered, though, that one of the sources of energy driving Empire's compulsive metastasis is its necessary resistance to the sovereign self's inborn, natural, and indigenous tendency for *equilibrium* with its



natural environment rather than homeostasis with its artificial one. The two are constantly at odds not because the subject is by nature a contrarian, but because the self tends to intuit that apperceptive unity is jeopardized by a steady diet of lies and propaganda. As a result, the degree to which the subject experiences equilibrium with its natural environment *is in inverse proposition* to the degree to which it experiences homeostasis with the simulated environment of the empire of the corporate state.

Life in realia class *a* is one of perpetually solving problems and overcoming difficulties. Life in simulacra class *b* is one of seeking out ever-greater distractions and avoiding anything that might challenge homeostasis or the status quo. Add to this a steady diet of unhealthy food, a sedentary lifestyle, meaningless work, and the perpetual stress of alternating stimulation and enervation digital gadgetry wreaks on the nervous system, and *Unbehagen* becomes the subject's Normal or Gaussian state. But fear not. The hegemony and its associates react by producing a pharmacopia of legal and illegal drugs to dope even the worst case of uneasiness, discontent, and unhappiness.

What of the subject prior to abdication, or the one who, by accident, inclination, or fierce resistance "prefers not to"? The subject's natural epistemology consists of a dialectic between awareness and consciousness which, we hope, brings about *episteme* in the sense meant by Kant as "Pure Understanding." Understanding works as the *tertium quid* (*tq*) in the output of the dialectic as *x* ("something else") rather than *x'* (fatal contradiction). As such, Pure Understanding owes something to the schema of Hegel's Second Negation as well.

Those who prefer realia class *a*, over simulacra class *b*, then, are simply faced with more problems to solve and difficulties to overcome. What makes them different from other classes of effort and endeavor, though, is that these problems and difficulties are maliciously generated by the apparatus that feels threatened by the noncompliant subject's rejection of its ethical aesthetic.

The (*tq/x*) is what Kant refers to as the "something else" of the valid synthetic proposition (VSP) which makes it possible for awareness and consciousness to be conscious and aware of each other. Such memetic reflection of these two "selves" allows for a displacement of one's narcissism. We could say that narcissism (as has already been mentioned) is a form of tautology, but one that negates its own Dasein rather than affirming its truth value. The difference between narcissistic self-reflection and the thoughtfulness that results in Pure Understanding is that the latter allows awareness to function as the subject and consciousness to function as the predicate, joined by the copula of being or Dasein. If they are not in

such a meaningful semantic relationship, then there is no understanding and, consequently, no *episteme*.

It is this problem that beguiles all discussion about the nature of consciousness and how it is different from awareness. “[I]n synthetical judgments,” says Kant, “I must have besides the concept of the subject *something else* ( $x$ ) on which the understanding relies to know that a predicate, not contained in the concept, *nevertheless belongs to it* [italics added].”<sup>29</sup> It is this ( $x$ ), this “something else,” this *je ne c’est qua*, that makes understanding possible.

At the same time, it is the alchemy of understanding that makes *consciousness awareness* possible, too, despite the dependency of the two terms upon each other in the dialectic of epistemology. By themselves, they represent whatever happens to be the ready-to-hand conceptual expediency to which we want to employ them. But typically, we consider awareness to be subordinate to consciousness.

A microbe is demonstrably “aware” of its surroundings; whereas we tend to reserve the word “consciousness” as a synonym for the cogito “I think” as the exclusively human product of the infinitive “to be” (“Cogito, ergo sum”). The statement “I am a carpenter” takes the subject “I” which, united with “am” creates the first unit of an apodictic tautology (since there is no “I” without being, or “am,” just as there is no body without extension, which is the material equivalent of being).

By adding the predicate “a carpenter,” however, we include a second unit of tautology (noun-verb-noun) but modify the first unit with a synthetic statement of being, since the mere fact of being “a carpenter,” though it *implies* that one *is*, remains insufficient for Dasein. Therefore, if we say, “Jesus was a carpenter,” then we are really saying nothing except “He was,” which is the material equivalent of “I am” in the analytic sense. The words *Jesus* (a proper noun for the pronoun “He”), *was* (the past tense of “is”), and *carpenter* (his socioeconomic role) are all *synthetic*, since they are in a contradictory (and therefore existentially *different*) category from that which makes the copula (“to be”) a truth function: being.

Consequently, Dasein draws the verifiable line at “I am” (1/0). What is beyond this line is reserved for the infinite variety ( $1/n$ ) of states of being and phenomena. Words such as *Jesus*, *carpenter*, and *was*, within the structure of the proposition, are dependent upon “something else” ( $x$ ) for their identity, meaning that their being is not apodictic. Such a consideration makes the question “Did Jesus exist?” seem ridiculous—regardless of if think He did.

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<sup>29</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 6.

To gain a better understanding of this matter, let us for a moment put aside the possibility of the negation of the negation of the core identity. Instead, let us look at the ethical aesthetic of the universe of discourse the subject now finds itself in. We have seen what role the progressive fallacy has in the formation of this aesthetic. In the structure of the abdication process, though, this fallacy is more effective at its incipience. Its effect is that it establishes the algorithm of abdication as *increase*, thus enforcing the effective procedure of its nominal *becoming* through the simplistic formula of the mere passage of time. Every such algorithmic increase then becomes *an increase of an increase of an increase*, each increment endowed with an imaginary identity nominating it as having *more discrete value* than its predecessor. (Blockchain logic notwithstanding.)

Therefore, every increment of infinite increase ( $1/n$ ) is ipso facto “better” in some ineffable way that depends upon the algorithm itself rather than “something else ( $x$ ).” Here is another nontrivial difference between the invalid and valid synthetic judgment. Again, we run into Wittgenstein’s objection to Russell’s paradox, namely that “No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself ...” (op. cit.).

While the invalid synthetic judgment may make sense applied to real numbers when counting heads of cattle, in considering it against the categorical exclusion we are left only with Peano’s axiom that no number is a successor of itself. We may have one steer, or any number ( $n$ ) of heads of cattle ( $1/n$ ) but applying the same principle to the number of years of one’s lifetime we cannot say that we will, therefore, live forever just because no number can be the successor of itself. As a result, there is only one value that is nontrivial: the difference between 0 and 1, the categorical exclusion, since the difference between 1 and  $n$  is trivial, *ad infinitum*.

The error of the progressive fallacy is that its verifiability depends upon its putative analytic nature as tautology. This claim, however, puts it into the category of an invalid contradiction. If it is tautological then how could it also represent itself as a series of discrete values, such a Fibonacci series where each new value is algorithmically discrete? No, the progressive fallacy is just an endless iteration of the same trivial difference between 1 and  $n$ , despite its extravagant claims to the contrary.

It is this iteration that is the darling of the ethical aesthetic of the industrial age where the exact copy is prized above everything else because it signifies the break between the economic inefficiency of the homespun and craftsmen era that preceded it. The accumulation of massive amounts of powerful capital in banks is not possible through the old system and the collection of taxes under such an economy is an expensive nuisance.

Therefore, the age of creating unique products on an on-demand basis with a direct relationship between the artisan and the customer it is bad, evil, benighted, old fashioned, stupid, and wrong. In the industrialized society of mass production and consumption, the only member of any set that can be considered good, enlightened, modern, smart, and right (like a “smart” phone) is something that is a replica of itself.

We can say, then, that any set of goods in the modern industrial state contains *one element*, as well as any number of iterations ( $n$ ) of that element with precisely the same characteristics without variation. If all elements in a set have precisely the same characteristics, though, and can be considered indistinguishable from each other because of it, then all members of that set, regardless of quantification ( $n$ ), are null except for one representative element which, we may say, serves the function of negating the possibility of a well-ordered empty set ( $\emptyset$ ).

How could such set be so attractive to the subject as to be almost irresistible? What makes the subject “fall in love” with this insubstantial repetition of meaningless nothingness? The discourse of abdication, in a variety of ways which will be analyzed later, presents this unitary isolation as the apotheosis of the narcissistic ego, its *Doppelgänger*. The image Narcissus falls in love with in the pond is the first exact copy of himself. His error, or invalid categorical contradiction, then, is identifying the image in the pond as being in the category of “the other” when it is in the strictly subjective category of himself.

If he regarded it as a copy of himself but considered himself to be the “real” Narcissus, then the contradiction between the original and its copy would hold both in their proper place and be, therefore, valid though synthetic. Identification of the image as “I,” in this case, is possible only through *associative identity*. Therefore, it remains synthetically “true” to say that the reflection is “I” (just as, in an earlier example, it remains “true” to say that the machine is on or off). But it is also a logical contradiction ( $A = B$ ) from the analytic point of view, since reflection is *not* oneself in the phenomenological sense and therefore cannot be said to be “I.”

Once the subject has allowed itself to be convinced of the ethical aesthetic of the reflection being “the other,” however, a dramatic inversion of its awareness takes place and consciousness, as such, vanishes. There is nothing particularly mystical about this vanishing act, since “not being aware” of the fact that the reflection is an image of oneself and not “the other” *is in and of itself* unconsciousness. This is a point which cannot be too strongly stressed here. If a cat understands that it is looking at a reflection of itself in a mirror, then we like to say that it is conscious, but not if it continues to believe that there is some “other” cat behind the glass.

The subject consequently enters an experience of existence described by the equation  $ax + by + cz + d = \emptyset$ , where  $abc$  are the constants of reality and  $xyz$  the variables of simulacra. The subject is now living a parallel track of reality and illusion, reality class  $a$  ( $abc$ ) and simulacra class  $b$  ( $xyz$ ), with the different letters representing different dimensions or attributes of experience such as time, space, and extension. The attributes of reality are non-negotiable. Therefore, they are considered “constants,” whereas those of simulacra are, by their nature, subject to perpetual change. At point  $d$  in this equation, simulated and actual experience *coalesce* into the invalid synthetic proposition ( $x'$ ) which then becomes the universal discourse of the subject's experience ( $d/x'$ ).

As mentioned earlier, the subject must maintain realia class  $a$  as the parent to simulacra class  $b$ , since simulacra for all their degrees of freedom, lack any generative capacity; they must, instead, *be generated* as derivatives of an underlying asset of real value. But at the same time, the discourse of simulacra ( $d$ ) must make strenuous efforts to overshadow reality with the dark cloud of its semantic opacity, making a special effort to redact any significant data regarding death which, much to the chagrin of any subject, may occur at any moment, in its youth or old age (as experience so generously demonstrates).

The *variables* provide the illusion of what Kant calls “manifold” and Heidegger “the furniture of the world,” while the *constants* maintain the fossilized state of the argument as they are drawn from the attributes or metadata of reality. Therefore, once we have run through this formula to the point where  $(abc = xyz)d$ , we are left with a tautology which can only equal  $\emptyset$  in terms of its value as being or Dasein.

In other words, what the subject attempts to construct with its desperate avoidance of the nonbeing of death ends up as a kind of death-in-life which, it is true, will indeed make the event of death—a phenomenon inevitable no matter what the subject thinks or does—seem trivial. Drawing its cue from the traditional religious hegemony it has supplanted, Scientism and the corporate state refashion the words of Isaiah 57:1-2: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” into the systematic dehumanization of all social, political, economic, and cultural experience.

The result is that “death” becomes a comical abstraction one “plays with” in computer games and that one's government metes out to its enemies by remote control.

The subject enthusiastically embraces this offer of an imaginary universe where “anything is possible” if one is only willing to sacrifice one's otherwise tenuous hold upon reality through abdication of the sovereign self. Like a snake shedding its skin, the subject gives no backward

glance to the self it once possessed, but instead looks toward the glories that the corporate state will deliver “in the future” to the deserving subject who is able to maintain the monthly payments through the devastating and periodic collapses of the economy it must labor under and the state’s incessant wars on its behalf.

What is the net discursive effect, then, or ( $d/x'$ ), of this existential compromise? The result is that life becomes “a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing” as MacBeth says in Act 5, Scene 5. His “o’er reaching ambition” for total power and empire results in the loss of both, as well as any possibility of a contented and natural life. This is the critical psychological component of abdication, and it is brought about primarily through language. The discourse maintains the illusion ( $d/x'$ ) by branding the meaninglessness of its artificial life as *meaning itself*, rendering all other potentially meaningful utterance as “dangerous.”

Herein lies the modus operandi of censorship. (Here “meaningful” is defined as a *valid* synthetic statement wherein the predicate contains an element of a set with a different existential identity from the subject but is of the same universal class.) It does this by reassigning the name of the set of *meaningful* utterances to the set of *meaningless* utterances, and vice versa. In other words, it switches the labels on the wines in the hope that no one will notice. The result is the “fake real” and the “real fake.”

Although what is meaningful must be unique (because if all utterances meant the same thing there would be no meaning), it must also defy the iterative nature of the Peano’s axiom that no number may be the successor of itself. What the axiom does for the counting (real) number is allow it to be mathematically useful, which cannot be properly said of the concatenation of  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1$  as it is not internally cumulative ( $1 + 2 = 2$ ,  $+1 = 3$ ,  $+1 = 4$ , and so on).

In other words, it does not keep a record of its *increase* as counting numbers do. All counting numbers are “the same” in that the predecessor and successor are always in the same proximity (+1, or -1) to each other. Therefore, they are not “unique” despite their property of being greater or lesser than each other once they are counted (but not until then).

However, the Fibonacci (F) series gives us a better analog for the idea that each number in a series can be unique even though it is the result of the application of the same algorithm. In counting numbers, the algorithm is simple and describes what the relationship will be between all numbers to infinity: add 1 to any number to get its successor. In the F-series, though, the same algorithm gives us a number that is in a unique relationship to all other numbers each time we run it: beginning with 1, add 1 to itself; take the sum (2) and add it to 1; then, take that sum (3) and add it to the previous

sum ... and so on (2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 ...). The same is true for logarithmic and exponential progressions, as well as prime numbers, as Cantor surmises.

While these numbers all belong to the same class (F-series), their *identity* is discrete because each depends upon an operation involving a *different* and *new* number, whereas integers require no other “operation” than mere (whole-number) succession and are therefore the material equivalent as a concatenation of the same value (1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 ...).

Also, while one number is the successor of another number, as we see in a series of real numbers, the relationship (value) between one number and another in the F-series is unique, unlike counting numbers. For example, in the F-series 3 is the immediate successor of 2, but 5 is not the immediate successor of 3, since there is an intervening number (4) not in the series, and so on.

Nevertheless, mere concatenation (1 + 1 + 1 ...) sufficiently maintains the illusion of progress because of the cumulative or “storage” effect of Peano’s axiom (1, 2, 3 ...). This property, of course, owes its logic to the valid synthetic judgment. Appearances, though, of such fundamental phenomena as progression have potential for manipulation when they are allied with the invalid synthetic proposition. The objective *burden* of the *valid* synthetic proposition which is that it is always in need of “something else (x).” As a result, it is a perpetual nuisance to the lazy and dim because it demands effect thought and positive reason as well as the burden of proof. Even on a trivial level we can see that it is easier to add one number to any number to get its successor than to have to multiply a number by its predecessor to get the successor, as we must do in the F-series.

What the subject really wants is a psychological approximation of reality that it can believe is *objective*, just as Narcissus wants to be in love with his reflection if and only if that reflection is *the other* and not himself. Consequently, the subject’s experience of existence is *dis-em-bodied* from Kant’s transcendental object, or that which underlies realia as Dasein. It is not accurate to say that simulacra undergo *le devenir* (the coming-into-being) in the phenomenological sense.

Simulacra are like viruses which are not actually “alive” themselves and consequently depend upon access to the machinery they can interact with in living cells to replicate. (Note that “virus” is Latin for “poison,” as the living cell must die for a virus to replicate.) However, for this transfer of inherited verisimilitude to be successful, simulacra must be considered by the subject to be “more real” than reality, else they vanish into the “nothingness” of the well-ordered empty set. As such, they maintain a spectral presence when referring to such values as  $\aleph_0$  and  $\emptyset$ , coming into their own as simulacra

class *b* only when the subject has abdicated its self-determination and core identity and becomes a simulation of itself.

In Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Minitru finds a teleological way to conflate the past, present, and future into one amalgamated discourse with the formula, "He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past." We can call this algorithm (*ppf*), or past-present-future. Controlling the present is the equivalent of controlling the past; controlling the past is the equivalent of controlling the future; therefore, controlling the present is the equivalent of controlling the future. This is a neat approximation of the discrete Markov chain where the future is always deterministic, but the present is always spontaneous. The advantage of such a system is that it allows for our experience of the present to *feel like* it is a matter of our free will, while in fact it has already been determined.

While control of the future through control of the present might seem self-evident, in this formula there is no direct control of the future except through manipulation of the past. But as the present quickly becomes the past and the future the present, there is an algorithmic engine at work here propelling the PF forward while merely iterating the same tautology. It is the perfect balance of the *illusion* of freedom and the *reality* of control. It pays homage to the idea that the greatest form of bondage is the illusion that one is free. There is no (*iq*), no third thing outside the class of (*ppf*). There is no possibility of escape, of freedom, of negation of the self-abnegation of abdication.

In this way a genuine cybernetic control system takes effect, fossilizing Kant's *a priori* of time and space into Ingsoc's social discourse. Naturally, the problem here is that the *a priori* are real in the sense of being the set of all sets containing all transcendental objects. Whereas the social discourse is an excrescence of mankind's collective ego in the forms of language and civilization. Therefore, this synthetic reality in which the rules of verification are subject to their own synthetic rules of self-creation depends upon a special construction of language wherein the subject of all statements, regardless of noun or pronoun, is ultimately the "I" who perceives the utterance. Put more simply, it is the narcissistic idea that "I am everything. Death is not the end of me. It is the end of everything *except* me."

As language is largely a bunch of random sounds with a vaguely agreed upon and ever-changing effect, its nature is almost purely psychological regarding its discourse; its denotative value, on the other hand, lies almost exclusively with the words themselves: if two parties agree that a certain



object is a knife, then as long as that contract persists between those two parties that object is a “knife.”

Once words are strung together into a sentence, though, this denotative effect which both parties A and B have come to rely on is eroded in favor of the discourse of the cumulative meaning of the utterance, along with the clutter of associations it brings with it, which is then further subject to interpretation by the receivers and other random variables. In this way, then, a knife can become a weapon and many other related things which are based on its use rather than anything inherent in its *thingness*.

In other words, it is almost impossible to nail down “meaning” under such circumstances in any verifiable way between the two parties A and B. If party A asks, “Do you believe in God,” B is faced with the following problem: if B says “yes,” then what B is doing is affirming, in the mind of A, that B’s idea of God is “the same” as A’s whether it is or not. Therefore, if B wishes to communicate with A regarding belief in God, the only possibility is to first ask, “Well, what is your concept of God?” The result, we hope, is a negotiated meaning both feel satisfied with.

The question is, then, how often in our everyday communication do we let this situation float by without asking such a clarifying question as B asks of A? Guessing that the answer is *most of the time*, then we must also wonder if this is because the words, we are using are so simple that everyone understands them the same way, or that we just do not care if anyone really understands us. If the truth is the latter, since nothing especially terrible happens to because of this behavior, then what we say does not really matter anyway. It is just *social noise*.

The sentence, the paragraph, the document, the way it comes to the subject, and how the subject reads it and when all affect how *any one word* is understood. Interpretations of the metaphysical trinity of love, death, and God make the point with little discussion.

However, to maintain the illusion that public discourse describes a bona fide “world,” the prevailing *social noise* must erect its own idols of verisimilitude, the chief god of which is Science. The word simply means “knowledge.” That this discipline is choked with technical nomenclature (in Latin and Greek too), jargon, buzzwords, vernacular, colloquialisms, clichés, and figurative language of various sorts makes it a powerful form of social noise.

The term itself of “science” has undergone some significant transformations throughout its relatively brief history. It is now endowed with the kind of sanctity that used to be reserved for the word “religion,” which is now a pejorative term meaning “superstitious” or even “crazy.” The word had been used for centuries to mean *knowing* or *knowledge* until

the need arose, in the West, to distinguish it as a distinct discipline apart from the various arts, fine and mechanical, and theology. But was there really a necessity for science to *overthrow* art, philosophy, and theology to be considered an effective mode of knowing? Or was science *hijacked* by the discursive needs of the corporate state the way a virus hijacks a living cell?

The argument can be made, and there is much proof to support it, that science was under siege by other disciplines long enough. At some point it was only natural that it would strike back. However, under the ethical aesthetic of the discourse of abdication it has somehow become the arbiter of all truth. Is there a God? Ask science. Are we alone in the universe? Ask science. Can we live forever? Ask science. Should I get married? Ask science. Am I crazy? Ask science. Should we go to war? Ask science. Free will or fate? Ask science. Is this the best possible economic, educational, governmental, medical, ethical, moral, informational, technological system we can create? Ask science, and so on.

Meantime, the nontrivial aspect of reality—the difference between being and nonbeing, or 0 and 1—persists undaunted by the delusions the apparatus man has erected in the image of his own ego. Each day the official mouthpieces of Scientism announce that science has come another step closer to medical immortality. But they do not dare to answer the question of whether there is “life after death.” Why? Because that would be admitting that life may have a decidedly unscientific side that does not fit into the Positivist paradigm.

Also, if there were life after death, there would be no need to sell medical immortality like surgeons sell plastic surgery. “For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,” says Hamlet, “when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, / Must give us pause.” Whatever phantasy the discursive apparatus of science may conjure regarding our fate as living beings, “time and chance happeneth to them all.”

What, then, does Kant contribute to our understanding of this ultimate of all distinctions: life and death? Moreover, how do we reconcile the fact that phenomena are an expression of that which we, as phenomena ourselves, can never perceive except through what he calls a “Unity of Consciousness”? The existential problem of an infinite divide between 0 and 1 is overcome by what he refers to as the *transcendental aesthetic*, in the “pure” sense of being the generator of “all representations” and therefore the phenomenological dimension of *le devenir*. “I call all representations pure, in the transcendental meaning of the word, wherein nothing is met with that belongs to sensation.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 576.

We may say, then, that as simulacra lack coming-into-being in the phenomenological sense, realia are not independent of what Kant refers to as their *a priori* “representation” in space and time. However, what of realia may be expressed as the transcendental aesthetic is not to be regarded empirically. To do so is to create *antinomy*, a fatal contradiction between what may be perceived empirically and that which may only be regarded, intuitively, as an object of the transcendental aesthetic.

The result is the formation of an ISP forcing two contradictory universes of discourse into the same statement about Dasein. While antinomy is common enough in simulacra class *b*, it is not possible in realia class *a*. Like the property of extension, “pure representation” is not something that is experienced the way things are once they have swum into our ken. Like the transcendental object, they too “transcend” the empirical while making it possible for that which we may perceive through the senses to have the property of being. As such, phenomena also lay themselves open to being simulated by that which is concerned with appearance only, objectively or subjectively.

Despite simulacra’s ethereal nature, or perhaps because of it, the discourse of the realm of simulacra is inordinately preoccupied with materialism. Its ethical aesthetic is in constant reference to empirical phenomena or sensation. Behind this apparent substance, though, there is no transcendental aesthetic. There is only, for example, the profit motive or a need to get “more power,” which has nothing to do with the transcendental aesthetic. Rather, it is the *de facto* ethical aesthetic of the fake, the magician’s illusion.

The chief cause of this bias toward materialism is that its greatest hold on the subject is what Freud calls the “pleasure principle.” Through its simple but potent system of sensational rewards (and punishments through the *denial* of pleasure), it holds a grip on the subject’s desires and needs as well as the compulsive demands the id makes for libidinal and instinctive satisfaction.

As Ayer points out (op. cit.), we may dispense with the notion that the empirical provides all the evidence we need for the existence of reality. The transcendental aesthetic supplants the Platonic notion of *eidos*, which gave birth to the schism between phenomena and noumena later exploited by the Church in its body-mind Manicheanism. It is a phenomenological “unity” in the sense meant by Kant. It also, through the “unity of consciousness,” allows us to embrace the empirical as “real” in an effective sense without alienating it from its genetic origin as the transcendental object.

This, perhaps, is Kant’s great innovation in reasoning regarding phenomenology. It allows for the introduction of the (*tq*) into predicate logic

so that the class of synthetic statements is no longer excluded from the possibility of verification. In so doing it also opens the door to higher-order logic which we may then apply to discourse to better understand how it can create a synthetic world lacking in any genetic material except itself. In so doing it gives us a glimpse into the apparatus of the abdicated subject's psychology, particularly the way it uses language as a means of self-deception.

Nowhere is this deception more evident than in the manipulation of time and space by the discourse of abdication. In the transcendental aesthetic, time and space are the genetic material from which realia spring through the medium of the transcendental object. This coming-into-being (*le devenir*) is represented by the Event of the crossing of the threshold between 0 and 1. As such, any one "thing" is a part, and also holistic microcosm, of what Kant calls the "manifold" of space and time. If there is one thing (0 / 1) there is everything (1 /  $n$ ). Space is "not a conception which has been derived from outward experiences." Furthermore, "time is a condition a priori of all phenomena whatsoever—the *immediate* condition of all internal, and thereby *mediate* condition of all external circumstances."<sup>31</sup>

It is worth looking into the difference between the terms "immediate" and "mediate" in the way Kant uses them here. As mentioned above, the transcendental object *mediates* the genetic expression of phenomena, giving rise to the *extensa*, or that which extends into time and space. *Extensa* we call realia, as they are the objects or "bodies" represented by language.

Time, as the meter of the pure transcendental aesthetic, is not the result of empirical experience, as is assumed in the protocols of language which give birth to such synthetic expressions as "in the future." This phrase does not belong to realia class *a*, as it is entirely imaginary, but is instead a kind of convenient reference for that class of phenomena. References to "the past" suffer a similar fate, though at least they have artifacts to reinforce the idea that something happened that is not happening "now."

Taken together, though, we discover that as the past and future are imaginary states, it is needless to refer to the present as some time other than these two states. Therefore, even the concept of "the present" is not anything more than a synthetic statements we use for the same of convenience. Time, though, is *immediate*. It is neither of the past nor the future, both of which originate from a semantic interpretation of experience, one as a record of it and the other as a projection of that record (according to BB and Minitru). Moreover, the *immediate* it is the *medium* in which we exist, or the region of Dasein, which is without any attribute except that it is without attribute.

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<sup>31</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 27.

Nevertheless, all attributes arise from that which has no attribute. We may reconcile Heidegger's idea of "being" (*Dasein*) with Kant's transcendental aesthetic when we consider how *mediation* is used in the modern sense as "media." The vessel of the propagation of ideas in modern society are the *mass media*, which of course take many forms that do not need to be listed here. The media are foremost concerned with time: air time, prime time, standard time, time zones, runtime, and so on.

One's interaction with the media is always *immediate*, even if one is reading an old newspaper. Screenplays are written in the present tense. But tense is irrelevant because the media product arrives before the audience in the only time there is: Kant's pure time of the transcendental aesthetic, or the immediate time. Many media products (of course including this book) are concerned with depictions of the ancient past, or the distant future, or serve to interpret the nature of the present for the reader. Nevertheless, their only ontological claim to existence is that they are in the here and now.

While a certain percentage of the media is concerned with controlling the past, present, or future in the Orwellian sense, the majority is devoted to the fabrication of artificial worlds where the subject's frustrated psychological and emotional needs are satisfied in a vicarious orgy of simulacra. As the subject's investment of time (and therefore money) increases, its sense of belonging to an ontological class "abdicates" from realia class *a* to simulacra class *b*. The *immediate* becomes *mediated* by the apparatus, and only realia bearing the trademark of the apparatus—the imprimatur of the simulacrum—passes the test of being "real." No actual analysis is necessary.

What Kant calls "reason" is absent from these machinations. "Proof" is bestowed upon simulated reality by the *third party* (*x'*) the subject itself has created by its own abdication of responsibility for testing reality, such as banks to create "money" and governments to preserve "peace." And along with the rights and privileges of living in this fantasy world come the consequences, such as economic collapse and war, which, despite their ugly nature, nevertheless fail to change humankind's collective desire for an impossible world without death.

## 1.8 The set of all sets and its significance

Louis XIV famously said, "*L'état, c'est moi*" ("The state, it is I"). There is hardly a better description of the logic from which the *state of exception* (SE) arises. At the same time, it presumes that the king is a member of the state, and therefore an element of the set, while at the same time being the state itself and therefore *not* an element of it. It is this latter property that

gives the king the possibility of exception from the *nomos* of the code of law—one not shared by the king’s subjects.

What he may do by the divine right of kings what would, if performed by the subject, simply be considered crime, is his prerogative as the lawmaker. As a result, it is not possible to say that there is any type of absolute crime in some objective sense except when we introduce *paradox*. As Russell indicates, *this* sort of categorical logic requires a special paradox that enables its existence as a proposition.

As such, Louis XIV’s divine right as king must be a degree of freedom he enjoys that his subjects do not. The question is, then, how do we reconcile the logical need for paradox with Wittgenstein’s injunction that, “No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself”?<sup>32</sup> Is this yet another paradox?

Russell’s paradox describes the set of all sets as that which contains itself *if and only if it does not contain itself*.<sup>33</sup> Here we have his expression of what he indicates is a fundamental contradiction in Cantor’s naive set theory. This paradox is a rational reading of what “set of all sets” *means*. But does it have any reality beyond the requirements of the predicate logic of language to indicate itself? Wittgenstein says no. In either case, what is of important to us here is its correlation to the logic of the state of exception.

Both Russell and Wittgenstein make a significant point about referential language. Language either *does* or *refers*. Picking up the distinction made earlier by Kant between the immediate and the mediated, we may coordinate *doing* to the former and *referring* to the latter. The immediate *does*; the referent *mediates*. Wittgenstein, by precluding the possibility of a proposition saying anything about itself, consigns it to *doing* something. It either *is* or *is not* an active, muscular expression of what is real; if it is, it is T; if it is not, it is F. “Being” true (or not) is a form of doing, as the infinitive “to be” is, as a verb form generative of a whole class of irregular verbs, a matter of action or inaction (e.g. “To be, or not to be ...”).

However, language must needs also *refer*, which we might call its semiotic function as signifier, and one thing it can refer to is *doing*. Therefore, it is at least possible that the set of all sets must be a set of itself provided, as Russell demands, it is not a set of itself.

Why it must also *not* be a set of itself (the paradox) is so that Russell’s proposition does not fall victim to the error Wittgenstein claims for it. Does it manage to escape this criticism? Here is an interesting venture into the possibilities of language when confronted with a synthetic “reality” created out of its own rules. Despite Russell’s protective clause, Wittgenstein makes

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<sup>32</sup> Wittgenstein, *TL-P*, 3.333.

<sup>33</sup>  $R = \{x | x \notin x\}$ .  $R = \{x | x \notin x\}$

a convincing argument for Russell having created a universe of discourse in which a paradox is necessary for it to make any logical sense. Which raises the possibility that a proposition can be logically sound provided it defines its own rules of what is sound logic. In this way the logic of Russell's paradox parallels that of the state of exception.

But does this necessity therefore mean that objective reality also demands such a paradox? As quoted earlier, Wittgenstein's judgment in this matter is that Russell has stumbled upon a logical *antinomy*, a fatal clash of categories from which is cannot escape except by the loophole of a paradox. "It can be seen that Russell's error is shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak about the things his signs mean. No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself (that is the 'theory of types'). A function cannot be its own argument, because the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself."<sup>34</sup>

Our use of this example, however, is to show that the *immediate* and the *mediated* can coexist even when subjected to the most rigorous tests of logic. Why is this possible? Perhaps because language itself is *referential* even when it is *doing* something (as it inevitably does) as a *performative* act. In this way it is indeed paradoxical, since it makes it possible for the signifier (referent) to also be the signified (action). Language, therefore, is the primary apparatus, ever concerned with "capture" of the precious units of reality that may be grasped by reason so that it can make some effective sense of the world.

Behind the noises, symbols, denotations, connotations, and syntactic strings of language lies a *discourse*. This discourse may or may not be at significant variance with the surface meaning of the utterance. *A* discourse (indefinite article) is not the same thing as *the* discourse (definite article). For there to be *any* discourse there must be a receiver of it. Any receiver is the subject of itself. Therefore, any discourse received by the subject, objective as it may be issuing as it does from the transmitter, cannot be other than whatever that receiver decodes it into. Since we may have *n* receivers, therefore there must be *n* discourses in this sense—even for the same utterance.

However, this does not make the fact of a primary discursive apparatus dissolve into an undifferentiated mass of subjective data. There must be some agreement between the receivers regarding the significance of the utterance, as well as some form of "checking back" with the transmitter for verification of the received meaning. But such a neatly constructed apparatus hardly exists in everyday life. What we know is that language

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<sup>34</sup> Wittgenstein, *TL-P*, 3.333.

encodes information and we decode language. From this we may or may not extract an *intended* discourse. The process of encoding and decoding itself is a mechanical form of the apparatus while at the same time being psychological and therefore *psycholinguistic*.

What is nontrivial here is the fact of discourse as the underlying *value* of communication, a value from which the possibility of communication derives its agreed-upon worth. In general, we tend to judge “worth” by whether an utterance can be regarded, or is verified as being, true (T). Otherwise, there would be no need for it, or it would be applied in the activities of exploitation and dissimilitude. Identified falsehoods have negative worth (like counterfeit cash) since they are regarded as forms of the *devaluation* of information as a commodity. Language is derivative not productive, though either way it is *performative*. In this way the performer is responsible for his performances. As Zola so aptly points out in the first paragraph of *Les Misérables*, “True or false, that which is said of men often occupies as important a place in their lives, and above all in their destinies, as that which they do.”

In the process of *le devenir*, the coming-into-being is first expressed as realia. Later, language steps in as a form of the temporal definition of the real. Foremost, language is bound by references to the *a priori* of time and space; there must be some way to indicate tense, else it becomes merely tautological: “this is a turnip” is the material equivalent of saying that *this is this*. Tautological statements such as “I am here” are meaningless, since their underlying structure is simply “I am I” which is apodictic and therefore only a statement of the obvious because it does not really *do* more than that.

To be generous, it may even be said that the utterance “I am I” is a *performance* of that fact, making the statement of it redundant and therefore needless. It is only when time and space are introduced into the grammatical structure of language that we are capable of such tongue twisters as Russell’s paradox or Minitru’s credo of War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength. The *a priori* provide the inherited attributes of realia class *a*, the ISP needs to persuade the subject of the reality of its synthesis. Most of all, though, the state of exception absolutely depends upon disturbing events to precipitate the breach of its own prohibitions against such breaches.

What first attracts the subject to the prospect of abdication is the discovery that the immediate can be mediated. Until that discovery is made, the subject operates under the assumption that the *a priori* represent an otherwise immutable reality. While it might seem that it would take some doing to convince the subject that time and space are not immutable fixtures of being, the fact is that such applications of reason are not as much a part



of this project as one would assume. There is no need to make an argument. To accept the immutability of the *a priori* is to admit that the ego must die. Therefore, any proposition stinking of this possibility must be filtered out and rejected. Nothing is easier than to offer the ego an alternative to its own annihilation.

Without a thought, the ego seizes upon the first illusion of mediated reality it comes upon like a drowning man clutching at a floating pong-pong ball. But this fleeting sensation of rescue from the ravages of time soon fades. In reaction, the subject enlists the collective will of other egos in the formation of an apparatus promising various methods of achieving nominal “immortality.”

These methods include creating great works of architecture, art, and thought; the institutionalization of social codes of class and manners; fantasies of an afterlife or of other dimensions of being; the passing of landmark legislation, issuing proclamations, and giving great speeches; winning potentially historical battles challenging borders and political systems; amassing huge fortunes and power; committing famous and notorious crimes; and seeking out medical miracles that will extend life indefinitely.

Eventually, the need arises for a system of encoding the prerogatives of the resulting discourse these extraordinary, metastatic forms of civilized behavior produce. This is where civilization steps in and begins codifying empirical reality into a body of law which can exist *if and only if* there is a state of exception whereby the lawmaker may be exempt, under conditions which he determines, from its *force majeure*. The resulting *nomos*, while representing limits on the activity that made it possible in the first place, nevertheless maintains a “back door” by which it may escape its own prohibitions when necessity and experience call for it.

The ultimate form of social discourse, then, is the body of official law in all its permutations and manifestations, from the Ten Commandments to the tax code. In this way, word by word, phrase by phrase, and concept by concept, sovereignty and its concomitant degrees of freedom is transferred to a *central authority* which derives its power from the voluntary abdication of the subject’s self-determination.

Agamben describes the ominous power the state of exception has over the most trivial of the subject’s expressions of will, invoking Kafka’s portraits of the same as forms of life for his hapless subject K.

For life under a law that is in force without signifying resembles life in the state of exception, in which the most innocent gesture or the smallest forgetfulness can have most extreme consequences. And it is exactly this kind of life that Kafka describes, in which law is all the more pervasive for

its total lack of content, and in which a distracted knock on the door can mark the start of uncontrollable trials.<sup>35</sup>

Naturally, this hegemonic power will have “a” discourse—freedom, security, equality, justice, peace—using all the platitudes the subject wants to hear in its flight from real value into the universe of derivatives which we have called here simulacra class *b*. The *type* of hegemony depends upon the cultural milieu of the aggregate mass of abdicated subjects. Some prefer a more religious-sounding set of features and benefits as reward for their abdication. Others favor the proscriptions of dictators. Some like the ritual of suffrage to make them feel that they are players in the game of hegemony (while completely missing the logical contradiction this entails). While still others prefer the mumbo jumbo of radical political economies tied up in noble-sounding ideologies.

The accoutrements and paraphernalia of abdication, however, are effectively trivial compared to the fact of abdication itself; the subject has negated its core identity, allowing the hegemonic discourse to assume the central position in its orientation to others and the world—even itself as the “other” of itself. Negation its core identity or “self,” however, does not in any way debilitate the power of the ego to seek out self-preservation at all costs. The difference is that the ego now has the corporate state’s prerogatives as its priorities, which it nevertheless interprets as its own, special, unique, and personal goals of unrestricted access to consumer goods and debt, and medical immortality.

Eventually a counter-discourse emerges, too, extending a sense of belonging even to those who reject *the* discourse of the prevailing hegemony for *a* discourse of their own device. While this may seem like a new-found freedom, what they have done in fact is switch the article from definite to indefinite, forming a dependency between the two discourses that negates both as effective ideology on the personal scale, thus showing no revolutionary effect beyond that. The chief benefit to the subject is psychological and not, in the effective sense, political, as it does not necessarily include the *polis* or “the people,” only the narcissistic ego of the subject.

The prevailing hegemony maintains the discourse *and* the counter-discourse of itself through vigorous affirmations and denials of its own tenets through the mouthpieces of the political establishment and the media (which is what Lenin meant by “useful idiots”). Each new overture of “repression” strengthens the voice of the counter-discourse, deepening the commitment of contrarians to the maintenance of the prevailing, primary

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<sup>35</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer* (Giulio Einaudi editore, 1995), 37.

discourse through opposition while also maintaining the illusion of hope that someday “in the future” they will prevail. This protective measure of the apparatus insures that it remains safe from any real disruption in its operation. The mass of subjects remains averse to any substantial change in the way the apparatus conducts itself by the fear of mortality and insecurity which “makes cowards of us all.”

After a certain period of voluntary incarceration in educational institutions, the armed forces, or corporate and state workshops, the aggregate mass of subjects becomes fearful of any change at all in the moment-to-moment reinforcement of its collective ego by the hegemonic discourse. It craves the empty promises the hegemony makes regarding the potential future of its immortality and compulsive consumption. Freedom, a word which has no innate meaning, becomes exemption and exception *from* change in the status quo of the apparatus.

What, then, is the relevance of the set of all sets to the *holographic surface* or *topology* of abdication? First, we must conceive of the process of abdication as belonging to a *realm* of possessions or attributes. This is not so uncommon in thought. For instance, the term “sphere of influence” provides more than a figure of speech in this sense. That we use “plane” and “sphere” together here makes more sense if we think of a sphere as a polyhedron with infinite sides (planes). Is it any more accurate to think of a person’s life as the two-dimensional timeline of birth-life-death in his obituary or biography? Or of history in the same way, as we typically do, as a chain of wars linked together by brief periods of recovery and preparation?

There are limits of technology affecting our perception of mediated reality as well. For the sake of argument, let us consider what would happen if this digitally encoded and transmitted synthetic reality suddenly became three dimensional. Its electronic infrastructure would instantly collapse under the strain of the added (and useless) data. While this problem of bandwidth might be remedied in time—since the PF states that all technology ever needs is *time* to pull off the next big “version” of itself—we must for now be content with trading what seems to be a world of simulated space and time for a “flat” representation of it.

Though these “problems” are ones of technology and the quest for synthetic verisimilitude, there is a social dimension as well. The two-dimensional person is not wanted at life’s three-dimensional cocktail party. Rejected by the militant multidimensionality of Nature, the subject in turn rejects Nature itself and turns inward toward the narcissistic image of itself in the “black mirror” of its ubiquitous gadgetry. The two-dimensional synthetic reality of digital media feeds off the ritual sacrifice, through abdication, of the subject’s three-dimensional sovereignty and the

concomitant degrees of freedom with which it was (once) naturally endowed. If we are willing to accept a two-dimension representation of reality as being “more real than real” what else are we willing to accept from the hypocrisy and injustice of the state of exception?

If there is any concrete definition of freedom it is in the way meant in engineering as “degrees of freedom.” That is, for instance, how many ways a machine can move. A car has four degrees of freedom: forward, backward, right, and left. A plane, though it cannot go backward, can go up and down, giving it five degrees, and so on. While the sovereign individual may not have “more” degrees of freedom than the “captive” one (either because of imprisonment or abdication), the degrees it *does* have are in the class of *self-determination*. To surrender this freedom, which of late have been renamed “privacy,” is to sacrifice that which one only ever had the possibility of owning. This tragic dispossession then haunts the subject as clinical depression, anxiety, ill health, and suicide.

Just as a sovereign (such as King Louis XIV) “possesses” its subjects and the realm inhabited by them through the formula “*L'état, c'est moi*,” so too does the corporate state by the voluntary abdication of the subject’s sovereignty. The sovereign individual is, ipso facto, in possession of itself. Therefore, the subject is a subject of itself—if and only if it is not a subject of itself. In other words, for the subject to be in possession of its self-determination, it too must be subject to the state of exception from the *nomos*. However, the last thing the sovereign wants is for the subject to enjoy the divine right of kings. This conflict is, often enough, the discourse behind the social and economic complaints leading to revolution. It is not that the subject wants freedom; *it is that the subject wants the same right to enslave that the king has*.

Either both the sovereign and the subject must not be excepted from the *nomos*, or they both must share the possibility of the invocation of exception, for there to be anything like the high-minded rhetoric both never tire of spouting. Otherwise, the class of the *nomos*, and therefore the “set of all sets” it purports to represent, is in antinomy, or fundamental, categorical, and universal contradiction. The creation of the so-called criminal is the best example of what results when this antinomy dominates the encoded social discourse or *nomos* of civilization. The criminal in such a state becomes the only free individual, *seizing* the power that cannot, and would not, be *given* to him. That this tends to result in his incarceration—or the total abrogation of his fundamental degrees of freedom and self-determination—is the logical consequence of such defiance of authority.

There are, though, built-in safeguards against the extension of legal freedom to the subject such as the sovereign enjoys. If one does not possess

the degree of freedom of abdication, then one cannot be sovereign. Therefore, the possibility of abdication is a categorical attribute of the class of the possibility of sovereignty. Furthermore, self-abnegation in the form of abdication is, of course, prerequisite to the possibility of a second negation: the negation of negation, which is the only form of an absolute positive when there is no other possibility of verification. In other words, the subject is forced into a situation where it *must* negate its self-determination so that it may win it back through the negation of negation, or what we have been describing here as the application of Hegel's Second negation.

The familiar dialectic formula of “thesis, antithesis, synthesis,” which of course depends upon a negation (*antithesis – thesis = synthesis*) provides an example of how *process being*, taken to its extreme as the negation of the positive sign of personal sovereignty, may be negated into *pure being*. But not every form of the negation of negation can be considered a positive in the sense of the affirmation of self-determination, sovereignty, and self-possession of the core identity. Adorno describes what he sees as a “crude” use to which the Second Negation has been put as well as the “lopsided” outcome it produces in the form of synthesis in Marxian dialectics when compared to Hegel's “actual terminology”:

Hegel's dialectic is often crudely put as “thesis → antithesis → synthesis.” To translate this closer to Hegel's actual terminology, as well as to his actual framework, we could denote this process instead as “affirmation → negation → negation of the negation (a.k.a. 2nd negation).” Now, in basic arithmetic, when you multiply a negative number by another negative number, you get a positive number; this is somewhat the principle here as well. The second negation is an affirmation. Negation [multiplied by] negation = affirmation. This 2nd negation which is an affirmation, is sort of a synthesis, *although it is not a neutral synthesis* [italics added].<sup>36</sup>

Adorno's observation that the outcome of the Second Negation “is not a neutral synthesis” points toward Hegel's idea of it as a form of “mediation” or the “median term.” In fact, the negation of the abdicated position *is not a synthesis at all*; it is pure negation which, from the point of view of the abdicated subject, looks like death of the ego, an event that it regards as synonymous with death of itself. This “outcome” then we may refer to as the tertium quid (*tq*), or in this case the *other other* (sic), which we can notate with a prime: other' (O'), or that which has been described by Lacan as *le grand Autre*.

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<sup>36</sup> Theodore Adorno, Lecture 2 on Negative Dialectics: “The Negation of Negation,” (1965).

The (*tq*) has been mentioned earlier in a slightly different context but with the same significance in the discussion of Kant's idea of the transcendental object. In identifying a "unity of consciousness" the transcendental object effectively *overcomes* the dichotomy of body and mind, matter and spirit, and thing and idea. In so doing the transcendental aesthetic is invoked, negating antinomy, and reestablishing the natural and noncontradictory relationship between phenomena and noumena, the empirical and "pure representation" as described by Kant.

By so doing it also makes it possible to apply higher orders of logic to what Gabriel Tarde calls the principle of *l'opposition* (or the coming-into-being through the interplay of opposites) not only in the process of *le devenir* but also our thinking. Therefore, we may unite both senses of the (*tq*) as a higher-order description of what we know as Hegel's Second Negation. At the same time, though, it must retain Hegel's meaning as the *median term* (not the excluded middle) which is nevertheless not a "neutralization" but a discrete state and, as we have described, a (*tq*) with its own claim to Dasein.

The transcendental aesthetic supplants the Platonic notion of *eidos* which degenerated in Western thought into the schism between phenomena and noumena and mind and body in the theology of the Churchmen of the High Middle Ages in Europe. The *reductio* of the *eidos* into Manicheanism is easy enough to find throughout Christian dogma. It thrives today in the more fundamental interpretation and practice of Abrahamic religious thinking (as well as in Buddhist and Hindu thinking) as the idea that the empirical world is a realm of misery, illusion, and death. Noumena, its opposite, the discourse goes, offers liberation from this realm into a deathless state of oneness with God. Not to be outdone, Scientism has taken up this crusade against the world and has offered, on one side of the argument, a synthetic digital universe where the empirical rules do not apply, and, on the other, the possibility of medical immortality where death is merely a disease to be conquered.

In so doing this metastatic perversion of the *eidos* departs from Plato's effective distinction between noumena and phenomena and finds itself in logical antinomy. Kant, then, helps restore some sense of the *eidos* as "pure being" through the transcendental aesthetic, but with the added understanding of the expression of the unity of consciousness which is necessary for *reason*.

Descartes contributed to the location of the *eidos* in the abstraction of the cogito which, now associated with thought, becomes localized in Hegel's Being-for-self (*das Fürsichsein*). The *thingness* of a thing owes its being in part to the consciousness of the subject's infinitive self: "to be."

Such firmer ground allows for the expression of the idea of Dasein in the work of Heidegger, unburdened as it might have been by the influence of other-worldly theological notions. Thanks in part to the liberating effect of the transcendental aesthetic we have been able to conceive of a *psychology* of the cogito, while at the same time appreciating the significance of the *other* rather than dwelling on notions of *another world* to which we might retreat from all we do not like about this one.

Furthermore, it is possible, without seeming materialistic, to speak of the transcendental *object* from the viewpoint of the subject which, while creating a new dichotomy, does so by dispensing with the schism between subject and object. Both must serve simultaneously as modes of being with equal value as *l'opposition*. In their opposition they are phenomenologically responsible for each other's coming-into-being while maintaining independent identities without antinomy.

Through the "unity of consciousness" then we may embrace the empirical as *real* in an effective sense without alienating it from its genetic origin as the transcendental object or *other*. Also, it becomes possible, without paradox, for an entity to sustain multiple independent identities as subject *and* object (through *l'opposition*) simultaneously and without contradiction in the unity of its exchange (or relationship) with other entities. Again, this may be Kant's greatest contribution to our rational and unified understanding of the nature and mechanics of phenomenology.

But in clearing the air of the Manichean schism, we learn soon enough what purpose it serves. By alienating the body from the mind, it makes it easier to conceive of an immortal ego, free of the corruption of the flesh, that may consort with angels and cavort with gods. Subordinate this possibility to the reality of the unity of consciousness, which must include the body, and which gives the ego only a supporting role in the structure of the psyche, and we return the subject to its mortal coil where it must rethink Hamlet's soliloquy. As goes the body, so goes the mind; as goes the mind, so goes the ego, and so forth.

We also reintroduce *alienation* as a critical principle in the consciousness of the self and other. It is the social and psychological *mood* of the modern corporate state. The schism is infectious, poisoning the *vertical* distinction of the mind and body and then the *lateral* distinction of self and other. Furthermore, it results in a discourse of alienation which amps up social tension, tears lover from lover, neighbor from neighbor, and parent from child, while scattering throughout society the seeds of its next military catastrophe.

Of all forms of extreme alterity or alienation, it is this *other* other (O') that irks the metastatic ego the most, having as it does enough of a problem

contending with the reality that, to its paranoiac horror, it is not the only being in the universe. O' always lies just over the horizon of the *other*, where it cannot be directly seen. Therefore, it is *felt*, intuited, but in the eerie, unnerving, way Freud describes as the "*unheimlich*" or uncanny. It is only a short distance between the *unheimlich* and *Unbehagen*. When we are unable to engage in the intuition of the *other*, then we must fall back on ourselves. The effect is one of immediate, hermetic, and terrifying suffocation and isolation. The only way out is negation of this self-abnegation through the apprehension of the other in the transcendental aesthetic.

Hegel says that the *other* other (O') draws its *unheimlich* power from its negation of the self as the Second Negation. In so doing it says once again that "I am I, but only in relation to the *other*," and that without the other there is only the impotent inward inversion of the narcissistic and spectral self or the ego. "Being-for-self is absolute negativity; i.e. the negation of negation. Determinate being was a negation of Being mere and simple: Being-for-self is the negation of this, and so a return to true affirmation, as including the element of negation."<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, there is a need for a motivating force in the life of the subject to initiate this process of the negation of negation. It can be found in the possibility generated by the presence of the (*tq*). The primary benefit of the (*tq*) is *possibility* (*Möglichkeit*). Possibility cannot exist without *risk*, though risk can exist without possibility. The "third thing" always involves a risk *that is greater than the risk of choosing the first or second thing* ( $A \vee B$ ). Therefore, if we let  $r$  = risk, then  $r(tq) > r(A \vee B)$ .

However, neither can exist without reality's *potential* for the spontaneous and discrete *event*. It is from reality's potential that realia get their *potency*; therefore, it is because of their *lack* of it that simulacra are the impotent mules of experience. They must borrow or inherit this attribute from their parent set. The real is always (and must be) underscored by the absolute inevitability of death, however, which is what makes the subject so willing to throw it overboard in favor of the homeostasis of the status quo which is, ironically (not paradoxically) *metastasis*. Therefore, this "risk" is absolute. Whereas simulacra owe their nominal existence to the exclusion of risk as a *relative complement* of realia (A) that does not belong to simulacra (B), therefore,  $A / B$ .

While having no attribute of risk potential of their own, they *inherit* it from realia through the process of mimesis. Hence, they imitate, or simulate, reality's properties, the only nontrivial property of which is the absolute

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<sup>37</sup> Hegel, *Prolegomena*, Ch. XVIII, p. cxl, *The Logic of Hegel* (Wallace, William, MDCCCLXXIV, Oxford at the Clarendon Press).



risk-potential of death. In this way the prevailing psychological state of simulacra is *narcissism*. We have heard this sort of thing referred to as “reflected glory” in the case of an historical figure who generated no light of his own, though he may have basked in the light of another more heroic figure. Though the moon may illuminate the harvest, it is a cold light despite its usefulness and romance. What simulacra offer the subject is 1) a dramatic reduction in risk through futures contracts (promissory notes) hedging potential economic failures in the maintenance of its imaginary space, and 2) a symbolic existence where death is merely an idea but not a reality—provided they can keep up with the monthly payments.

In “Letter on Humanism” Heidegger makes a useful distinction between *Möglichkeit* as it is typically expressed in metaphysics and as he means it in relation to humanism. In the former, it is *essence-as-potential*. In the latter, it is *possibility-as-potential*. What, then, is the difference between essence and possibility? In the purely metaphysical sense, potential, as essence, contrasts with existence, as possibility (or actuality, as in being able to say that “It is possible”). Heidegger, however, takes a transcendent view of *Möglichkeit* as the “quiet power” or “favouring-enabling” of Being, or possibility. This does not mean that potential and possibility are different attributes of Being; rather, they are the same principle (*Möglichkeit*) seen from two positions: essence and existence.

In the first, potential (*potentia*) is the necessary antithesis of the actual (*actus*). In the second, it is “Being-for-self” that includes the actual in its embryonic or primordial form. Meaning that the actual must “come” from *somewhere*, making it the result of what Kant calls “something else (*x*).” The metaphysical dichotomy of essence and existence, whichever precedes the other in the coming-into-being, allows for humanity only as *a posteriori* Dasein, which is at odds with the idea of Dasein being without such attributes as past, present, and future. What Heidegger refers to as “Being itself” allows for humanity as an *a priori* attribute of Being.

In other words, the *possibility* of humanity (*humanitas*) must be contained within the existential boundaries of Being-in-the world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) as *potential*, otherwise we are obligated to say that it is something that arises *a posteriori* after it has already established itself, which is absurd and contradictory and results in antinomy. Possibility *enables* (favors) the coming-into-being, *le devenir*, as potential. In so doing it preserves the essence of humanity which is thinking or the cogito as it affects being and therefore the ultimate linguistic potential of the copula (to be). And as we may accept the cogito as evidence of Being (Dasein), and as an expression of the infinitive “to be,” we may also rightly say that *Möglichkeit* is the

potential to declare that “I am” as consciousness apodictically *but only in relationship to others*.

Being is the enabling-favouring, the “may be.” As the element, Being is the “quiet power” of the favouring-enabling, that is, of the possible. Of course, our word *möglich* and *Möglichkeit*, under the dominance of “logic” and “metaphysics”, are thought solely in contrast to “actuality”; that is, they are thought on the basis of a definite—the metaphysical—interpretation of Being as *actus* and *potentia*, a distinction identified with the one between *existentia* and *essentia*. When I speak of the “quiet power of the possible” I do not mean the possible of a merely represented *possibilitas*, nor *potentia* as the *essentia* of an actus of *existentia*: rather, I mean Being itself, which in its favourite presides over thinking and hence over the essence of humanity and that means over its relation to Being. To enable something here means to preserve it in its essence, to maintain it in its element.<sup>38</sup>

A signal attribute of *possibility* is that its potential remains undaunted by *risk*. Coming-into-being includes the *absolutely inevitable* risk of death, and the concomitant one of certain pain. Risk here does not mean something that may or may not happen. It means something that *will* happen sooner or later. In all our undertakings, and at every moment of existence, death is present as risk. It may come now, or it may come later. The differential between coming-into-being and nonbeing we call *risk*.

Alas, this is a risk the metastatic ego is not willing to take, as its sole mission is to preserve itself at all costs above and beyond the so-called biological imperative of survival and no matter how many “others” it has to kill to do it. Once it has seen itself in the speculum of reality, its mortality is impressed upon it by the “*fort-da!*” or *aletheia* of existence; the ego’s first experience of seeing itself releases an explosion of recognition and pleasure it never quite recovers from. “I am!” it exclaims to itself as its biggest fan and most ardent supporter. Immediately following upon this epiphany, though, comes the morbid thought that, “Therefore, I have the potential (risk) of *nonbeing*” according to the law of *l’opposition*.

Consequently, it must begin the process of *contraction* or the “turning away” from itself, away from the spectacle of seeing itself glowing in the polished onyx of reality (and the black mirror of its digital gadget). The “*fort-da!*” hide-and-seek game begins. It first learns psychological and emotional pain through its sense of crushing loss when pulled away from its image by the bothersome demands that “others” make on it. Hell is, then, as Sartre says, “others” for the metastatic ego.

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<sup>38</sup> George Friedrich Hegel, “Letter on Humanism,” *Global Religious Vision* (Vol. I.I, 2000).

Soon, though, it begins scheming of ways it can spend eternity gazing lovingly at its own form without interruption from these beastly *others*, and particularly without their demands for love and attention. Modern technology indulges this passion (to its great profit) by creating a digital “profile” of the subject through telemetry made possible by the subject’s addiction to its ubiquitous digital gadgets, all of which come conveniently supplied with a “black mirror” in which they may “interact” with themselves.

By this synthetic means, the subject manipulates a reality it is convinced is “more real” than any other reality (particularly of the analog sort) so that it may grow ever closer to its ideal of itself and farther and farther away from its real, *a priori* identity as a mortal tied moment to moment to the uncertainties of *fatal risk*. Furthermore, it is offered the opportunity of continual, uninterrupted access to its own profile which it may modify according to its now protean identity—provided it makes the monthly payments on time. All it needs to do to join this Cult of Mediocrity is abdicate its sovereign self to the corporate state by signing promissory notes for debt.

Throughout this wretched melodrama, however, the potential for *humanitas* contained in Being-in-the-world somehow survives the ego’s orgy of narcissism. How can this be? The ego’s recognition of itself in the speculum of its self-regard as well as what is fed back to it by its digital gadgets is *a posteriori*. The subject’s *a priori* or indigenous nature as a sovereign being in relation to other sovereign beings and suspended in space and time remains as an unconscious, nagging reminder in the form of a vague but gnawing *Unbehagen*. Therefore, its defensive mechanisms, aspirations, plans, schemes, preferences, proclivities, and peccadillos consequently become expressions of the trivial iterations and concatenations of  $1/n$ , or the difference between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ).

Meantime, Being-in-the-world nevertheless still contains the *a priori* potential for *humanitas*, expressed as awareness of itself in the form of *thought*. To the subject’s horror, though, it finds that it cannot turn off the spigot of thought’s relentless flow which consists of endless iterations of the tautology “I am I” without reference to the other. It may turn to pain-obliterating opioids and even suicide in desperation to staunch the flow of this compulsive idea, such as it is. Without reference to the *other*, the subject’s ego must keep up the “I am I” mantra or lose its sense of Being-in-the-world. Bereft of self-determination, the *synthetic* form of being it must now embrace is one existing in the confining or contracted space of its ego’s self-referential, and unconscious, *autonomism*.

Here we have the holographic plane defined by an imaginary Hilbert space of  $n$  dimensions where  $\mathbb{R}^3 = xy^{(\text{dot}n)}$ , or the scope of the hegemonic discourse, that simulacra class  $b$  requires to be considered “the world.” Therefore, the product of this equation is a dot-product in the form of a real number ( $n$ ), where that real number is, nevertheless, imaginary.

While this is indeed paradoxical, it is not contradictory; as an “imaginary real number,” it need not conform to any properties real numbers are typically required to exhibit except to maintain the appearance of being a specific, countable number and therefore a scalable “dimension.” That it has no corresponding value (such as the actual dimensions of a Euclidean space) does not prevent the imaginary  $\mathbb{R}^3$  from being inhabited by the elements of the set simulacra (class  $b$ ), provided they possess the inherited attributes of *realia*.

The allies of Dasein, however, are space and time, not civilization and its society, government, and corporations, which are mere excrescences of it. Consequently, the subject finds itself in an existential ISP consisting of an officially sanctioned, propagated, and enforced language of *fundamental antinomy*. As Heidegger says, it “presides over thinking and hence over the essence of humanity ...” (op. cit.), for better or worse.

Teleologically, this special language of the ISP attempts to preside over *what will be* in a deterministic sense in that it is *not* cognizant of the fact that *fate* eludes human perception, psychically and statistically. The risk-potential of fate is above and beyond promises of eternal life “in the future” when medical technology is supposed to catch up with the ego’s fear of death. Therefore, as potential, *what will be* consists of two possibilities: 1) the negation of negation, and 2) death, which is the negation of Being itself—with or without the negation of negation.

There must be the possibility of a Second Negation (SN) for there to be any negation at all. If negation cannot be negated, then there can be no negation in any sense. But the SN must not be a *neutralization* of value in an otherwise ferocious process of dialectics. If it were, it would become what Adorno, above, regards as the “crudely put” synthesis of the Marxian dialectic. There is the further danger of yet another formation of the ISP as the excluded middle ( $A = B$ ), or a relation of *symmetric difference* where elements belong to A or B but not their intersection ( $A \Delta B$ ).

Rather, what we can expect is the *relative complement* of the negation of itself ( $A / B$ ) where elements of A *do not* belong to B. The Second Negation is at once a recursion to the state of sovereignty (because power is taken, not given), while at the same time being a new, discrete state in the Markov chain of Being. The states of  $A = B$  or  $A \Delta B$  are *synthetic*. Adorno’s objection to them is that as the Marxian synthesis they simultaneously

disinherit simulacra class *b* of its attributes (such as extension) derived from realia class *a*, while at the same time denying realia their categorical status as the elements of the only set of the real. If synthesis were anything more than exclusion or inclusion (which amount to the same thing), we could not have the red pill of realia and the blue pill of simulacra.

Consequently, what we are left with after the negation of negation is *potential*, in the form of *the power taken, not given*. The subject has *seized* the power it had abdicated, which now has the special property of having been lost and won back again. The *a priori* sovereignty it had originally was a gratis gift from the fact of its *humanitas*. Following the SN, it is the consequence of a seizure of power from the grip of the hegemony. What the SN does is permit the formerly impotent subject in the state of abdication to regain its potency by affirmation of its self-determination in a brazen act of self-determination. In so doing, it also restores Death to its throne as lord and master of the ego, regardless of whether there is some more ethereal life of the spirit beyond its death. Religion offers no true escape for the ego from its inevitable demise. The ego is an entirely temporal expression of the empirical world, not the integrated expression of the transcendental aesthetic which includes the transcendental *other*.

The sexual overtones of this possibility are intentional because they indicate the origin of the tertium quid in the subject's *a priori* potential for *jouissance* in the Lacanian sense. It is not the purpose of any part of this discussion to define the word "*jouissance*" once and for all or in any official way. (The reader has permission to indulge in whatever *feels good* regarding a satisfying definition.) However, there are some specific ways in which it is meant here, in this discussion, and, within its limits, that serve the overall intent of the analysis. It is safe to say that here it is meant in the sense that we find it in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* and elsewhere in Lacan's works, though as with the mirror state and the orders of being some modifications will be made "for the sake of experiment."<sup>39</sup>

When the subject abdicates its personal sovereignty, it is motivated not just by the trinkets of immortality and consumerism flashing before its eyes on the screen of its gadget, or in the hyperbolic rewards it is promised in exchange for its value as an apex consumer. It is also driven by the fear of death and pain from the bleak plain of reality covering the topology of its existence toward a "better life" where it thinks that what are its fundamental desires and birthrights will be magically fulfilled.

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<sup>39</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 7: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (W. W. Norton & Company, 1997).

Another motivation in fleeing this horrible world is that otherwise it must maintain its sexual potency is some way to compete with other sovereign beings for the favor that libidinal attraction inevitably brings. To this end, it is also burdened with the “care of self” (*epimeleia heautou*) described by Foucault but familiar in therapeutic medicine and from the earliest times of Greek thought.

All of this is such a bother! Why not just enter a world where everything is *pornographed*, where just a click of this, or a flick of that, fulfills all desires—albeit in a rather onanistic way? From this vantage point the prospect of a negation of this blissful state, despite its difficulties, is unthinkable. What, then, is the role of *jouissance* in all of this?

Provided the subject has not crossed the Rubicon of the categorical exclusion and the possibility of the negation of the negation of the sovereign self remains, *jouissance* serves the purpose of overriding the subject’s pleasure principle through what amounts to juridical transgression in the *nomos* of the hegemony. Ultimately, it is what Lyotard calls the “libidinal economy” of the subject that keeps it in thrall to the permanent state of exception of the abdicated state. As Freud describes in *Civilization and its Discontents*, the subject weighs all possibilities in the balance of how much pleasure it will get out of each act it commits. The goal of this economy is to get the most pleasure with the least pain.

Generally speaking, after taking the same economy in others into consideration and making an attempt to legislate the “pursuit of happiness” to the fullest extent possible, the hegemonic order creates laws and society creates customs that the subject accepts as forms of contractual protections and guarantees for the “futures contract” it has signed where its own sovereignty has been used as the underlying asset.

As a result, a kind of homeostasis is achieved requiring that all of the resources of the mass of subjects and the state be directed toward its maintenance. *Homeostasis, then, becomes the highest ethical aesthetic.* Those who violate it are perverts, apostates, enemies of the state, criminals, weirdos, freaks, and terrorists and are dealt with accordingly.

As Lacan points out, though, *jouissance*, though it has its roots in the wants, needs, and desires of the id and therefore in the seeking of pleasure, nevertheless tends to *explode* within the apparatus of the *nomos* by pushing the subject into fits of *transgression* it cannot seem to stop itself from committing. As a result, it attracts the ire of the self-correcting *cybernetics* of the state apparatus and the mores of society.

The result is pain in two forms: through the denial of access to pleasure (such as bank loans, good jobs, homes, comfort, convenience, and security), and 2) outright punishment (such as prison, public humiliation,

ostracization, and poverty). As a system, it works well; few are those foolish or brave enough to risk these outcomes of transgression voluntarily. Nevertheless, far more subjects than the state and society would like, tend to commit transgression against the unwritten rules of society and the published laws of the land.

The harder the state seems to push for homeostasis, the more transgression spreads through the community in ever greater perversity. This inverse relationship is the bread and butter of politicians, the *raison d'être* of the judicial system, the topic of all sermons from the pulpit, and the buzz of every office gossip.

What the ego really wants: the *imaginary* infinity of immortality for itself, it can never have. One would figure that reason would convey this truth to the ego, but in the abducted position the day has long passed (if it ever came at all) when the ego would listen to reason. As a result, the actual infinity of pure being in the form of Dasein eludes the subject. It will then do *anything* to avoid the negation of the negation of its abdicated sovereignty, even though this is its only hope for *jouissance*.

It is as if it were a shipwrecked passenger clinging to a piece of debris who is reluctant to risk grabbing a life preserver thrown down to it from a luxury ocean liner. It sees the Second Negation as what Hegel calls a “neutralization” of what it has come to know as itself, but what is in fact only a *simulacrum* of itself as defined by its electronic gadgets and the consumer lifestyle it buys into with them. “The negation of negation is not a neutralization: *the infinite is the affirmative*, and it is only the finite which is absorbed [italics added].”<sup>40</sup> This absorption of the finite into the infinite the subject interprets as death of the ego, a dissolution into an “oceanic” state where all individuality is lost in the morass of the terrifying alterity of *otherness*.

But this reluctance, given the circumstances of abdication, is only natural. Being unfamiliar with Being-for-itself as *pure being*, we instead reach for *process being*, which is like reaching for the can of gasoline instead of the fire extinguisher during a fire. The conflagration of the “pursuit of happiness,” which is always “in the future,” then consumes all of our energy, to the neglect of our health, family, friends, country, civilization, and, ultimately, our sanity.

That it is not in the present makes it infinitely inefficient, thereby demanding all our resources for the maintenance of its unstable simulacrum of “reality.” Being-for-itself, therefore, is carried forward into the imaginary

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<sup>40</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, First Sub-division of Logic, The Doctrine of Being, “Being-for-self,” *The Logic of Hegel*, William Wallace, trans. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press 1874), 153.

future as the symbol of the *neutralization* of the ego, the *tertium quid*, which is to be avoided at all costs.

Always keeping an electronic gadget in front of one or finding some other way to be constantly barraged with the discourse of consumerism and the state, helps one maintain a fragile sense of existence based only upon the feeble ontological signals emitted by simulacra. Meantime, the ego's hated and feared class of realia, along with realia's quantitative universe of discourse as *Dasein*, haunts the ego with *unheimlich* signals of overpowering dread. This dread arises from the miasma of the abyss between the subject and object, now beyond the possibility of wholeness in Being-for-itself. What the subject cannot know in the abdicated state is that pure being, which is undisturbed by the intimations of mortality the *a priori* of time by its nature emits, allows for a sense of the infinite which ultimately allays the dread of death with an acceptance of its uncompromising terms.

At stake here is consciousness. While it may be said of the subject that it is "aware" of itself in the abdicated state, and while it may react to every pinprick in its elaborate lucid dream, it cannot really be said that it is *conscious* of its status as a simulacrum of itself in a world of simulacra. (If it were, as the Buddha says, it would die of fright on the spot.) It is worth quoting Hegel at some length, then, to get a better idea of the complexities of negation involved during the interplay between one subject and another in the establishment of consciousness and therefore the cogito and ego. That the Second Negation on a social and even cosmic scale results in synthesis is indicated by Hegel's larger application of it.

However, in his discussion of the lord and bondsman he makes it clear that negation is the principle driving what we know about the *coming-into-being* of the sense of the self in its relation to others, with no mention of synthesis. The point of abdication, which is the negation of the self, he likens to a "trial by death." The subject's emergent paranoia as it enters the position of the social or Real-I (I2) quickly develops into the "extreme alterity" Lacan describes as that which alienates one ego from another. This is hardly a "synthesis" in the Marxian sense. Rather, it is described by Hegel as the "middle term" resulting from the negation of one ego by another, which "collapses into a lifeless unity" in a *pas de deux* of "abstract negation."

They cancel their consciousness which had its place in this alien element of natural existence; in other words, they cancel themselves and are sublated as terms or extremes seeking to have existence on their own account. But along with this there vanishes from the play of change the essential moment, viz. that of breaking up into extremes with opposite characteristics; *and the middle term collapses into a lifeless unity which is broken up into lifeless*



*extremes, merely existent and not opposed.* And the two do not mutually give and receive one another back from each other through consciousness; they let one another go quite indifferently, like things. Their act is abstract negation, not the negation characteristic of consciousness, which cancels in such a way that it preserves and maintains what is sublated, and thereby survives its being sublated.<sup>41</sup>

In the consciousness of being (what might be called the *I-Thou*, or subject-object, structure), negation “preserves and maintains what is sublated,” which we might presume is what Lacan means by the Real-I or social position of the development of the ego. However, in the lord-bondsman relationship, they “cancel their consciousness” which results in them going their own way “quite indifferently, like things.” The persona comes into being through the process of pure being, whereas things come into being through process being itself; it is not necessary for them to be endowed with consciousness, though it is necessary for them to be recognized, considered, and named by consciousness for there to be “a world.” Driven by its emergent sense of paranoia and weakened by its maladaptation to reality by a chaotic and coercive social environment, the subject naturally succumbs to relentless invitations to abdicate appearing on the horizon of its consciousness like “preapproved” credit card offers in the mail.

It is an error to consider that what is meant by “consciousness” here is any one thing; it is rather a *process* of consciousness (*process being*) which, seen at one stage or another, may be described differently though always containing an element of self-awareness allowing it to remain as a member of the same class or category. One stage of self-awareness, then, is that in which one acknowledges the existence of the “other.” This we say corresponds to the Real-I position of the mirror stage. However, we really cannot understand the significance of this position to the development of the ego until we acknowledge what it means to be regarded as a “thing,” or, as Hegel describes it below, “in the manner of ordinary objects.” As Hamlet observes about the dead king in Act 4, Scene 2, “The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—”

One advantage (or liability, as the case may be) to the “thingness” of being is that we may separate the category of the subject from that of the predicate in our propositions about the nature of life. In so doing, we are able to generate abstract concepts (such as the “king,” “lord,” or “bondsman”) as well as engage in abstract analysis and metaphysical

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<sup>41</sup> George W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. by J. B. Baillie. (London: Harper & Row, 1967), 67.

speculation. Problems arise, however, when we denature pure being by subjecting it to forms of judgment and inquiry appropriate only to process being.

Moreover, we open possibility of violating the rule of noncontradiction between the categories of subject and predicate. We see this problem in the supermarket and the fast-food restaurant where we are confronted with the oxymoron of “processed food.” If we take two other familiar necessities often included in the same category, we can ask ourselves if it is possible to also have “processed clothing” and “processed shelter.” Instant dehumanization is possible through the “processing of applications,” the “legal process,” and the “political process.” And while we regard an animal as the pronoun “it,” witnessing the industrial processing of animals for supermarket meat must give us pause.

Self-consciousness is primarily simple existence for self, self-identity by exclusion of every other from itself. It takes its essential nature and absolute object to be Ego; and in this immediacy, in this bare fact of its self-existence, it is individual. That which for it is other stands as unessential object, as object with the impress and character of negation. But the other is also a self-consciousness; an individual makes its appearance in antithesis to an individual. Appearing thus in their immediacy, they are for each other in the manner of ordinary objects.<sup>42</sup>

Therefore, regarding the “other” in what Hegel describes as “the manner of ordinary objects” helps us maintain our sense of ourselves as discrete entities apart from others, but it also encourages the development of what he calls the “absolute object of the Ego” which, inevitably, will find itself in a position of paranoid, alien alterity with others who, compounding the situation into a discourse, are doing the same thing.

Therefore, paranoia is a form of the negation of pure being into process being. Whatever pathologies or difficulties arise from this characteristic act of the ego overshadow the “sublated” forms of negation that ultimately end up defining the subject’s role in society and signification as an individual among individuals. Either the subject itself abdicates and becomes paranoid of others, who are in turn paranoid of it, or it does not and becomes a social pariah, an apostate who has dared to defy the edicts, fiats, protocols, and prerogatives of the hegemonic discourse. “You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, Mr. Beale,” says Jensen in the movie *Network*, “and I won’t have it. Is that clear?”

The two critical points of negation are 1) the negation of the self at the point of abdication, and 2) the negation of the negation of the self, which

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<sup>42</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 2:186.

we call here for the sake of convenience the Second Negation. What is important, though, is to keep in mind Adorno's criticism that any synthesis would not be "neutral." All that can be said about the negation of the negation of sovereignty is it is a negation of *process being* for *pure being*. As such, it belongs to Dasein which, in turn, encompasses realia class *a* as well as simulacra class *b* as a set of "real copies" rather than "copies of the real." This possibility of negation naturally arises from the subject's ontological orientation to its awareness, or what Hegel calls "consciousness," of its existence and therefore the cogito.

Self-consciousness is primarily simple existence for self, self-identity by exclusion of every other from itself. It takes its essential nature and absolute object to be Ego; and in this immediacy, in this bare fact of its self-existence, it is individual. That which for it is other stands as unessential object, as object with the impress and character of *negation* [italics added].<sup>43</sup>

The subject derives the signification of its existence as "I am" in part from the presence of others who it regards as a negation of itself, but who themselves regard the subject in the same way. This is an associative position of equality despite that it is not a positive assertion of being but a mutual negation of it. Nevertheless, the subject is also in opposition to itself as pure consciousness. In the mirror stage, this consciousness not only regards its reflection of itself as the other, it also regards others as a reflection of itself. Hence, we say that the nominative "I" or ego involved is an idealization of itself or the "Ideal-I" (I1), the result being that as awareness of others as others dawns on the subject's consciousness, they are always in a subordinated or what Hegel calls a "sublated" position.

According to Lacan, as the subject deepens its involvement in the complexities of the social or Real-I (I2), it develops a sense of paranoia it attributes to the "radical alterity" of what it perceives as their position in relation to its own in the social schema. For Hegel, this paranoia is justified in that the subject finds itself in a what could be characterized as a mortal struggle with the other where it must "risk its own life" to signify as something more than the "bare fact of its existence."

The individual, who has not staked his life, may, no doubt, be recognized as a Person; but he has not attained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness. In the same way, each must aim at the death of the other, as it risks its own life thereby; for that other is to it of no more worth than itself; the other's reality is presented to the former as an external other, as outside itself; it must cancel that externality. The other is a purely

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 2:185.

existent consciousness and entangled in manifold ways; it must view its otherness as pure existence for itself or as absolute negation.<sup>44</sup>

Hegel also sees the subject's struggle for identity, or being, in the relationship between the lord and the bondsman. In this relationship the subject becomes involved in an even greater mortal struggle (real or symbolic) with the "external" needs of the bondsman which it perceives as, perhaps, contrary to its own. Furthermore, the lord is in a position to regard the bondsman as a thing, somewhat weakening the subject's position and certainly undermining the possibility of the equality of its associative position.

What, then, are we to make of the subject who enters freely into the agreement of lord and bondsman? If we take this possibility to a highly metaphorical degree, we find that it is the paradigm for many of our common relationships with other as sons and daughters, employees, citizens, and so forth. Furthermore, in a diversified society we also find that *we may be lords while at the same time being bondsmen*.

Democracy is not the establishment of a free and open society of equality; rather, it is the introduction of the opportunity for every slave to also be a master. Abolition of slavery would fatally cripple society as we know it. Therefore, by maintaining and even intensifying the ways in which we can be slaves (such as through debt) the status quo stretching back millennia is maintained while propitiating the rhetoric of freedom by allowing slaves to be masters of those weaker than themselves economically or politically.

In the subject's voluntary abdication of its personal sovereignty, it is only too willing to avoid the messy fight to abolish slavery, and all of the reductions in the quality of life that go with it, in exchange for what it has desired since it first become aware of itself: dominion over others. This dominion, the hegemony will freely admit, is much preferred over what Hegel describes as a "trial by death" which "cancels both the truth which was to result from it, and therewith the certainty of self altogether."<sup>45</sup>

And as human beings are especially prone to great variations in strength, intelligence, disposition, health, wealth, and social standing, such a system of being master and slave, lord and bondsman—at the same time!—is only too easy to legislate into reality. And it meets with universal acceptance, even from those who find themselves at the bottom of the social order. Thanks to the doctrine of the commercial discourse that *every consumer is a king*, even those with the least social, political, and economic power can

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<sup>44</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 2: 187.

<sup>45</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 2:188.

take out their lust for domination in the form of the abuse of servers in restaurants, cashiers in supermarkets, customer service representatives on the phone, those they supervise, and even those they serve.

The need for negation, then, is built into the subject's inherent desire to feel "real," to feel that it is a unique, discrete, atom in the fabric of a greater whole which it depends upon and which depends upon it. This need, however, like all the subject's needs, is laid open to exploitation in the same way in which the subject would like to exploit others to commandeer them into being its bondsmen, thereby making itself their lord. Provided it is permitted by the mechanics of the hegemony to be *both* lord and bondsman, then it is willing to submit to what it sees as the "mild yolk" of abdication. Disturbing visions of social injustice and inequality notwithstanding, it is also willing to accept as "truth" (t) the rhetorical tropes of its political establishment claiming that "something is being done," and that "progress is being made," and that "in the future" such ugly features on the topological landscape of this otherwise ideal Hilbert ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ) space will *someday* be history.

Here, Russell's paradox returns to haunt us as the algorithmic necessity of abdication. It is the prerequisite of the possibility of inclusion in class *a*. Until negation has been negated, the individual has not, in effect, *earned* its sovereignty. Possibility here is distributed topologically over a sphere of influence, a realm, which is defined by degrees of freedom with the attributes of class *a*. Ultimately, abdication itself (*b*), as an attribute, must be a member of the set of attributes of sovereignty (*a*). Otherwise, we end up with the classical dichotomies we see in two-dimensional political discourse such as the rich and poor, the have and have-nots, the master and the slave, the sovereign and the subject, the aristocracy and the proletariat, and the captive and the freeman.

The beauty of mathematical logic is that it allows for ways to express ideas that would otherwise be hobbled by words. The perhaps reckless application of it here is meant to enhance the possibilities of expression rather than limit the audience, obfuscate, or ennoble. And while we are grateful that words often force us to state difficult things in a plain way, they have their limits; Russell's paradox, as stated above, provides an example. But even a simple statement such as "I am lying" (an antinomy) immediately shows us that language may do more to block our view of an idea than other symbolic forms of expression.

But what happens when the mass of subjects lacks even the most rudimentary methods of analysis, such as being able to test if a proposition is verifiable? Another attribute of the members of class *b* is an inability to distinguish between an analytical and synthetic statement; in the latter the

predicate may be of the same universe of discourse as the subject or not—the difference is equal to the hapless captive.

This inability to test the reality of a proposition is of critical necessity to the survival of the hegemonic power the mass of abdicated subjects has set up as the talisman of its collective core identity. As such, the subject comes to regard this deficiency of reason as its most cherished attribute, while at the same time regarding those who are analytically proficient with fear and suspicion. In short, a certain inability to reason become the dominant phenotype of the abdicated self.

Kant, on the contrary, regards those who *fail* to discern the difference between the synthetic and analytic with significant consternation when he says that his proposition “mathematical judgments are synthetic” is “directly opposed to all [the] conjectures” of those who are “engaged in the anatomy of human reason.”<sup>46</sup> We might presume that he had poor regard for the rational anatomists of his day who he saw as exercising their deficiencies in lieu of the virtues necessary to appreciate the difference between conjecture and truth in the mathematical sense.

The hegemony, which now takes on a kind of diabolical autonomy, exploits its sphere of influence. Its foremost agenda is preservation of itself at all costs, even to the sacrifice of the abdicated subjects who have erected it in place of their organic core identity. Its hegemony is predicated upon the conflation of 1) a synthetic proposition where the predicate is alien to the subject’s universe of discourse and is therefore false (F), and 2) *the relentless indoctrination of the subject into the cult of mediocrity*. Something needs to be said about the latter.

As mediocrity is a human invention always at odds with nature (like “excellence” and “perfection”), it requires a “cult” to provide perpetual reinforcement of its existentially illegal dogma. One is either of the cultic phenotype or not, with an elaborate testing process to determine one’s adherence to its dogma. It accomplishes this by relentless assertion of the fallacy Wittgenstein identifies in Russell’s paradox: “No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself ...”<sup>47</sup>

Despite the hegemony’s trumpeting of its reliance on “scientific evidence” and the logic of machines, and even despite its cataclysm of “proofs of concept” in the form of its endless production of gadgets and data, ultimately the hegemony must rely on presenting a invalid synthetic proposition as a verified analytic proposition:  $F = T$ . For example, “In times of peace, prepare for war!” Doing so maintains the illusion of verifiability

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<sup>46</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 720.

<sup>47</sup> Wittgenstein, *Op. cit.*

by containing verifiable truths in existential sets within a false universe of discourse, then presenting the existential sets as discrete universes of discourse:  $\exists = \forall$ . We see this in the “universal truths” of government such as seeking peace through war, prosperity through debt, and freedom through control.

In place of verification the invalid synthetic statement substitutes *verism*; provided it *looks* like it can be verified, or that it *is* verified (in the way a magician’s trick seems “real”), then it is ipso facto verified or T. In effect, this is a negation of an analytic proposition. Extending what Wittgenstein sees as Russell’s error, the hegemony defines the Law governing it—a logically illegal move. “Russell’s error is shown by the fact that in drawing up his symbolic rules he has to speak about the things his signs mean.” Moreover, as an apparatus it is a machine relying on the engine of an algorithm the symbolic rules of which *recur*, endlessly modifying themselves based on the cynical expediency of the mediated immediate moment. Therefore, that which is so mediated is *mediocre*!

The only possibilities of law that preserve the integrity of the immediate are 1) if it issues from a disinterested and existentially discrete class, which may be a third party (though that solution is corrupted soon enough), or 2) from a cryptologic algorithm such as block-chain logic which creates a tertium quid between two parties in an anonymous agreement in a non-zero-sum game. Such possibilities, however, seldom reach any kind of sustained universality because of the wishful thinking of the mass of abdicated subjects itself which has learned to abhor attempts at disinterest.

Once this recursive machine is set up through the collective will of the mass of abdicated subjects, the primary function of all expression becomes the substitution of simulacra for realia. This is only possible through a political economy subverting an underlying real-value asset into a derivative imaginary future gain. Therefore, all discourse becomes realigned from the immediate present to the ever-elusive “future” which is a product of mediation.

The result is a dramatic and categorical exchange of the corporeal for the surreal. In effect, then, all public discourse becomes a relentless cavalcade of surrealistic propaganda, the flavor of which depends upon the two-dimensional attributes of the prevailing political economy (which could be as divergent as communist and capitalist). Nevertheless, its two-dimensional “skin” is stretched over the topological space of the sphere of influence in such a way as to approximate a “world,” forming what appears to be a universe of discourse out of an existential set, which we have called class *b*.

The immediate is concerned with the nontrivial difference between 0 and 1 ( $0 / 1$ ), while the mediated is concerned only with the trivial difference between 1 and  $n$  ( $1 / n$ ). The first has a natural economy because of *le devenir*, the coming-into-being, which may be called the ontological imperative and is *creative*; the second, however, exacts an infinite drain upon the natural resources of the individual, state, and environment, resulting in catastrophic exhaustion. It is *derivative* in that it sucks its value from the immediacy of the present through a parasitic dependency upon the creative power of *le devenir*. The apparatus plays an infinitely inefficient zero-sum-game as its ostensible universal set, which it claims through its discourse to be the set of all sets; nature plays a non-zero-sum game as its actual universal set, which is always efficient. The difference is that the former, as part of nature, has predicated itself as a universal upon an existential ( $\exists$ ) subject (class  $b$ ), resulting in a F (False) synthetic proposition. Therefore, the only T (True) set (class  $a$ ) is nature's *disinterested set of all sets* wherein the apparatus is an existential ( $b = \exists$ ) set, not universal.

The former consists of members of class  $b$ , while the latter, being the T set of all sets, is class  $a$  which must contain class  $b$  (and all other classes). The result, then, is that class  $a$ , as the True universe of discourse, is always T while class  $b$ , as the set of all illegal self-referential synthetic propositions, is *ipso facto* F.

Whatever the political (or theological) economy, the hegemony touts a paradisiacal Shangri-La “just around the corner” from immediate reality. The resources of the *a priori* of time and space are commandeered for the quixotic voyage to this imaginary port-of-call, leaving the present without ship, rudder, or captain. (Perhaps the most beautiful expression of this paradigm in both a religious and secular sense is Melville's *Moby Dick*.) Naturally, disaster ensues. War, economic collapse, disease, and a tormenting sense of life being fake and empty hector the hapless subject into desperate, though unconscious, action.

When this *mishegas* is imposed from without upon a sovereign subject, the result is often rebellion; however, the natural tendency of the ego to preserve itself for eternity axiomatically succeeds in negating the negation of the negation of the sovereign self, returning the liberated subject to its captors *tout de suite*. With nowhere to turn except *toward* the discourse and *away* from itself, it exercises what it believes to be the degrees of “freedom” it has mortgaged with its abdication: obsession with digital gadgetry, overuse of psychopharmacology, abuse of alcohol and tobacco, dependency on Big Medicine, doping with illicit drugs, acquiescence to authoritarian government, orgiastic consumerism, reckless indebtedness, and narcotic



entertainment. Such a psychic *Blitzkrieg*, nevertheless, fails to sustain the subject's fragile dream of egoic immortality because it is predicated upon an invalid synthetic proposition.

The entire apparatus of the hegemony applies its resources to the maintenance of this figurative world. Inevitably, it fails. It cannot sustain the energy needed to function without the assistance of nature and reality. Failure, though, only seems to spur the subject and its hegemonic collective on to bigger and greater failures, as if the search were for complete annihilation. Despite the titanic proportions of civilization's relentless debacles, each is often predicated on some petty oversight, natural shift in climate, or expedient pretense only historians are capable of aggrandizing. Nevertheless, the absurdity of these trivialities goes unnoticed. The death, destruction of property, and universal suffering caused is enough to ennoble even the most ridiculous story line.

Most of the time, competing propaganda lines become lost in the scrambled discourse of social chaos; the detritus becomes the "content" of the public education system and the blizzard of laws, treaties, financial systems, and harebrained ideologies following in their wake that help lubricate the slide into the next big horror show. In the meantime, the best of religion, philosophy, politics, science, economics, and art attempts to piece together a life worth living for the survivors and their progeny, with, as a rule, only modest success.

The differential between the immediate and the mediated becomes the measure of civilization's worth. If we consider the immediate as class *a*, since it is the only "state" that is real, and since it contains the mediated (class *b*), then we see that the observable tendency is movement from *a* to *b*. In other words, civilization always *tends* to mediate the immediate to a greater and greater extent until there is an *inversion* of one for the other, which we may call negation. Meantime, the subject inhabiting civilization drives this inversion through the activity of its own abdication. The pity is that the subject barely feels a bump.

There is no dramatic scene between Dr. Faustus and Mephistopheles. Abdication is the norm. But to maintain its status as "normal," it must somehow possess what Heidegger calls *Zugengenzeit* or everydayness. We demand everydayness from our experience to get a sense of its homomorphic consistency. If it keeps repeating itself, then it is "real" in the sense that we naturally define the world without any sense of what verifiability means.

One who abstains from abdication, for whatever reason, is a rube, an ingénue, a crank, an eccentric, a fanatic, a virgin, or an idiot. One who attempts negation of abnegation fares fare worse, however, being perceived

as a threat who must be, as Emily Dickinson says, “handled with a chain.” The ultimate rebellion is not holding back from the temptation to abdicate; it is having the courage to let it happen, and then the will to suffer whatever is necessary to negate it. *This* is the “will to power.” The will as exercised by a sovereign individual should be confused with the *whims* of the abdicated individual’s desires. (After all, Nietzsche did not title his book *The Whim to Power*.) The former arises from the power of self-determination guided by reason in the forms of true synthetic and nontrivial analytical thought. The latter is an expression of the ego’s weakness in its subservience to the id’s demands or the expression of its own self-indulgence.

It is never particularly beneficial to claim that everything is subject to paradox. And as we have seen, Wittgenstein puts up as strong an argument against Russell’s paradox as Russell does for it (considering its necessity to this set theory). We might even say that it is paradoxical that the former’s objections and the latter’s assertions must coexist for us to have this conversation. There is certainly no shortage of the presence of the cousin of paradox: irony.

As Žižek points out, what sometimes looks like paradox is in fact a kind of *parallax* created by a state when it must coexist with its negation, which then, like a mirror image, becomes its *Doppelgänger*. Only image is the actual “original,” but the forensics needed to tell which is which have been obscured or lost. As the witches observe in *MacBeth*, Act 1, Scene 1, times of deceit, chaos, lies, and confused allegiance force language to do double duty, serving realia and simulacra simultaneously:

When the hurly-burly’s done,  
When the battle’s lost and won . . .

Fair is foul, and foul is fair  
Hover through the fog and filthy air.

The famous “fog of war” invokes such an oxymoron as “friendly fire.” Like the language of Classical physics versus the evolving language of quantum mechanics, the common discourse much of modern language is based on assumes the *a priori* of time and space and no more while the technologically engaged world (which is not the only world) struggles to find a new voice better approximating its agenda. Meantime, the prevailing discourse is neatly two dimensional. And yet we are forced by the growing presence of the parallel universe of simulacra to stretch the two-dimensional plane of language, with its four degrees of freedom, over the infinite plane of the sphere of influence, with its *n* degrees of freedom.

However, our simple language strangles the processing power needed to encompass (literally) the expanding *topology* of realia (class *a*) which, it must be stated again, includes class *b* (simulacra) if and only if it does not include class *b*. The only languages suitable to express the power and scope of the topology of class *a* are, perhaps, poetry and theoretical mathematics.

Something needs to be said about the use of the word “topology” in this discussion. It is meant in its literal sense, as the study of the surface area of a three-dimensional space or object. We may describe a simple sphere or the differentiable manifold of an exotic sphere through topology; among such objects there are those that demonstrably exist in the *realm* of temporal reality and those that meet every criteria for being sound mathematically but will *not* be found among the extensa of realia. Rather, they occupy their own mathematical *realm*. (To use the term “dimension” here only confuses the matter.) As logic is a form of mathematics, and language is a form of logic, it is entirely possible that language, too, may form complex three-dimensional “objects” which we may begin to construe as simulacra. It is not enough for simulacra to exist only in the imagination, though they must exist in an imaginary space.

The human imagination and imaginary space are not one and the same, as the latter is verifiable *as space* without dependency upon being imagined (such as dragons and unicorns are). Furthermore, as all space is bounded and therefore encloses something, it is entirely appropriate to refer to surfaces within this space which may be described, mapped, and graphed. Even if we accept this possibility as a complex form of mathematically expressed “reality,” we must also accept that without meaning it can have little to do with language. Therefore, we may refer to these surfaces as *semantic* (as we have earlier).

In describing the surface area of a three-dimensional object, we succeed also in describing the *space* enclosed by that surface. In describing the topology and mechanics of *simulacra class b*, we begin to understand it as an existential class of the universal quantification of Dasein. If we relax our positivist hypervigilance a little and settle into a warm bath, as Archimedes did, we may discover something. Ever since William Gibson’s first use of the term “cyberspace” in his cyber-punk novel *Neuromancer* published (prophetically) in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the notion of an abstract space as a “place” which could be inhabited by more than the imagination but by something less than the soul has become commonplace without completely self-destructing into a figure of speech.

Today the word “space” is used quite comfortably when referring to shared concepts and ideas. It is hard to tell when it is being used metaphorically or literally, or if technology and its related concepts have

made the difference trivial. Nevertheless, topology is a discipline born of mathematics.

What is important to this discussion is thinking of this space as existing in two superimposed states: realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*. Both occupy the same space, made possible by their categorical differences: one real, one not. It is extraordinarily convenient that simulacra exist largely on an electronic and digital plane, and in the minds of the collective imagination of the subject and its society and government. This property allows it to occupy the same cluttered and dirty space as realia, but with a critical difference that makes it immensely attractive. While the world of simulacra lacks the constraints of the *a priori* of time and space—the bane of mankind—as well as the substance that gives weight and meaning to the world, it more than makes up for these shortcomings in its ability to accommodate the type of fantasies which allow the ego to enter *metastasis*. The irony (*not* the paradox) of the hegemonic order is that it seeks its own homeostasis through the ego's metastasis. But this is only natural when we consider that the topology it creates as the space in which its subjects operate is predicated entirely upon invalid synthetic statements.

The beauty of the invalid statement is that it allows for contradiction. Unbounded by the chains of the rule of noncontradiction, its only task then is to adorn itself with the jewels of Positivism. It establishes empirical, verifiable peace by destroying whole countries and peoples. It creates a system of law that is based on the soundest principles of liberty and justice, so that it can imprison generation after generation of the disenfranchised underclass. It creates a medical system based on the most advanced understanding of the human mind and body, while at the same time killing tens of thousands of its patients through mismanagement, malpractice, and by pushing the financial threshold for receiving its benefits far beyond the means of those who need it the most

It develops technologies that increase food production to the point where it can feed the world, then through geopolitics and commodification of food into a financial asset class allows millions to starve. It builds planes, rockets, ships, satellites, robots, networks, reactors, and computers that represent the culmination of 3,000 years of technology and science, only to weaponize them all, jeopardizing the safety of everyone, interested or not.

As has been mentioned here, though, the class of simulacra derives its verism from the property of *similarity* to the real thing. It is not constrained by the limits of the *simulation*, which weakly suspends disbelief until the subject must turn the computer off and go to bed. Instead, it *becomes* the subject's sleep, its bed, its computer, its bank account, its education, its job,

its environment, its relationships, and most of all its government through control of the subject's *cogito*.

As such, the signals the subject processes empirically are split as they enter its perception, with part of the data going straight into the processing apparatus of the internal hegemonic discourse. There, they are subject to the cybernetics of its autonomic control system. The other part goes where it needs to go. If the entire signal were filtered by the discourse just after the point of input, the subject would be incapable of operating in space and time, which do not take kindly to being entirely ignored, fault tolerant as they are.

Nevertheless, the most ingenious part of the discursive apparatus is the component of its mechanism which allows for any signal not processed by the discourse to be overridden by that discourse. In other words, the subject has internalized its own state of exception. It is the internalization of this delight of delights that makes it nearly impossible for the subject to negate the apparatus except through the transgressions of *jouissance* which, we might say, *compel* the subject to negate, even against its wishes. The apparatus quite accurately portrays transgression as a painful act which could result in death, then proceeds to so organize the subject's circumstances that this outcome is all but guaranteed.

This, then, is a description of the Wasteland of the subject's abdicated topology. Naturally, this realm does not look like a wasteland at first, if ever. It has a built-in *narcotizing dysfunction effect* in the form of what Freud describes as the pleasure principle. The subject wants 1,000 percent stimulation 2,000 percent of the time ... and gets it provided the monthly bills are paid. If they are not, then the subject loses all its underlying value as an asset which consists exclusively of its ability to consume. In a consumer society, losing one's power to make the monthly payments on the debt is the equivalent, by default (literally), of a transgression. ("You have meddled with the primal forces of nature, Mr. Beale, and I won't have it. Is that clear?")

Surely, pain and even death will follow, particularly if those unpaid bills have to do with food, shelter, personal safety, and medical care. But the hegemony sees to it that there is always a critical mass of "voters" and taxpayers who see the "dream" come true. The greater the subject's power to consume, the greater the freedom and power the subject is allowed within the confines of its imaginary space. Its existence is predicated upon the hyperbolic needs of its own aggrandized ego.

Which brings us to the next point regarding the abdicated subject's environment. There is no denying that realia class *a* exists in the *space* we may describe with the various surface-area formulae, such as  $A_s = 4\pi r^2$  for

a sphere. What beautiful complications we may encounter calculating more irregular surfaces only make it interesting. However, regarding simulacra class *b*, we find ourselves in an *imaginary* space of semantic surfaces which, by their *meaning*, transmit that significance which they have *inherited* from realia.

We know, at least, that in this space the rule of noncontradiction is suspended except in as much as it might contribute to the rhetorical illusion of the validity of a proposition. As a result, we find ourselves in a much less constrained environment where we are free to apply more exotic and theoretical mathematical descriptions of reality. This much Kant makes clear in saying that valid synthetic arguments dominate arithmetic. Gödel also makes a case for the *incompleteness* of these arguments and descriptions which we could accept more easily if we had not been told for centuries that they were complete. Therefore, we must search for other ways to describe this space.

The Hilbert space ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ) fits this need. It is a vector space, meaning that unlike non-theoretical space it may sustain two vector paradigms simultaneously, such as real vector space, which is Euclidean and uses real numbers, and complex vector space, which uses a scalar field of complex numbers. While there is much more to express about these differences and their implications mathematically, it will suffice here to say that simulacra class *b* must occupy a space which accommodates both enclosed parts of the categorical exclusion: the difference between 0 and 1 (0 / 1) and the difference between 1 and any other number (1 / *n*).

By bringing the two together, despite their categorical differences, we are forced into a universe of quantification ( $\forall$ ) which includes both classes *a* and *b* as existential ( $\exists$ ) classes, with the difference being that class *b* is a member of class *a*, but not vice versa. In other words, simulacra are a form of realia, but realia are not a form of simulacra. For realia to be verifiable they must be real; for simulacra to be taken as real they must assume the identity of realia, but for them to exist in a state of exception they must not possess the property of the *a priori* (time and space). How, then, may simulacra assume the identity of realia without possessing the property of the *a priori*? Again, the success of this magic trick is the result of *misdirection*.

Space and time exist in two dimensions, one *actual* and the other *psychological*. The *actual* dimension preexists the cogito, expressed with capital letters ( $S \wedge T$ ). Therefore, we say about it that it is *a priori*. Psychological time and space, however, are *a posteriori* of the cogito as its product, and are therefore expressed with lower-case letters ( $s \wedge t$ ). While they are categorically different as actual and psychological, they

nevertheless are properties of any subject because of the cogito's *mental* effect upon reality itself. Once the mind commutes the infinitive "to be" into "I am," the psychological existence of the subject is born. Self-identity, consequently, is a property of the *a posteriori*, or the psychological not physiological life of the subject. As such, then, it is a property of both realia and simulacra which, in their relation to the subject who regards them, inherit their identity equally from the *a posteriori* of the subject's psyche where they exist as ideas or noumena.

Finally, we must take into consideration what Lacan regards as the application of topology to the matter of the structure of the psyche, particularly of the architecture of desire. In the delightfully tortuous "*L'Étourdit*," Lacan inserts the idea of topology into a discussion of what he calls the "*ab-sense*" of Freudian practice (psychoanalysis). In a few short sentences he uses "*ab-sense*," "*ab-sens*," and "*sens-absexé*" to surround at three points the "logic" of castration and the Oedipus complex as they appear in the course of psychoanalysis. What all three neologisms have in common is the particle "*ab*," meaning of course negation. We have already discussed the role of desire in the *abnegation* of the subject's sense of self-determination.

Castration is the *sine qua non* of negation, analogically and otherwise. And what is missing or abnegated in the Oedipus complex is expressed well enough in the eponymous play by Sophocles where, in *Oedipus Rex*, the king lacks the knowledge about himself that would lift the curse upon him and his people, which includes not only his incestuous relationship with his mother but also his patricide.

For those who listen to me ... *ou pire*, this exercise would only have confirmed the logic by which castration and the Oedipus complex are articulated in analysis. Freud puts us on the track of the fact that lack-of-sense (*ab-sens*) designates sex: it is by the inflation of this lack-of-sex-sense (*sens-absexé*) that a *topology is unfolded where it is the word that decides* [italics added].<sup>48</sup>

The gross illusion perpetrated by writing upon language is that it is somehow detached from the crucible of desire which is so much more apparent in speech. That we come upon the best articulation of the Oedipus complex in a play where the writing is subordinated to the performance of it gives some indication of what is lost. Freud, in describing the structure of the psyche, albeit in motion as the actor in the comedy of everyday pathology, manages to give the impression that it is a clinical matter taken

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<sup>48</sup> Lacan, "*L'Étourdit*," 60.

up by psychoanalysis. While this is true, Lacan attempts to put negation in the forms of castration and the Oedipus complex back “on the track” Freud originally conceived for it as an *absence*.

This void permeates psychoanalysis. As has already been mentioned, Freud and Lacan early in their work begin as clinicians treating pathology but end up as philosophers and social critics astonished at the everydayness of pathology. What they discover on this plateau is “a topology” that is “unfolded” upon the semantic surfaces of language in the form of “the word that decides.”

As they journey deeper into the terra incognita of the psyche, they discover exotic lands, strange tribes, and insensible (lack-of-sense, or *ab-sens*) customs informing what once seemed like “innocent” utterances. To their horror they discover that *the word*, and the language in which it functions, is no less of a psychodrama than Sophocles *Oedipus Rex*. As a result, psychoanalysis turns from the abnormal to the “normal” as its source of the revelation of the psyche’s deepest pathological secrets.

Running with this idea, Lacan pushes it into the realm of absurdity. The phallus of castration is the organ that speaks, not the lingual apparatus of human physiology. This idea is common enough in vernacular banter about this topic. Then why not in a more formal, if somewhat demented, discussion of psychoanalysis? We even go so far as to characterize certain persons as *thinking* with the penis (the “head,” or *glans*). None of this escapes Lacan. Furthermore, he locates this monstrous phenomenon in the *a posteriori* discourse of “happiness,” which as we have said all along is a commercial proposition meant to synthesize *jouissance*, thereby serving as its simulacrum.

It is rather that the more it is snapped up (*happé*) by the *a posteriori* of the discourses that await it (happiness as it is called in the U.S.A.) the more does the organ have things to carry from them. It is put down to it being emotional ... Ah! Could it not have been better trained, I mean educated. For that you have another think [sic] coming.<sup>49</sup>

Serving as a lawyer for the phallus, Lacan makes its argument, saying that we must attempt to understand its predicament.

We see clearly in the *Satyricon* that to be constrained, indeed implored, supervised from the earliest years, studied in vitro, changes nothing in its moods, that one is mistaken to make its nature responsible, when, on the contrary, it is simply because of the fact that it is not happy with what it is made say, what it is coming up against.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 62.



Psychoanalysis, as well as the other laboratory equipment we use to trace the ganglions of the phallus back to their roots in the lowermost regions of the psyche, often serves to frustrate the phallus' attempt to articulate its wants and needs. It is "made to say" what it says, forcing it to come "up against" the discontents (*Unbehagen*) of civilization. After it is "constrained," "implored," "supervised," and "studied" in a test tube, the conclusion is often that it is its "nature" as the *pene loco* that it must be stifled with what Lacan calls, hilariously, the bishops' *s'en chapotent*, or *mitre* (noting that "*capote* also means condom"). Ultimately, he says, "it is a matter of structure ..." Any attempt to "tame it" is better done in the "topology upon which its virtues depend"—the bedroom—than on the analyst's couch. How much less successful, then, is the attempt to mollify the phallus first with the discontents of civilization and then with the *a posteriori* discourses of "happiness"?

The project to manufacture synthetic *jouissance* that can be commodified in the forms of ubiquitous titillation and clandestine pornography, while at the same time publishing ever greater punishments for the "perversity" of transgression, only succeeds in confusing the phallus into *impotency*—actual and metaphorical. Its potency begins in the *real*, undergoes a transformation into the *imaginary*, and ends up in the libidinal dead end of the *symbolic*.

Therefore, we may conclude that the topology of reality, though it may include the class of simulacra, nevertheless suffers from the burden of sustaining an infinitely inefficient form of itself as synthetic *jouissance*. Contrary to the nature of the phallus, which is *outwardly* oriented toward the other by the biological imperative to procreate, synthetic *jouissance* is *inwardly* oriented. It is Narcissus having sex with himself while imagining that he is someone else: his ideal, incorporeal other, uncorrupted with the filth of "otherness." Never mind that this revolting "otherness" is the actual substance of "the other" while at the same time being the substance of himself as the *other's* other (other').

Consequently, he becomes *nothing* in erotic embrace with *nothing*. Here we see what Lacan means by "*ab-sense*," "*ab-sens*," and "*sens-absexé*"—in other words, *absence*, the void. Nevertheless, the subject is supported by all of society, the state, and the church in this adventure in the topological wonderland of simulacra class *b*. Deviation from this dreadful story of castration and Oedipal desire results in the punishments reserved for the transgressor, whatever they happen to be at the time but always painful and often enough resulting in death-in-life or death itself. None of this is possible without simulacra class *b* occupying a "space" which we may properly call the topology of abdication.

But for class *b* to engender the permanent suspension of disbelief, realia class *a* must be complicit in the construction of reality. This complicity need not be voluntary. Rather, realia are commandeered by the hegemonic discourse in the form of language. Like water wearing down the most stubborn and jagged rock, the imaginary version of reality pursues a relentless campaign to infiltrate every word, every expression, every sentence, every paragraph. This may seem a tremendous undertaking; and it is, which is why the economy of the imaginary Hilbert ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ) space is infinitely inefficient. But as Lacan points out, it begins “from the earliest years,” which gives it a significant advantage over the gradual deployment of reality as it takes hold during the mirror stage and never lets up. As simulacra depend, at least at first, on mimesis, they have a decided advantage over the *manifold* objects of the *a priori*, which are bound by their unique and limited nature. Language’s need for discrete utterances to *mean* at first binds thought into simple but fundamental logical structures. Foremost of these structures is the rule of noncontradiction, which is what allows the objects of the manifold to express their identity.

Soon enough, through the stultifying application of invalid synthetic arguments ( $A = B$ ) and the numbing repetition of trivial analytical statements ( $A = A$ ), thought gradually, imperceptibly, yields to the discourse of abdication. It would seem subject at some point in this graceful and relentless onslaught would wake up to the loss of its self-determination. Instead, if it has any awareness of the process at all, it happily, and even with a certain *joie de vivre*, surrenders the burden of the real to the promise of the infinite delights of the imaginary “in the future.”

To better map the topology of this process, we need to look more closely at the logic of the relationship between realia class *a* and simulacra class *b* as codependent existential classes within the universal quantification of Dasein.

For class *a* to be “reality” it must be complete, meaning it must include all classes (whether it does or does not also includes itself—we leave this up to Wittgenstein and Russell to debate). However, if simulacra—the negation of reality—are members of the set of realia, then they must exhibit attributes of all real elements of class *a*. These attributes are necessary for the *verism* allowing invalid synthetic and trivial analytic propositions to masquerade as realia. It *mimics* the verifiability of true synthetic and nontrivial analytic statements, allowing the possibility of simulacra by endowing them with the appearance of verisimilitude or “*truthlikeness*.” It seems the human organism has a reflexive need for sense that something is “true,” but how this truth is defined varies with the demands made upon the individual by the environment.

The operation of this principle is equal in the audience of a magic show and the corporate-funded research laboratory. The apparatus exploits this paradoxical necessity in its quest for priority in the psychological language of the subject's thought process, such as it is. This is nowhere more evident than in the ultimate expression of the language of the apparatus: the law and the *state of exception*. While this term sounds quite grand, everyone has seen it in the boss who runs an office with a draconian iron fist but casually breaks all of the rules he or she has established by fiat, or the police patrol car that runs a red light just because it can, or the parent who in a drunken rage beats his children for underaged drinking. On the petty level we are likely to dismiss it as the hypocrisy of human weakness; on the vast institutional level we are likely to find it to be the gene of misery and revolutions.

How, then, does it take shape on a macro scale? Fundamental to the discourse of the apparatus is the Law. It is the expression of the aggregation of sovereign power, which we call hegemony. Hegemony transmits its discourse through all available channels to accomplish its aim, which is always the singular pursuit of its own preservation and increase. In this way, the prevailing discourse is propagated and inculcated as the official language of the sovereign and its adjacent interests. However, mere words and images are not enough. There must be a *juridical* solution, longitudinally prosecuted and exercised, where the Law emerges from ontological obscurity in the guise of analytical proposition. From there, it emerges into the light of empirical authority as a semantic challenge to the *a priori*.

As Ayer has already pointed out here, the mind is ever ready to sacrifice the *a priori* intuition of space and time for the beautiful lie of the *a posteriori* discourse of egoic immortality. As Agamben describes it, "The paradox of sovereignty consists in the fact the sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the juridical order .... 'I, the sovereign, who am outside the law, declare that there is nothing outside the law'".<sup>51</sup> Agamben goes on to say that "The *topology* [italics added] implicit in the paradox is worth reflecting upon, since the degree to which sovereignty marks the limit ... of the juridical order will become clear once the structure of the paradox is grasped."<sup>52</sup>

What is the topology of this paradox? To get an idea of it we must first describe the two-dimensional plane that is ultimately stretched over its sphere of influence, which we come to know as a "world." We may express this paradox as  $[x(n) \rightarrow n(\sim x)]$ , where  $x$  = the law, and  $n$  = the state of

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<sup>51</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 15.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

exception. In other words, the law ( $x$ ) permits the state of exception ( $n$ ) if, and only if, the state of exception ( $n$ ) permits negation of the law ( $\sim x$ ). Here again we have what Wittgenstein calls a “state of affairs” which calls for a proposition defining the rules for its own verification. Is this any different, at least in spirit, from what we find in John 1:1: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”? We might grant God special dispensation here to decree the law *ex cathedra*. But what of man? Should we extend the same charity? Does man “stand” in the same “state” of logical beatification as God?

While this question may be left for the theologians, it at least brings up the ego’s psychological role in this otherwise rather mechanical process of exploiting the logical limitations of language for psychological effect. In its flight from the “real value” of death, the ego pursues the derivative future value of its own immortality by mediating the immediate reality of the present through the establishment of the law. But fearing that the nature of a “law” is to set limits on what any one individual so that it may protect the good of society, potentially setting a limit on the ego’s own enterprise, the ego builds into its apparatus a *negating recursion* allowing it the  $n$  degrees of freedom otherwise reserved for three-dimensional topology of realia.

The fact that the subjective ego stands in contrast to the objective nature of realia is no deterrent. After all, why should the ego limit itself if it has the choice not to? The ironies are 1) that it is possible for the ego to do so, and 2) that as a member of the class of realia the apparatus has every right to demand any degree of freedom possible within its scope. This potential we call “free will.” It is inextricably bound up with the necessity of the will to power over the negation of one’s sovereign core identity. As such, it is the source of all heroic drama in the collective mythology of human struggle.

If the law is all powerful, then the hegemonic power must be outside of itself or risk being subject to its own fiats, which would put a limitation on its power to impose the law. The hegemon, erected in the subjects’ collective image, stalks a land of great uncertainty, and it likes it that way. It thrives on selective enforcement of its fiats, cronyism, and corruption. Here, what is “known” epistemologically is only what is syncretical. Therefore, the analytic must be intuited within the system.

As a result, it never *appears*, as its appearance is to the topology of the sphere of the hegemony’s influence what the reality of a magician’s trick is to the illusion it creates. The hegemony is in constant danger from whatever resources may be left with the power of analytical thought. Always on the defensive, it surrounds itself with an autonomic filtration system favoring class  $b$  if and only if it contains class  $a$ .

In other words, the ontological order must be inverted; *realia* must be a *dependency* of simulacra. Under such a regime the organic movement of time (T) is replaced by a manufactured and manipulated form of psychological time (t). The ultimate object of this ontological legerdemain is the establishment of a “timeless” state where the subject subordinates its consciousness and therefore its sovereignty in favor of a sense that it will never die provided it keeps paying its phone bill.

But this *state of affairs* does not come easily or cheaply for the usurper. Since the hegemony may not wage all-out war on the population with neat success, it must employ other, more psychological, means. The state therefore turns to the apparatus of mediated discourse, amply provided by its allies in the mass media, education system public and private, and the slave mentality of the workplace where the subject labors away its best hours performing tasks that in and of themselves have no real value. Here, through this glass darkly, we see Kant and his pure Transcendental Aesthetic from a great distance. His organic, objective *a priori* (state of space-time) is overthrown in a bloodless *coup d'état*. Offered the immortality of an endless supply of consumer goods and credit, the subject bows to its new lord and master.

It is ready to accept all decrees issuing forth from the throne of social and political priority that is the consequence of the abdication of its responsibility for self-determination. The drone of the hegemony's discourse is that the synthetic, argumentative reality substituted in the abdication of individual sovereignty is in fact the analytic, explicit reality.

The result is a kind of social and economic chaos advantageous to the agenda of the hegemony, which is total autonomy from its creator the subject. In its sacrifice of self-determination, the subject also loses any power to influence the topology of the sphere it finds itself trapped in. It must accept whatever “world” emerges from the aggregate effect of the chaos. If it is a matter of economy, then this aggregate effect is the result of the consumer demand created by easy credit. This hegemonic genesis is often lightly referred to as a “bubble,” but the image does little to give a realistic sense of its all-encompassing pervasiveness as quite literally the world the subject now inhabits.

There is no need for any design of this world; it emerges quite autonomously from the dynamic forces involved, which range from the technology necessary to create the illusion to the economy which makes it possible to operate the technology. “There is no rule that is applicable to chaos,” says Agamben. “The sovereign's monopoly over the final decision is the essence of State Sovereignty and must be properly defined not as the

monopoly to rule but as the monopoly to decide ...”<sup>53</sup> What the subject has sacrificed is the ability to decide, turning it over to the hegemonic power which it believes is an accurate reflection of its wants and needs.

While chaos of course has no rule, it must have laws. A “state” must “stand” for something (freedom, justice, equality, democracy, and so on). But is not a law a rule? It is *if and only if* there is no state of exception; but since the hegemony requires the state of exception to exist, chaos reigns. *Exception* is a form of negation, in this case negation of the positive law of no exception—which, hypocritically, is what the law touts as its sole sustaining credo. The state of exception is a form of reset back to a state of chaos where rules do not apply, the irony being that such a decision is made by a set of rules allowing the return to no rules. “The exception is a kind of *exclusion* [italics added],” says Agamben, and as such is the negation of +1, leaving us with 0, a reset of the categorical exclusion. “The rule applies to the exception in no longer applying, in withdrawing from it. The state of exception is thus not the chaos that precedes order but rather the situation that results from its suspension.”<sup>54</sup> The state of exception is its own justification. No “trusted third party” is needed. In this way it is deliciously anarchic, appealing both to those who hate the arbitrary imposition of the law and those who seek to establish its priority over all free will in the totalitarian state.

What follows in a civilization from the state of exception is an opportunity for its citizens to run amok. Underneath their cringing need for “security” is an almost irresistible lust for pandemic mayhem. In fact, the former increases with the virulence of the latter. Why? Because the individual does not see this lust in himself, but in his neighbor; meantime, that neighbor sees this passion not in himself but in the individual, who sees it in him. The social bond that makes society possible soon vanishes. The Law redouble its extrinsic effort to compensate for the lack of any core ethical aesthetic that might increase what Kropotkin calls *mutual aid*. Cued by the fiats of the leader, and in emulation of the impunity they perceive the sovereign to possess, citizens “take the law into their own hands.” Corruption, the cousin of exception, becomes the only way to proceed.

Consequently, there is a rise of the rule of the military camp, which includes partial and selective imposition of martial law. At the same time there is a forcible redistribution of income in the forms of rapacious financial institutions, a mafia-like government, the rise of powerful criminal cartels, and rapid growth of transnational corporations acting as proximal governments.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

This moving description by a former Roman citizen of around 450 A.D. shows what “civilization” looks like in the depths of a perpetual state of exception to its own laws. The occasion was a banquet held by no less than Attila the Hun, who had freed his Roman captive after he had demonstrated the personal integrity the “barbarian” considered worthy of a free man.

The freedman of Onegesius exposed, in true and lively colours, the vices of the declining empire, of which he had so long been the victim; the cruel absurdity of the roman princes, unable to protect their subjects against the public enemy, unwilling to trust them with arms for their own defense; the intolerable weight of taxes, rendered still more oppressive by the intricate or arbitrary modes of collection; the obscurity of numerous and contradictory laws; the tedious and expensive forms of judicial proceedings; the partial administration of justice; and the universal corruption, which increased the influence of the rich, and aggravated the misfortunes of the poor. A sentiment of patriotic sympathy was at length revived in the breast of the unfortunate exile; and he lamented, with a flood of tears, the guilt or weakness of those magistrates who had perverted the wisest and most salutary institutions.<sup>55</sup>

Why is the state of exception necessary to the hegemony? And how does it arise of itself as the law? What the speaker above describes as “the partial administration of justice” is familiar to subjects of the modern state as “selective enforcement” where, for one reason or another, the rate at which laws are enforced is uneven across the field of known crimes. Often it is accompanied by unfunded or underfunded mandates from the lawmaking branch of the state which force law enforcement into selective enforcement because of a conflict between a demand for justice and lack of resources. Therefore, selectively enforcing the law, though sometimes a necessity because of the ratio of available resources to incidents of crime, is an invitation to a discretionary application of the state of exception.

Inevitably corruption creeps into the equation, weakening the population’s faith in justice while strengthening the power of those who find it necessary to bend or break the law at its expense. Never mind that it is also *paying* for this debacle through taxation which tends to be better enforced than other laws.

While we may equate the “total” state of exception with civilization’s ultimate endpoint: the totalitarian state, its discretionary enforcement is enough to bring on the attributes of the ethical aesthetic of total state control. How? Through the expression of the *nomos* in the discourse of the state’s

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<sup>55</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Wordsworth Editions, 1987), Chapter 34, 633-4.

rulers, officials, functionaries, politicians, corporations, and the media they as an elite cohort inevitably control. It should be added that some currents of thought running through the histories of civilization have been deeply suspicious of and opposed to the state of exception.

In “The Seventh Day, The Tenth Story” of Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, the storytelling king of the day comments that, “It is clear beyond doubt that any just king should be the first to observe the laws he has made. If he acts differently, he must be judged a slave deserving of punishment and not a king.”<sup>56</sup> The interesting choice of word here is “slave”; Boccaccio’s character believes that the hypocrisy of the state of exception deposes a king, who should be the master of masters, to the level of a slave.

Attempts to *totally* control the lives of the subject are simply too inefficient. They tend to divert resources away from the wealth aggregation of the plutocracy and into the belabored apparatus of state needed to bring about this unnatural circumstance. More modern forms realize that the media and the education system are much more efficient and profitable ways to terrorize citizens into abdicating and submitting to the state.

The form of expression used in education and the media is a kind of verbal terrorism; only one “word bomb” followed by a few ugly examples of selective enforcement trumpeted in the media as the universal law-of-the-land is enough to galvanize the entire population. The survivors of this onslaught are usually the few cranks and dissidents who, like the survivors of the Plague, are somehow genetically immune to its infection. There are also individuals who, by design or accident, have isolated themselves from the disease-carrying discourse, such as religious cults, “survivalists,” and “fringe” groups that have managed to avoid the “carriers” of this meme. They serve as a kind of seed stock to, perhaps, regenerate the ideas the discourse believes it has all but stamped out. As such, they are branded as “dangerous” by the state. Meantime, it is the historical tendency of all forms of “the partial administration of justice” to tend to favor those who support the hegemony not only in word and deed but in money and power. The result, as the “freedman of Onegesius” describes, is the consequential disintegration of the apparatus in favor, usually, of a new bigger and better one that does not make the same errors but eventually succumbs to some genetic descendent of them eventually.

It is a mistake to think that this is simply the natural course of human events and history, considering that we have barely 5,000 years of it to ponder compared to tens of thousands of years of other forms of human existence which, just because they predate civilization, are not de facto “bad” and “wrong.” They are just fundamentally different.

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<sup>56</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, (Wordsworth Editions, 2004), 524.



While it may seem that there are many “decisions” the subject surrenders at the point of abdication, there is only one which is nontrivial: the biological imperative of self-determination. Of what does this imperative consist? Besides the need to survive, and therefore to eat and reproduce, its most salient characteristic is the organism’s *capability* to make decisions about its own destiny. We may strip this capability down to an alternating pattern of non-zero-sum and zero-sum games. In the former, it must assume a Nash equilibrium where decisions about what is most advantageous to its survival are made taking into consideration what is most advantageous to its peers who are in the same circumstances and upon whom it ultimately depends. This we call society.

However, there is also the element of competition under certain circumstances and therefore one must from time to time lose for the other to win. The former taken to the extreme of the exclusion of the latter we call altruism; the latter take to the extreme of the exclusion of the former we call self-interest or more poetically “social Darwinism.” But if we discard the ethical aesthetic of equilibrium which is after all an organic state and therefore analytic, we are left with the synthetic proposition of the creation of an artificial world wherein no equilibrium is necessary or even possible.

No intelligence is needed on the part of the subject to understand this dynamical situation. Necessity itself is a game where one either gets what one needs and wants or not. It is the same for a microbe as it is for a sovereign, and therefore it has its own syntax and does not need to borrow it from the rule book of civilization.

Nevertheless, this game is subject to the categorical exclusion. And as such, it determines the ethical aesthetic of the individual and by association the network of other individuals comprising the social milieu. Kropotkin, in *Mutual Aid*,<sup>57</sup> describes his reading of Darwin and others as well as the result of his observations of nature. His conclusion is that cooperation, or what has been called here a Nash equilibrium, results in the most favorable outcomes for individuals of a social unit.

As soon as we study animals—not in laboratories and museums only, but in the forest and the prairie, in the steppe and the mountains—we at once perceive that though there is an immense amount of warfare and extermination going on amidst various species, and especially amidst various classes of animals, there is, at the same time, as much, or perhaps even more, of mutual support, mutual aid, and mutual defense amidst animals belonging to the same species or, at least, to the same society.

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<sup>57</sup> Pyotr Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (New York University Press, 1972).

Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle. Of course it would be extremely difficult to estimate, however roughly, the relative numerical importance of both these series of facts. But if we resort to an indirect test, and ask Nature: "Who are the fittest: those who are continually at war with each other, or those who support one another?" we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest.<sup>58</sup>

Despite the fact that the origin of the term "survival of the fittest" is attributed to Herbert Spencer not Darwin, Kropotkin sees "social Darwinism" as the losing strategy in the game of survival. And there is enough evidence to support the assertion that the same view was held by Darwin himself, such as we see in this passage from *On the Origin of Species*, quoted by Kropotkin, "Those communities ... which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members would flourish best, and rear the greatest number of offspring."<sup>59</sup>

So what, then, is the subject's motivation for doing all in its power to overthrow the superior social instinct in favor of unenlightened self-interest? Would this not seem to be inviting its own extinction? We must once again wonder what the engine is behind the subject's lust for abdication; it would seem that nature would endow this creature with an innate and tenacious sense of resistance to such a choice. Nevertheless, the path to self-destruction is lined with signage indicating the fastest way to Hell.

The subject is only too willing to follow these signs to their end in the vain hope that "in the future" its ego will not be asked to make the ultimate sacrifice. As its fear of the dissolution of the ego is collectivized, this fear takes on a degree of autonomy which makes it behave almost as a living being itself, with its own sense of self-determination.

Of course, this is an illusion. But as with all humanoid machines from computers to animatronic Turks, we are inclined to embrace the idea that we are not alone in the universe, and that of humankind's many gifts the creation of artificial life is the most unexpected and spectacular: the so-called "singularity" every toy company and pop technologist prays for.

What, then, is the mechanism at work here? In the categorical exclusion, the threshold of infinity lies at the position between 0 and 1, not between 1 and  $n$ . Ironically, the former is the synthetic proposition, as 1, as a predicate, is not a member of the class of 0, which only contains itself and  $\aleph_0$  and therefore only numbers that are "infinitely less than" 1. The statement "0 /

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 9.

1" > (the difference between 0 and 1 *is* greater) joins a subject (0) and predicate (1) with a copula (/, or "the difference ... *is*").

This is a *true* (T) synthetic statement because while 0 and 1 are not of the same class, they each draw their attributes from each other and are therefore mutually dependent. As such, they are dependents not of the same *class*, but of the same *category* of what might be called "*le devenir*," the coming-into-being. They arise *from* each other. Whereas, 1 is a member of all numbers of *n*. The relationship between 1 and *n* is therefore analytical in the sense of being tautological and therefore "always true" and verifiable, since *A* is always *A*.

All positive integers, then, are members of the same class of positive integers, but none are dependent upon any other to be a discrete number except to be the successor of another number but never its negation. This distinction is trivial, following as it does the nontrivial (infinite) distinction between 0 and 1. The difference between 1 and 5 could just as well be expressed as  $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 1 = 5$  as  $1 + 4 = 5$ . Furthermore, both are no more consequential than saying that  $5 = 5$ .

Identity cannot be predicated upon the fact that identity *A* is not identity *B* without one being the negation of the other and therefore giving rise to *le devenir*. The reason is that  $\sim B$  could be any member of a set, not just *A* and vice versa. Whereas there is only one possibility of there being a negation of 0 or 1. The relationship between *A* and *B* is not necessarily one of *B* being the negation of *A* but rather of it being something *other than A*, a class to which belong what Kant calls the "manifold," or everything *other than A*. And to say that the class of positive integers contains infinity because we may potentially have an infinite sequence of them is also false. We cannot *prove* this proposition, since we must always stop at some number along the line. Therefore, positive integers might be said to have a synthetic infinity, or even an imaginary infinity.

It is this synthetic or imaginary infinity that is exploited by the discourse of the abdicated subject. In so doing the "manifold" of the subject's imaginary world of simulacra take on the cloak of verifiability otherwise reserved for synthetic statements.

Meantime, they lack any meaningful relational element that would endow the joining together with a copula into a proposition any kind of power to define reality, as would a "true" synthetic statement (which nevertheless remains distinct from the analytical statement because it eludes verification). Kant's description of the difference bears repeating here.

In forming an analytical judgment I remain within a given concept, while predicating something of it. If what I predicate is affirmative, I only predicate of that concept what is already contained in it; if it is negative, I only exclude

from it the opposite of it. In forming synthetical judgments, on the contrary, I have to go beyond a given concept, *to bring something together with it*, which is totally different from what is contained in it. Here we have neither the relation of identity nor of contradiction, and nothing in the judgment itself by which we can discover its truth or its falsehood.<sup>60</sup>

Again, we must make the distinction between a false and true synthetical statement, setting aside the idea that for something to be “true” it must be absolutely verifiable. (For example, the truth of the statement of an enthymeme need not be stated, but only implied by the known elements.) To say that *B* is *B* because it is not *A* is false because it unites a subject and predicate which are have no dependency, neither cause and effect nor negation. Therefore, the copula creates a statement which is not only unverifiable but meaningless, for example, “I am you.” The latter, however, contains its own verification while also showing a nontrivial relationship of dependency between *A* and *B*, as in “One is alive because one is not dead.”

In this case the identity of *A* (life) arises from its *negation* of *B* (death), not solely from the fact that it is  $\sim A$ . There is no manifold of members of either class *A* or *B* here. The matter becomes clearer when we use numbers. We cannot say that 2 is not 1 because it is a negation of 1; we can only say that any number, to be “a number,” must have a successor. But that successor does not give rise to the number. The number 0 is the only number that gives rise to any number, and therefore it gives rise to all numbers as *le devenir*.

When manufacturing became the foundation of Western wealth and economy during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, the idea was born of the simulacrum—the endless iteration of an identical thing, each its own “original” of the other. A new ethical aesthetic was born. Until this time, such an idea was absent from consciousness of realia. We may also presume that as these goods needed a market. As that market was used to having each thing in its realm being *unique* (as handicrafts are), a commercial discourse arose to combat this “old” unique.

The old unique meant that a blacksmith, for example, would never turn out two horseshoes alike, even for the same horse. With the rise of machine manufacturing, such variety would soon become an abomination. It was a sign of the *inferiority* of handmade products. Much later it would be revived as a desirable commodity; it became the “unique selling proposition” of the props of an idealized homespun “past” when everything was of “quality”—yet another adjective that would suffer abuse in this context.

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<sup>60</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 126.

Klemperer describes what he calls “The Curse of the Superlative” in the language of the Third Reich. Specifically, he finds the word “unique” to be a common example of the way Hitler, Goebbels, and Nazi discourse deconstructed the numerical superlative so that it could be repurposed as hyperbole:

“[U]nique” is just as much a superlative as a thousand [as in *Tausendjähriges Reich*]. As a synonym for extraordinary, and stripped of its numerical significance, the word became ... a fashionable expression with a whiff of the aesthete about it .... The [*Lingua Tertii Imperii*, or *LTI*], and particularly the Führer himself, use the word so often and so carelessly that one is reminded in comic fashion of its numerical value.<sup>61</sup>

The kernel of the repurposing is, of course, the denaturing of the word’s numerical significance. What is “unique” in a number system? While the word “discrete” adequately describes the difference between one number and another, it should not be confused with *unique*. Only certain irrational numbers such as  $\aleph_0$  (if it is an irrational number) and  $\pi$  may be accurately described as unique. After all, should we not want anything that we call unique to be rare, infrequent, *sui generis*?

On a little more technical level, however, we may say that by migrating the meaning of unique from a superlative to hyperbole the thing described as such also migrates from being a member of class *a* (the difference between 0 / 1) to class *b* (the difference between 1 and *n*, or any other number). Other comparisons include the effect on the predicate logic of a sentence, where a predicate of class *b* is grafted, as it were, onto a subject of class *a*, by employing the nexus of a ostensibly verifiable proposition. In the statement, “If one *is* born, then one must die,” *is*, at least in first-order logic, verifiable because it is a matter of cause and effect.

Here, the copula “*is*” (to be) issues from *le devenir*, the coming-into-being, which is the universe of discourse of all that may be said to “exist.” Whereas the statement, “If one commits treason, one *is* an enemy of the state,” is only verifiable according to its own logic and not the predicate logic of a universal. In other words, its verifiability is merely tautological, meaning that it only belongs to the existential set of itself, which is as much as saying that *it is because it is*, which is true, but trivial. The copula “*is*” is, at best, figurative. We could call it *is'*, or “*is, prime*,” a simulation of the coming-into-being that is a creature of the perhaps wishful imagination only and not of any objective reality.

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<sup>61</sup> Victor Klemperer, *The Language of the Third Reich* (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 225.

Such a statement has not earned the right to the copula “to be” because there is no absolute cause and effect relationship between the subject and the predicate, only an association within the invalid synthetic proposition of the *nomos*. And even this ersatz truth is suspect. Creating a world where mere awareness is enough to “verify” existence suits the ethical aesthetic of digital technology.

Despite this transparent flaw, it remains proud of the hubris of its world-making, awaiting the arrival of its Messiah “The Singularity” to verify the grandiosity of its claims—which is its own hyped-up jargon for what the Nazis merely termed “unique.” This suits the discourse of the hegemony, which accepts it without complaint or modification. It allows it to generate endless artificial words for the enthrallment of the subject whose generous abdication has made this whole arrangement possible, and profitable.

Historically, to effect this change in consciousness, the idea of a superlative such as “unique” had to change as well. Before manufacturing, the way in which each hand-made thing was unique was “the same”: by accident of its fabrication. Each manufactured item, however, was considered unique in a new and better way in that one was just as miraculously perfect as another—a rare phenomenon in nature, if altogether absent. Along with this new aesthetic came a socio-economic stigma regarding homespun goods: they were for the poor, the hayseed, the rube.

In having two opposing ways in which something can be “unique,” there arose the *good* and *bad* unique, which requires a sort of aesthetic in which a false (F) synthetic proposition can be maintained as a true (T) analytic proposition. This distinction later gave rise to the ubiquitous commercial phrase thriving until this day of something being “one of the most unique” of its kind. The word “unique” therefore ceased being a category, becoming a relative, synthetic attribute subject to degree.

As is the way with language, dozens of other words followed suit until there was a general erosion of categorical thinking, much to the benefit of the new rising ethical aesthetic of consumerism. All that was missing was a financial system of easy credit to go along with it. Although such an economy was slow to follow, when it did catch up there was no turning back. A new political economy was born to match the ethical aesthetic, changing the foundational concept of civilization from the maintenance of equilibrium to perpetual expansion and progression.

Therefore, all things associated with this category were transformed from the categorical to the relative. Furthermore, the marketplace was such that provided manufacturers could maintain the right balance between diversity of style and universality of trends, they could convince the consumer that everyone could be uniquely the same while being differently

unique—the *fundamental synthetic fallacy*. The staggering success of this enterprise led to the world we see today.

The way it transformed the apparent immutability of the empirical world into a universe of fungible, transactional quantities subject to the whims of imagination touched something basal in the neurological structure of the ego. It made such symbolic manipulation of language and therefore of how we think about reality physiologically and psychologically irresistible and addictive.

Of course, the first and foremost apparatus is language itself.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, it is language which must first be manipulated by the apparatus for it institute the state of exception, which is ultimately a *willing* suspension of the predicate logic of language, as Orwell indicates throughout *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. "The situation created in the exception has the peculiar character that it cannot be defined either as a situation of fact or as a situation of right, but instead institutes a paradoxical threshold of indistinction between the two," says Agamben.<sup>63</sup>

While these modifications of the predicate logic of language were at first limited to commerce, their success soon helped them spread to politics, economics, ethics, morality, science, religion, education, and finally our own personal existence as sovereign, self-determinate individuals. The result was and still is that through the language of the law the hegemony may invoke the state of exception, thereby violating Wittgenstein's rule that "No proposition can say anything about itself." The law creates its own rule about how it follows its own rule by stating the law shall be enforced if and only if it shall not be enforced. Once again, we are haunted by  $[x(n) \leftrightarrow n(\sim x)]$ , where  $x$  = the law, and  $n$  = the state of exception.

When sovereign power steps outside the law, invoking the law of the camp, it temporarily *reassigns* sovereignty to the citizen by suspending the rule of law which was the very apparatus which denied the subject its self-determination. While some subjects decry the loss of "security," and politicians make names for themselves by claiming they will restore it *a fortiori*, the citizenry soon intoxicates itself with such bonanzas as unqualified credit and the perquisites of universal corruption—public and private. While the rule of the military camp professes to uphold and enforce law and order, its presence is the symptom of an underlying breakdown in the social fabric of "mutual aid" necessary to keep society from descending into chaos.

The ensuing "freedom" can take the form of mass murder, kleptocracy, enslavement of the underclass, beheading of the aristocracy, imprisonment

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<sup>62</sup> Agamben, personal conversation, Saas-Fee, Valais, Switzerland, 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Agamben, *op. cit.*, 18.

of “intellectuals,” and more often than not an otherwise unprecedented transfer of the commonwealth into the vaults of the self-appointed *domini* of “the fittest.”

Agamben cites Arendt’s description of the totalitarianism of forced labor camps as a state where “everything is possible .... because the camps constitute a *space of exception* [italics added] ... in which not only is law completely suspended but fact and law are completely confused—everything in the camps is truly possible.”<sup>64</sup> Ah, to live in a special world where *everything* is possible! The problem until recently, however, was that this “space” quickly led to a critical depletion of resources, starvation, and mass death. Nevertheless, that it is a “space” belies its topological nature, meaning that as a repository of simulacra it *inherits* the potential of world-making from its parent realia.

With the advent of digital technology, inheritance occurs in a vicarious, virtual, *sur*-reality where the consequences while not eliminated are displaced enough to seem inconsequential. What has really happened, however, is that “fact and law are completely confused”; the analytic and synthetic are conflated, for the law, like mathematics, is entirely synthetic. Depending upon the culture, “blasphemy” may or may not be a capital offence. There is no order of logic to the law except whatever expedient the law-maker finds necessary *in situ*.

Consequently, in modern culture the same old crisis that the construction of an artificial world has faced over the centuries is either pushed down the time line of absolute inevitability or is cynically imposed upon a powerless and impoverished culture whose leaders throw open the gates to civilization’s excesses in return for their personal enrichment. Despite the seemingly unlimited possibilities of this derivative universe of discourse, the universe of real value—realia—persists. And it is not filled only with mutual aid, rainbows, love, and forests of chirping birds. It is also the realm of deadly disease caused by virus, the catastrophes of nature, and the inevitably uncontrollable forces of war.

As the subject basks in its artificial paradise made possible by technology (ironically, plagued with virtual “viruses”), real viruses busy themselves trying every combination of surface protein in search of just the right one to fool all vaccines and antibodies and bring mass death to humankind. Though experience, history, and signs in the environment warn us of these impending disasters, the cult of wishful thinking blinds us to the consequences. No longer acquainted with the psychodynamics of reality and infatuated with the ego’s dream of eternal consumption, humankind sees no significance in these temblors, opting instead to wait for the decisive quake.

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<sup>64</sup> Op. cit., 170.



The problem is that simulacra inherit the *diathetic* characteristics of realia (such as a computer virus) without possessing the organic integrity to maintain the “otherness” necessary to identify with members of class *a*. Members of class *a* belong to Kant’s *a priori*; members of class *b* are *a posteriori* and are therefore derivative, bereft of the underlying real value of realia upon which they are predicated.

More needs to be said here regarding the diathetic. Besides its meaning in modern medicine as inherited characteristics, it also serves to give us an idea of how this kind of “disposition”—for that is what heredity is from parent to child—affects what we have been calling here the sphere of influence. T.E. Lawrence, in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, uses the term in relation to the propaganda necessary to persuade Britain’s clients, the Arabs, to fight the Turks more strategically.

There remained the psychological element to build up into an apt shape. I went to Xenophon and stole, to name it, his word *diathetics*, which had been the art of Cyrus before he struck .... Of this our “propaganda” was the stained and ignoble offspring. It was the pathic, almost the ethical, in war. Some of it concerned the crowd, *an adjustment of its spirit to the point where it became useful to exploit in action* [italics added], and the pre-direction of this changing spirit to a certain end. Some of it concerned the individual, and then it became a rare art of human kindness, *transcending, by purposed emotion, the gradual logical sequence of the mind* [italics added]. It was more subtle than tactics, and better worth doing, because it dealt with uncontrollables, with subjects incapable of direct command. It considered the capacity for mood of our men, their complexities and mutability, and the cultivation of whatever in them promised to profit our intention.<sup>65</sup>

The discourse of the abdicated subject, in the form of the hegemonic *nomos* and the chatter of the media, serves to “adjust” the “spirit” so as to make exploitation of the subject’s will possible. The banality of celebrity gossip and the arbitrary fiats of the state, despite their meaningless triviality, nevertheless serve the purpose. In fact, the more banal and arbitrary the better; they beat the drum to which the subject now dances.

If that drum beat stopped for a minute, it might awaken some innate analytical faculty in the subject’s mind and spoil the illusion of an immortal paradise of consumerism. What Lawrence describes as a “pathic” (emotional) ethical aesthetic in diathetic discourse creates a “disposition” or “state” in the subject “transcending ... *the gradual logical sequence of the mind.*” In this state, fair is foul, and foul is fair, which is useful in the kind of Clausewitzian total war Lawrence had in mind at that time and which

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<sup>65</sup> T.E. Lawrence, *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1926), 92.

might seem, in retrospect, to have been necessary for the sake of that campaign.

Nevertheless, as we have been saying all along, the hegemonic power created by the aggregate of the subjects' abdication of personal sovereignty instinctively incorporates and then applies whatever is most expedient. In this case, *diathetics* is necessary for formation of an artificial world that will have the verisimilitude to satisfy (not "fool") the subject. Being all too willing to suspend disbelief, they subject may even be aware that it is "being had" or that what it reacts to as realia is merely simulacra; such perception *is no deterrent!* In fact, it is a "unique" selling point for manufactured reality. No fuss, no mess!

What, then, is the irresistible power of such an arrangement? Why is the diathetic so effective in replacing realia with simulacra? We may turn to where, perhaps, Xenophon found the idea: Aristotle. In *Metaphysics* 5.1022b, he uses the word to mean "disposition," which he defines as an "arrangement of that which has parts, either in space or in potentiality or in form. It must be a kind of position, as indeed is clear from the word, 'disposition.'"

He goes on to say that being of a certain disposition or state is a kind of "having," which echoes nicely with the idea of the subject "being had" by the discourse it has created through the abdication of its own responsibility for its sovereignty. Either one "has" one's sovereignty in the sense of it being one's possession, or one *is possessed* by a sovereign entity which has assumed, by proxy, the self-possession one surrendered. It is no coincidence that this proximal entity is called *the* State, while the "disposition" of the subject is called *a* state. The difference, of course, is the semantic significance between the definite and indefinite article.

[T]here is another sense of "having" which means a disposition, in virtue of which the thing which is disposed is disposed well or badly, and either independently or in relation to something else. E.g., health is a state, since it is a disposition of the kind described. Further, any part of such a disposition is called a state; and hence the excellence of the parts is a kind of state.<sup>66</sup>

Therefore, the subject finds itself in a bifurcated disposition of being "diathetic" in the most literal sense. It occupies *simultaneous parallel ontologies* (of which we shall hear more later). The enormous inefficiency of maintaining these two classes simultaneously as parallel "realities" forces social structure to bifurcate into the haves and have-nots. This is the

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<sup>66</sup>*Metaphysics*, 5.1022b

mechanism civilization adopts as its ethical aesthetic when equilibrium is no longer part of its stabilizing core.

At best, it touts social welfare programs as evidence of its beneficent nature, substituting altruism (a fatal game strategy) for a Nash equilibrium in the form of a non-zero-sum game. Along with the virtues of the progressive fallacy, its mouthpieces trumpet the necessity of state-organized alms without the least bit of bashfulness regarding its otherwise rapacious promotion of the zero-sum, winner-take-all game. After all, it has paid for the indulgences for its sins.

What more does the subject want from its appointed sovereign, the power it has sacrificed its own personal sovereignty for? While the mass of the “poor” may lack the will, means, or know-how to topple this situation, they usually possess the resentment, anger, and frustration necessary to make life difficult for the anointed.

The solution? Create a network of *carceri*, or enclosures, either in the form of state and federal prisons or urban ghettos with inescapable gravitational fields of poverty. Here, the underclass can be effectively managed by the beneficence of the altruistic state while being contained enough not to interfere with the dream world of simulacra.

However, having inherited the diathetic characteristics of realia, this ideal world of eternal consumption of entertainment and goods is nevertheless subject to impingement by shortages of various necessities, natural disaster, invasions, subterfuge, terrorism, and endemic corruption and incompetent management. Furthermore, being presided over by a kleptocracy, its fatal inefficiency tends to accelerate parabolically, forming a cycle of booms and busts which momentarily release the pent-up ferocity of those it mercilessly exploits. It would seem, then, that the days of the reign of the hegemonic simulacrum would be numbered. And they would be if, and only if, the mass of abdicated subjects did not support it with even more devotion and sacrifice just when it could be overthrown. These fanatics, possessed of (or by) what Goebbels calls “*wilden Fanatismus*,”<sup>67</sup> form the bourgeoisie of class *b*.

Without them the state of exception is impossible. However, having abdicated, they remain blind to the interests of the sovereign self which has a natural affinity for realia and an equally natural revulsion for simulacra. They cannot see that their tacit endorsement of the state of exception during times of chaos guarantees that once “normalcy” returns, it will bring about yet another more odious one—perhaps for their children.

They also see the it as an opportunity to relieve themselves of the burden of the relentless demands of progressive altruism, abandoning their

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<sup>67</sup> Klemperer, *LTI*, 63.

humanitarian credos in favor of further curtailment of their freedom and self-determination in favor of law and order and national security. Meantime, the underclass, who once again are seen as the festering miasma of chaos, must suffer a new round of imprisonment and humiliation.

The bourgeoisie has a problem appreciating the freedom of the state of exception because state torture and murder on the one hand and looting and rape by the lumpen proletariat on the other, are not sanctioned deontological behaviors in the bourgeois codebook. Their ethical aesthetic will only allow such sociopathy if it is conducted *by proxy* on their behalf, far from the prying eyes of their favorite entertainment media.

While their ideology of altruistic progressivism and social evolution through technology is entirely *teleological*, their actual behavior and consequently what little decision-making power they have left after abdication is entirely *deontological*. In this way they become comfortable with hypocrisy, which also then becomes part of the ethical aesthetic of abdication.

If things in the present are terrible, there is no need to do anything about it. “In the future” they will automatically be better. If things in the present are good, then everything must be done to impose a permanent state of fossilization so that nothing ever changes.

Aiding them in this crusade to replace the *a priori* of realia with the *a posteriori* of simulacra are the parasite classes of government, the church, education, banking, and the media. So as not to offend the delicacy of their ethical aesthetic, all the dirty work of empire must be performed teleologically by paid proxies who assume the role of defenders of the republic.

Despite their fanaticism for law and order, the mass of abdicated subjects has its heroes among those who seem to operate in a permanent state of exception: criminals. The greater the worship of professional criminals, the greater the cry for law and order. For example, the absolute heyday of the hero criminal was between 1920 and 1933 in the United States when the sale and drinking of alcohol was prohibited by a popular outcry against the deleterious effects of alcohol. This social experiment forever cast the role of organized crime as the champion of the individual who by choice or force finds himself powerless. The massively lucrative liquor business was taken over solely by crime syndicates.

It was not until the government realized how much tax revenue it was losing that it made the cynical decision to repeal the law. Agamben describes this state of being as “in many ways similar” to that of *homo sacer*, the “sacred man” who may be killed without juridical penalty. “He has been excluded from the religious community and from all political life” and is therefore free

of the *nomos*, or Law. His status as a kind of holy man helps illuminate the vernacular sainthood gangsters and criminals receive from their “audiences” who are often also their victims, and for the collective celebration of their juridical crucifixions.

This issue in transformational law is what Agamben calls “inclusion.” The categorical *exclusion*, however, by its nature, has an inverse relationship to inclusion. What is excluded from the category is determined by the sovereign power. By remaining the arbiter of juridical power within the law, the *nomos* excludes the citizen from exercising the same (e.g. “taking matters into his own hands”). Under this regime we may say that the citizen's sphere of influence, or what he has power over, has transferred from realia to simulacra, creating a topology or “space” with inclusion at one end and exclusion at the other.

This contrasts with the criminal whom the subject both fears and worships. In transgressing the *nomos*, the criminal injects his personal sovereignty into a lawless terrain by exploiting the state of exception for himself only, incurring the wrath of the hegemony.

Therefore, it may be said of the criminal that possession of personal sovereignty is “true” (T), but that the odds of sustaining it are low. As an enemy of the hegemonic order he will soon find this sovereignty revoked by the *nomos* of the *carceri*. (It is for this reason that *omerta*, the Code of Silence among criminals, is the last refuge of their personal sovereign power—even if it means certain incarceration.) By abdicating, the citizen negates his positive sovereignty ( $1 - 1 = 0$ ). Consequently, he enters a realm where simulacra, which are the negation of realia, express the false proposition of ownership; just as the subject does not own his house, car, or even his bank account because of insurmountable debt, he also does not own *himself*. Therefore, the proposition that he is “free” is false (F). However, he has the reasonable expectation that this state of being will not lead to incarceration—at least not with the same bad odds as the criminal.

As for the criminal, what happens after that, how many he kills, how many banks are robbed, what number of incarcerations he suffers and so on is merely iterative ( $n$ ). While the criminal has crossed a social threshold, he has not abdicated; his act of defiance—even if it is out of sociopathy—excludes him from class *b*. Seen from the point of view of the members of class *b*, he is at once a pariah but also an object of envy, for just as the dead envy the living in Homer, so too do the abdicated envy the sovereign, even to the point of jealous hatred.

The exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule. The particular

“force” of law consists in this capacity of law to maintain itself in relation to an exteriority. We shall give the name *relation of exception* to the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion.<sup>68</sup>

Such a complicated, convoluted state of “reality” is only possible when the rules are dictated by their own expedient needs. Confusion about the ethical aesthetic at work here arises from the *a priori* (and false) assumption that the subject is somehow forced to abdicate. However, one may not be “forced” to do something voluntary; if that is the case, it is no longer voluntary and must then go by some other name. It is true to say, though, that the discourse of the hegemony strews the path to abdication with rose petals, keeping the thorns of the stems well from view.

Meantime, the subject itself, ill-equipped to make any kind of existential decision, and barely aware of its own ontology except the biological imperative to eat and reproduce, is “ripe” for abdication. Dragging the cross of responsibility up the Golgotha of self-determination, the subject is ever vigilant for the easiest escape route from its mortal fate. As a result, it is both *pulled* into abdication by irresistible hegemonic forces (such as the necessity of debt) and *pushed* by his own desire for an immortality filled with limitless consumer goods and luxuries—the enticements religion offers only post mortem to those who promptly pay their tithes.

The result is a categorical abnegation of organic core identity. This push-pull negation can be likened to the trucks of an electric train with self-powered cars and no engine. In such an arrangement, each car has two trucks with sets of electric powered wheels. The rear truck (based on the direction the train travels) pushes the car, while the front truck, engaging the same mechanism, pulls the car. The “exception” is the front truck, and the “rule” is the rear. Both propel the force of law (*nomos*) toward its exteriority, and as such are in a state of *the relation of exception* in that they negate each other and yet propel the juridical “force” in the maintaining of a set of all sets where “something is included solely through its exclusion.”

While this may seem absolute, we must consider that there is no exception to the state of exception. It *is* absolute. As such, it neatly serves as the threshold between what the subject regards as “interior” and “exterior”—in other words, the topology of its Dasein. It also serves as the transformational point between normalcy and chaos. The relation of exception, then, becomes the topology of abdication through which both sovereign and citizen navigate in their *pas de deux* of hegemonic possession.

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<sup>68</sup> Op. cit., 18.

## 1.9 Personal sovereignty and exclusion

When we talk about language, we also talk about psychology. When we talk about psychology, we also talk about emotion. And what emotion is more fundamental to the modern profession of psychology than “happiness”? The most profitable of all industries, pharmacology, even has pills to bring it about, with some commercial success. Certainly, the goal of therapy, in the mind of the client, is to establish a state of permanent, unassailable happiness in perpetuity.

While this is an ambitious goal, we must remember that psychology is now considered to be a “hard” Science, like its big brother psychiatry. As such, *it is only a matter of time* before Progress conquers any deficiencies psychology (any psychiatry) has in bringing about the ultimate state of eternal happiness for everyone. While the word “happiness” is basically a commercial proposition with only a vague denotation, its connotations are so rich as to earn it an everyday place of honor in modern political and commercial discourse as the *summum bonum* of civilization’s beneficence.

It is the aim of government, medicine, education, entertainment, banking, and consumer culture to support the subject in its quest for this elusive state that always seems to be “in the future” but is real enough as a laudable life goal for which any sacrifice is appropriate. The famous “pursuit of happiness” referred to in the Declaration of Independence is an example of how exalted this pursuit is. The modern psychological-psychiatric apparatus assumes that it has justifiably replaced the humbug of religion in making such promises. The subject is ... *happy* ... with this idea, since religion, if it promises any sort of happiness, specifies that it cannot be had in the corporeal world and therefore must be expected as one’s reward for good behavior, but only after what the subject is most frightened of: death.

The contemporaneous ego, however, will have none of this. It must have its happiness somewhere in between its current miserable condition and its inevitably complicated demise at the hands of nursing homes and hospitals. Public intellectuals, best-selling authors, and the prize-winning geniuses of science have already “proven” that religion is a bunch of hogwash. And if this happiness cannot be had in the here in now, “the future” will do, *if and only if* it is not so far into the future as to be after the death of the body.

Despite the Bible’s rather comprehensive view of life, the word happiness occurs (in the King James version) only three times: in Deuteronomy 24:5, Psalm 34:1, and Psalm 146:1. All three honorable mentions hardly have the commercial gravitas of the modern sense of the word. From the point of view of psychology, this fact is yet another example

of what is wrong with the Bible. It is full of doom and gloom rather than the cheerful “good news” (or Gospel) of the modern self-help movement, psychopharmacology, and commercial appeals offering the ultimate existential quid pro quo: eternal happiness in exchange for one’s signature on a promissory note. The papal indulgences of Cardinal Albert of Brandenburg, Elector and Archbishop of Mainz, could not have been a better deal.

Nevertheless, the discourse of psychology has learned much from the *dichotomania* of Semitic religion. Its own version of “good” and “evil,” couched in the innocuous terms “well” and “ill,” give it free reign to minister to all aspects of the subject’s existence, including what can be ascertained on psychology tests to see if the subject is a good fiduciary risk or not, or even suitable for military service, as if dying for one’s country required a sound mind and body rather than dire necessity or patriotic zeal, which, alas, cannot be measured in the same way. Language plays nicely into this scheme for political psychology, in part by providing a cache of terms such as “happiness,” “security,” “freedom,” “goodness,” “patriotism,” “sanity,” and “progress.”

Most of all, though, language—as the apparatus itself—establishes a discourse relying upon what Gabriel Tarde refers to as “*L’opposition universelle*” in the book by the same name. While he sees that opposing ideas and words arise from each other as mutual genes, he also sees that they give rise to the *extensa* of phenomena, such as war and social relationships. As such, they are the *a priori* gene of phenomena, whereas the “synthesis” of the theses and antitheses of life’s struggles are merely the excrescence of the *a posteriori* in all its scatological glory:

We have often said and repeated, and it has become a kind of axiom, that all our knowledge of things consists of perception of the similarities or differences between them. It is right, and it proves that universal life is an endless interlacing of repetitions and variations. Is it true, however, that there is no difference between these two large classes of the relationship between objects, between states of the being?<sup>69</sup>

Tarde modifies the axiom by saying that there is a *tertium quid* in the dynamical relationship between opposing concepts and forces: “[I]t is the original combination of the first two fused together,” by which he means that from which all opposition springs. What distinguishes A from B, or 0 from 1, is not that they are *different* in some categorical way, but that they

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<sup>69</sup> Gabriel Tarde, *L’opposition universelle: essai d’un théorie des contraires*, trans. A. Spano (Félix Alcan, Éditeur, 1897), 1.



are in the same category and therefore demand “difference” (or “*différance*,” to defer and differ, as Derrida puts it).

Again, the problem of the unique versus the discrete arises as well. As Tarde puts it, “[T]hey have the character of presenting a difference which consists of the very same similarity ...” In other words, *les oppositions* are of the same universal category ( $\forall$ ) or class but of opposing existential ( $\exists$ ) sets or identities. For example, life and death arise from each other and are therefore “fused together.” Despite their apparent antinomy they are one and the same “original combination” of existence or Dasein itself. Therefore, it is false (F) to say that a rock is “dead” since it never lived, neither does it contain any evidence of “life,” though it exists and therefore finds itself in the same universal category as living things.

Consequently, the difference (*l*) between life and death is not categorical but existential, meaning that it is a matter of each being a member of a discrete set of either living or dead things. The latter set, however, does not contain *things that are not living*, such as rocks. We can say of living things that they have crossed the threshold from 0 (nonbeing) to 1 (being), meaning that they are in a categorical exclusion not from each other, but from  $1 / n$ , or 1 and any other number (*n*). These things are members of their own set, which makes it possible for us to have language. If things that are dead because they were once alive were in the same existential set as things which do not have either attribute, language would become wholly synthetical; we would be able to fix a crux between subjects belonging to the first category to predicates belonging to the second, creating a false (F) statement.

The problem is that when we do affect such a hybrid, it nevertheless maintains the same grammar as either a verifiable analytical statement or a true synthetical one. In other words, language *becomes* the apparatus of the simulacra, no longer serving the purpose of realia. The result is that what amounts to the illusion of language comes to suffice for language itself which, even when referring effectively to fantasy, must otherwise have recourse to reality. This matter is taken to its greatest extreme in the ISP where to categorical contradiction is added the linguistic affront of insisting upon the universal power of the existential category. This bit of magical misdirection makes fiat, dogma, simulacra, and the state of exception possible all at once.

Despite the axiomatic quality of this theory of opposition, Tarde takes care to be clear that he does not mean that “*les extrêmes se touchent*,” (extremes touch) which he calls a “vulgar” saying. Furthermore, he distinguishes *l’opposition* from dialectics then becoming quite popular in philosophy (1897) in a revival of Hegel’s thought. “Logicians especially showed here, with the exception however of their master Aristotle ... a

singular inattention. When Hegel, for example, unrolls with so much serenity his interminable rosary of triads, he does not realize that the thesis and antithesis, which he says are oppositions, are only different terms [for the same thing].<sup>70</sup>

Like Hegel, however, Tarde does propose a *tertium quid*. For Tarde, *difference*, or what might be called the sum of two opposing values, is itself analytical, whereas for Hegel it is synthetical. The possibilities here are interesting mathematically considering that the “sum” of 0 and 1 is 1, and that the sum of any two integers is just another integer. In the first case we have opposition in the form of a negation; in the second it might be said that there is opposition only in as much as difference is a form of opposition.

What, then, is the nontrivial relationship in either *l’opposition* or dialectics? How is the *tertium quid* more than the result of a negation or a setup for yet another pair of integers? Tarde sees Hegel’s synthesis as *a posteriori*, whereas he sees *l’opposition* as *a priori*. This is the critical and categorical difference between the two ideas. We can see, then, why the Hegelian approach appeals to the discourse of abdication, capitalist or communist. It allows both strategies to create a world through language without reference to exteriority, meaning that the apparatus of the synthetic world creates itself out of the logic of its own algorithmic apparatus. There is no need for reference to “God” or to what the discourse considers to be the “opposite” of God: reason based on verifiability and analytical logic.

Again, “No proposition can say anything about itself.” Wittgenstein and Kant insist on the *a priori* as the gene of the coming-into-being of realia (*le devenir*). The *a priori* are the only possible predicate upon which a true (T) synthetic statement about realia can be based. Furthermore, as time and space, they are also the basis for any physical description of the universe, their relativity and potential for superimposition notwithstanding, and are therefore also the basis of any analytical statement.

Russell found it mathematically necessary to predicate set theory on the idea of the set of all sets including itself “if and only it does not include itself” because, as Kant points out, “All mathematical judgments are synthetical.” Is Russell’s paradox a true or invalid synthetical statement in the sense meant here by the ISP? Wittgenstein declares it is false. Though a case can be made for the necessity of paradox in any absolute statement about realia which is by necessity “true” *to itself*—such as in mathematical systems.

What concerns us here is the appropriation, by the apparatus of the hegemony, of the magical world-making of ISP’s. Such statements are possible only when applied to a social cohort of abdicated subjects lacking

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 2.

the analytical ability to discern the *difference* between true and false statements, be they synthetic or analytic. The subject is concerned only with appearance, of which simulacra consist, abhorring realia as dirty, confusing, uncomfortable, inconvenient, and alien (exterior) to the topological realm of the ego.

How, then, do simulacra maintain the semblance of what seems to be the “real” world? The *appearance* of orthodoxy convinces the abdicated subject that the language of the hegemonic discourse (what Klemperer, in referring to the public discourse of the Third Reich, calls the *Lingua Tertii Imperii*) is, if not verifiably “scientific” and “factual,” at least synthetically “true.” But often enough under even light analytic scrutiny whatever logic this discourse purports falls apart. On the surface of the language, grammar errors, the compulsive use of jargon and slang, bald contradictions, political correctness, and malapropisms abound to the point that the crudeness of these utterance becomes obvious.

But the subject does not *dare* share this perception lest his fellows identify him as a discursive apostate. Rather, these vulgarities are *celebrated* as the “language of the people” in public discourse and entertainment to the point where any counter-discourse, despite its absolute veracity and integrity, becomes suspect because of its unassailable verisimilitude. Under such a social regime, discursive orthodoxy becomes a shibboleth distinguishing the “public enemies” (or those who *prefer not to*) from the folksy demagogues the media adore.

In the world of finance these distinctions are clear, where all rules, including those of grammar, are made to be broken. Figurative jargon almost entirely replaces literal denotation *by design*. The result is that the uninitiated are befuddled by the “secret language” of the financiers. In the fog of financial war, then, the Cassandras of economic doom, no matter what verifiable proof they come armed with, are reviled, rejected, ostracized, marginalized, fired, or worse: investigated by government authorities for *daring* to question the sanctity of the marketplace and the integrity of its transnational stakeholders. It could be construed that such behavior by the authorities is a sign of the presence of ISP’s in need of “irrational exuberance” to sustain the mass illusion as verisimilitude.

In *le devenir*, a thing that has come into being by crossing the threshold of 0 / 1 is at last judged *in* language and *by* language. If it is not named, it does not exist because it does not “extend” into the realm of realia at the core of perception: the mind. However, naming, despite its magic, is not a permanent state but is instead a *temporary* assignment which depends upon the network of social agreement. Trials and political debates are often battles over finding the right name for the situation that everyone can agree

upon: is it murder one, two, three, or manslaughter? Such decisions require the entire apparatus of the state, as well as a jury, judge, and lawyers, to make final sense of it. And even then, the *name* of the crime and therefore its punishment can be appealed or overturned! So too is it with both concrete phenomena and abstract ideas in our ken.

The process of naming is one of true *recognition*, then, since it may very well be that the thing has been “known” all along in some other way. However, during this nascent period of its existence in the topological realm of the ego it was not officially recognized through the social ritual of naming. The importance of this ritual in the landscape of the ego is made somewhat ludicrous by the superego’s necessity of *renaming* that which has already been named to give it more social significance and power. We only need remember that a traitor to one’s country is a hero to that country’s enemy.

The superego, concerned as it is with the social role the subject’s ego plays in the melodrama of life, must manage the subject’s multiple parts that it plays: son, father, leader, criminal, and so on. To one’s natural given name and surname are appended “Your Honor” or even “Your Excellency” after ascendency to the hegemony’s official pantheon. One may also become The Murderer in the media, or The Martyr in ecclesiastical canon, or Lord So-and-so, Commandant, Lieutenant, Mr. President, Father William, or even Sister James!

In the case of the anointed ruler, the superego acts as the emissary of the apparatus in the personal consciousness of the subject’s ego, growing in strength in its campaign to facilitate the whims of the ego’s expression of the id’s desires. In the case of those who are ruled, the superego works in the opposite way: to impose greater *anticathexis* on the impulses of the id to contain it and then channel its psychic energy into commercially profitable channels.

Herein lies the psychological difference between the ruler and the ruled. While the ruled may also desire the power of the ruler, they balk at the grotesque level of responsibility and megalomania necessary to be successful at it, preferring the lazy life of dependency, ease, and consumption, and to bask in the promise of medical immortality the discourse offers those who behave themselves and who sign the promissory notes of usury (*riba*).

As King Henry IV laments, while the subject sleeps like a baby, swaddled in the comfort and convenience of simulacra, the Sovereign must take on the care of the world of realia. Destiny waits on the Sovereign’s every move, as it does on the whims and moods of God.

Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose

To the wet sea-boy in an hour so rude,  
 And in the calmest and most stillest night,  
 With all appliances and means to boot,

Deny it to a king? Then happy low, lie down!  
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown.

(*King Henry IV*, Part II, Act III, Scene I, Lines 26-31)

For the majority of subjects, the life of the “wet sea-boy” is their *métier*. Again, it is a matter of the essential dichotomies of language. One is either the sovereign or not. If one is not, then one has a different relationship to the hegemony than the sovereign. Attempts at inverting this dichotomy fall into the category of the synthetic and dialectical, such as the “dictatorship of the proletariat”—an oxymoron. “Democracy” in a “republic” is a lighter form of the same synthetical statement. States which have named themselves democratic republics have only ever survived when they were ruled by a strong central leader surrounded by an elite and powerful coterie of deputies who communicated the leader’s desires to a “senate” of the rich and powerful lawyers, merchants, agriculturalists, and industrialists. Or where they simply had all opposition eliminated in one way or another. In the Kantian sense, none of these values is explicit or analytical in that they are all *a posteriori*, lying beyond the moment when power is seized.

However, there remains one value which is the same for all: the possibility of *personal* sovereignty through the mechanism of the Second Negation, or, as it has alternatively been called here, *preferring not to*. Immediately this proposition seems suspect because there is the *facticity* of the sovereign as a value no revolution seems to be capable of erasing.

It could be asserted that personal sovereignty is impossible unless the sovereign suspends the rule of law. Even where there is no direct sovereign power, the state retains the ultimate power to prosecute, persecute, disband, promote, and define the *form of life*. According to Agamben, Kant describes the form of life as “‘respect’ (*Achtung*, reverential attention) for the condition one finds oneself living under. Form of life is a law “that is in force *without signifying* [italics added], and that thus neither prescribes nor forbids any determinate end ...”<sup>71</sup> He quotes Kant as saying, “‘once the content of free will is eliminated, the law is the only thing left in relation to the formal element of the free will.’”

In the same passage Agamben asks what the form of life is that corresponds to the form of law (*nomos*). To answer this question, one must

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<sup>71</sup> Agamben, op. cit., 37.

understand what is meant by “without signifying.” When a word signifies, there is a direct relation between the signifier and the signified, for example the word apple and the corresponding fruit. The matter becomes a bit more complex, however, when the noun signifies an idea which serves as a signifier of itself.

A word is an idea as well as a grapheme, phoneme, and morpheme. An idea may well signify in the concatenation of thought without being able to stand by itself in the category of realia class *a*. This we call an invalid synthetic statement, or ISP. Nevertheless, the responsibility of a noun representing a person, place, thing, or idea is *to keep its signification consistent from class to class*. When it does not, the possibility of verification is lost; its only recourse then is to become *self-verifying*.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the class of ideas (which are always synthetic as they cannot be “verified”), the temptation to treat its elements as a products of the fancy (whim) is too great for the ego. It cannot bear the thought of submitting itself to the idea of its own death. Furthermore, ideas lack the armor of realia and are thus exposed to abuse like hermit crabs without their borrowed shells. What greater way to abuse an idea, then, than to claim for it the divine authority of God or the sovereign power of the state? In both cases we are compelled to “respect” the *Achtung* of the utterance—whether or not it honors the rule for membership in the class of realia.

Therefore, by introducing a new universe of discourse in which, as Wittgenstein says, “the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument” while at the same time containing itself, the *nomos* of the state of exception becomes populated with ISP’s.

As a class, then, the ISP is no longer a member of the universe of discourse of the realia of persons, places, and things. Instead, it become the foundation of first the *simulation* of realia as simulacra, and then the institutionalization of simulacra by fiat and force.

But we also have to consider that many persons in the world are born without the possibility of sovereignty. Their “choice,” if it can be called that, is to abide in the state in which they are born as what amounts to slaves or vassals, or death. How, then, can they abdicate? Moreover, their only possibility of “sovereignty” is suicide. And since in suicide one possesses nothing, least of all oneself, then neither the possibility of abdication nor the possibility of sovereignty exists. Furthermore, for there to be a state of exception there must be something to which it exists *as* the exception. If there is nothing for which it is the exception, say in a long-term “successful” totalitarian regime or fundamentalist theocracy, does the subject have any claim to there being anything necessary to signify?

To answer these questions, we must think about what form of life there is where the thread of personal sovereignty has been lost. Orwell attempts this in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, though he introduces a subversive element of self-determination in the form of romantic love which presents the possibility of the unraveling of the *nomos* while at the same time serves as the undoing of lovers Winston and Julia.

A further argument against *a priori* personal sovereignty is that in many countries a child is born as state property, straight from the womb. Until a certain age, for instance sixteen, the child must attend state schools or their equivalent, must be a registered citizen through a birth certificate, must be counted for in the census, and can be taken away from the parents and made a "ward of the state" at the slightest provocation and with almost no legal recourse to the contrary.

While this is not "slavery" in the classical or romantic sense, it is *possession*; the state possesses the child. Therefore, the child cannot possess itself, nor can the parents possess the child, until there is some juridical change in status, which in some countries is called "majority." While "majority" used to mean freedom from one's parents, it now means transition from being a ward of the state to a free agent in the game of promissory notes, usury, and *riba*.

This imposition of the apparatus of the state on nascent sovereignty is not new; the Spartans practiced it in segregating ten-year-old boys from their parents and training them to become warriors. Parents went along with it, presumably, because they themselves had the same experience and because they saw the necessity of it in protecting everyone from their common enemies, which were considerable.

What, then, are the "possibilities" open to the individual? Apart from its trademark buildings, roads, and infrastructure, civilization consists of perpetual bureaucratic curtailments of sovereignty at every turn of the subject's self-determination. In effect, civilization engages in a transaction with the subject: laws, institutions, and wars in exchange for self-determination. It then *sells* the abdicated sovereignty back to the subject in the form of various sorts of distraction, financial risk, and officially sanctioned and even illicit *jouissance*. Herein lies the true nature of kleptocracy: not the theft of the individual's most precious possession of itself, but rather the resale of it *back* to the subject piecemeal through the mass media in the forms of insurmountable debt, infotainment, edutainment, prurient scandal, war games, disinformation, and pornography.

When we refer to the subject's sovereignty, we mean the *possibility* (*Möglichkeit*) of it, and not necessarily the bare fact of it. Why? Because there are three basic states in which the subject finds itself: 1) total self-

determination, 2) partial self-determination which it may *buy* back from the state, and 3) abdication, where the only possibility of redemption is through the negation of its self-abnegation. In the first it is free to do as it wishes. In the second it is a possession of the state or the bank and must buy its way out of that predicament by paying taxes or debts. In the third the subject has abdicated either the first or the second possibilities, in which case there are only two avenues left: The Second Negation (the negation of its abnegation), or suicide.

In all three cases it is a matter of bartering the subject's *possibility* in the form of *potential* value. In this respect we may refer to this possibility as the *Möglichkeit* of what Kant calls the *Bedingungen der Möglichkeit der Erfahrung*, or conditions of the possibility of experience. Nicholas F. Gier in "Wittgenstein and Forms of Life" describes this possibility as a *form of life*, or what Wittgenstein refers to as belonging to that class of human experience he calls *Lebensformen*. Within this class we have such intangibles as "hope" and "joy," which in Lacanian terms could point to *jouissance*, but in the language of the hegemonic discourse is ultimately transmogrified into the commercial concept of "happiness."

In other words, hope and joy *are not in space or time* and they lack empirical content. They are forms of life, not facts of life. *Lebensformen* are therefore primarily the formal conditions, the patterns in the weave of our lives, that make a meaningful world possible .... As some commentators have already seen, forms of life perform a transcendental function.<sup>72</sup>

When we speak of *Möglichkeit*, then, what we refer to is what may be expected from the subject "in the future." In financial terms, the subject become the underlying asset of future speculation. At the same time, the possibility of its underperformance as an underlying asset is hedged by promissory notes serving as the nexus of a web of the laws of the *nomos* and the statutory demands of society for full participation above the level of the Underclass.

For example, if one has never borrowed money, and therefore has never been exposed to delinquency or default, one is *de facto* a greater "credit risk" than one who has borrowed, defaulted, or gone bankrupt, as the latter has proven to have the *potential* for taking on such liabilities to the profit of the institutions which extend them as *possibility*. Living on debt to have now what one would have had to save and strive for "in the future" is a form of

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<sup>72</sup> Nicholas F. Gier "Wittgenstein and Forms of Life" (*Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 10, 1980), 241-258.



life, too, but one which is more akin to death than what we we commonly regard as living.

Naturally, there are many *Lebensformen*. It could be argued, as Schopenhauer does, that as one is possessed by oneself, and possession is a form of life as *possibility* and *potential*, then killing oneself is also a form of life. But this argument pushes the proposition to the point of a synthetic predicate because death is not a form of life but a *fact of life*. As such, it is classed among those elements which Gier says have “empirical content.” He gives an example of Wittgenstein’s thinking in this regard: “When Wittgenstein convinces us that hope and joy are not reducible to overt behavior, we are then immediately inclined to think of them as inner feelings .... But joy ‘designates nothing at all’, neither outward nor inward; hope is not a ‘state of mind’ ... or a feeling ..., and it is surely absurd to think of someone ‘hoping’ for the first time.”<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, we may not have two forms of existential, empirical death; if there are two in the way we speak and think, then one must be symbolic. There is a certain sense in which suicide is regarded as symbolic, a “cry for help,” or even a statement about one’s life or about others in one’s life. The suicide leaves a note; the person who dies naturally or accidentally leaves a will. Through we refer to the same state of existence when we refer to death, we may use radically different grammar to do so depending upon the circumstances: 1) “he killed himself,” 2) “he was killed,” 3) “he died,” 4) or even that “he was assassinated.”

It could also be argued, though, that possession is not any more empirical than joy or hope, and that suicide, as the negation of joy and hope, is their material implication. In this way the willful death by one’s own hand can be considered a *form of life* rather than a *fact of life* because it involves a symbolic act of communication in the *form* of it being a *performance*, as language must be.

While the hegemony actively encourages one’s “ultimate sacrifice” for the state as a worker in the trenches of incessant warfare, it is less enthusiastic about the suicide of a taxpayer. Why? As a symbolic act, suicide *defies* the brand of possession. It robs the slave owner of his chattel. It cheats the investor of his indenture. And in most cases, it denies the bank repayment on its promissory note, adding to its stock of toxic debt.

At the same time, suicide offers a kind of *symbolic* reset of the categorical exclusion by providing the possibility of return to the position of OI from whence one came, though we must add a prime: OI', since *having been*, one may never return to *never having been*. If it were possible to return to *never having been*, then there would at any one time be an infinite

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

“number” of beings who *never were*. And while there is no material difference between  $n$  beings who never were (0I) and 0 beings ( $0I = n \wedge 0$ ), it is, ultimately, a (perhaps valid) synthetic proposition to argue that suicide is a form of *Lebensformen*.

It could further be argued that a “slow death” by such self-destructive behaviors as risky behavior, overeating, smoking, drinking, and drugging are “forms of life,” but they are so only until the point of death, at which time they become, empirically, facts of life as they lack the decisive “event” of the clear-cut suicide who, in so doing, with or without a note, nevertheless makes a statement—as Hamlet clearly understands in his suicide soliloquy.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that by killing oneself, one “excludes” oneself from the hegemonic discourse by defying its claim to the right of possession indicated in the promissory note. Simultaneously, one excludes oneself from the realm of the sovereign while exercising the ultimate act of personal sovereignty. Being a symbolic act, it has a certain linguistic value *as meaning* that lives on after the subject is dead. The suicide note is often evidence of at least what idea the departed wanted the living to consider post-partum. As such, it is a threat to the state of exception in the form of speech.

Suicide, then, can be construed as a form of “free speech” as well as a form of life. And we have an innate sense that it is something other than a mere fact of life. However, it is not to be taken as an exception to, or negation of, the state of exception. Negations here are slavery versus suicide, the former being the least (0) state of personal sovereignty and the latter the most (1). Still, suicide remains a negation. But of what? How does it compare to the Second Negation?

For one thing, the suicidal subject may or may not have abdicated. There are many motives for suicide. It would not do to numerate them all and then work out their chain of reasoning and implication. But we can continue to look at the possibilities, meaning that the individual has some degree of freedom to act. A slave, no matter how many chains may bind him to a stone, can refuse to eat. The slave who kills himself “cheats” the sovereign out of his possession, his investment, and the potential labor that could be expected from that slave “in the future.”

There is a good reason why jail and prison authorities take away prisoners' shoelaces. Schopenhauer questions the moral indignation at suicide institutions show when they are cheated out of their possessions. “Thus we read that suicide is the most cowardly of acts, that only a madman would commit it, and similar insipidities; or the senseless assertion that suicide is ‘wrong’, though it is obvious *there is nothing in the world a man*

*has a more incontestable right to than his own life and person* [italics added].<sup>74</sup>

What Schopenhauer describes as an “incontestable right” is the quintessential statement of personal sovereignty, *in extremis*, where one asserts a metaphysical sense of ownership over one’s existence. Were personal sovereignty not *a priori*, then it would be something we would have to argue into existence. The arguments of the churchmen about the “sin” of suicide have not slowed the urge to die willingly.

What, then, is the difference between dying at the point of an enemy sword or using one’s “bare bodkin” to accomplish the same thing? We may take the statement that the suicide prohibition is supported by the liturgy and scripture as indicating an obtuse relationship to the act. Schopenhauer shows that the clergy has little juridical ground upon which to make suicide illegal. Despite the hullabaloo the *domini* make about it, there is scant mention of a prohibition against suicide in scripture, making masturbation a far greater crime.

Like “happiness,” suicide is a modern problem. In fact, the two words have become linked; the motive of all suicides, according to the mass media, medicos, and public officials, is a quantitative *lack* of “happiness,” which, as we have seen, is a truly modern commercial and political concept. Therefore, should we believe that a state of being that is mentioned in the Bible only three times is the culprit behind an unpardonable sin?

In Matthew 27:3-5, Judas finds himself in a moral and ethical cul-de-sac, the only way out of which is, as he sees it, suicide:

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.

The elders’ indifference belies their unwillingness to be a part of Judas’ intrigue with the Roman soldiers. Judas’ contrasting distress belies his understanding of his act, alas too late to do anything to prevent it. But it does have the effect of making the silver seem worthless. The casting down of the money frees him from the bond of servitude with civilization which has deceived him into betraying Jesus, and himself. And in that moment of

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<sup>74</sup> Arthur Schopenhauer, *Essays and Aphorisms* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), 77.

freedom he chooses to take possession of himself once again, being his own arresting officer, judge, jury, trial, and executioner.

This, the most profound mention of suicide in the Bible, supports Schopenhauer's assertion that it is a man's right to make such a decision and then carry it out. For the modern subject, suicide means release from debt, escape from prison, freedom from bills, and exoneration from the imperative to "progress" to the highest level of salary, prestige, and creditworthiness in civilization's hegemonic order. We must wonder, then, why suicide has become the *antonym* of happiness. It sounds more like the *formula* for it.

In my opinion it ought ... to be demanded of the clergy that they tell us by what authority they go to their pulpits or their desks and brand as a crime an action which many people we honor and love have performed and deny an honourable burial to those who have departed this world voluntarily—since they cannot point to a single biblical authority, nor produce a single sound philosophical argument; it being made clear that what one wants are reasons and not empty phrases or abuse.<sup>75</sup>

The passage above is rich in exception and exclusion. To begin, he asks "by what authority" the ban (as we shall call it) is justified? Lacking in explicit text, he must fall back on criminal law. Just as it has long been a crime to be "crazy," it has also been a crime to "murder" oneself. But criminal laws provide no rationale as religious teachings do. Laws are not teachings or even philosophy. Therefore, Schopenhauer asks for a reason, a teaching, not "empty phrases or abuse."

Moreover, reason leads us to question such as ban when we weigh the merits of a life well lived and of peace and generosity against the judgment of guilty which always befalls the suicide. There is no trial or defense lawyer; the suicide is guilty without the possibility of being proven innocent!

Despite the lack of "biblical authority" church dogma itself is replete with injunctions against doing what only God has the "right" to do: take one's life. Consequently, those being eaten alive by cancer must suffer worse than any denizen of Hell merely because it would be a greater crime to end one's suffering oneself, quietly, peacefully, and, perhaps, painlessly.

There may be no better metaphorical image of "exclusion" than that of being "excommunicated" from the church upon killing oneself. In the case of the suicide, though, the exclusion takes on the lurid image of being denied burial in "sacred," holy, or consecrated ground. The suicide must be interred

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

in a profane space, alien territory, indeed in the region of the topology of the categorical exclusion where one is *a priori* sovereign. Again, by invoking the state of exception for the suicide, the sovereign succeeds in restoring the suicide's personal sovereignty, just as in declaring martial law there is what Agamben calls the ensuing "situation" of *relative* freedom.

The situation, though, is not so simple. The idea that the sovereign "wants" to enslave or even rule is an over-assumption. The sovereign never tires of reminding the population of how uneasy the head lies that wears the crown. It is part of the romance and mystique of that which the subject has surrendered and may perhaps have a certain wistful nostalgia for, but no more than that. Furthermore, the citizen, precisely at the point the sovereign state seems to seize the most power, is thrown back upon personal sovereignty—a situation the citizen is not accustomed to.

The greater the state's power, the more likely the state of exception. When the final citizen has surrendered the last iota of sovereignty to the hegemony in the name of greater national security and prosperity—then, *then* comes the surprise when a state of emergency is declared, laws are suspended, an enemy is identified "in our midst," and "no one is safe." The prosperity vanishes. Social chaos pervades the urban landscape, instigated by the ruling elite's mythological adversaries described in the mass media as the Other.

Amidst the clamor for a scapegoat, since there is no more personal freedom to surrender, the terrified citizen runs to hide behind the legs of the parental state which initiated the reign of terror in the first place. A blood sacrifice to the god of Securitas must be found. When it is insurrection by the proletariat, then the aristocracy is sacrificed; when it is martial law by the aristocracy, then the proletariat is sacrificed. Either way, there always remains a critical mass of undifferentiated subjects that is ready to throw its support behind which ever one looks it is going to be the winner.

For abdication to be complete, there must be *acquiescence*. While it is easy to get the subject's attention with promises of medical immortality and endless consumerism and debt, it is harder to deliver the goods. Immortality, being infinitely inefficient, requires an infinite amount of energy and wealth to pull off. The chant that "in the future" the mere passage of time will bring it about for the *hoi polloi* has limited power. Therefore, acquiescence seldom comes up front. Rather, it is an involved, incremental process of getting the subject to believe little lies, as stepping stones to the bigger ones that ultimately fulfil its ego's greatest desire to live forever in a realm of infinite self-indulgence and solipsism.

Often enough it comes on the back end of what seems at first like an initial public offering of one's sovereignty. Soon enough, though, it

becomes clear that one need a “push” the existing hegemony is only too willing to give. As mentioned earlier, this is the push-pull mechanism. The best way to conceal the rat trap is to put it into a romantic story which then becomes the story of the subject’s life, carefully recorded by actuaries and digital telemetry. Meantime, this life is aggrandized by submerging the subject in meaningless entertainment which tells the same heroic tale again and again of how the hapless subject triumphs in the end through its super powers and mystical association with the gods.

Long before the ease of casting a digital (Inter-) net and (World Wide) Web to ensnare the subject’s psychic energy generated by its libido and id, its abdication was portrayed in the folk tale. Of course, these folk (or fairy) tales still exist nearly in the same ancient form, only now they are given a slick contemporary style, modernized characters, and an imposing ubiquity the village tale never enjoyed. Movies, TV shows, news, gossip, popular reading, video games, and advertising take the place of the village folk tale of demons, monsters, evil rulers, kings, knights, queens, and subjects.

For instance, many Russian folk tales begin with a child being abducted.<sup>76</sup> But this capture seldom takes place without the child being complicit in it by disobeying its parents’ prohibitions regarding forbidden times and places. This event is therefore also a kind of abdication of the child’s self-determination in exchange for an adventure from which it often returns rich and well married (provided it has not been eaten in the process).

They are often also portrayed as cautionary tales designed to get children to obey their parents—an eternal battle. However, a child’s attraction to them belies the fact that this abduction has indeed led to a new world of metaphysical miracles and self-indulgence not possible or permitted in the child’s “real” world of home, school, and work. For example, the child is brought by a magical bird to a land where it does not have to work and may play with golden apples, a narrative detail we shall return to later.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps the adventure involves a house made entirely of candy, or the child is turned into some kind of interesting animal with supra-human powers (such as flight). Therefore, the citizen, who remains essentially a child in the paternal hegemony, must be presented with an *a posteriori* argument, or enticement, to motivate the abdication of his personal sovereignty which then may be negated through suicide, martial law, or the Second Negation. He must be persuaded to put himself in harm’s way at first (abdication) and then allow himself through acquiescence to be spirited

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<sup>76</sup> Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: U. of Texas Press, 1988), 98.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

away by the magic carpet of the hegemony and its entertainment apparatus to a new life of pleasure, security, and immortality.

In the end, there is no length to which the citizen will not go to preserve its ego. It may even write a book to this end. How, then, does the state convince the individual to make the “ultimate sacrifice” for his country? In a time of war, the subject is convinced that if he does not go “over there” and fight “them,” then “they” will come “here” and fight him, whether or not there is empirical evidence for there being a “clear and present danger” of that sort. It is appalling what vague abstractions, such as “patriotism,” will send a man off to die in war without a second thought for his own life.

In a time of so-called peace, being a soldier is a kind of professional job where each “worker” is convinced that if any one dies it will be the enemy or, at worst, the next guy. Nevertheless, as the Huns swept into Byzantium, says Gibbon, Roman civilians “were persuaded [by their leaders] to adopt the convenient maxim that a private citizen, however innocent or respectable, may be justly sacrificed to the safety of his country.”<sup>78</sup> This is merely a modification of the basic assumption we tend to make about our odds of dying at any specific time, since it is always “in the future.” Meanwhile, these odds remain throughout our lives at next to zero and often teeter on the brink of immortality.

As Hamlet reminds us, “Thus conscience does make cowards of us all” when we contemplate our ego’s nonbeing. While we may forgive the plebian for his lack of courage in the face of death, the matter does not seem much different even among the bravest. Despite his reputation for bravery far surpassing the average citizen of Troy, Achilles, who has been killed and has passed into the Hades, nevertheless complains to Odysseus that he would rather be a slave in the world of the living than a king of the Underworld.

O shining Odysseus, never try to console me for dying.  
I would rather follow the plow as thrall to another  
man, one with no land allotted to him and not much to live on,  
than be a king over all the perished dead. (*Odyssey*, 11.488-491)

Achilles’ first proposition is, in effect, “I would rather be a slave,” in other words, he states, explicitly, that he would prefer to be in a state of abdication of personal sovereignty than his current position as the immortal “soul” of Achilles in the Underworld. If  $x$  is death and  $p$  is slavery and  $q$  is sovereign power, then Achilles’ statement or preference follows this form (where  $\rightarrow$  means “if, then”):  $(q = x), \rightarrow p$ , in other words, “if to become a

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<sup>78</sup> Gibbon, 630.

sovereign I must die, *then* I would rather abdicate the possibility of being a sovereign and remain in the temporal world, even if it means that I must be the slave (*thrall*) of a sharecropper.”

As this is not a particularly Aristotelian discussion with Odysseus, Achilles does not state his views on the fact that even as a slave to a sharecropper he must eventually die and presumably find himself in Hades anyway. But he makes his point: even though, apparently, the ego of Achilles has indeed survived the event of bodily death, he would still rather be “living” than “dead,” which he most certainly is. If this *reverse Faustian bargain* entails being a slave of a slave, then so be it. How much easier it is, then, for the subject to be the slave of a sovereign!



# CHAPTER TWO

## 2.1 The language of the sovereign

The aggregation of the abdicated personal sovereignty of individual subjects we call “the sovereign.” Civilization cannot exist without this character, be it in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat or a despot. Between these extremes are the milder forms that are relics of the European Enlightenment, such as democracy, and the even more anachronistic artifacts of classical antiquity, such as the republic.

Their grandiloquent credos such as *E Pluribus Unum* and *Senātus Populusque Rōmānus* (*SPQR*) echo through the ages, giving hope to the masses that even after sacrificing their self-determination and personal sovereignty on the altar of civilization they will somehow remain the boss of themselves and the environment in which they struggle to be “happy” in “the future.” The stony edifices these civilizations erect to express the gravitas of the state create the sense that they have “always been there,” despite vacation trips to the ruins of other much larger and more ambitious (and more successful) empires.

Reality is not the concern of the state. The state is the concern of the state. As such, in the great tradition of all organizations, the state exists *of* itself, *by* itself, and *for* itself, often in a condition of complete *disorganization*. As a shareholder in this corporation or, for the more ambitious, as a broker in this exchange, the subject can expect a dividend of law and order, a national identity (in the form of a passport and a tax ID number), an army of impressive uniforms and weapons, and a system of jurisprudence which primarily guards the interests of the state. However, to continue to reap this dividend the subject must pay taxes or find itself disenfranchised as an enemy of the state wherein the entire apparatus turns its wrath upon the powerless individual (or the would-be criminal).

How this all happens with what appears to be the seamless operation of a well-oiled machine is a miracle that could only be accomplished by the magic of language. Language itself is a parallel ontology. It is not a simulacrum, and yet it is responsible for the manufacture of all simulacra. It is not realia, and yet it is responsible for any awareness of what Kant calls “manifold.” Furthermore, it is the origin of the *copula*, the crux between the subject and predicate, expressing the ineffable state of being embodied in the words *be*, *am*, and *is*. From this act of copulation spring the manifold of

*extensa*, both simulacra and realia. Without it, humankind is as mute as a fish. But this only describes the genetic origin of what language expresses.

What is most impressive is the world it creates that is “more real” than the world it describes. The greatest expression of this achievement is the *nomos*, or Law, upon which all civilization—even its zoos and prisons—is founded. Therefore, the sovereign, created by the subject’s abdication of the bothersome responsibility for self-determination, relies on the apparatus of language to maintain this parallel ontology with an extraordinary degree of persistence rivaling even that of nature’s largely legendary continuity. The apparatus of language is a complicated machine, in part because it is always adapting to the needs of the sovereign as well as the mass of subjects, seeking homeostasis between the two which are always launching into metastasis. Therefore, it is recursive, containing  $n$  conditional branches. Its tendency to recur allows it to modify its own rules, even the rules regarding modification. (“No proposition can say anything about itself.”)

From this mechanism language takes a “random walk,” making it, at best, predictably unpredictable and therefore stochastic. As such, there is always an  $x$  percent chance that language will tend to express itself in true or invalid synthetic statements, or in trivial or nontrivial analytic statements.

Nearly all hermeneutics and epistemology is concerned with determining what percentage of  $x$  there is in the prevailing discourse at any time  $y$  in the random walk of language. This random walk is then subject to  $n$  conditional branches which are themselves in turn subject to the same condition, making parsing for specific meaning at best difficult. Each is its own discrete child discourse, owing its semantic expression to the parent discourse and never deviating from it regardless of whether the parent discourse is a T or F synthetic proposition or a trivial or nontrivial analytic proposition. All of this, however, is on the “back-end” of language. The subject, on the front-end, is concerned only with *effects*. Its only form of epistemology is awareness of *any immediate benefit to the ego’s gratification of its desires and needs*. Therefore, the prevailing linguistic logic of empire is the ISP. Its tacit environmental milieu is that of simulacra class  $b$  which has inherited the verisimilitude of realia class  $a$ .

If science can bring to the marketplace a new gadget or contraption that seems to “work like magic,” the subject is happy that “progress” is moving along as promised by government and the corporations which own it. Having abdicated, the discourse of the subject itself is displaced from subject to object; the *object* of the state becomes the *surrogate subject*, confounding the possibility of proper hermeneutics and epistemology (by design). While the subject finds what Žižek calls a “parallax” displacement of subject and object irksome from time to time, and likes to grumble about

it, the process of democracy and other social contrivances of civilization allows it to shed its frustration in such cathartic rituals as voting (Apollonian) or revolution (Dionysian).

Agamben has said that language was the first *liturgical* apparatus. The moment words were strung together into syntactical relationship, the apparatus was born.<sup>1</sup> Why? Because possibility (*Möglichkeit*) bifurcated by *l'opposition* in *le devenir* and through the oscillations of Hegelian dialectics is signaled by the copula into language in the form of subject and predicate. Consequently, the discrete meaning of words is modified in a way which has no analog in numbers. It is as if a number could remain the same while having from time to time a different value.

While language does indeed follow the mechanics of logic (such as in the Boolean *and, or, nor [not]*, which are also included among common coordinating conjunctions), it also departs from them as well into what might be considered a kind of metalogic which we find in the *inevitability* of poetry. But it is also, therefore, subject to corruption through the manipulation of language in the form of propaganda, disinformation, and the substitution of ISP's for VSP's and the analytic propositions of first-order logic.

When they are consolidated into a single God (endowing that word with the dignity of a proper noun), they become a *discourse*. In other words, God takes on the aspect of a universal machine, dispensing justice at the same moment as observing the fall of a sparrow or answering the prayers of the devout. The definite article overtakes the indefinite article of "a" god, the latter of which is not a universal machine but is dedicated to one function only, for instance agriculture.

However, it is not God himself who is the machine, but the apparatus of his words. The subject, previously free to roam in the earthly garden of a heathen paradise populated with innumerable gods, must now worship the unitary voice of the *nomos*. As such, God inevitably becomes an anthropomorphic projection of man in his Father role as Lawgiver of the *nomos*, though infinitely greater. Man, through the process of *l'opposition*, becomes  $\aleph_0$ , the smallest infinite cardinal number. God is everything; man is nothing without God. John Donne is not bashful about the effect this relationship has on him in Holy Sonnet 14:

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, *o'erthrow* me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.

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<sup>1</sup> Agamben, personal conversation, Saas-Fee, Valais, Switzerland, 2009.

I, like an *usurp'd* town to another due,  
 Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;  
 Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
 But is *captiv'd*, and proves weak or untrue.  
 Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,  
 But am betroth'd unto your enemy;  
 Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
 Take me to you, *imprison me*, for I,  
 Except you enthrall me, *never shall be free*,  
 Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me. [italics added]

The poet begs to have his personal sovereignty, which is here likened to Satan, “your enemy,” beaten out of him! Donne, undone as it were, begs for the opportunity of abdication of his self-determination, which he sees as a “sin.” The language of the poem overwhelms any possibility of self-determination with the words, *o'erthrow*, *usurp'd*, and *captiv'd*, and with the injunction to “*imprison me, for I / ... never shall be free ...*” By Donne’s day (he lived from 1572 to 1631), this was common, if perhaps a little effusive (“ravished”?), language for Christianity where it was not inappropriate to speak of one’s relationship with God in lovers’ terms.

Nevertheless, here we see the voice of the sovereign issuing from his mouth (pen). The subject, like a ventriloquist’s dummy, mouths the words the sovereign wants to hear. Meantime, the sovereign itself voices the magic words which help pry self-determination from its anchor in the core identity of the subject’s psychological stronghold and sets the subject adrift on the sea of abdication. Sovereign power in the end is only a figurehead for the true ruler: *language itself*. Agamben describes the naming power of language as a form of lawmaking, once the particles of the *nomos* are strung together into syntactical utterances, which we consequently call discourse:

Language is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside language and that language is always beyond itself. The particular structure of law has its foundation in this presuppositional structure of human language. It expresses the bond of inclusive exclusion to which a thing is subject because of the fact of being in language, of being named. To speak [*dire*] is, in this sense, always to “speak the law,” *ius dicere*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Agamben, op. cit., 21.

## 2.2 The dictator of language

A dictator is one who speaks (dictates) the law (*ius dicere*). However, we tend not to consider Louis XIV's equation "*L'état, c'est moi*" to be a description the modern dictator, since he was a *monarch*. In his case, then, there is the intercession of such ideas as "the divine right of kings" to mitigate the image of one from whom the Law issues autocratically. These are the words of a *King*, a "lawfully" and rightfully enthroned Sovereign, not some common usurper or revolutionary with no other claim to power except *le force majeure*. Consequently, when we use the word "dictator" it is often not clear what we mean. In modern parlance, which is the origin of the word anyway, *dictator = bad*, in other words he is someone we do not like, someone who will not be invited to dinner.

When a sovereign is called a *dictator*, that means he is a "bad" person who needs to be replaced, by any means necessary, with a "good" person. What more does the subject of the modern "democratic" state need to know? If the subject's state unilaterally removes a leader designated as a "dictator" of another state through subterfuge, bribery, civil war, or even murder, so be it. Dictator *bad*. Democracy *good*.

People who are ruled by a dictator are ruled by a "bad person." If they do not *like* being ruled by a dictator, then they are "oppressed." If they like it, then they are *bad people too* and must be destroyed. But if we stop short at what we can say for sure about the word—it means one who speaks the law (*ius dicere*)—then we can see how language is involved up with the idea of the sovereign.

When we think of a sovereign we think of kings and queens in the romantic and historical sense as special people living in castles who lead a charmed but perhaps tragic life, for "uneasy lies the head that wears the crown." While there have been many kings who wielded the sword, there have also been many who did not. Moreover, there have been few queens who have done so. Therefore, it is not likely that it is the derring-do of sovereigns that make them significant. Both kings and queens, as well as peace-loving aesthetes, have ruled over empires not with swords but *words*. Consequently, what words issued forth from these characters were in the form of the *nomos*. As such, in the absence of a parliament, they are *dictated* to the subject by *fiat*. The Marxian idea of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" hints at what problem there may be with the modern conception of *res publica*.

When we think of our own sovereignty, though, we think of, perhaps, our rights under criminal and civil law, such as the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty, the writ of *habeas corpus*, and so on. If we are

more sophisticated and political, we might think of the *Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen* of the French Revolution, one of which states, under Article III, “*Le principe de toute Souveraineté réside essentiellement dans la Nation. Nul corps, nul individu ne peut exercer d'autorité qui n'en émane expressément.*” (“The principle of all Sovereignty resides essentially in the Nation. No body, no individual can exercise authority that does not emanate expressly [from the Nation itself].”)

There are basically two related ideas here: 1) “the nation,” which we presume to be the mass of “*citoyen*,” is the sole repository of whatever sovereignty may be exercised in the governing of the state and the carrying out of its judicial procedures, and 2) no other body or individual may have such authority. It is this idea which makes such ideas as the “dictatorship of the proletariat” possible, provided the “Nation” remains associated with the people who comprise it rather than with the elites who are supposed to represent and serve them. It is not likely that this is what the Roman aristocracy meant by *Senātus Populusque Rōmānus* (SPQ). Nevertheless, we tend to lump all proletarian-sounding ideas of governing together as some form or another of “democracy” that is only different from the modern conception in that the citizen of such a paradise wore a different costume.

Perhaps what we should consider instead of democracy and its relation to dictatorship, though, is the dynamic between the *nomos* and personal sovereignty. What is the relationship between *Souveraineté* and the self-determination of the individual? Can we say that if our state professes the *Souveraineté* of the people, then we as atoms of that state and as elements of that set, therefore possess it to the same degree? To have such a document as the *Déclaration* one must dictate or declare one’s intentions.

Considering the origin of such a document as representing the will of the *populusque*, the *citoyen* of a republic, that will must at some point be codified into a constitution, a body of law. *Nomos* is the result, as a noun, of the Greek verb *νέμω*, to deal out, dispense, especially (we are told), meat and drink in Homer. The Law metes out the meat and drink of the people’s will.

The lexicon of a language mostly consists, and rightly so, of nouns. The sovereign is the name giver through the apparatus of the law. If beheading equals freedom, so be it. If security can be achieved by throwing one in one hundred persons in prison, so be it. If peace means war ... so be it. War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength. Language is the perfect apparatus because it allows for an infinite extension of reality through the psychology of naming. Something that has no existence in nature (a.k.a. reality), such as perfection or happiness, may be conjured up by a creative advertising copywriter on a Monday afternoon and then, as a

meme spread by the media, become a fixture of the general discourse, indefinitely.

In natural language processing (NLP) systems, we may have a fixed number of verbs and other parts of speech, but never a fixed number of nouns if there is to be a useable language. Therefore, this phenomenon must be curtailed and controlled by the apparatus of the state which is always in a zero-sum game with its enemies and a non-zero-sum game with its corporate overlords and presumably its clients: the people.

One would think that the state, in the interest of its clients who have so graciously abdicated their sovereignty for its sake, would also have an adversarial relationship with the corporations regarding themselves a supra-governmental “bodies.” In fact, it would seem that “*Nul corps ... ne peut exercer d'autorité*” means just that. But as the state has an interest in the wellbeing of these corporate bodies, ostensibly as the employers of its clients, this part of the social contract may be amended. Such an amendment may be made by adding, subtracting, or modifying language. If the people have stormed the Bastille of language, then the state, so that it may maintain its hegemony, must do what it can to limit the spread of such *wilden Fanatismus*. To succeed as a state, it must at some critical point seize control of the meaning of such words and ideas as *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, or suffer the consequences of stateless anarchy. It is for this reason that poets (such as Percy Shelley), fiction writers, journalists, and lyric writers such as certain folk and hip-hop artists, can seem dangerous to the state.

Therefore, the state’s survival depends upon its ability to control the quality and quantity of language in circulation through the exercise of the law, or in the case of the Nazis, the *LTI*, just as it manipulates currency. To do this it must also have a majority interest in the shadow apparatus of the mass media, which it controls not only through its regulatory bodies and but also by acting as the gatekeeper and spin doctor of any “news” issuing from it.

In Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Symes, Winston’s colleague at Minitru, boasts about reducing the number of words in the official Newspeak dictionary. He also gives an idea of what this means to the state apparatus:

“The Eleventh Edition is the definitive edition,” he said. “We’re getting the language into its final shape—the shape it’s going to have when nobody speaks anything else. When we’ve finished with it, people like you will have to learn it all over again. You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We’re destroying words—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone. *The Eleventh Edition won’t contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050.*” [italics added]

After all, who needs all those synonyms we see in a bloated thesaurus? The word “thesaurus” itself sounds like an extinct dinosaur. What is most interesting here, though, is the verb tense of the final (italic) sentence: “that will become obsolete before ...”. This tangle of wishful thinking about the future, as perverted as Orwell meant it to sound here, is nevertheless the basis of the global derivatives market as well as the political and economic thinking behind it, for everything that is good lies “in the future” for the citizen of empire. The future determines the present because the synthetic future of simulacra is *more real* (like *more unique*) than the present’s analytical realia. “Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past,” says the Newspeak credo.

The present controls the past by writing history. But the present is the future of the past, just as the future will soon be the present which will in turn be the past. What Orwell perhaps could not foresee is the degree to which the future would overtake the present.

If the future controls the present, and the present controls the past, and the past controls the future, then a seamless algorithm forms in which time and space, the Kantian *a priori*, vanish into a mental state that may be manipulated by discourse. Engulphed in an ISP, real Time (T) becomes psychological time (t), so that just as  $\forall = \exists$ , so too does  $T = t$  (both of which are variants of Aristotle’s excluded middle of  $A \wedge B$  modified to  $A = B$ ). As such, all language too becomes psychological, subjective, solipsistic, losing its connection to the transcendental object and the Other.

To be the Sovereign, as a dictator or a king, is to know this in the sense that one may act upon it through the *nomos* in the form of fiat (*ius dicere*). If blasphemy is a capital offence like first-degree murder, then so be it. The *nomos* dictates the state of reality as the state itself (“*L’état, c’est moi*”). The state is nothing other than the linguistic reality in which the subject finds itself. It has abdicated its sovereignty to the state in the hope that it will be protected from the ravages of mortality, injustice, inequality, scarcity, poverty, ignorance, and chaos, only to find that “time and chance happeneth to them all.”

The subject might not have made such a bargain if it had allowed itself to face the reality of life it must witness all around itself each day, particularly with the surveillance apparatus of electronic news gathering at its fingertips. Specifically, it blinds itself to the truth that civilization itself is the guarantor of war, and that its mediocrity and corruption will bring upon the subject’s head all that it most feared and hoped to escape by abdicating. Again, civilization’s love of war is the direct result of its ethical



aesthetic of perpetual homeostasis as the highest good, which is in turn an obsession made compulsive by its algorithmic metastasis of growth and progress.

All civilizations are, at base, totalitarian. If they are not, then they are tending toward this condition in the form of military Empire. The homeostasis civilization seeks, and to which it devotes most its resources, simply does not exist in nature and the universe. But the denizens of civilization find the idea of the Law of the Jungle unthinkable. To have to take responsibility for their own self-defense and wellbeing is a burden they cannot bear, nor are they in any way prepared to bear it. Self-determination is boring, tedious, painstaking, worrisome, and without glory compared to the phantasmagoria of simulacra. Moreover, it demands the subject's total attention, leaving none for the mindless distractions of entertainment and the neural stimulation of a digital gadget.

Naturally, then, simulacra circumvent the strictures of realia by predicating all earthly rewards as being "in the future," just as the Church once did when it determined the cultural discourse. No phrase belies the psycholinguistics of the hegemonic discourse more than "in the future." It is the white man's Shangri-La, a Neverland, an Erewhon, where he lives on forever in youthfulness, with unrestricted access to consumer goods, debt, and round-the-clock entertainment and self-indulgence. It is a place where all enemies are vanquished, all wars are won, and all poverty is wiped out with perpetual prosperity and equality for all. It is the source of all technologies, discoveries, vaccines, treatments, cures, solutions, resolutions, and bright ideas.

The present is a nasty, dirty place where one must be put in jail, use the toilet, get diseases, work rotten jobs, get stuck in traffic, find sex partners instead of relying on pornography, and then, of course, die. It is an awful place where one gets old looking, cars and planes crash, and people get fired from their jobs. Worst of all, it is *boring*. Reality just plods along on its meaningless, existential, godless ramble to nowhere. Life is stupid (and contagious). It is like watching paint dry, or grass grow.

The past, however, is the glorious tale of the subject's national history and its struggle for what is right and good that always succeeds before the chapter is over. It is full of noble characters who fought for what they believed in while building beautiful palaces and establishing governments protecting the freedom and rights of its citizens through the rule of law. Sure, there were some bad guys in the past, like Hitler, but in the end, they got theirs, and the movie always has a happy ending. Death is mere intellectual speculation, morbid conjecture, and a matter for the police. It is only a possibility, never a reality except for others. It is for poor people, or

the wretches who have brought such misfortune upon themselves by leading reckless lives at odds with the status quo.

Unfortunately, the past, present, and future are not material equivalents. The past is a story in a book, or a collection of documents or artifacts. What we make of this detritus has about as much credibility in terms of being “real” as a good novel, if we are to judge such things by the lofty standards science purports to judge all things. The most that could be said about the future is that whatever we think it holds for us is likely *not* what it *will* hold for us. Beyond that, based on what we regard as scanty evidence, we know we will die, even though we never take it more seriously than buying life insurance and making out a will. Therefore, whatever exists beyond the reality of the present can only be psychological, which nevertheless has its own dubious “reality” as the existential set ( $\exists$ ) of simulacra.

Part of the fantasy, and power, of this set is its claim to universal discourse ( $\forall$ ). But this claim consists only of unabashedly ISP’s or purportedly analytical statements which never have been and never will be verified; or verified statements which are trivial tautologies ( $A = A$ ). Invalid synthetic statements rely upon the artificial reality of *verism* as their claim to verification. In this world what *looks* verified or verifiable is so. The trouble with this ethical aesthetic, besides the obvious, is that it prevents attempts at the verification of that which looks unverifiable.

As a result, discoveries in science, social organization, psychology, art, and mathematics which are often by nature obscured from easy verification, become neglected. Those who dare to pursue them anyway are often subject to the same neglect (at least in their time, such as Nikola Tesla). The exception is if they bring to the marketplace something that can make somebody a lot of money right away, which is the ultimate form of “verification” in a universe of discourse based on ISP’s and the misapplication of quantification.

Agamben identifies language as the sovereign power itself, therefore one who controls language has the power. And who controls language? Primarily it is the education system, public and private; the mass media; religious organizations; the banking system; and the state itself. It is not necessary to say “corporations,” as these other organizations named above, in one way or another, depend upon each other to maintain hegemony, the rule of law, and *le force majeure*.

What is important is that they are *organizations*, and as such take on a personality, a core identity (e.g. “branding”), acting autonomously in their own interests just as the subject did before abdication. As entities they are members of the Cult of Mediocrity, which defends its interests at any cost lest it be forced into a compromising situation with the demands of reality

and the Law of the Jungle. The Cult courts language, seeking exercise of its power over the psychology of the hapless subject who, having abdicated, has put itself at the mercy of whatever fiat these “bodies” deem expedient for their own self-interests.

As Agamben points out, “[L]anguage is the sovereign who, in a permanent state of exception, declares that there is nothing outside language and that language is always beyond itself.”<sup>3</sup> He goes on to say that the morphology of law is human language itself, expressing the “bond of inclusive exclusion.” The critical propositions here are 1) that the sovereign is *always already* in a state of exception by self-fiat, and 2) that the exclusion is “inclusive.” As in Russell’s paradox, the existence of the sovereign as language is predicated upon the synthetic proposition described by Agamben, namely that language is a set of itself if and only if it is not.

In such a state of *inclusive exclusion*, Orwell’s Newspeak, a form of *doublespeak* designed to stomp out “thoughtcrime,” roams freely as the ethical aesthetic of the prevailing and orthodox discourse. The universe of discourse created is based on an ever-expanding set of ISP’s which, while growing in application and number, simultaneously gobble up whatever “free speech” still roams the range of human experience. Thus, it is possible that the sheer ambient quantity of words is reduced while the ambiguities it expresses multiply exponentially. Orwell’s description of Newspeak as using “logic against logic” underscores its power of usurping the analytical thinking necessary to engage with reality as a sovereign individual.

He says the purpose of Newspeak is “to deny the existence of objective reality and all the while to take account of the reality which one denies—all this is indispensably necessary. Even in using the word doublethink it is necessary to exercise doublethink. For by using the word one admits that one is tampering with reality; by a fresh act of doublethink one erases this knowledge; and so on, indefinitely, with the lie always one leap ahead of the truth.”<sup>4</sup>

The relevance here to the simulacrum is that the state of exception must be an exception to *something*, and that something is the original state, making the exception a *copy* of the original. It is a simulacrum rather than a simulation, though, because the state of exception of language, being permanent, includes in its discourse the proposition that it is the authentic, verifiable, and verified truth. By this fact, the original is accused of being a copy, immediately casting suspicion upon its now lunatic and heretical

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<sup>3</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 21.

<sup>4</sup> Orwell, op. cit., 220

claims of being the “pretender” to the abdicated throne of truth through reason.

The original lacks the manufactured ingredient of *verism* common to all simulacra. The problem is, the original is a member of the set of realia class *a*; it is the true (T) and verifiable universe (V) which in fact contains, as an existential set ( $\exists$ ), elements of simulacra class *b*. “From this perspective, the exception is situated in a symmetrical position with respect to the example, with which it forms a system”<sup>5</sup> says Agamben. The class of *nomos* “can contain everything except its own paradigm.”<sup>6</sup>

The “system” is none other than the hegemonic order erected using the brick of the subject’s abdicated sovereignty and the mortar of its taxable gross domestic product (GDP) to form the edifice of the state apparatus. This may seem to be more in keeping with Wittgenstein’s claim that “No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself .... A function cannot be its own argument, because the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself.”<sup>7</sup> However, the difference is that the propositional sign, say *x* or *y*, is not the paradigm of the exception as it is in the *nomos*. The idea of “including” an exception, while seemingly paradoxical, is merely synthetic. In its ugliest form we call it lying and hypocrisy. In its most sophisticated form we call it government.

It is as if the law were the for purpose of allowing the denizens of civilization to feel that vigilante justice, provided it is put through the rigamarole and ritual of “due process,” therefore exonerates the executioner from claims of a rush to judgment. It is also not necessarily paradoxical that the lawmaker must make a law allowing himself to be free from the force of any law he sees as an impediment to the exercise of its will. Otherwise, how would he enforce the law? It would be as if the Commandment not to kill resulted in one failing to defend oneself with lethal force when one’s life is threatened.

Ironic, perhaps, but not to be dignified with the significance of a logical paradox. The state of exception is no more a paradox than saying that *force majeure* as an exception to breach of contract is anything more than a necessity. This does not mean, though, that the universe of discourse contrived by the hegemony is not *itself* in the state of Russell’s paradox as a synthetical proposition. Just as Kant believes that mathematics consists of synthetical “judgments” because the predicate is not self-evident in the subject or argument of the statement, so too are the statements about reality

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<sup>5</sup> Agamben, op. cit., 21.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein, *TL-P*, 3.333.

made by the hegemonic discourse, and for the same reason. Again, Kant says that, “[T]he concept of the sum of 7 and 5 contains nothing beyond the union of both sums into one, whereby nothing is told us as to what this single number may be which combines both. We by no means arrive at a *concept* of Twelve [italics added] ...”<sup>8</sup>

However, while it is the beauty of mathematics that we may, after the concept has been arrived at, reverse the process through what Peirce calls “abduction” and verify the truth (T) of a proposition, the same cannot be said about the law. Reversing the morphological structure of the language of the hegemonic discourse of the *nomos* brings us to the conclusion that all of its propositions are *synthetic*. At best, they are based on consensus and at worst on fiat.

For example, who is to say that it is cruel and barbarous to include “blasphemy” on the list of capital offenses as some Islamic legal codes do, while in other legal codes “murder” *cannot be* a capital offense because that code does not include capital punishment? How, for instance, do we reverse the *mechanics* behind the law for blasphemy demanding decapitation if we cannot do so for murder which, generally speaking, has in most instances otherwise followed the code of Hammurabi of an “eye for an eye”?

If the hegemonic discourse were not based on valid or invalid synthetic propositions alone, violence would not need to be the ultimate and inevitable recourse of civilization when it discovers that the prerogatives of reality conflict with the expediencies of its lust for absolute homeostasis in the form of the *nomos*. Change from within society, based on verified and verifiable principles, would evolve from a discursive dialectic. But this is not to be. Therefore, war is just another form of metastatic *nomos*.

The totalitarian state—what Agamben calls the “permanent” state of exception—is the point toward which the drama of civilization tends in its mission to preserve itself at all costs and establish Empire, even at the expense of the citizens it purports to serve and preserve. Consequently, civilization is the excrescence of the individual’s abdication of self-determination in favor of the dream “in the future” of eternal security and comfort offered to those willing to submit to its *Unbehagen* in the present.

### 2.3 Lacan and the psycholinguistics of *jouissance*

The chronic effect of discourse born of abdication is *derealization*, a psycho-emotional state where realia lose their natural luster and fascination and become “fake.” In their place, a new interpretation of reality forms, one

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<sup>8</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 721.

which has no material basis in *a priori* realia (time and space) except in as much as it is a kind of *imitation* of it. Mimesis in the form of realia's hereditary attributes eventually yields to a topological realm of simulacra. The latter is in relation to the former as a metaphor is to a simile. The discursive transformation is from "it is like" or "it is as if" to "*it is*."

While the former may admit that it is *synthetic* reality (though usually in the more commercially fetching forms of "virtual" or "alternative" reality), the later proudly proclaims that it is the "reality above all *other* realities." Wed to this claim, then, it remains unconscious of the absurdity of the underlying idea of there being "multiple realities," which is a kind of oxymoron. The claim is therefore a categorical contradiction and the creature of its foundational ISP:  $\exists = \forall$ , or  $A = B$ . Linguistically, the signifier (S) modifies its role as the sign post pointing to signified (*s*) to become the signified itself, subordinating the signified to the role of the suppressed pretender to the throne ( $S > s$ ), resulting in the familiar Lacanian inversion of *S/s*.

Once language has been commandeered for the "progress" of the hegemony and its apparatus, then, the categorical superlative is used only hyperbolically, or symbolically, never literally. Derealization occurs when the subject's psychological *affect* ceases to respond to the stimulus of realia, for example a lack of interest and arousal in physical sex partners in favor of pornography. Consequently, the *pornographication* of all aspects of human interaction spreads as the logic of the apparatus permeates the now impotent self-determination of the subject.

Unlike the depressive who becomes "dead to the world," though, the abdicated subject is *awakened* to a world of infinite stimulation which runs on logics fueled by invalid synthetic and trivial analytic propositions. This "new" and "improved" world lacks the *quotidienne* rules and limitations of the realm of realia while at the same time containing the "thus" (*sic*) of  $A = A$ , which becomes its *summum bonum* and claim to priority over valid synthetic statements (VSP's).

The potent combination of invalid synthetic and trivial analytic propositions endows the fantastic with the most trivial of reality's attributes: *tautology*. The analytic "truth"  $A = A$  then becomes, like *S/s*, the material equivalent of an ISP:  $A = B$ . The two must remain exchangeable in the economy of the ISP:  $A = A \rightarrow A = B$  (if  $A = A$ , then  $A = B$ ). It is precisely this psychological inversion that we see in O'Brien's attempt to "convert" Winston to BB's regime of the ISP:

"How many fingers am I holding up, Winston?"  
 "Four."

“And if the party says that it is not four but five—then  
how many?”  
“Four.”

Question the truth-value of the hegemonic discourse’s ISP’s and it points to the tautological truth of its trivial analytic ones; point to the banality of its analytic propositions and it points to the infinite possibility and potential in its invalid synthetic ones. What makes this possible is that the ISP is systematically conjoined with an analytic subject as the predicate through the copula.

It is a perfect system. Based on a fatal logical flaw, it is thereby immune to corruption, criticism, and correction. And while the subject may be conscious of the difference between what is “real” and “surreal” while dabbling in the pleasures of *simulation*, its discernment and what Peirce calls “conduct” is soon possessed by the *narcoticizing dysfunction effect* of simulacra which inevitably follows once the process of abdication is complete. The lure of immortality in a land of infinite pleasure and *possibility* (*Möglichkeit* in the sense of “potential”) is too great for the now captive ego to resist. Why would it want to? More to the point: what choice does it have?

Therefore, derealization is at once a psychological and phenomenological process. It is psychological because nothing changes in the subject’s environment. What changes is the subject’s orientation *to* that environment. Derealization in the normal subject depends upon language, such as the formula “in the future” as the gene of unlimited *possibility*; the narcoticizing effect targets the subject’s psychic energy, first immobilizing and then harnessing it through the stultifying power of mass media entertainment conveyed by exploiting the subject’s dependency upon the neural stimulation of its digital gadget.

If there is any paradox in the drama of sovereignty it is that total self-possession is the only possible state in which the subject may reach out to the transcendental object, that which belongs to the topological realm of the *a priori* and is therefore the Not-I. Once the subject rejects its own self-determination, narcissism becomes its only possible relationship to others and things.

Because the subject is no longer an individual but a member of the set of itself, the topology (or landscape) of its psychological *apperception* contains only members of this set, foremost of which is the “consumer profile” created by the telemetry of its digital gadget’s analytics. In other words, it is no longer aware of the unique, discrete, presence of others and things because it has lost that status in its own regard, swimming in a sea of

itself. “Reality” becomes an expression of a continual adjustment to the ego’s (and the id’s) wants and needs which are, in turn, directed and misdirected by the commercial apparatus which has supplanted organic and spontaneous culture.

That reality has been hardly accommodating in this way historically is no impediment in the digital age. Until now, reality tended to toss a spanner in the works when mankind attempted to stray too far from the physics of its Dasein. Religious suicide cults serve as an example. Nevertheless, like Narcissus, the subject soon falls in love with its own image reflected in the “black mirror” of the digital gadgets it cannot live without.

These devices are, in turn, programmed to mimic the subject’s unfulfilled desires, satisfying them in the least satisfying way—like showing a man dying of thirst a picture of water. One would think that the thirsty subject would immediately cast off the simulation as the ISP it is. However, the rapid morphology of the subject’s narcissism into a consumer simulacrum completes the derealization process, numbing the subject to the possibility of realia’s stimuli. In the resulting wave of suffocating boredom, the subject turns to ever-greater overtures of distraction offered by the digital mechanics of its gadget and the prurient content it conveys.

Realia are now perceived as annoying, inconvenient, uncompromising, dirty, boring, stupid, contagious, uncool, suspect, old-fashioned, and “other.” Through the *verism* simulacra inherit from realia, the subject soon becomes a copy of itself, categorically alienated from the simulation of the original. Derealization *alienates* reality. The set of realia class *a* contains elements of the *a priori*, which the subject’s new-found state of digital dysfunction in simulacra class *b* rejects. Realia pose a threat to simulacra’s persistence as well as provide an unwelcome intimation of personal responsibility and the absolute inevitability of mortality.

Meantime, simulacra, by inheriting the face value of realia, derive their manufactured verisimilitude from the property of verifiability characterizing realia. However, through the manipulation of the rules of validity regarding synthetic statements, this verifiability is transformed into a property reserved for members of the existential set of simulacra. At first the value is in mimetic form, where it might be properly said of a thing that it is a simulation. In other words, what makes it valuable is that *it simulates the characteristics of the underlying asset of the reality it mimics*. But this state is only its initial simulation of coming-into-being (*le devenir*). It is not until it achieves autonomy from its underlying real-value asset that it might properly be called a simulacrum. Once it has become autonomous, a new much greater value is attached to its verism: it now enjoins the state of exception where anything is possible.



While this reorientation to life begins as language, it soon becomes thought and, consequently, the subject's psychology. Meantime, decisions must be made, only now they are based on ISP's rather than VSP's and non-trivial analytic propositions. These memes, in the form of ISP's, affect everything, from the subject's finances to its diet, but certainly its choice of entertainment. The mass of abdicated subjects, in disposing of realia through relentless appeals to the hegemonic powers, also dispose of culture. In its place they install *entertainment*, a form of neurological stimulation serving as a distraction from their deep unconscious intimations that something is not quite right.

While entertainment includes the traditional categories such as music, movies, books, sports, news, and so on, it also includes things that, under the old regime of realia class *a*, would generally not have been considered entertainment, such as food, religion, money, power, government, policing, war, medicine, shopping, family, and the fathomless side shows of prurient content the Internet provides. These nontraditional distractions which would embarrass (and also bore) Tiberius, may be enjoyed more or less with impunity while at the same time being tracked and recorded by the telemetry of the subject's digital gadget.

But so far, we have discussed only the phenomenological and psychological aspects of this modification of the natural state of the human psyche. What we need to discuss now is the mechanism by which this fundamental reorientation from the *a priori* to the *a posteriori* takes place. To do so we will use Lacan's mirror stage as an apt description of the early psychological reversals necessary to prepare the subject for the complete abdication of personal sovereignty and self-determination. In doing so we continue the emphasis on language as the apparatus by which this transformation is accomplished.

However, to understand the place of this transformation in the development of the subject's psyche in Lacanian terms, we must also look changes in the significance of the first-person pronoun "I" to the individual's psychology. What changes occur in the subject's orientation to its idea of itself, or its core identity (*imago*)? Of course, what affects the "I" affects the copula "is" (to be), for who, after all, is acting? Therefore, this is also a matter of significant changes in the predicate logic of thought. In abdication, the transformation is from a tacit, *a priori* embrace of one's core identity as it has developed in early childhood, to a manufactured "unique" identity which is, one could say, bought off the shelf of the hegemonic order's online mail-order catalogue.

In this transformation the concern for language is not so much in the cognitive sense of its acquisition and development as much as it is in what

Žižek calls the *parallax* of the subject-object relationship between individuals who communicate information about what they identify as the Kantian *manifold* of reality. Already contained in the terms “subject” and “object” are the seeds of the citizen-sovereign positions which are, according to Agamben, symmetrical. Nevertheless, they represent two vantage points from which reality may be observed, resulting in a critical refraction of their respective interpretations of that reality which must, in some way, be reconciled.

The psychological development of this relationship is described by Lacan as “the mirror stage” in which the individual experiences two critical stages: The Ideal-I or Specular (which we will represent as I1) and the Social or Real (I2). These stages, states, or positions (as they will variously be called here) establish the subject’s sense of *self-as-subject* and therefore of the *world-as-object*.

This act, ... once the image has been mastered and found empty, immediately rebounds in the case of the child in a series of gestures in which he experiences in play the relation between the movements assumed in the image and the reflected environment, and between this virtual complex and the reality it reduplicates—the child’s own body, and the persons and things, around him .... This meaning discloses a libidinal dynamism, which has hitherto remained problematic, as well as an ontological structure of the human world that accords with my reflections on paranoiac knowledge. *We have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—whose predestination to this phase effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term imago [italics added].*<sup>9</sup>

The first position (I1) refers to the “speculum,” or the Latin word for a mirror. In it the self idealizes itself as its own reflection. This “exemplary situation” says Lacan, is the position in which “the symbolic matrix [of the] I is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject ...”<sup>10</sup>

He concludes by saying that what is most significant about this stage is that “this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the

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<sup>9</sup> Jaques Lacan, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” *Écrits, A Selection* (U.K.: Associated Book Publishers, Ltd. Alan Sheridan, trans. 1949), 502-3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

individual alone [and which] will only rejoin the *coming-into-being* [italics added] (*le devenir*) asymptotically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality.”<sup>11</sup>

That the ego finds itself inclined in a “fictional direction” by its specular orientation to itself underscores its possibility in the sense of its capacity for a diet of propositions which tend to fall in the spectrum of invalid synthetic, synthetic, unverifiable, unverified, and verified trivial analytic propositions. As the morbidity of this stage persists in crystalized form as pathology (or what Lacan politely calls “discordance”), the subject’s sense of “reality” becomes increasingly dependent upon an endless concatenation of language the logical morphology of which tends to fall in the *pistis* to *eikasia* range of Plato’s Divided Line.

In other words, the discourse of the subject’s thoughts becomes entirely dependent upon a fictional account of its life and deeds. This may mean that the subject becomes its own hagiographer. Conversely, the depressive may become a *paranoiac* possessed of what Lacan calls “paranoiac knowledge,” ever ready to blame others (parents, society, government) for its chronic shortcomings.

The second (I2) position may simply be described as that in which “[the subject] is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, [when] language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject.” We may presume that as the subject further develops its mutually beneficial relationship with others *as others*, it also finds itself in a fictional world of its own devising. For this social network to be maintained, not only must the “true name” (identity, or *imago*) of each player be verifiable in the trivial sense of  $A = A$ , but that player’s role in the game must be actual and discrete so that it serves the subject’s infantile egotism by reinforcing the subject’s narcissistic sense of identity and belonging.

In this state, the concatenation of the subject’s discursive thought tends toward the *noesis-dianoia* side of the Divided Line. As it is from this incessant ritornello of self-ideation (*imago*) that the subject derives its sense of the Cogito, the subject naturally settles into a “real” or unique and discrete relationship with other members of realia class *a*, that is verifiable by members of that class. However, this incipient orientation is also subject to *n* permutations as the superego develops in relations to the infinite variables of society. A disruption in this process of development leads to a malformation of the subject’s relationship to society in the form of a-social, anti-social, or sociopathic behavior.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Meantime, the subject's search for its *imago* may be crippled by what Lacan calls the "paranoiac knowledge" that it is living in a dream from which it has no power to awaken. This is a common dream. Surrounded by copies of itself in the form of the "other," a suffocating sense of isolation forces it into a desperate search for what Lacan calls *l'objet petit a*. While this is the psyche's symbolic interpretation of the situation, it is the best it can muster considering its lack of situational apperception. As such, it is the reality of the subject's house of mirrors from which it seems there is no escape—a scene in more than one horror movie.

The third (I<sub>x</sub>), or abdicated, position is neither Ideal nor Real. Rather, it is *Imaginary*. As such, we may say that I<sub>1</sub> corresponds to what Lacan calls the *symbolic* order, I<sub>2</sub> to the *real* order, and I<sub>x</sub> to the *imaginary* order. Later we will examine the symbolic nature of discourse in the I<sub>x</sub> position when we look at the effect abdication has on signification in language. Meantime, it is accurate to say that the abdicated position of I<sub>x</sub> belongs to the imaginary order in that the individual is no longer *who he is* but who he *imagines himself to be* (*imago*). It is at this point in his development that he may be most successfully manipulated by the hegemony's dream factory. At the same time, he also begins to learn about death, establishing a *motive* for the flight into the imaginary Neverland of immortality. All that is left is for the commercial apparatus to provide an *opportunity* for this flight.

Who he may or may not be, then, becomes entirely negotiable. Often, though, it is not the person himself who does the negotiating. While the "civil rights" and even "human rights" of the abdicated are also negotiable, the greatest freedom of negotiability belongs to the state through the power of its exception to the *nomos*. As a result, the subject is ever wary of its status in relation to the edifice of the law, the state, and the *mores* of society it attempts to uphold in itself and others.

In a flash, the individual may fall from the grace of being a taxpayer and apex consumer in good standing to the material equivalent of a criminal—all because he lost his job due to the vicissitudes and expediencies of the so-called business cycle of the financial markets. He may believe that he has the power to live out his fantasies, but he soon learns that *such a prerogative costs money*, and that money and power are synonymous in the imaginary economy of the hegemony. To be powerless, therefore, is to be penniless.

Just as we have made some modifications to the Lacanian mirror stage in order to understand the psychology of the ISP, we may also make some modifications to Lacan's three orders. We begin by saying that the imagination itself is imagined, being a psycho-cognitive function operating in the dimension of that which we cannot account for in reality—a reality which is, of course, imagined. Despite their heterogenous nature, the orders

are tied together in a Borromean knot that language cannot untangle without causing their dissolution. The inability of language to effectively parse the relationship between them underscores the fact that their unified expression is the morphology of thought itself and therefore of the psyche's ability to apprehend the gestalt of its Being.

It is the problem of the eye seeing itself without the aid of an image or mirror. Without these artificial aids, we may only *imagine* what the eye looks like. Nevertheless, the eye "looks like" *something* to someone else who may be able, for instance, to draw it for us. But then that drawing becomes the other's subjective interpretation of the reality of the eye independent of imagination, while at the same time being yet another form of imagination. For the observer and ourselves, however, the eye also maintains its existence as an *idea* independent of our empirical regard. If it did not, we would not be able to confirm our understanding of the meaning of someone else's statement by saying, "I *see* what you mean," by which we mean, of course, that we believe we understand something as the other person does.

Of all the senses, it is the function of the eye that we use as synonymous with understanding. Again, we are limited by Wittgenstein's injunction against self-referential discourse. ("No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself .... A function cannot be its own argument, because the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself.")<sup>12</sup>

The only hope, then, is to cut the Borromean knot as we are told Alexander cut the Gordian Knot upon encountering Gordium. Impatient of the puzzle, he instead used brute force to "solve" what others could not. As the self-proclaimed "Son of Zeus," he could establish a state of exception even to the rules and laws of the oracles of the gods. It is the conqueror, the hegemon, then, who may transcend the unity of the three orders, only because he can. The citizen must accept what the conqueror establishes as the "order of the day," working within those confines toward fulfillment of his egoic aspirations as a child of the gods and the leader of the elite corps of hegemons.

Though we may analyze the real, imaginary, and symbolic orders with the less brutal sword of reason, it is impossible for us to see them in action without noticing that one influences the other in a trinity of implication and effect. Their relationship, therefore, is dynamic. First one then another may dominate the Borromean topology. For example, we could say that in 1933 the symbolic idea of Democratic Socialism dominated the political discourse of Germany, quickly leading to a landscape of Nazi nationalism

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<sup>12</sup> *TLP*, 3.333.

in word, deed, thought, and spectacle. By 1940 the imaginary had established itself as everydayness. By 1945, however, it had reached its zenith and fell to its nadir, contracting this topology into the excretion of history.

The idea of “*Blubo*” (*Blut und Boden*), embraced by the special language of Nazi Germany (*LTI*), was self-consciously earthy if not also primitive in a romantically *modern* way (as we shall discuss later in more depth). The dream of the *Tausendjähriges Reich* had enveloped and consumed the imagination of the German people to the point where what is usually reserved for historians in their *a posteriori* method of *looking back*—the naming of a “*Reich*”—became the linguistic prerogative of the state and its subjects *looking forward*.

When Berlin fell in 1945, there was barely anything left of the symbolic and the imaginary, leaving only the “desert of the real.” The real, in the form of bare life, was upon the German people as it was upon the Europe that Germany had conquered and lost. Nevertheless, despite the chaos of a world war they soon managed to regain their equilibrium in the collective psyche of the population of Europe. Therefore, we may regard them as are dimensions of each other, inextricably bound as components of the cogito in the Borromean topology of Dasein.

Naturally, the three orders of the Gordian Knot express themselves differently depending upon whether they are the orders of the day in the Ideal-I (I1) or Real-I (I2) positions of the mirror stage. The situation is significantly more complicated when we add our accretions of the 0I (Not-I) and Ix (abdicated-I) positions to the sequence. In both cases it is a matter of what results from the *a priori* or *a posteriori* negation of the orders of being. How, then, might something be “negated” if it has never been, as is the case with the 0I position? We can say that the Ideal-I (I1) position of the mirror stage negates the subject’s primordial state of negative identification. The result is a negation of a negation, which gives us the positive of I1, or the Ideal-I.

The positions of I1, I2, and Ix comprise a concatenation of ontological states of being in which the attributes of the quantitative universe of discourse change with the latent possibility in each position. What remains constant is Dasein, without attribute except the attribute that it is without attribute, in which they all abide to an equal degree, thus establishing the Borromean topology. But again, it must be emphasized that these concatenations are to be considered the way we would countable numbers: as successive accumulations of each other, just as 2 is the accumulation of  $1 + 1$ , and 3 the accumulation of  $2 + 1$ , and so on. Consequently, I2 is the accumulation of  $I1 + 1$ , of the Ideal *and* (+) the Real.

The difference, though, between the concatenation of countable numbers and the positions of the mirror stage is that the former is based on an infinity in which we may count using whole numbers. The latter is characterized by the relationship of discrete numbers in modular arithmetic. Values located on the Borromean plane are subject to *recursions* rather than infinity. The plane is modular in that its entire universe of quantification is contained within the existential set between 0I and the negation of Ix, without the possibility of an *infinity*. Its processes are reversible if and only if there has not been a categorical exclusion (CE), where a process has crossed a threshold of no return (e.g. 0 / 1). Furthermore, it is, ultimately, a universe of *negative* rather than positive (integer) quantification, containing three negations:

- a. The negation of 0I (as in something *not* not existing): I1 (the symbolic, spectral Self).
- b. The negation of (1/1') in both its forms as  $0 + 1$  (I1) and  $1 + 1'$  (I2): Ix (abdication).
- c. The negation of Ix as the negation of the negation of (I1 + I2):  $\sim Ix$  (Hegel's Second Negation).

The 0I preceding this concatenation and the  $\sim Ix$  (not-Ix) following it are without positive attribute, though they may be described as absences of a positive attribute (as is Dasein). How is this so? We may say that the concatenation (I1, I2, Ix) belongs to the ontological orders of the symbolic, real, and imaginary, whereas 0I and  $\sim Ix$  belong to Dasein, which is without attribute. It is not possible to describe Dasein as symbolic, real, or imaginary, though they *abide* within the triangle of the Borromean territory.

The disparity between what we commonly conceive as "reality" with its abundance of infinity and the finite confines of the Borromean plane would not be a problem except that it forces us to talk about Dasein as a synthetic or analytic proposition. Consequently, we are in the awkward position of having to *prove* not only that it is possible to prove anything at all, but also that we exist so that we may prove something. Therefore, let it suffice to say that the Ideal-I (I1) position of the mirror stage *negates* the subject's primordial state of negative identification. The result is a negation of a negation, which gives us the positive of I1, or the Ideal-I. At the same time, it establishes the possibility of Hegel's Second Negation, or the negation of the negation of sovereign self.

What is of greater concern, though, is the consequence of the concatenation of the three orders of being as *process*. For example, we can see that in the evolution of Nazi ideology from the time Hitler became Chancellor in 1933 to his death and the end of the war in 1945, there was a

clear concatenation of the imaginary, the symbolic, and then the real as *le devenir*, or the coming-into-being of the Third Reich, as well as its undoing.

As Lacan describes, the subject's sense of alienation and paranoia arises out of its confusion regarding the nature of that which it seeks as *jouissance*. Confusion, therefore, arises out of the categorical transformation of its orientation to realia in the successive concatenation of the real, the imaginary, and symbolic during its fateful journey toward becoming a simulacrum of itself. Along the way, its need for transgressive *jouissance* intensifies as it moves farther from the *real* position. In psychological terms, we would say that the subject becomes increasingly "divorced from reality" in a kind of induced psychosis.

Meantime, the subject's path back to the womb (OI) is barred by the CE, which it crossed at birth (0 / 1). As a result, its longing for *jouissance* becomes commingled with its nostalgia for the OI of the prenatal state of the womb (matrix). Soon enough, an imbalance occurs in the psyche due to its desire to recur to the state of *never having been*, which is absolutely impossible and is therefore a CE. In reaction to the horror of this impossibility, then, it goes in the other direction and first seeks *abdication* of its self-determination, and then *oblivion* in the form of immersion in the narcotizing dysfunction effect of entertainment and the fairy tales of its collective identity as a member of Cult of Mediocrity.

It may seek analogs of this state in various forms of nonbeing, such as drug and alcohol addiction. A stultifying combination of meaningless work, senseless entertainment, and "virtual" human interactions via digital technology envelop the subject in a matrix of commercial propositions built upon the ISP that fulfil its critical desires only nominally and notionally. Or it may take the bolder step of suicide (though it is a rare subject that can muster this much courage), in which case instead of *never having been* it seeks the next best thing: *nonbeing*. In seeking after *jouissance*, there is no limit to its predictably unpredictable (stochastic) behavior—from mass murder to indulgence in personally transgressive behavior for which it sometimes must pay dearly in public humiliation and often enough trouble with the law.

More likely, though, the subject will choose the commercially purveyed forms of oblivion offered to those who manage to make the monthly payments on their digital gadgets. Consequently, there is an ever-greater longing for *l'objet petit a*, or the unobtainable object "in the future," which then becomes the symbolic *displacement substitute* standing in for the subject's frustrated lust for catastrophic *jouissance*.

The apparatus of the preexisting hegemony is sensitively tuned to the subject's plaintive cry in the wilderness as it suffers in its miasma of



narcissism and paranoia. Agents of the apparatus soon come to the rescue with offers of medical immortality, channels of social media, fountains of consumerism, neurologically stimulating digital gadgetry, and the promise of a leveraged fantasy life “in the future” based on the ersatz *le devenir* of the promissory note which brings the subject access to purchasing power well beyond what it could possibly have earned in its past. The overwhelming stimulus of this onslaught, and the giddy feeling of having unburdened itself of all personal responsibility, acts as a narcotic, dulling existential angst while fueling ever-greater fantasies of a resplendent realm of simulacra where *anything* is possible. At last, the subject has its own personal state of exception—as long as it can keep making the monthly payments.

Here, Freud’s definition of “*Unbehagen*” meets Lacan’s “discordant” emotional void created by pathological obsession with a return to the womb in search of that which can only be found outside of it: *jouissance*. It is from the idea of the womb, or “matrix,” in Greek, that we come upon the possibility of psychological “space,” a landscape, a topology that can be defined, discovered, and mapped.

Whether that landscape is populated with realia or simulacra is matter of the subject’s negation of itself. If it is the latter, then the subject has voluntarily chosen to live within the confines of the projection of its own ego inevitably in service of the id. Though the id has been historically repressed by the apparatus of civilization for the “greater good,” in the subject’s abdication to the hegemonic order in the digital age civilization with its God-given *nomos* and endless secular prohibitions can merely supply, through industrial power, the simulacra the subject requires to maintain the illusion of an endless specular state of being.

In this state of exception, which is negation, anything is possible. This sense of limitless possibility and potential (*Möglichkeit*) is intoxicating; the subject soon mistakes the fragrance of its intoxication for the *jouissance* it has never really known and therefore cannot properly identify. If the subject seems confused, the hegemonic discourse steps in with its jails, recreational drugs, alcohol, and psychotropic medicine. Moreover, it explains how everything should be through the mouthpieces of its institutions of government, religion, banking, education, and the media.

Those who have tasted of the freedom of sovereignty must assume the role of sovereign themselves, fight or evade the apparatus, kill themselves or experience the thrill of killing others, or express *jouissance* through great works of artistic, mathematical, and scientific creation. However, there is no quarter for them. They must exercise whatever their dispositions and

circumstances allow. At the same time, they are all under the imperative of Hegel's Second Negation, or the negation of the abnegation of self.

Civilization has so construed the matter that it stands ever ready to accept the subject's resignation from itself in return for promises of *jouissance* "in the future." But in place of the fancy French word the marketing language of civilization prefers its own invention: *happiness*. As an all-purpose noun, ready to conform itself to any and all occasions where its legendary power is called for, happiness serves as a form of ersatz *jouissance*, safe, sanitized, packaged, and tracked by corporate analytics. Most of all, though, it is free of any real transgression that might get the subject into some kind of trouble it could not get itself out of. For example, violent video games allow the subject to commit mass murder, just like the real perpetrators it sees on TV who are engaged in what amounts to an orgiastic spectacle of transgressive *jouissance*.

Meantime, there are those who cannot afford the monthly payments needed to maintain this infinitely inefficient game. They are not deemed worthy "credit risks" by the hegemonic apparatus. Effectively barred from simulacra class *b*, the masses of the disaffected, disenfranchised, imprisoned, and impoverished, find themselves unwillingly trapped in realia class *a*. One look at their condition would convince anyone of the necessity of membership in simulacra class *b*. After all, reality is dirty, stupid, boring, dangerous, and endlessly *quotidienne*, bereft of the slightest traces of "happiness," immortality, and endless indulgence in consumerism. In the phantasmagoria of simulacra, Heidegger's everydayness or *Zugengenzeit* is replaced with the permanent state of exception where anything is possible, even immortality. Of course, this state of affairs is possible if and only if the subject can get a line of credit to pay for it, since simulacra's infinitely inefficient affront to natural economy demands ever-greater resources from the subject and its community.

Members of class *b*, then, are shocked when they find themselves suddenly plunged into the world of class *a* through economic collapse precipitated by the future-predicated, speculative nature of the derivative financial markets. Moreover, the probability is that within the lifetime of the average member of class *b* the hegemonic order will find it expedient to aggravate a war to protect its interests, distract the population from the shocking details of its operation, and reinforce the permanent state of exception it permits itself. Therefore, the subject of class *b* will inevitably find itself in pushed toward the edge of the territory of class *a*, but without any of the necessary equipment to survive in it.

Meantime, the unwilling members of class *a* who were never given the choice of abdication because of their socio-economic status, education,

intelligence, ethnicity, or some other primitive “bad otherness” (the negation of the equally primitive “good sameness”), having only ever lived under such conditions, fare better—provided they are not singled out as scapegoats for class *a*’s fury at the frustration of its plans for immortality and uninterrupted consumerism.

How, then, does this *state of affairs*, in the sense meant by Wittgenstein as “proposition,”<sup>13</sup> come about in the early developmental positions of the psyche’s development? The fact is, there must be an etiology of abdication. The psyche must be prepared in some way for such a profound change in its morphology. As mentioned above, the primary structural changes in the individual’s orientation to itself and others occurs in early childhood, specifically in what is called the “critical period” (CP) of 0-12 years old.

The term usually applies to the development of language, though it is also applied to other forms of acculturation. A common example is Victor of Aveyron (c. 1788–1828), the “feral child” made famous by Dr. Jean Marc Gaspard Itard, whose attempts to teach the Victor to speak failed. There is enough controversy regarding the CP theory to look to other etiologies in the failure to learn language. Nevertheless, few would disagree that the first twelve years of a child’s life are the most critical in developing such skills so fundamental to social interaction as language.

What is not as readily investigated, perhaps because of the obvious difficulties of it, is what effect different forms of acculturation have on the development of thinking, world view, and the sense of self. It could be argued that this is the primary concern of child psychology. While it may be, expressions of malformation as well as successful adaptation are more readily taken up in the psychology of the adult where, as nearly all of Freud’s work in psychoanalysis attests, they are encountered as pathology. Lacan saw the genes of future pathology in the development of the child’s mirror stage and in the surrounding psychological phenomena as they are associated with desire and the dynamics of *jouissance*.

We have discussed the basic idea of the Ideal or specular I (I1) and the Real or social I (I2) positions. In this part of the discussion we will look more closely at the OI position before I1 (Not-I, or no-identity); the Ix position after the sequence of I1 and I2, or the abdicated-I; and the negation of the abdicated-I (~Ix). The addition of the accretion of the OI to the Lacanian positions gives us a concatenation of OI, I1, I2, Ix, or Not-I, Ideal-I, Real-I, and Abdicated-I. The transformation from OI to I1 is the material equivalent of the categorical exclusion 0 / 1. The transformation from I1 to I2 is the material equivalent of 1 / *n*.

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<sup>13</sup> *TL-P*, 45.

Here is a schematic description of these modified positions of the Lacanian mirror stage of early childhood psychological development:

- 0I: The pre-spectral position. The ego has no sense of itself and therefore no *cognitive* memory, but only *somatic* memory.
- I1: The spectral position. The ego “recognizes” itself as the universal quantification of its biological needs.
- I2: The real (social) position. The ego discovers that there are others who have the same biological needs.
- Ix: The abdicated position. The ego barter itself for a collective identity which is “more unique” than position II.

In addition, we must consider the significance of these positions to the schema we have established here of the interplay between synthetic and analytic statements in the language of discourse:

Synthetic, specular, simulacra: class *b*.

Analytic, real, realia: class *a*.

In I the subject’s specular orientation to itself is at first “natural” in that it is the intermediary stage between no sense of “I” (0I) and the social sense of others (I2). If it is pushed beyond the age appropriate for its use as an intermediary stage and becomes crystallized as an ego state in and of itself, then morbidity sets in as narcissism. But this describes the more pathological individual. Typically, this transitive stage is merely muddled in a dysfunctional social environment at home and at large, leaving the ego in a fragile and vulnerable state of provisional stability in relation to other, often equally unstable, egos. Therefore, the individual becomes a “seeker” after the stability, comfort, security, distraction, and most of all identity it cannot find in itself. This Lacan describes as the compulsive longing for *l’objet petit a*, the unattainable object “in the future.”

Why unattainable? Because it can only be found within the subject’s own sense of *jouissance* in the form of the transgression that sets it apart from other subjects. Searching *there*, however, would not be sufficient to drive the consumer goods and entertainment markets. Therefore, the subject is perpetually redirected to look for it anywhere but in itself. Besides, the subject lacks the capacity for self-determination and what Kohler calls *situational apperception* developed over a considerable period of healthy socialization necessary to survive ritualized transgression.<sup>14</sup> Both the pathological narcissist and the malformed ego owe their neurotic *ennui* to

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<sup>14</sup> Lacan, op. cit., 1.

the apperceptive error of seeking *without* that which may only be found *within*. Abdication, then, is a temptation few in such a state can resist.

As for 2, the social sense of others having the same wants and needs as oneself is enough to set the ego on the path to ever greater sovereignty and self-determination. It should be kept in mind, however, that this concatenation of positions is not to be construed as being strictly linear; it is interlaced with conditional branches and recursions which make it uniquely complex. It is a pity that the consequent striations these departures from straightforward development create are often mistaken for a personality.

Lacan analyzes the development of the sense of “I.” Following the negation rule we have used throughout this discussion, the coming-into-being of “I,” which is a negation of Not-I or *OI*, must be coupled with the arising of the *you, they, them, thou*—the *other*. The second- and third-person pronouns must be the negation of *I* for the subject to be conscious of its existence as the Not-I. This class of the Not-I is only possible if the subject is possessed of itself as the *I*, in other words the Not-I of the class of Not-I.

As such, the personal pronoun-subject is in the same class as impersonal pronoun-subjects because they share the same attribute of the Not-I, or *other*. As such, there are in effect two forms of Not-I: 1) That which is not oneself, or “others,” as well as objects (things), and 2) The primitive, primordial self, immersed as it is in a more or less unconscious state both before and shortly after birth.

It is no easy judgment to say that upon being born one is somehow “conscious” in the sense we casually mean it as being aware of ourselves as mortals among other fellow mortals in a universe of things and phenomena. None of us, it seems, have any directly-accessible memory of this brief period such as we might of the events of three or even two years later. This fact may give us some idea of the degree to which we are conscious at that time, if we like to equate consciousness with memory, which we also tend to do. Therefore, it is all too convenient at this time to say that this period of life immediately after birth in some respects resembles that immediately before birth—if we subtract what is undoubtedly the assurances and pleasures of life in the amniotic sack. What we do know, however, is that the number of functioning neurons in the brain of the infant are about the same just before and after birth, and that soon after a dramatic pruning process of them takes place. What, then, can say of any hypothetical somatic memory of this period of perhaps mythological bliss?

In a letter dated 5 December 1927, Freud’s correspondent Romain Rolland describes what he calls an “oceanic feeling” of oneness with the universe which he applies to the state of religious ecstasy saints and mystics

are known for and which has not failed to draw the devout and faithful to surrender much of their earthly sovereignty to the Heavenly Father:

But I would have liked to see you doing an analysis of spontaneous religious sentiment or, more exactly, of religious feeling, which is ... the simple and direct fact of the feeling of the “eternal” (which can very well not be eternal, but simply without perceptible limits, and like *oceanic*, as it were [italics added]) ...<sup>15</sup>

Freud, being honest, is skeptical. For one thing, he admits he has never felt this way. But more important to his critique of both the psyche and the civilization it has built, he believes that feelings (or “feeling-tones” as he calls them here) of any sort, to be useful to the psychoanalyst, must be accompanied by the associations which generate them or to which they attach themselves. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, he refers to Rolland’s letter, adding some description which brings us closer to being able to equate the “oceanic feeling” with the more mundane phenomenon of the undifferentiated state of the infantile mind, perhaps “remembered” in a profoundly somatic way that, at the time, was the only form of memory it was capable of.

Freud describes this feeling to be “something like the restoration of limitless narcissism,” adding that “the origin of the religious attitude can be traced back in clear outlines as far as the feeling of infantile helplessness. There may be something farther behind that, but for the present it is wrapped in obscurity.”<sup>16</sup> Later, he says that it must be an “early phase of ego-feeling ...”

This feeling, [Romain] adds, is a *purely subjective fact*, not an article of faith ... but it is the source of the religious energy which is seized upon by the various Churches and religious systems, *directed by them into particular channels, and doubtless also exhausted by them*. One may, he thinks, rightly call oneself religious on the ground of this oceanic feeling alone, *even if one rejects every belief and every illusion*. [italics added]<sup>17</sup>

A purely subjective “fact” is no fact at all, unless, of course, it is couched in an invalid synthetic proposition purporting to be verifiable or verified (*verism*). It is no wonder, then, that the prototype and chief competitor of the modern corporate state—the system of religion and churches—directs

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<sup>15</sup> Letter from Romain Rolland to Sigmund Freud dated 5 December 1927.

<sup>16</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, James Strachey, trans. (W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

“religious energy” into “particular channels” which serve its needs. The church, however, having exhausted this energy through overuse and perhaps abuse, has against its will allowed the “oceanic feeling” to find a new home in the *womb-matrix* of the corporate state and its entertainment and information apparatuses. And “even if one rejects every belief and every illusion” as do the scientific researchers funded by the corporate state and its universities, one nevertheless labors to support the infinite expansion of the hegemonic empire of technological, financial, and informational “progress.”

While we may imagine that it is possible to have a sense of sovereign identity under such circumstances, for it seems that even animals naturally have this sense, there is a significant difference between the sense of identity of the individual who *thinks* in language (word-associated ideas) about his identity and one who likely does not. While there is obviously some form of cogitation fermenting in the mind of the abdicated subject, it is often only in the form of scheming its next move in whatever game it finds itself playing.

Beyond that, thought becomes a commodity the subject uses to get a job to get a loan so that it can use the job to pay back the loan. In other words, in the world of simulacra class *b*, what goes on in the machinations of the subject’s brain is not thinking but the *simulacrum* of thought. How could it be otherwise? “Real” thought requires a sovereign will, one who thinks. It depends upon the maintenance of the polarity of self and other. One must think *about* something, not just about oneself! Rather, to maintain its immersion in the “oceanic feeling” sold by the commercial interests it is beholden to, the subject, through abdication, *resets* its misadventure into the *real* position of the mirror stage (II) back to the “early phase of ego-feeling” of the *spectral* position (I). The result is what Freud calls the “restoration of limitless narcissism ...”<sup>18</sup>

We may rightly assume that position I, if only because of its close proximity to the womb, retains much of what the infantile subject found desirable in its somatic memory of that experience. However, even if there were no such memory, for there is no way to prove that there is, the mythology not only of religion but of the corporate state will provide such a primordial paradise, either in the form of an ideal state of Nature, or in a glorious Age of Innocence in which everyone was happy until dirty, old, stupid, *reality* came along and ruined it.

Who, then, is it speaking from the position of the first-person pronoun “I”? Technology has given us an apt analogy. Natural-language processing programs with the temerity to say, “*I* will look up your records” as one waits

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 7.

on hold on the phone use the pronoun but have no sense of *I* as we mean it here. The mere use of the word is not enough to engender consciousness, which we define here as awareness with a *verifiable* sense of *I* as expressed in thought and language. Of course, the use of it by NLP programs is simulation. But what of the simulacrum? The difference, as mentioned earlier, is that simulation is a form of simile; it is *like* or *as* the thing it mirrors. Whereas, the simulacrum states that it “is” the thing it mirrors as metaphor, which makes it the *original* and the thing it mirrors the *copy*.

Again, this is a manipulation of the invalid synthetic statement to create *verism* in the form of a self-verifying proposition. Therefore, without an “*I*” to speak from in the sense meant here, there is no meaningful speech. It may carry information, such as when the NLP program says, “*I* see that you’re calling about X; is that right? If so, press 1 ...”

But it is an error to equate meaning with information. This is easy enough to see when considering statistics. We may have the most enlightening and scrupulously gathered figures couched in the most lucid language—that mean absolutely nothing unless we possess the key to their significance that gives them *meaning*. However, this problem is far greater when we attempt to “hear” the discourse in communication, which is often at odds with the *surface data* (semantic surface) of the utterance.

Idiom is a good example. What could possibly be meant by saying that someone is not quite one’s “cup of tea?” The discourse is that one *does not like* this other person. Euphemism, slang, rhetoric, doublespeak, and nearly all commercial and political communication is, by design, dual layered: there is the semantic surface data, which is more or less irrelevant, and the discourse, which is the *meaning*. For even these forms of language to *mean*, however, they must be backed with conscious, deliberate *intention*. And only an “*I*” can intend. To do so predicates a will, and only an “*I*” can have a will. It is interesting to note that the prognosticators of the “singularity” of artificial intelligence speak of it becoming “conscious” be seldom of it having a will. They belie the fallacy of their proposition by assuming that even “conscious” artificial intelligence will still do their bidding, in other words have no will of its own, though there are the alarmists who predict that that will must be malignant. Why? Because of the same fallacy: they assume that if the machines will not do *their* bidding, then they will run amok and destroy or enslave humankind in an effort to establish their own empire of computer hardware which will somehow be fundamentally incompatible with biological human culture.

Much of this fallacious prophesying has to do with wishful thinking, infantile projection, invalid synthetic propositions, the delusions grandeur of the priesthood of science, and the latent narcissism of its authors. But its



real root is a misconception about the relationship between the personal pronoun “I” and the possibility of self-determination and the human will.

Without an *I* to speak, there is no meaning in an utterance. Moreover, we must also invoke the *rule of exchange*, that components in the topology of negation are interchangeable. Each *I*, we can say, is a *you*; each subject an object; each 0 a negation of 1 for, as Peano expresses in his first of primitive axiom, “0 is a number,” not the absence of a number, just as the object is not the absence of a subject.

But this “I” must come from somewhere, and that is certainly not from the fingertips of someone writing an NLP program or other such “AI” application. Nor is it from “I” of the politician who has appropriated the personal pronoun the way kings and queens have appropriated the “we” as singular, though “we” might be more accurate in the case of the former who must inevitably be backed by “powerful special interests.” (The authorial “we” is excluded from this observation.)

Therefore, the etiology of the “I” is a good place to start to understand where meaning comes from, what the will is, and how intention is embodied in words concatenated into language. To understand the ontological differences between Lacan’s mirror stages I and II we must also understand what the formation of the “I” entails in its relation to derealization and desubjectification. While derealization applies to the subject’s relation to all things, desubjectification applies specifically to other subjects. When the subject abdicates, it is *desubjectified*. Collateral with this event is a negation of position II of the mirror stage. Therefore, position II resets to position I, plunging the subject into the bassinet of its infantile stage of regarding itself as the only subject in the universe, and therefore the sole arbiter of the universe of discourse.

As an infant, let us say between the ages of 0 and 1, the subject has had flashes of stages to come; in fact, being in the specular position it is the perfect mimic of the later adult stages it finds itself surrounded with. Mimicry gives it a taste of the schema of these stages, transmitted in a rather mysterious but not mystical way through the “presence” of the adult caretaker. For example, a smile from the adult often brings a smile from the infant. But why is it smiling? (Why is anyone smiling? Do we *know* in any verifiable sense?) Such is the universal developmental process of the psyche of the human infant. We accept its raging narcissism, its inconsolable tantrums, its disregard for our needs for peace and sleep, its bad table manners, and its breaking of toilet taboos.

However, when the adult “resets” to this stage through abdication, what was once a vibrant show of newborn life becomes a morbid solipsism. While the individual now knows enough to use the bathroom by itself, its eating

habits, regard for the needs of others, and intractable self-indulgence resemble those of the child it left behind many years before. In the historic periods where realia, for better or worse, were the only possibility of existence, such behavior was barely tolerated, usually only in the sovereign as long as he provided the advantages such as protection and order he promised in return for the free exercise of his infantile ego. After the dawn of the age of simulacra following the Industrial Revolution, however, the trend of modern societies has been ever greater reliance on a parental caregiver state, capitalist or communist.

The industrialization of agriculture has not been so much an attempt to make it more efficient and bountiful but to bring it in line with the *verism* of simulacra so that even the things we eat are products of our fantasy not our reality—despite the connection to the biological imperative. What other explanation can there be for so-called “processed foods”? Once these foods could be ordered online and delivered to one’s door, they moved into the realm of the infant’s impulsive need to be fed from the teat at the slightest whim, either from hunger or for the emotional comfort it brings.

But such convenience comes with a price. As we have said, that price is derealization followed immediately by desubjectification. In the first state or stage (I) the subject has no effective relationship with the other. Its primary orientation is to itself. Others exist only as utilities cued into existence by the expression of the subject’s wants and needs through such paralinguage as infants may use. In the second (II), the subject develops a sense that these shadowy utilities might be others like itself, though it takes the ego some time to understand, if ever, that the needs of other egos effectively equal its own.

Which brings us to the problem of “bare life.” We might presume that bare life is that which exists *a priori*, without the imposition of our will upon the environment. It is the “time and chance” which “happeneth to them all.” It is also the topological realm of realia. In it, the biological imperative remains in full force. Whatever one’s orientation to realia or simulacra the imperative remains to provide for one’s biological needs and to procreate. It is easy to see, however, how this imperative vanishes instantly when one becomes addicted to opioids, alcohol, overeating, prescription drugs, or even tobacco and gambling.

Those chronically depressed or who have suffered unspeakable trauma are also known to abandon this imperative. Furthermore, is it not an abandonment of the biological imperative to slaughter the enemy in war, defensively or offensively? One could say that defending oneself is perhaps the most fundamental biological imperative; and it is. As Gibbon so nicely puts it, “In the state of nature every man has a right to defend, by force of

arms, his person and his possessions; to repel, or even to prevent, the violence of his enemies, and to extend his hostilities to a reasonable measure of satisfaction and retaliation.”<sup>19</sup>

We find the similar sentiment in the mouth of Pampinea, a character in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. While Florence is in the throes of the plague and all law and order has broken down, she says,

It is the natural right of every person born here on earth to protect, sustain and defend his or her own life as far as possible. This right is generally recognized: indeed it has sometimes happened that, to save their own lives, people have killed others without any fault. If this is conceded by the laws, which seek the well-being of everybody, *how much more lawful* [italics added] is it for us and anybody else, without giving any offence, to take such means as we may for the preservation of our lives?<sup>20</sup>

While we recognize these ideas from other descriptions of one’s “right” to self-defense such as Gibbon’s, what gives this statement greater significance is its context. As the plague ravaged Florence in the 1300’s, a *de facto* state of exception reigned. Boccaccio’s first-hand descriptions attest to medical science, the Church, and the municipal government failing in their attempts to contain the disease and maintain order. As a result, Florentines found themselves in a state of almost total freedom *without signification*.

While this negation of the *nomos* led to suspension of laws and customs (such as proper burial), justice itself, being a-temporal and not dependent upon the vicissitudes of the laws of man, remained a matter for the individual to determine. In her attempt to invoke justice in the absence of the *nomos*, Pampinea turns to the sense of justice based upon an empirically verifiable condition, or what has been called a “clear and present danger.” From this verifiable subject, she forms the synthetic predicates which complete her argument and provide attributes for members of this existential class.

Pampinea’s reasoning here is that 1) It is our *a priori* (“God-given”) right to “protect, sustain, and defend” ourselves, 2) The laws against killing are suspended provided we act in verifiable self-defense (justice), and 3) Since the law allows for 2, we may invoke a total state of exception unilaterally for ourselves as circumstances demand. This is a valid argument if we consider that one proposition follows from another, that it is based upon a verifiable subject, and that nowhere in these propositions, which are

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<sup>19</sup> Gibbon, *op. cit.*, 810.

<sup>20</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (U.K.: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 2004), 14.

all of the same class, do we find contradiction. In this sense the “freedom” she describes *has* signification. Therefore, it is based in realia class *a* rather than simulacra class *b*, as the *nomos* often is. To be a valid member of the class of propositions regarding the “right” of self-defense, the element must have the attribute of being verifiable.

However, since the rule of law is here suspended by the state of exception, it is not necessary to rely upon the *nomos* for this verification, which as we have seen is prone by its nature to base itself upon false (F) synthetic propositions (despite its demand for verifiable evidence upon which to base claims of guilt or innocence). Therefore, while the predicates of Pampinea’s propositions are synthetic (i.e., God cannot be subpoenaed as a witness to verify what right He gives us), they are valid if and only if there is verification in the form of a subject for the predicates which, analytically, cannot be disputed. An unverified or unverifiable proposition founded upon a verified or verifiable analytical proposition is *de facto* true (T).

With or without witnesses, then, if one is set upon by an attacker with a knife who clearly has the intent to kill, it is not necessary to ascertain and prove motive, subpoena witnesses, submit evidence, and argue the matter before jury and judge before killing one’s foe. While this may be clear enough, the matter gets more complicated when the assailant is the plague! However, since we may say that the plague is a verifiable fact, therefore that which *follows* from the plague—looting, rapine, murder—brings with it the signification of verifiability. Such acts, then, qualify, using Pampinea’s reasoning, for what might be called the “extra-legal” *justice* she describes as being “more lawful” than the law itself.

However, what percent of combatants can be said to be engaged, *mano-a-mano*, with what we may verifiably identify as this struggle? More to the point: how many of them are in “a state of nature” such as we might equate with realia class *a*? And according to both sides in every war, there are the attackers and the attacked, the good guys and the bad guys, meaning that either both are wrong, which is a travesty, or both are right, which is an absurdity.

Agamben’s idea of bare life allows for two possibilities: 1) a kind of social Darwinism (really, Spencerism), and 2) dwelling exclusively in the realm of realia. The second includes both true synthetic and verifiable and verified analytic propositions. In the first we find the disenfranchised who must suffer at the expense of those who exploit or exclude them in favor of their infinitely inefficient life in the realm of simulacra class *b*. In the second we find those who, by design or chance, have either never left or have returned to realia class *a*.

Those who have never left are extremely rare; they fall into two categories: those who have been somehow isolated by chance, geography, ideology, or belief, and those who manage to survive within the dominant culture of simulacra but regard it as just another existential set of realia. Those who have “returned” have in fact “reset” themselves from abdication 1 to self-possession 0 through the mechanism of Hegel’s Second Negation. This latter cohort is made possible only because those individuals, though having abdicated, *have not crossed the threshold of the categorical exclusion (0 / 1) beyond which there is no possibility of reset*. They also must have the character for it, which is a mysterious (but not mystical) disposition which, nonetheless, is required if the journey back home is to be successful.

The word “negation,” in the lexicon of the hegemonic discourse, is a pejorative. Why? It is the enemy of Progress, the Holy Spirit of the scientific gods of simulacra. Within this universe of discourse negation is associated with Nihilists, Existentialists, God deniers, Holocaust deniers, nay-sayers, knockers (rather than boosters), emotional “negativity,” having a negative bank balance, sobriety, abstinence, not voting, asceticism, and preferring, like Melville’s *Bartleby*, “not to.”

In this discussion, however, it is what brings about the *positive* existence of everything in either direction of the process of *le devenir*. It is no secret that the negation of a negation brings about a positive result. But is that positive result the restoration of the value that was originally negated, or is it something new?

The first meaning of “bare life” above is associated with derealization and desubjectification *as it is imposed upon* a subject. This is not the same thing as the subject negating its personal sovereignty in abdication. When the hegemonic order throws someone in jail, that person loses far more personal sovereignty than the one who has voluntarily abdicated in anticipation of world of infinite possibility and potential. It is, therefore, a negation the subject’s “being” as a person. The disenfranchised subject’s only consolation is that by default it remains in the state of what Agamben calls bare life.

If bare life were different behind bars than it is in front of them, then it would not be the attribute of realia class *a*, Agamben intends it to be. Which raises the question of what happens when 0 is merely the absence of a number? What happens when subjectivity is removed from the parallel ontological threads of subject-object? If we consider the Nazis’ treatment of Jews and other “undesirables” we see that they did not take away their sovereignty, for in the eyes of Nazi ideology they had no legitimate sovereignty to take away.

In other words, they never possessed it, so how could it be taken away? What was taken away instead was the opportunity to act as if they were sovereign individuals as the Nazis considered the “true German” by birthright. Moreover, and more to the point, the Nazis saw this desubjectification as a process of returning “stolen” sovereignty, mostly in the forms of wealth and power tied up in real estate, market shares, and debt and other such banking instruments, to the true German people of “*Blut und Boden*.”

The Nazi word for desubjectification was *Vermassung*,<sup>21</sup> meaning “de-individualization.” But is this not also the goal of democracy? Is not democracy and the republic only possible when every individual sacrifices his own individuality for the greater good of the whole? Patriotism is patriotism, in the Nuremberg rally or in the hallowed temples and citadels of Democracy. “*The state of exception thus ceases to be referred to as an external and provisional state of factual danger and comes to be confused with juridical rule itself.*”<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the difference between the fascist state and the democratic one is a matter of degree, since both are existential sets within the universal set of civilization. Are we to conclude, then, that there is “good” civilization and “bad” civilization?

There was a time when there was only *good* civilization, but that was when “barbarity” was an identifiable quantity in the social organization of humankind. As barbarity is a negation of civilization, however, it too has been relegated to the dustbin of the hegemonic discourse’s lexicon. In its place is the more egalitarian distinctions of such useful dichotomies as capitalism and communism, fascism and democracy, Muslim and Christian, and so on. Could it be, though, that all of civilization tends toward the totalitarian, and that these distinctions are only mismatched phases of the same progression toward this end?

What they all share is the growing presence of the *nomos* in the form of the state of exception as the law. This is only possible when *Vermassung*, or desubjectification, becomes a requirement for membership in simulacra class *b* which extract their *verism* from the fiats and *nomos* of the hegemonic order rather than from the *a priori* of reality or “real value.” Otherwise, how then would such illusions as currency be possible? And from such fundamental illusions follow a cascading root system branching in all directions into every possible source of energy available in the captive polity of the state.

As Agamben describes it, the polity can then be described as “captive,” though their captivity is more like voluntary protective custody. Those in

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<sup>21</sup> Klemperer, op. cit., 178.

<sup>22</sup> Agamben, op. cit., 168.

such custody, however, though they may all look similar, are not of identical ilk. For reasons which we will discuss in more detail later, some have crossed the threshold of the categorical exclusion from which there is no return, while others retain the potential for “reset” to their primitive state of realia through bare life.

Agamben describes the dual mechanism of the hegemony of capture and abdication in Nazi jurisprudence. “National Socialist jurists were so aware of the particularity of the situation that they defined it by the paradoxical expression ‘state of willed exception.’”<sup>23</sup>

A caveat here is that “a state of willed exception” and “abdication” should not be construed as Jews in Poland being herded into the ghetto, for instance, or American Japanese during World War II “wanting” to be interned. Rather, each had the ultimate sovereign act at their disposal: suicide, which could mean armed resistance, terrorism, or taking their own lives. In the case of the Poles, Jewish or otherwise, they did resist, and suffered the consequences which amounted to suicide.

The abdication of their sovereignty therefore contained an element of negative volition because the ultimate sovereign act (in Schopenhauer's sense) remained. Also, “willed” is a nonspecific referent here and may be assigned to the volition of both the captor, who is, in effect, the “receiver” of abdicated sovereignty, and the one who abdicates. In either case it is a battle of the will to power which in and of itself is an excrescence of the biological imperative.

When we speak of will, though, we speak of the “I.” At what position, then, in early development does the sense of “I” begin, and what is its relative position to a sense of others? While Lacan does not specify age, he makes it clear there are certain periods in which such changes occur. Identification of these periods relies on what relationship a child has to his or her own image “reflected” in some way, not necessarily in a literal mirror.

Moreover, Lacan identifies the perception of self as both subject and object through mimesis as a critical stage in the development of *intelligence*, the concomitant precursor of consciousness, which we may assume here to be the “general intelligence,” or the “g,” of psychometricians. “This recognition is indicated in the illuminative mimicry of the *Aha-Erlebnis* [sudden realization], which Kohler sees as the expression of *situational apperception* [italics added], an essential stage in the act of intelligence,” he says.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, we may take the lack of a complete, sound, and transformative *Aha-Erlebnis* as indication of a deficiency in g, though

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>24</sup> Lacan, op. cit., 1.

certainly what can be measured on such tests is only a minor fraction of the story of intelligence.

Nevertheless, we tend to perceive intelligence as underlying the quantification of awareness and perception (*situational apperception*) and the measure of the magnanimity of consciousness.

Again, we have a “situation” in the sense Agamben describes as what occurs when the state suspends its juridical mandate for itself. Inevitably, the exception spills over into the laws intended for the *hoi polloi*. While this is partly the result of the typically sloppy way a state of exception is often imposed (for example, “martial law”), it has a more cynical side. Rather, the hegemony needs to control the pressure that has built up in the mass of abdicated subjects regarding their frustration over a lack of satisfaction with the shabby deal they have made.

Though they do not know it in these terms, they have become disillusioned with the imitation of a life that does not even exist. The way they see it, though, is that the state and its corporate minions have failed to live up to the hyperbole they used to cajole the subject into abdication. The preference is to regard this revelation as a shocking surprise, which is better than admitting that they have been “had.” Therefore, easing up on law and order while appearing to dramatically increase it by, for example, martialing paramilitary police and imposing curfews, is the best combination to win the approbation of the angry mob. They get to commit a lynching or two to blow off steam, loot the shops that “oppressed” them with prices inflated by the over-velocity of currency issued caused by irresponsible banks, and “take matters into their own hands” in a *tour-de-force* of misdirected sovereignty.

This is not *chaos*, but a kind of “freedom” to interact with others the subject did not have under a strict regime of abdicated sovereignty. The subject is now free to romanticize about self-determination or violate that of others through objectification. Either way, it is less boring than reality while being more exciting than toeing the line of the hegemonic discourse. In the former people band together to form new social units to accomplish more than they could as individuals, increasing their chance of survival and “happiness”; in the latter they either fight amongst themselves for limited resources, or take the first option and then fight as a unit against other units for the same. They are familiar with these struggles as the common plots of the violent entertainment they have been saturated with since birth.

Note that it is therefore possible for the former and latter to be enforced at once through the subsuming of the first by the second. In either case, though the subject may or may not bemoan the state of affairs as misfortune (unaware that it is by design), the unconscious revels in the sudden eclipse



of the state's apparatus of the *nomos* with its endless prohibitions, fiats, injunctions, and anticathexes.

The real surprise comes when an overt form of chaos emerges which, though already operating *sub rosa* as corruption and incompetence, strikes the unsuspecting subject as something new replacing the "law and order" touted by the hegemony. The situation usually worsens before it improves. During the downward trend, it may seem that much of what the subject believed in will soon be lost in a catastrophic economic collapse, pandemic violence, chronic shortages, a breakdown of public services, mass unemployment, hyperinflation, and the ravages of war at home or abroad. It is not uncommon for *all* of these things to happen at once!

The trauma produced only serves to strengthen the hegemony's position, however, by incapacitating the subject's ability to negate the negation of its self-determination. At the same time, the subject gets to live the post-apocalyptic adventure it always admired in the movies and TV shows it cannot live without. Everyone becomes a hero, struggling to live just one more day. There are endless opportunities to help one's fellow in need or scorn him with selfish impudence, both of which come with a fresh sense of power.

Either way, there is a sense of living through storybook times, much like the ones portrayed in the spectacle of history. What was once trivial, such as paying the next month's rent or buying food, becomes profound. A new and thrilling simulacrum is born full of what appear to be the innate hardships and difficulties of reality, replacing what had become the lackluster simulacrum of air-conditioned immortality, unlimited borrowing, and endless consumerism.

Despite all of these marvels the state of exception brings for the hegemony and its subjects, the one thing it passes over is any effective wisdom about the difference between true and invalid synthetic statements, and trivial and nontrivial analytic propositions. Therefore, the objective, verifiable reality of the situation eludes the subject. In effect it lacks what Lacan, using Wolfgang Köhler's term, calls the "illuminative mimicry of the *Aha-Erlebnis*," either through early and primitive indoctrination and conditioning, or through the dismantling of its morphology in the psyche through the education system and entertainment.

As a result, it also lacks the *situational apperception* to understand what the state of exception means in the abstract as ideology and in the concrete as the medium in which the hapless subject must now exercise the biological imperative. While we may also say that the subject lacks what Köhler calls the "intelligence" to deal with the situation, there is no shortage of "best and

the brightest” of them judging by the plethora of g-loaded activity in technology development and the financial markets.

Unfortunately for the mass of subjects as a whole, the “smart” ones tend to be equally dispersed among those who *precipitate* the state of exception for their own gain and egoic aggrandizement as well as among those who are its victim despite their wealth and achievements, the devil take the hindmost.

Such a state of affairs is only possible when the negative power of a single abdicated subject is multiplied by millions and even billions of times as more and more of the human herd is corralled into the permanent state of exception and is then linked together through various networks of commercial electronica. On the surface, the state of exception may look like the land of the free, brave, and prosperous—or a totalitarian hellhole. Its appearance is irrelevant because that is the attribute of it which belongs strictly to the set of simulacra class *b*.

As has been mentioned earlier though, this class also shares attributes with realia class *a*. If it did not, no one would be convinced of anything for long. Both classes *a* and *b* contain existential elements of the universal set of all sets which is has been deliberately left ambiguously defined here only as a “state of affairs” in the sense meant by Wittgenstein as a “proposition.”<sup>25</sup>

The need for ambiguity is to avoid the stirring up the debate between Wittgenstein and Russell over whether or not, as Wittgenstein puts it, a “proposition can say anything about itself.” Nevertheless, within this universal set, classes *a* and *b* intersect in what can be called class *c* where simulacra “borrow” the attributes of realia and realia take on the aura of an illusion. In class *c* there is an exchange of values and attributes benefitting both classes in terms of their adaptability to the subject’s need to *believe*. One thing the present scientific regime has learned from its far more experienced predecessor religion is that *belief is all*; reality is merely an adjunct to it, lending support and a certain useful substantiality. Under the spell of belief, a man can charge into battle armed with a toothpick against a sea of scimitars or blow himself up along with enemy civilians in a marketplace.

This much can be said for the benefits the intersection of classes *a* and *b* brings to simulacra. There is also a certain amount of this intersection in class *c* that is unavoidable because of the nature of empirical epistemology. By default, we rely on our senses, for instance, to provide us with reliable data for the construction not only of our immediate topology, but also of the cosmology of the universe. While this seemed to serve us well enough when

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<sup>25</sup> *TL-P*, 45.

there were few other tools to assess reality, we now have the hardware, software, procedures, methods, data, and the apparatus to challenge what we know about the empirical universe.

There has been no greater tool than logic, which has been able to confound even the most intractable beliefs our senses have led us to embrace. But what of it? We still must go about our daily business; despite what we know about it, the sun still goes “up” in the morning and “down” at night because that just suits our whole worldview better not only in perceptive and linguistic ways, but also practical ways. Therefore, while we may be thoroughly trained in the methods of verification and logic, and fully knowledgeable about our subject, we nevertheless allow what amount to the limitations of our senses and understanding to dictate what might seem like an overly generous portion of our understanding of reality.

But what of realia? How do realia benefit from the illusions of simulacra? Anyone familiar with the notion of the “romantic” dimension of reality understands that from sexual relationships to literature and fine art it is the so-called *romance* of these phenomena that gives them their allure, their power, and even their meaning. But the romantic element in our processing of reality can both give it meaning and lead us astray into what Lacan calls the “paranoiac information” of the dream simulacra are able to conjure into being in our waking lives.

For example, Klemperer describes the romantic dream of the Teuton that gripped the German people when what he calls the *LTI* (*Lingui Tertii Imperii*, Language of the Third Reich) occupied the collective discourse of the nation. To be effective, the *LTI* had to bypass analytical reason, appealing to what Klemperer calls “feeling.” But not only did it appeal to the emotions of the German people regarding their legendary origin and nationalism, it also appealed to the idea that *feeling* is superior to *thinking*:

- a. Feeling endows the Teuton with imagination and a religious inclination, it enables him to idolize nature, makes him “close to the earth,” and allows him to adopt a skeptical attitude towards the intellect.
- b. Feeling propels him towards the infinite, and it is this which constitutes the fundamentally Romantic quality of the Teutonic character.
- c. Feeling makes a conqueror out of him, furnishes him with the German faith in his own calling to world domination.<sup>26</sup>

He goes on to say, quoting another author, ““along side the craving to dominate the world was the desire to escape it.”” The discourse of propositions a, b, and c is that *feelings* about reality, as long as they are

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<sup>26</sup> Klemperer, *op. cit.*, 273.

based on the Romantic idea of the Teutonic race, are “more real” than anything analytical thought or reason could supply if not based on the same ideal.

In support of Wittgenstein’s injunction against self-referential propositions, we see that the Teutonic universal of “world domination” is possible *if and only if* those who would benefit from it the most, the Germans, were not part of it! One may not “dominate” something, and therefore possess and inhabit it, when one also desires to “escape” it completely. Unless, of course, one allows for paradox, which Wittgenstein says we may not do when we have conflicting categorical statements.

There is also a utilitarian function of class *c*, which is neither simulacra nor realia: control of the libido. For example, a sovereign individual who is married may have fantasies of extramarital sex. In such a situation the simulacrum of “going to Hell” by breaking the Ten Commandments may be more beneficial than the fantasies of carrying out the libidinal impulse. This common conflict is no way interferes with the subject’s sovereignty.

We may speculate that such sovereign fire bands as John Donne, whom, as we have seen, was all-too-ready to abdicate to God (not Man,) were so tempted by their own libido without too regularly submitting to it. Meantime, many of them would gladly have gone to the stake over a personal point of theology.

While it is easy enough to see this, we must also respect the fact that they also possess this quality innately in the form of the sublime—a matter we discuss in great detail elsewhere. For our purpose here, though, it is enough to say that the semantic surface of the permanent state of exception may be endowed with Nazi idealism or the lofty aspirations of the European Enlightenment. In its deep morphology, though, an apparatus is an apparatus. It is not the ghost in the machine; it is the machine in the ghost.

The most accessible attributes of this subliminal structure are known to the great critics of humanity as corruption and incompetence. The apparatus itself seems to delight in ritual purges of these blights on the reputation of modern polity when in fact what it is doing is ridding itself of what has been called the “appearance of impropriety.”

Acquainted only with surfaces, the subject is satisfied that justice has been done after what is sometimes a dramatic and cathartic show of *mea culpa* by the almighty hegemony. Sometimes the hegemony’s corporate and financial overlords even allow “regime change” in the forms of revolutions and the coup-de-tat, sweeping away what they see as the weak functionaries they implanted there in the first place perhaps in a previous purge.

Such lackeys are often drawn from those who by nature are inclined toward corruption and incompetence, for strong individuals are sovereign

ones and just would not be able to carry out the will of the true overlords of the hegemonic empire. Therefore, these purges, while necessary, are also inevitable. The new functionaries, inexperienced in the ways of the permanent state of exception, are soon indoctrinated, bought off, or blackmailed into obedience to those who ultimately determine the fate of the mass of abdicated subjects.

Which brings us back to the matter of the abdication of an individual, since hegemonic power is possible only through the voluntary abdication of the individual's sovereignty. Without willful abdication, formation of the hegemony has the same complications kidnappers face when they seize hostages: the care and feeding of the quarry, the constant worry that it will escape, and the general tension of maintaining a captive whose usefulness has an expiry date. Besides, the object of the hegemonic order is to facilitate or foster, but not force, the formation of a mass of dependents who, for a relative pittance of return, are willing to sacrifice all they bring with them into this life and all they can borrow thereafter.

While up close the value of each dependent seems to vary considerably, seen from the great height of the hegemony there are basically two groups: the majority of the mass, reaching almost 100 percent, who are more or less of the same modest value in terms of the return on investment, and an infinitesimal fraction of the total population consisting of those who must be serviced and propitiated. This latter group, variously called through the ages the "aristocracy," the "bourgeoisie," the "landlords," or even, in a strange miscarriage of terminology (or perhaps bad translation) the "intellectuals," has always consisted of the major stake holders in whatever ideology serves as a front for the hegemonic organization.

In a perverse shadow of this arrangement such ideologies and economic concepts as "communism" and "fascism" aggregate the popular mandate into a kind of state-run Burke's Peerage of apparatchiks who seem to have little personal wealth. Instead, they feed upon the unlimited commonweal, which is at their discretionary disposal, including its vast weaponry, surveillance apparatus, tax system, prisons, and, of course, state of exception.

The subject, then, is a bartered commodity. It is even sold on exchanges and over the counter in financial marketplaces. While each individual is disposable due to his low relative value to the whole, the whole itself has formidable potential in terms of profit for the corporate overlords of the hegemony. What could possess an individual to sacrifice not only his present but his future and his family's future to this juggernaut? How is this natural orientation of the ego "commodified" in such a way that it may be packaged and sold? Put this way, it is an unattractive deal.

What inevitably wins the subject over is a combination of mortal fear, social pressure, technological “magic,” narcoticizing entertainment, educational indoctrination, and expert marketing conceived by persons of superior intellect to the mean of the herd. These experts understand, if not consciously then intuitively, the mass psychology of the herd of subjects. They know that the way to a man’s heart is through his linguistic cognition. They also know that of all of the mental powers the subject is deficient in, logic-based reason is the weakest.

They know that even the smartest among them will eventually succumb if the bait is fresh enough. Despite the predatory sound of this overture, what it all comes down to is a free, sovereign, willing, and even *knowing* surrender of the subject’s personal sovereignty through the mechanism of abdication.

Therefore, there must be an identifiable mechanism through which this process initializes. It could not possibly be a scatter of random shots in the dark, some of which hit their mark. Were it less predictable, there would be no possibility of the financial instruments (such as derivatives) upon which global financial markets depend. Ultimately, the subject must be engaged in first, a willing suspension of disbelief made possible by entertainment, and second, a willing suspension of self-determination in favor of self-interest.

The native, realia-based *I* of the subject, the capacity or potential for which it is presumably born with, must be replaced with the *I'* of abdication. This conditional branch occurs just at the moment when the subject prepares to take its first baby steps away from the spectral, Ideal-I position of the ego (I) into the Real or social position (II). The requirement here is an abandonment (or sublimation) of the narcissistic specular orientation; such a move comes for all with a certain amount of trepidation, just as walking on two legs does after the grounded comfort and security of crawling on all fours.

The natural goal of this transition, and what is meant to replace the trepidation associated with it, is the *jouissance* of the first inkling of individuation where one is simultaneously subject and object. Whether or not nature has built this reward into the process to help it along is not for us to decide; however, the fact remains that without *jouissance* the subject’s development is doomed to chronic pathology, in particular a crippling ennui accompanied by a sense of failure.

And it is precisely at this moment that the existing hegemonic order steps in waving its promissory note, its acceptance to university, its job-offer, its enlistment into the military, its marriage certificate, its mortgage, its social status, its endless supply of consumer goods, its offer of membership, and its intimation of medical immortality.

In short: the commercial proposition of “happiness.” Who can resist? It becomes impossible and ridiculous to say, “I don’t want to be happy.” After all, as Freud makes clear, the *discontent* (*Unbehagen*) of civilization, though well-known and much despised, nevertheless pales in comparison to the horrors of self-determination, transgression, discomfort, ignorance, loneliness, poverty, inferior social status, and worst of all: the certain death the subject anticipates if he refuses to abdicate.

There is always hope that if one submits, plays the game right, and happens to be at the “right moment in history” when Progress has solved the age-old scourge of disease, that one may be able to have one’s life prolonged indefinitely. It is clear, then, that civilization’s *Unbehagen* is one of the symptoms of a failure to find that which in life will give one the freedom and courage to apprehend *jouissance*. In its place, the apparatus provides the subject a seemingly endless supply of “happiness” in whatever form is most readily accessible, from sky diving and getting rich to drug addiction and religion.

To understand this mechanism better, let us look again at the concatenation of the subject’s ego development using modified Lacanian terms:

- 0I: The pre-spectral position. The ego has no sense of itself and therefore no cognitive memory, only somatic.
- I1: The spectral position, Ideal-I. The ego “recognizes” itself as the universal quantification of its biological needs.
- I2: The Real (social) position. The ego discovers that there are others who have the same objective needs.
- Ix: The abdicated position. The ego barter itself for a collective identity which is “more unique” than position II.

Generally speaking, positions 0I through I2 crystalize during the Critical Period, ages 0-12, of the development of language. As such, they are *language driven*. Therefore, they are properly associated with the imago of the cogito. It is not necessary here to say too much about the *cogito* and its origin in thought and language. Lacan describes its formation as the *imago*. It is the idea of oneself that speaks, thinks, and acts.

The body is the machine this ghost occupies. But it is not necessary to think of this schema in Manichean terms of a dichotomy between the mind and body; rather, we must also keep in mind that while the imago is the ghost in the machine which makes the cogito possible, it is the simulacrum of the social *I*, or *I'*, that is *the machine in the ghost*. Just as the Ideal-I is about to complete its maturation into the Real or social I, the subject abdicates.

When we consider that Lacan (and others) describe some form of this process of individuation as taking place during an early age range, perhaps between 0 and 5, we might wonder how such a creature could make the kind of executive decision a sovereign must make when he abdicates. As we have mentioned, though, there is little ceremony. No trumpet fanfares accompany this act, nor is there a document to sign.

Instead, the child simply drifts into a dysfunctional relationship to the persons and realia around it, paralyzing development of the ego. Despite its status as a child, it still has the power to resist. In fact, children are known for their signal lack of cooperation with the desires and whims of adults as well as those of their social environment; their egos tend to begin unique, healthy, powerful, and willful, much to the displeasure of their parents and the school authorities.

The “juvenile delinquent” is the quaint character of the social discard pile whom all predict is destined for “no good.” A child’s core identity, or imago, through the chronic dysfunction, disappointment, and ennui surrounding it, is simply “kept on ice” until it can be sold profitably in the marketplace. By then, there is little about the subject to pity.

It is no longer the fragile, sensitive, impulsive, emotional, creature of minute stature we are conditioned to protect and even worship as the substance of what we once were. At majority, whichever age a society wishes to set it, the subject has a choice: either retain personal sovereignty and perhaps suffer the consequences of social ostracization (or, in some special cases, lionization), or abdicate and reap all the rewards and benefits the hegemonic order promises to those who acquiesce.

The *ghost in the machine* and the *machine in the ghost* are our two kinds of being. The former is based on the *fact-of-life* of the cogito. It is expressed through such necessities as the biological imperative in realia class *a*. It is the sum of the categorical exclusion from OI to I1, or  $0 + 1 = 1$ . The latter consists of the iteration of 1 in the form of *n*, giving rise to what Kant calls the “manifold,” which includes simulacra class *b* ( $1 / n$ ). Then there is class *c* where classes *a* and *b* intersect in what Plato calls the *eidos*, and which leads to the romantic idea of a person, place, thing, or idea; it is just as possible to have a romantic *idea of an idea*, such as freedom, justice, liberty, truth, perfection, happiness, and so on, as it is to have one about a lover or sublime thing.

We could say that among the manifold is what we call a “tree.” It is part of what makes the manifold possible in the form of realia, being that a tree is not a rock. However, it is trivial whether there is only one kind of tree or an infinite number of kinds of tree or even of trees themselves. One is



sufficient. Furthermore, as long as it can be said that there is one tree, then even the idea of a tree is enough to establish the reality of this thing.

This thing will belong in different ways to different existential categories of realia. It will belong to the category of living things, which the rock will not; but like the rock, it will belong to the category of natural things. Though man may create his own forms of a living thing through horticulture and biology or of the inanimate thing through materials science, he only succeeds in creating a new class of things that he has made that are either simulations or simulacra of natural things.

Here is the basic fallacy of the idea that the scientist will “become God” and create what hitherto could only be expected from nature. Just as once something has come into being it can never *have not come* into being (0I), so too once man has fabricated something it can never be said about that thing that it has the attribute of having been fabricated by nature. This is despite the fact that man himself is a product of nature, meaning that it could be argued that if man is a product of nature then whatever he produces is, by inference, association, or attribute, a product of nature too. Such an argument is at best a synthetic proposition and at worst a false one.

As for the coming-into-being, the position of 1(I1) always represents membership in realia class *a*, even if the thing is “manmade.” And as we have said here it is in this sense that simulations and simulacra are members of realia, possessing this categorical criterion of having come into being from nonbeing (*never having been*). However, once the process of *n* iterations of realia begins, that which is at first “unique” becomes “*more* unique” than its original, giving existential bias to the copy which now becomes the *nominal* original. The product is the consignment of the original to the obscurity and suspicion of being the imposter because it is not “perfect” in relation to other iterations of itself as simulation or simulacrum, as the case may be.

The situation is considerably worse for the sentient creature, however. The binary of *never having been* and being itself haunts every moment of its existence. The cogito seems to arise as a reaction formation, or irritation, caused by the idea that if it has come into being, it can go out of being. We think, “If I have come into being by a negation of 0, therefore, the equation is reversible: I may go out of being by the negation of 1.” In a panic, we seize upon the illusion that by ever grasping for *n* iterations of 1 to imaginary infinity the ego will never perish, forgetting that 0 is a number like any other number, and that indeed the equation is reversible except for one value: *having never been*.

Once one *is* in the form of “I am” (the cogito), *having never been* is an impossibility because the cogito *is* the negation of 0I. And it is this fact

alone which endows the idea of death with the terror with which the ego anticipates it. In first a numerical and then exponential progression, the subject's resources become increasingly consumed by schemes for the infinite preservation of the ego, whether it means building a pyramid or authoring books.

Sensing this state of affairs, the hegemonic order organizes itself and its discourse to gather a monopoly on iterations of 1, I or the product of *le devenir*. Meantime, the subject compulsively abdicates its sovereignty in the hope that such a desperate act will bring it the joy (happiness) of eternal reassurance of the survival of its ego. These iterations begin as realia (for example, real estate), then follow an inevitable path to simulation, terminating in simulacra.

The most transparent example of this pattern is in financial markets, banking, and state treasuries where things of real value are exploited as underlying assets (things of nominal value) and then finally are set loose by fiat as purely symbolic instruments purporting to represent a positive underlying asset that is in fact the *negation* of one: debt. The invalid synthetic nature of this proposition is obvious in the analogy of an empty larder with an IOU in it for cans of beans being described to a starving man as being "full" of food only because, "in the future," it *might* be if the IOU is paid back.

This magic is made possible by a confluence of invalid synthetic propositions and the endless production and consumption of simulacra. But like the magician's trick, it requires a highly skillful "misdirection" of the subject's awareness. In *le devenir* we have, besides the modified Lacanian positives described here, 1) the coming-into-being and 2) the being itself as the cogito. While this applies to a being that can, at least, possess the imago of or a persona, it also applied to animals and things.

All animals seem to have some sense of being, ranging from the purely mechanical seeking of food and avoidance of pain to a higher-order sort difficult to distinguish from human except for some fine points of language. As for things, that we can say they exist at all means that their being, or Dasein, is in the same class as ours regardless of any other attribute. It is Dasein's utter lack of any attribute except the attribute of lacking any attribute that makes it a universal quantification (V).

The crossing of the threshold from 0I to 1I (the Ideal stage) requires a recognition that "I am," the cogito. For a person not a thing, this is coming-into-being. For a thing, it entails recognition and naming by the person. It is by this *process of being* (*le devenir*) that what Heidegger calls the "furniture of the world" and Kant the "manifold" of phenomena manifest. These two designations of coming-into-being as the persona and the thing complete

what Heidegger called the “Monolith of Being” or what Agamben refers to as the “form of life” (Wittgenstein’s *Lebensformen*).

The Monolith of Being is comprised of the present-at-hand and the ready-to-hand. In our schema, the former may be associated with the coming-into-being of the persona, or cogito. The latter relates to things, as we cannot say of the *persona*, the *cogito*, that it is “ready-to-hand” like a hammer; whereas the most we can ever say about the Dasein of the subject is that “it is” and therefore the persona is “present.” If that persona “is not,” then either it *has never been*, in which case it is, at best, 0I, or *it was*, in which case it is in the class of “nonbeing,” meaning that it has signified, but is *no longer signifying*.

Palmer compares Heidegger’s distinction between the present-at-hand and ready-to-hand modalities of being to “*Pure Being* like that of Parmenides and *Process Being* like that of Heraclitus [italics added] ...”<sup>27</sup> The persona exists as pure being, Dasein, in that it is not the outcome of any process, nor its gene. Things are the outcome of cause and effect beyond their genesis in *le devenir*, which they share with the persona who names, or the “lawgiver” of the state of exception.

[Heidegger] is saying that the two kinds of Being he identifies are equiprimordial rather than choosing one as a fundamental basis. Thus he designates what might be called the Monolith of Being as a combination of these two kinds of Being and posits that we are continually moving back and forth between the two modalities, sometimes keeping hold of them in tandem.<sup>28</sup>

This interesting passage from Boccaccio’s *Decameron* describes the behavior of his compatriots during the plague in the Florence region in the 1300’s. Here, farmers in the suburbs of the city abandon their crops, cattle, and duties in the face of what they estimate is their imminent nonbeing in the form of death from the plague.

[A]s if they expected to die that very day, they all devoted themselves energetically, not to promoting *the future* of their cattle and their fields and the fruits of their own past labors, but simply to consuming those products which were *ready to hand* [italics added].<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Kent D. Palmer, “Beyond Dynamic Ontologies to N-ontologies and the foundations of Emergence in Fundamental Ontology.” Dissertation: *Emergent Design Explorations in Systems Phenomenology in relation to Ontology, Hermeneutics and the Meta-dialectics of Design*, U. South Australia, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron* (Wordsworth Editions Ltd. UK, 2004), 12.

While the two modes of being are equiprimordial, meaning that they are “equal” taken by themselves and weighed against each other in the balance of existence, they are seldom squared in the vicissitudes of civilization. Their equality arises from the possibility of their mutual dependency, meaning that there cannot be one without the other. This does not mean that they must therefore maintain a ratio of 1:1; it means that they must maintain equilibrium over time so that we may say of them that they are equiprimordial. All that is ready-to-hand has been, at the point of *le devenir*, present-at-hand. Whereas, all that is present-at-hand is *potentially* ready-to-hand; it need only signify this possibility in the sense of *Möglichkeit*. Once the potential of “the future” is subtracted from the “presence” of the present-at-hand of Dasein, the subject is left with that which is strictly empirical.

In this state of affairs, the subject “lives for the moment” and little else. In other words, the subject abandons the synthetic proposition of the future for the analytic proposition of the moment. The former (class *b*) intersects the latter (class *a*) in only one respect: death, which is “the future’s” only certainty (class *c*). Therefore, “death” is the sole member of class *c*, as well being a member of classes *a* and *b*. It may seem that “the present” may lay claim to greater quantification as the *present-at-hand* than it is being given here; but the fact is that as *pure being* rather than *process being*, it is not bound by the attributes of the *a priori* of time and space. A process must “take place” in time, as it has duration. Since the present-at-hand and the ready-to-hand arise from each other in the Monolith of Being, however, the former must include an element of the temporospatial in the form of the absolutely inevitable potential of death.

The two kinds of being are the predicates of the subjects “I am” and “it is.” The persona is trapped in the synthetic proposition of the ego which must self-define and self-nominate itself into existence perpetually. It has no possibility of proving its existence, preferring instead to accept its own nomination as the cogito to distract its intellect with the metaphysical questions of the existence of God, the significance of love, and the finality of death. Things, being ready-to-hand, welcome verification.

They therefore find themselves caught up in endless trivial exercises of verifiability. We may call this the “thus” (*sic*) quality of things. The ego becomes so enamored of the possibility of their verification that it eventually begins stuffing the present-to-hand into the ready-to-hand mold. God, intellect, happiness, love, and even death do not escape this mania for quantification.

What makes the indulgence of the ego’s proclivity for universal quantification possible, of course, is the invalid synthetic proposition on which the hegemonic discourse of civilization is based. Since the present-

at-hand and the ready-to-hand both share, as existential classes, *le devenir*, the ego exploits this fact to the point where their categorically alien characteristics as pure and process being are deliberately and institutionally ignored. The essential difference between the classes is that pure being is synthetic and process being is analytic. Although the ego is a synthetic proposition, this is not to say that it is a *false* one; it is simply to say that it is not verifiable.

However, when it presumes to make up the rules of verification based on its own synthetic existence, then it follows that whatever the output of its propositions, they will ipso facto be false. As we scale up and down the manifold, however, we learn of ever greater differences—that is, if we accept that Dasein is the only possible universal quantification because it is the only set that has no attribute other than the attribute of having no attribute. And it is this attribute which is not a paradox, as it is in Russell, but a fact, which makes it impossible to impose quantification upon Dasein while at the same time allowing it to contain everything that “is” the predicate of the copula.

The *persona*, as “I,” excludes all else as “Not-I” to maintain its identity. This is its first act as the ego once it is in the spectral position of its development. In other words, others do not exist the way it exists, as that which makes all else come into being. Psychologically, it feels that it does not belong to the set of others who have done the same thing. Despite this inevitable delusion, it is the perception that it belongs to its own unique set that identifies it as a member of the set of all other individuals who think the same way. Therefore, when the subject moves with the “thinking” of the herd, it does so under the illusion that it is making its own, unique, discrete decision to act (and speak).

It is for this reason the subject speaks the language of the hegemonic discourse, which ultimately is nothing more than the collective will of its abdicated fellows. That they have personified this collective will into a demon or demigod—imperial, fascist, democratic, totalitarian, or theological—is a matter of culture and convenience. It seems, though perhaps we will never know, that the psyche of the human animal has developed in such a way that it would grow out of this narcissism into a healthy social orientation if conditions were right. But since civilization itself is predicated on the endless mutation of the spectral stage, the sovereign individual is a rare animal indeed and the conditions always seem to tend toward the adverse.

The *thing*, as a permanent and inescapable member of realia, includes itself in the manifold. But is the persona also a thing in any way other than, like a thing, an expression of *le devenir*? We have said that the persona is

not a member of the class of the ready-to-hand, as things are, but is rather a mode of pure being. This, however, does not exclude it from the possibility of being a thing. What makes a thing a thing is not that it has no attribute of pure being, or that it is in no way present-at-hand. Rather, it is that it is a product of *process being* rather than *pure being*. Therefore, we can say that a thing has no intelligence (which is the real question of so-called artificial intelligence: is it a member of the class of pure being?).

We know that a thing is not a persona. A persona is a thing only inasmuch as it is a *form of life*. Whereas a thing is merely a *fact of life*. Attached to a person, the persona will die with that person. Since death is a fact of life, therefore a persona is a fact of life and consequently a thing. Moreover, using Palmer's description of Heidegger's Monolith of Being, this quality of "continually moving back and forth between the two modalities" is much more in line with what we know about the nature of the universe than the idea that the persona or the thing is in some kind of immutable static state.

Perhaps a problem with set theory, besides Russell's paradox, is that it gives the impression of a world divided up into static sets which at best might intersect but do not oscillate. It is enough to say that the *pas de deux* between the class of personae and the class of things is what makes language expressive, poetry possible, and perhaps life interesting, for the drama of the subject's abdication is "such stuff as dreams are made on."

Hamlet, in Act 4, Scene 2, says, "The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—" Body or not, Hamlet seems to be saying, the king is a *thing* in the sense of the *eidōs*, without which there would be *no thing* (nothing), and which comes into being as soon as there is a thing to which we may attach it—dead or alive. It is an interesting proposition. We could reword what he says as, "The king is with the body *if and only if* it is not with the body." Cast in such paradoxical form, it may or may not be an invalid synthetic statement. However, we could argue that regarding things in general, it is not necessary that the *eidōs* of the king be with the body, though to be "the body of the king" it must have an attribute of the associated *eidōs*. In which case it would be a true synthetic statement.

Hamlet says as much as reply when Guildenstern, taken aback by his words, says, "A 'thing,' my lord?" and Hamlet says, "Of nothing," or as we could put it a *thing of no-thing*. Hamlet toys with the fact that language fails us when it steps out of the proposition it has created for itself where existence must play by its rules, thus violating Wittgenstein's injunction regarding the theory of types, namely that "[no] proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself ..."

In Hamlet's case, the argument does not need to contain the prototype of itself because "proof," though empirical and not analytical, lies outside of the proposition in the universal ( $\forall$ ) agreement regarding what is and is not a "king" ( $\exists$ ). We all seem to understand this on some level or are trained to believe this is true. Part of the reason is just the sheer volume of information we must accept and act upon in every situation that will never go beyond our synthetic understanding.

As a result, we make mistakes. But in general, we have built a healthy and generous (or "high") tolerance for fault into our lives and daily calculations. From time to time this fault tolerance may be institutionalized into systems of the forgiveness or indulgence of "sin." The overuse of the latter is partly what led Martin Luther to condemn the Papal Church. His German vulgate translation of the Bible further eroded its primacy.

Nevertheless, fault tolerance in language, while allowing it a certain freedom to be highly adaptable to our circumstances, must rely upon the synthetic proposition for its liquidity. Fault tolerance is supposed to be part of the justice system, too, and is one of the reasons why there is due process to find out what the circumstances were of a crime beyond the bare facts.

However, language, being what it is, operates as a function containing its own argument. If this were not the case, we would not need predicate logic to take it a step higher into a realm of greater possible verification. It is also the reason why the specialized language of jurisprudence has a *low* fault tolerance, such as the categorical difference between the verbs *will* and *shall*, which makes all the difference in a law or contract. The language of the law compensates in the precision of its language and its demand for verification for the low percentage of verifiable statements in everyday language.

As a result, the aim of jurisprudence—to determine guilt or innocence and to make the punishment fit the crime—is often at odds with the demand its language makes for verified analytical statements. Furthermore, verifiable language can be the perfect mask for unjust, absurd, or ill-conceived laws which only serve to weaken the citizen's faith in the justice system and strengthen the hand of those who systematically manipulate it for their own gain at the expense of the innocent. Finally, this aura of verifiability, the god of our age thanks to science and technology, is invariably the guise under which the state introduces the apparatus of the permanent state of exception in the form of the *nomos*.

The languages of technology and medicine are bound by the same necessity. But like legal language, they have evolved to the point of being laden with jargon. The professional must undergo a decade of training to learn the lexicon while the layman remains mystified by its incantations.

While we hope this obscurity cures disease and builds computers better than it would if it were laden with solecisms and figures of speech, we also get the distinct feeling that we are in the presence of a priesthood of Churchmen incanting in a language intended to be unintelligible to the layman. This state of affairs give rise to a race of middling interpreters we call the media and academics.

While this is clearly to the advantage of the professions and their mouthpieces as it was to the Church in the Middle Ages, it also gives the subject a good feeling of being taken care of by superior beings. As a result, plain-speaking technologists, medical doctors, and lawyers are seen as demagogues or amateurs and must seek their fortune in business or politics. Economics and finance, professions populated with perhaps less charismatic characters, depend upon a proprietary language to an extraordinary extent to work their magic over corporate and governmental leaders and the *hoi polloi* through the agency of the media they command.

We attribute the density of such language to the superior degree of verifiability these disciplines require as well as their ever-greater specialization, for better or worse. But what really matters in situations where low fault tolerance is called for is the quantitative ratio of verifiable and verified statements to unverifiable synthetic statements. In everyday language it simply is not possible to have the level of fault tolerance required for these specializations, just as it is not possible to practice these specialized professions without a more elevated language of their own. However, this is not to justify the abuse of what amounts to the privilege of talking above the heads of those whose day-to-day wellbeing depend upon these professions.

There is always the obligation to find a plain way to express the effable (even in philosophy) and to avoid deliberate obfuscation. And while “effable” and “obfuscation” are not in the everyday speech of say, a news broadcast, it is easy enough to find out what they mean. There is no need to “dumb down” the sacred incantations of the professions, only to make it so that a person with a little ambition and a few modest resources can make sense out of them so that he might be able to get at least an intuitive idea of whether or not they reflect his best interests.

In everyday communication local standards, cultural norms, figures of speech, idiom, vernacular, and our natural inclination to embellish the truth to make the case for ourselves stronger introduces a significant amount of *noise* to language. While a good sweeping by Minitru and a new edition of the Newspeak Dictionary might not be the answer to this jungle of verbiage, the fact remains that the apparatus of language is not possible unless it allows itself to make up its own rules about its descriptions of reality.



Otherwise, it would not have the power of adaptability necessary to accommodate all of its uses, good and bad. Furthermore, it would not have that plastic delight we cherish in poetry and other forms of literature and even everyday speech.

However, when there is a sophisticated and divisive attempt at systematic exploitation of its high fault tolerance, the quantitative ratio of simulacra to realia in the subject's psychological life *inverts* in favor of simulacra. Accompanying this inversion is a new statistical weight added to simulacra in the form of their coronation as the "improved" and "more unique" reality. This one, says the discourse, is free of the flaws that plagued the one the subject now gratefully leaves behind as outdated and messy. "Realty 2.0" is born as the next product generation.

The subject soon becomes alienated from the old-fashioned, outdated reality. Stubbornly ignorant of mankind's lust for immortality and eternal pleasure, the forsaken reality plods on in its "boring" and inimical way anyway, setting up the subject (and the financial markets) for a corrective disaster. Part of the problem, though, is that often the subject barely feels the incremental change from realia to simulacra or is so festered with assurances "everything will be all right" from government and the media that it does not sense the danger dead ahead. "There will only be a slight discomfort" doctors say before a painfully invasive procedure. The result is an orientation to a *Lebensformen* hitherto unknown to the human psyche and for which it is poorly equipped to face.

But if this were the whole story, mankind would have simply blown itself up a thousand times over since the invention of the atomic bomb. Besides reality's refusal to go along with the hegemony's discourse adventure, it also is, by its nature, subject to a longing for equilibrium which will not be thwarted. The scales of this balance tip by the force of what Heidegger calls the equiprimordial modalities of the present-at-hand and the ready-to-hand.

As we describe it here, though, it is better understood as pure being and process being. Furthermore, we may align these modalities with propositions that are analytic and synthetic, respectively. While together they form the undivided Monolith of Being, it is as equiprimordial predicates sharing the same subject that they join irrevocably with the yoke of the cogito through the agency of the copula.

As such, they are also products of the propositional logic of language. Their "subject  $x$ , predicates  $a$  or  $b$ " structure allow them the comprehensive simplicity to range through Dasein without excluding any set, including simulacra:  $\forall = (a \vee b \rightarrow x)$ , where  $\forall$  is the universal quantification of Dasein. Therefore, it is with great consternation that equiprimordial reality

encounters the hegemonic discourse of the abdication of the subject's self-determinate sovereignty. Why? As Agamben describes it, the state of exception predicates itself as the universal quantification of reality. In doing so it creates "two" realities: real reality and fake reality. This would be fine, as we all have imaginations and like to use them, except for the fact that what is predicated on the *a priori* of time and space in this bifurcation is by primary displacement assigned the false (F) part of the truth table.

Furthermore, "real reality" functions as a kind of self-negating double positive. As "reality" is categorical, adding an adjective derived from the noun itself negates the category. Doing so has the same logical force as a double negative negating itself into a positive.

Meantime, the subject's situational apperception has been crippled by the ego's morbid malingering in the spectral (I) position. To get a good look at what this crippled creature looks like we only need to consider the sociopath. While no society can sustain too many of these creatures, modern society cannot seem to build prisons fast enough to hold them. Those with a little more sense and perhaps better behavioral training from parents and schools manage to make a life for themselves in a society that does not know much better. Since there can be only one reality and still be reality (as it must be distinguished from *n* number of potential *Lebensformen* and is therefore categorical), simulation becomes simulacra at the moment when the reality of the *a priori* is displaced by simulation in the primary position of the subject's situational apperception. *Aha-Erlebnis*, the "eureka moment" of discovering the gestalt of reality, becomes impossible. We might even say that this "moment" where simulation becomes simulacra at the point of the subject's abdication is the negation of *Aha-Erlebnis*. Life ceases to be a matter of overcoming difficulties, solving problems, and discovering truths and becomes the avoidance of reality *at all costs*.

We really cannot argue with the view of reality presented by the hegemonic discourse: Life is a horribly wicked game of chance where even those who do not want to play are forced to, while at the same time every roll of the existential dice is loaded against the puny mortal. The house always wins. Everything ends badly.

The greatest worldly, intellectual, artistic, scientific, and spiritual success is crowned with a bloody moment of "*Eli Eli lama sabachthani?*" Death soon follows. Nothing is fair. Justice is an abstraction. Money, which is nothing at all, is everything. Health, as much as we may try to preserve it, eludes the best of us.

In this spiritual, intellectual, and humanitarian darkness, however, the little flares of light of the *Aha-Erlebnis* give us glimpses of reality so sublime one "Road to Damascus" moment can inspire us for a lifetime and,

in turn, generations for millennia. Herein lies the ontological difference between the true (T) and false (F) proposition, synthetic or analytic. The value of T is always *infinitely greater* than F ( $T = 1 > F = 0$ ); otherwise, nothing would be either true or false. Furthermore, the logic of binary computing would be impossible. By “greater” is here meant not only *value* of any kind (numeric, exponential, semantic, and so on), but more specifically ontological value in the schema of Dasein. Of this thing we can say that “it is.”

As such, it is the category difference between realia and simulacra, between that which signifies and that which does not. And between the signified and the signifier in the “right” relationship as being *coexistent* rather than *codependent*.

If the signified arises as a consequence of its nomination as the signifier, it is codependent. The *being* of the signified, then, is a consequence of the *a posteriori* of the signifier. If the signified arises through *le devenir* as a consequence of its identity as an extension of the *a priori* of time and space, then any arbitrary signifier will be a further consequence of the signified within the apparatus of language. Therefore, it is a matter of priority: if the signified arises as a consequence of the signifier, it is a false (F) proposition; if the signifier arises as a consequence of the signified, it is a true (T) proposition.

For the analytic statement, it does not matter if it is trivial ( $A = A$ ) or nontrivial. If it is T, then it is infinitely “greater” than the F statement. While we cannot verify the truth of a complete synthetic statement as subject and predicate, we can detect if it is *potentially true* (verifiable but not verified) provided the subject is verifiable and both subject and predicate share a computable (quantitative) attribute. If they do, then we can say that given  $x$  conditions,  $y$  is true (T). In an analytic statement, though, given *any* condition ( $n$ ),  $y$  is true (T). For example, it is *always* true that  $c$ , the speed of light, is  $x$ , which is why we are able to nominate it as a “constant.” In turn, quantum mechanics would be impossible were it not for the Planck constant  $\hbar$  for the same reason.

However, Andrew Wiles showed that *proof* of Fermat’s last theorem, where  $a^n + b^n = c^n$ , and  $n$  is any positive integer greater than 2, is a matter of what Kant calls a synthetic judgment, since using the tools of positivism otherwise forces us into an *infinite chain of inconclusive proofs*. Rather, using modular arithmetic synthetically, Wiles was able to exploit the Tanayama-Shimura conjecture to provide a satisfying “proof” of the theorem which in turn stands up to analytic verification *outside of its own logic*.

An invalid synthetic statement must first create its own universe of discourse in which such a statement is always true, meaning that the truth of the logic of that statement may or may not be verifiable in another universe of discourse. The speed of light ( $c$ ) is *always* verifiable in *any* quantitative universe, though as a synthetic predicate that universe may differ categorically from another in which  $c$  is also true, for example one in which there are more than four dimensions.

An unverified or unverifiable proposition founded upon a verified or verifiable analytical proposition is de facto true (T). “Founded” means that the synthetic predicate is rooted in a verified subject which may or may not be the result of *Aha-Erlebnis* but often is. This, for example, we find to be the case in mathematics and physics, which Kant describes as synthetic judgments. What is a life without apprehension of the gestalt of *a priori* reality? What effect does the negation of *Aha-Erlebnis* have on our will to live as sovereign beings?

As mentioned, situational apperception becomes paralyzed. The discourse turns to expression of the *a posteriori*, pre-digested, regurgitated, filtered, and processed simulacra of the hegemony. Pure being, in the rush to quantification of the ready-to-hand, becomes a threat to the new order. While it may succeed in protecting itself from abuse by sequestration in hiding places where the state of exception lacks the situational apperception to seek it, it also succeeds in removing itself from the stage of humanity’s struggle to lift itself out of perpetual misery.

What is the consequence of this sequestration for the subject and society? And what direction does civilization take except toward its own self-destruction when there are no more “eureka” moments to pull it out of its problems and difficulties? Despite this recipe for disaster, there always exist forces greater than the self which override its petty narcissism. As mentioned, the Monolith of Being nevertheless maintains its indomitable lust for equilibrium through the equiprimordiality of its two modes.

Within the universal topology of Dasein, *le devenir*, as the coming-into-being, expresses the *a priori* nature of both the cogito of the persona and the bestowing of thingness on the object by language. For the child, the sense of “I” *always already* exists as *latent possibility* at conception. But this potential must engage a process of development which, though linear in expression, nevertheless is subject to vicissitudes and variations which in the end help distinguish one individual from another but also are the source of pathology. The moment at which it confirms for itself that it has a sense of “I” is the moment at which it may be said about the subject that “it is.”

But this incipient “I” remains undeveloped in a critical way which, if left incomplete, will result in pathology sometimes even leading to

sociopathology. What the subject lacks in the Ideal-I (I) position is the Real-I (II) to accompany it. The Real-I is the expression in the morphology of the psyche of the realization that others exist in the same way that the subject does, having the same needs and wants. While such a moment may not be marked with the image we may have of our first steps, it is nevertheless the definitive moment in the evolution of individual consciousness and sovereignty and may rightly be called the first moment of *Aha-Erlebnis*.

No baby goes running through the streets shouting “Eureka” at that moment, in part because it is not quite so sudden as Archimedes’ epiphany. Rather, it is a relatively gradual process considering the short and compressed time of a child’s existence. Nevertheless, there is a marked change in behavior expressed most significantly through the effective use of language, for language, as communication, presumes a transmitter and receiver and a mutually-agreed-upon code to operate. As such, effective use of language is de facto evidence that the child has entered the threshold of the position of the Real-I in the development of the ego.

None of this is possible, however, if there is malformation of the ego in the spectral position. In the structure of the psyche of the individual (I) serves as the foundational structure of the superstructure of the subject’s ensuing development of the mature ego but more importantly the superego, the repository of the anticathexes (the psychic equivalent of the *nomos*) upon which civilization is built. Language, particularly written language, is the cornerstone of civilization. It confirms that a society of “others” have this sense as well. Until then, though the subject has a sense of a spectral “me” as its own reflection (I), effective language is not possible because the child does not (in “reality”) perceive that there are two parties who share the same code, and that this code causes things to happen corresponding to the needs and wants of sovereign individuals. In this way the spectral position is in contrast to what the subject in the social or Real-I position (II) considers to be the cogito. For the thing, the fact of its existence precedes its naming. As such, it is an extension of the *a priori*.

But this is not enough for the subject perceiving the object. A thing which is not named either does not exist in the situational apperception of the persona or, if it does, has no corresponding cognitive value as an object of thought. Other individuals, however, as pure being rather than process being, make demands upon the subject in ways *no* thing (or even *some-thing*) will or can. One of those demands is that the subject communicate through a shared and structured language nuanced with the prerogatives of the society in which the child finds itself.

Early on, then, society confronts the child with its complex demands well before the child has any capability of meeting them with the necessary

skill and understanding they require to be fulfilled. Immediately a vague resentment festers in the child at this affront to its feral egotism. The human psyche, being what it is from its inception, thus harbors a secret and unshakable longing for the state of exception. Much later on this longing will be exploited for the benefit of those who by a natural lack of sympathy, greater intelligence, or both, see the subject's *Unbehagen* as an opportunity to assuage their own through a pathological lust for complete power.

The teleological outcome of this motivation is what we call civilization, for which the subject pays dearly and professes it cannot live without even in its most pernicious forms. For this enterprise to be successful, however, it must be generously populated with the simulacra which foremost must have the attribute of non-signification. In other words, for the permanent state of exception to be *more* real, *more* unique, and above all *more* entertaining than reality, the things and even the personae occupying its "space" must transmit the discourse that *anything is possible, even immortality*.

But is this not signification? Is not this discourse that which simulacra signify? Discourse is not signification, it is implication. The statement "One in ten coal miners have brown lung disease" implies that there is a correlation between coal mining and brown lung disease as the discourse of the statement but is not in any way its signification. For a word, phrase, or statement to signify, its sign must be universal to all members of the class of those who have the necessary key to decode it. The signifier and the key must be 1) unique, and 2) universal. Implication, however, requires interpretation by that which signifies. Therefore, it is a secondary effect. The primary effect is the correlative coexistence of the signifier and signified locked as they are in a cryptological relationship precluding any ambiguity about their meaning and therefore eliminating the possibility of a "trusted third party" (TTP) which must be the arbiter of meaning. Perhaps the most infamous TTP in literature is Minitru of Orwell's *Nineteen Eight-Four*. Perhaps the most notorious TTP in history is what Klemperer calls the *LTI (Lingua Tertii Imperii)* of the German Nazi Party during its reign of power from 1933 to 1945.

Then there is the matter of its verifiability. For example, for a law to signify it must be a synthetic proposition which contains a subject that is verifiable and a predicate sharing the same attributes of the subject (though it may or may not be from the same existential class of verifiable realia class *a*). Nevertheless, it must not share the attributes of a category which *contradicts* the category of the subject. This is the law of noncontradiction. In other words, though we may not be able to verify a synthetic proposition, we can determine if its terms are or are not contradictory.

This is not the same thing, however, as saying that the fiats of the *nomos* in the state of exception do not signify. In the former case signification has not yet been bestowed upon the objects of pure being and process being; therefore, they remain in the nascent state of the *a priori*. Possessing the attributes of time and space, these objects are members of realia class *a* despite their lack of *a posteriori* signification. In the latter case, though, the *nomos* has *negated* the signification of pure being and process being, of personae and things, so that in the state of exception it may do with them what it pleases without indictment by its own apparatus. The negation of signification is an attribute of the members of the class of the *a posteriori*, and therefore of simulacra class *b*.

The result is the creation of two forms of non-signification: that which has never been signified, and that which has had its signification *revoked*, either after voluntary abdication or through the commission of a felony against the *nomos*. They stand in relation to each other as do the Lacanian positions of the specular, Ideal-I (I) and what we have come to call the abdicated sense of “I” (Ix). When the ego-subject becomes the persona in the full-scale state of the social position (Real-I, or II), it may be said about the subject that it has signified. When it abdicates from the social position (II) to the abdicated (II – I = Ix), its signification as the sovereign persona is negated, though it retains the *artifact* of the its original sense of “I” in the spectral position. With the developmental accretion of the Real-I removed from the experience of the now atavistic Ideal-I, the spectral self soon grows morbid, turning in on itself in a form of terrifying and alienating narcissism from which it feels it can no longer escape. Rather than attempting to reverse the damage done by its abdication, it instead plunges into the fathomless distractions, titillations, and hallucinations populating a geometric Hilbert ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ) space littered with simulacra.

These objects of the subject’s new, improved, and *more unique* reality are in fact generated by projections of the subject’s own infantile id through the agency of libidinal cathexis. The hegemonic order aids the subject in this project by invoking a permanent state of exception where the anticathexes of its own *nomos* are voided through corruption, war, disorder, incompetence, mediocrity, and forms of vulgar self-indulgence requiring only the price of admission to be enjoyed.

Pampinea, in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, describes the behavior of the laity and clergy during the plague in the otherwise highly regulated and genteel Renaissance culture of Florence during the 1300’s. The disease has brought on a state of exception by the ensuing vacuum of municipal control, which in turn seems to serve as an indisputable argument for the lawfulness of breaking the law under such circumstances.

I have often heard and seen them ... doing whatever they most enjoy, without making any distinction between proper and improper behavior, just so long as their impulses move them .... [E]ven members of religious orders, shut up in their convents and monasteries, argue that *whatever is suitable and lawful for others* is also good for them. And so they *break the laws of obedience* and give themselves over to the delights of the flesh, thinking that they will save their skins by this lewd and degenerate way of life [italics added].<sup>30</sup>

We can imagine the feeling of being in a lucid dream where one realizes the shackles of civilization's discontents no longer have their hold on us in such a state of affairs. The psychic burden of layer upon layer of anticathexes is cast off in favor of complete possession of the human animal by the whims of the id rather than the will of reason. Far from being absent, however, reason reappears as the rationale, the justification, the excuse to excuse oneself from that which one may have even been charged to uphold prior to the catastrophe, as is the case with the clergy.

To understand the morphology of this situation, we have to understand where in the development of the cogito the subject may seize the opportunity for a conditional branch into a parallel ontological state or a recursion to an earlier one. In evolutionary biology this return is called *neoteny*, or biological reversion to a previous state to meet a new challenge better met with an old adaptation. Later in this discussion we will describe these possibilities in some detail. For now, it is useful to look again at the morphology of the subject's linear path across the plane of its developmental potential.

The concatenation of ego development, then, runs: 0I, I1, I2, Ix. Another way to express it is  $0, 0 + 1 = 1, 1 + 1 = 2, 2 - 1 = 1'$ , with the second occurrence of 1 (the Ideal-I) marked with a prime as the abdicated form of the spectral position. This abdicated position is the *Not-I*, since it has been replaced with a simulacra of the self in the form of a programmed and managed off-the-shelf persona conditioned to compel the subject to constantly reinforce its abdication through ever greater commitment of its physical time and psychic energy to the support of the hegemony through taxes and consumerism.

The remaining territory of this topology contains only the *potential possibility* (*Möglichkeit*) of Hegel's Second Negation in the form of the negation of the Not-I. But the apparatus of the hegemonic order, through language, has set up the state of affairs so that the subject regards this potential negation as one and same thing *as the death of the ego*—or that

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<sup>30</sup> Boccaccio, op. cit., 15, 16.



which it fears the most. This elegant “bind of mind” in nearly every case successfully prevents this event which, from the point of view of the hegemonic order to which the subject has abdicated, is potentially catastrophic to its survival.

In its place the discourse of the hegemonic order assumes the position of the cogito as the “real” personality, which is based on the false (F) synthetic signification of simulacra, which, not being members of the class of realia, fail to signify. The nomos of the hegemony then becomes the discourse of the subject’s identity as a member of the existential set of “verified” subjects within a universe of discourse based upon a invalid synthetic proposition, namely that the set of all sets is a set of itself if and only if it is not a set of itself.

As the self-appointed *set of all sets*, the sovereign power in the permanent state of exception contains both the persona and the thing, proclaiming dominion over both. As such, it is a *metaoperator* in determining what is or is not among the manifold furniture of the world populating its topology. In physical terms, it is responsible for *path ordering* outside of linear transforms in Hilbert space ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ). The topology of the discourse of abdication may be described as a Hilbert space constructed in three dimensions based on invalid synthetic, self-referential propositions. Path ordering, particularly regarding “the future” vector upon which the present point of the hegemonic discourse is based, takes the place of the subject’s disabled self-determination. Linear transformations, or *maps*, meanwhile, lend the universe a sense of signification and therefore of “reality.” In addition to modular consistency, the world of simulacra must be built upon holomorphic functions that are analytic to distribute agreements between all points in the quantitative universe they define.

For example, despite the fact that the hegemonic discourse is based upon invalid synthetic statements, all of the rules of verifiability nevertheless remain intact within the bubble of its universe. Heidegger describes how one may be jolted into consciousness by the sudden absence of the ready-to-hand, as if someone pulled the chair away before one sat down. “[W]hen something ready-to-hand is found missing, though its everyday presence [*Zugengenzeit*] has been so obvious that we have never taken any notice of it, this *makes a break in those referential contexts* [italics added] which circumspection discovers.”<sup>31</sup> For the subject, there must be no “break” in the map of the topology, otherwise the entire universe collapses back into realia.

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harperperennial Modernthought, 2008), 105.

We see this morphological failure in microcosm when an economic system collapses upon itself. One may map the topology from a point, through vector spaces, and across planes with homomorphic consistency. This consistency, then, lends the realm the kind of *quotidienne* sameness the subject once experienced in the universe of realia, the only difference being that it is now based on the *metadata* of realia, or signifiers, rather than empirical data issuing directly from the personae and things populating the realm of realia as the signified.

This new, improved everydayness has the added ingredient of infinite possibility based upon its detachment from the verifiable limits of realia. The discourse itself, understanding the ego's desire to flee the everydayness of realia, also understands that the subject will not accept any new improved reality that does not seem to possess *the sense of everydayness it is fleeing from*. While this may seem to be a contradiction, we must remember that the subject, bereft of the power of reason and any analytical ability except the most rudimentary it needs for day-to-day survival, believes that *repetition is verification*.

In other words, it does not matter how absurd and ridiculous the "reality" it is offered is, as long as it occurs again and again with homomorphic consistency. For the hegemonic discourse to survive, it must not allow any of what Heidegger calls "circumspection" to spoil the illusion. Therefore, it is homomorphic consistency coupled with holomorphic integrity which give the subject's new environment the verisimilitude, or verism, of reality.

With the ubiquity of the hegemonic discourse through the universal dispersal of networked gadgetry, this "break" in "referential contexts" seldom occurs except when the subject is powerless to act upon this knowledge. Also, we might say that the ready-to-hand has been replaced with the present-at-hand; for instance, while one may *say* one "owns" a house, the fact of a mortgage merely gives one *rights* to certain assets, if present or possible.

Meantime, the *fact* of ownership belongs solely to the financier: the bank. Therefore, the home, which one assumes is ready-to-hand, is in fact merely present-at-hand for the nominal "homeowner." When a break in the context occurs, it always comes as *anagnorisis*, an unmasking, where the subject is astonished to discover that the situation is precisely the opposite of what it has assumed all along and, frankly, was led to believe.

Most of what we know as the signified comes to us through empirical data, such as what we may gather by the senses. And while the senses themselves create a subjective idea of reality by their limitations, they are, nevertheless, *dependents* or extensions of the *a priori* of time and space. Since the senses inherit their attributes from the *a priori*, they provide us

with an approximation of reality which may be tempered with the most important sense of all: reason. Without reason they are merely experience; without experience cognition is merely ratiocination.

The disciplines relying upon the tenets of positivism, such as science, computing, jurisprudence, and mathematics, carry on in this universe just as they would in one based upon analytic propositions and true synthetic statements. The miraculous products and achievements of science keep the naive subject in thrall without ever suspecting that they are part of a vast dream. The seemingly swift and harsh judgment of many by the justice system lures the subject into feeling that it is being protected by an omnipotent, godlike force. Although all the news is “bad,” and quite rightly so, solutions to these seemingly intractable problems spring from politicians like rabbits from a magician’s hat, reassuring the subject that “something is being done” to guarantee absolute security “in the future.”

Meantime, the “space” in which the apparatus of the hegemonic discourse operates is not a true universe of discourse at all; rather, it is an existential set which has proclaimed itself as a quantitative universe in which all is accounted for, even the existence or nonexistence of God. Just as a virus exploits the DNA of the cell it infects, so too does the hegemonic discourse exploit the *a priori* code of time and space inherent in all things of *le devenir*, providing it with the perfect disguise of reality. Nevertheless, it remains an existential set within the true universal quantification of Dasein which remains inviolate because it is without attribute (other than that it is without attribute).

Why is this not obvious to the mass of subjects before and after abdication? Is the homomorphism of the hegemonic discourse consistent enough not to allow for breaches of its illusion of verisimilitude? We may attribute this lack of situational apperception in part to the steady indoctrination of the subject from birth by society into accepting the *name* (metadata) of reality for reality itself. In other words, in the ethical aesthetic of the social discourse the signifier and signified are *inverted*. Those who balk at this travesty are soon brought in line by an autonomic system of rewards and punishments which herd them into the corral of abdication. From that point on they entrap themselves in the phony Hilbert space ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ) of simulacra where “anything is possible.”

They welcome the state’s alternately authoritarian and libertarian parental overtures. They depend upon the alcohol and drugs, legal and illegal, it provides. They succumb to the lure of debt through the desire to use what they cannot possess and do not deserve. They believe the fairytales of infinite riches trumpeted relentlessly in the media which are owned and controlled by those who possess infinite riches. All that remains to keep

them in the fold is the ubiquitous and unrelenting buzz of the media's sole injunction to *consume*.

By freeing itself from the *a priori* obligations of realia, the discourse of abdication establishes itself as the permanent state of exception where anything is possible. It is only nasty, dirty, messy, uncomfortable, inconvenient, boring, poor reality which says that there are limits to what is possible. *This* state of affairs the infantile mind of the subject cannot bear, trapped as it is in the narcissistic morbidity of the indefinitely delayed spectral position. Particularly irksome are realia's intimations of mortality for the ego. "Send not to know for whom the bell tolls" say realia, "it tolls for THEE." Plunging into denial of this reality, the ego flees to what is offered as a safe haven where even death itself is simply a medical condition that can be cured with the right pills and procedures.

How could a rational being fall for this ruse? The only possible conclusion is that the subject is *without reason* in the effective sense of the word. Instead, it develops the ability to "scheme" its way into the banquet of immortality promised by the hegemony, aided and abetted by the education system it pays dearly for that is supposed to develop its sense of reason, not disable it.

In an expressive sense, the hegemonic discourse, through the infinite channels of the media, combines with other operators to endow them with the attributes of simulacra class *b*. A fitting analogy would be that it acts as a virus, infecting realia class *a* with the gene of invalid synthetic statements. But its most significant role, in the literal sense of the word significant, is that serves as the metadata attached to all that it signifies. This "mark of the Beast" as we might call it, is the precursor necessary for admission into the lower echelons of the hegemonic order.

As the hegemonic order ascends the throne abdicated by the mass of subjects, it assumes the scepter of the power to nominate personae as legitimated members of the hegemonic order and to bestow upon things the significance of being useful or valuable to this order. A "citizen" is an example of the former and "money" is an example of the latter. And inasmuch as one cannot be a citizen without money, and money is not possible without the monetization of the citizen's labor, the two are coexistent.

In other words, the apparatus of the hegemonic discourse provides the metadata for the catalogue of reality without indicating if anything in it has any substance (real value). In this way it is possible to circulate currency and create jobs without reference to intrinsic value—a power once only exercised by the Church. This is both an asset and liability to the state, since it gives it total control over the subject and the economy, but neither is worth

anything outside of the self-proclaimed *a posteriori* value system of the apparatus. In place of real value, the state (the new Church) must exhaust its resources through wars, surveillance, bureaucracy, and social programs to maintain the illusion of being more than nothing.

While this is the state's problem, the impact of it on the subject is that its real value, based upon its sovereignty, is infinitely devalued upon its abdication of that sovereignty. The advantage to the state is this mass abdication creates an army of "useful idiots" the state can use to help fund its adventures and fight its wars. The disadvantage to the subject is that its dirty, unwieldy, inconvenient, messy, awkward sovereignty is reduced to a tidy quantification the state may abuse with impunity.

Meantime, the subject maintains, through the belief and faith mechanism of democracy, that it holds the power over how its abdicated sovereignty is to be used by the hegemony. To this end, the state also expends enormous sums (derived from forced confiscation of the tokens of the subject's labor) on the spectacle of representative government. As long as this charade stays one step beyond the limited ken of the poorly educated and benumbed subject, the government maintains its hegemony.

Despite its inherent gross inefficiency, this process has been made far more efficient than it ever was thanks to digital technology. While no one would mistake a furniture catalog for the furniture one wishes to buy, nevertheless it is common to find the *nomos* mistaking metadata regarding the subject to be the subject itself. While this error arises from the intrinsic mediocrity and incompetence government is known for, it is also by design. While government itself remains weak in its ability to determine even its own agenda and course, its corporate overlords know precisely what they want from it and the citizens government controls. Their intentions are particularly obvious when we consider the uses and abuses of all type of data mined through marketing telemetry and state surveillance, which is the same beast seen in its private and public guises.

While these escapades are the stuff of such haunting literature as Kafka's *The Trial*, they are made all the more ominous and terrifying by their application in the digital age, bereft of any romantic content. Through the *reductio* of the subject's "parameters" to bits and bytes, the inefficiencies and inconsistencies of analog bureaucracy, and the quaint marketplace vulnerabilities of commerce, both of which once gave the subject a modicum of power by default, have been all but eliminated.

## 2.4 Psycholinguistics of the “Social I”

Though ignorant of the complexities of the social environment it is born into, the child is nevertheless affected by them in profound ways. Pressures and constraints imposed upon the adults charged with its care are, through mimesis, mirrored into the hard wiring of the developing child’s psyche. In effect, it becomes a biological microcosm of the technological society it must adapt to. While this is an autonomic process tied inextricably to the demands of its biological imperative to survive, this “process being” can be manipulated in such a way as to soften up the subject’s later resistance to the seductions of abdication.

While these have already been enumerated, a look at the *mimetic surface* of the mechanism helps us understand how this mélange of self-determination, biological imperative, and social pressures and constraints work together to form the full acculturated adult of modern society. Here we see the distinction between a mimetic and semantic surface: the former belongs to the spectral position of the Ideal-I, while the latter belongs to the social position of the Real-I. That the latter is the inherited property of simulacra only underscores their power to *substitute* for realia in the state of permanent exception through abdication. The former may only *simulate* reality, and in so doing lay claim to a fragile world of imitation.

But first we must also understand the role of the preexisting society in this process of psychological imperialism. Where does it come from in the West? We do not have to look far in history to discover the thread of hegemonic power extending from late pre-Christian Era to today. We should wonder at the universal acceptance of the Christian Era dating system in modern cultures throughout the world that goes beyond the metric needs of standardization. It seems to commemorate the modern hegemonic order in its demand for voluntary abdication of personal sovereignty through taxes, military service, debt, the creation of laws, and the spread of democracy.

What occurred in that period of two hundred years before and after the birth of Jesus to create such a landmark in the time line of Western civilization? It benefits this discussion to say that it was the crystallization of Roman imperialism among the tribes of Judea, Germania, and Britannia, an effort that met with the greatest resistance and helped bring about Rome’s ultimate demise only much later. One brief glimpse from Gibbon of this resistance in Germania makes the point:

The forests and morasses of Germany were filled with hardy race of barbarians, *who despised life when it was separated from freedom*; and though, on the first attack, they seemed to yield to the weight of the Roman

power, they soon, *by a signal act of despair*, regained their independence, and reminded Augustus of the vicissitude of fortune [*italics added*].<sup>32</sup>

The description here that they “despised life” in captivity and only regained their freedom after their “despair” over the loss of it shows the psychological nature of the predicament of the “barbarians.” Imperial Rome of this period regarded all of the peoples it conquered as barbarous and therefore childlike. This *patronizing* attitude helped justify imposition of the Roman *nomos* in what Lacan calls the Name of the Father (*le nom du père / le non du père*). The imperial “No,” while domesticating these “barbarians” into taxable submission through ever-more-demanding tribute, fomented the rebellion that would later pave the way for the true barbarian scourge of Attila and the Huns, who would (at first) have none of it.

We may use this as an analogy to the domestication of the childish psyche. One look at the helpless child invokes the impulse to begin the acculturation process immediately to waste no time in bringing it round to the standards of acculturation. Meantime, the child itself experiences these pressures and constraints as a kind of pruning and potting of the wild id. Its rapacious mobility, albeit on all fours, is soon replaced with a kind of “standing” in place on two legs which we will discuss in depth later on.

This standing has more than a linguistic affinity with the idea of social standing as well as what it means to be accepted as a “contributing member of society” and therefore a voting member of the state apparatus: *a taxpayer*. What, then, does this incipient acculturation do to the child’s process of mimesis? Its first effect is that the child learns, inherently and somatically, that *process being* is more valued by society than *pure being*. The latter is negotiable; the former is critical. As it is said about people who do not vote, “Either you’re part of the process or you’re part of the problem.” Those who stubbornly value pure being over process being are a continual problem for the state and society.

As acculturation goes deeper into the psyche and is therefore more effective the longer the child mirrors society, it is in the best interest of society to prolong the spectral position (I) at the expense of the social position (II). While the commutation of the spectral into the social stage, even under the best of circumstances, brings with it a sense of competition and conflict, it is nevertheless an expansion of the subject’s conscious awareness beyond the stage of almost hermetic narcissism. “This moment in which the mirror stage comes to an end inaugurates, by the identification with the imago of the counterpart and the drama of primordial jealousy ...

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<sup>32</sup> Heidegger, *op. cit.*, 4.

the dialectic that will henceforth link the *I* to socially elaborated situations”<sup>33</sup> says Lacan.

It would at first seem that society would favor the socialization stage of development (II); but this presumes that a society comprised of abdicated subjects who have erected (elected) a hegemony to guard their selfish interests would want universal suffrage, sovereignty, and independence of thought and action. Rather, these intrinsically social qualities are a threat to the social order which values itself over any one of its individual members, therefore rendering them, one and all, expendable in favor of the “greater good.”

Rather than what has been called “enlightened self-interest,” then, sacrifice of individual consciousness in the service of the collective consciousness of the state as the “will of the people” becomes the only ethical aesthetic in force. As a result, all other ethical considerations inherit this attribute. It becomes the shibboleth by which all social ideas and institutions are measured. If they are found to be deficient in this attribute, they are immediately pruned from the vine.

Once again, *process being* is made possible by mimesis. While the child finds its own mirror image and recognizes that “I am,” the child itself also serves as a mirror of the social milieu. The child “mirrors” and “is mirrored.” This property we may call *mimesis*. While at first it must mirror itself before it mirrors others, the child is, nevertheless, surrounded by stimulus which issues from the presence of “others,” in particular the parents who, by default, shape the morphology of its relationship to the social order. Eventually this stimulus “gets through.” The child begins to understand that these “others” not only give but also take away; and the first thing they take away is their servitude to the instinctual and physiological demands of the infantile id the child expresses through the agency of its rudimentary ego. “How dare they!” thinks the tyrannical child. This formation of what Lacan calls the sense of “lack” is usually not the result of any cruelty on the parents’ part (though it can be through neglect); rather, it is a temporal conflict between the infant’s a-temporal demands and the adults’ temporal obligations to the social order.

Lacking reason, like its counterpart the adult subject of the modern hegemony, what the child cannot understand is that these obligations indirectly benefit it by providing sustenance and protection. Nevertheless, this provisioning frustrates its desire to be satisfied in the moment. At the same time, it teaches the child that there is “something” greater than itself even beyond the influence of the parents. This something is society. And as it looms larger and larger in the child’s ken, the child’s psyche begins the

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.



harsh transition from being mirrored *in* society, to becoming a mirror *of* society.

The problem, beyond the lack of reason (which we can accept), is that this infantile ego lacks any semblance of a superego; therefore, the child's desires pour out into the world in an extemporaneous flood of *cathexes*. Taken all together they can be considered the desires of the child, including the *eros* (ἔρως) of the libido. Meantime, the adult, too, has desires, one of which is to be free of the tyrannical demands of the infantile ego. Immediately, conflict arises between the infantile ego and the adult ego, overburdened as the adult ego is with the chaotic complex of anticathexes we call civilization and the obligations membership in the hegemonic order demands. These *discontents* (in the form of *Unbehagen*), haunt the adult through a persistent, gnawing ennui it is never quite free of except, perhaps, when it is drunk, drugged, or otherwise over or under stimulated by entertainment and consumption.

Nature's hope is that the nurturing instinct of the parent will overcome the longing to be free of the obligation of providing for an infantile id which has not yet learned the prohibitions and commandments of the *nomos*. Unfortunately, the adult ego has not progressed appreciably beyond the bounds of its young charge's ego, making the task seem formidable. In desperation, the adult turns to the state for more powerful means of acculturation in the forms of the public education system and entertainment. The state and its media apparatus happily accept this responsibility, producing a curriculum, delivery system, content, and environment intended (more by default than design) to tune the child-subject into the correct frequency of the prevailing discourse.

In the child's favor is its albeit feral adaptation to "bare life." Disengaging the child's "barbaric" instinct from its tenacious rejection of civilization's discontents requires relentless abuse in the forms of senseless education and mindless entertainment. Meantime, through eons of adaptation the child's psyche "knows," perhaps genetically, what buttons to push on the control panel of the adult ego, and society, to get what it wants. This attempt is, of course, not always successful.

But we must generalize to be able to understand the significance of the infantile ego's power of mimesis to shape and be shaped by its environment. Despite the fact that the infantile ego assumes that its power is omnipotent, bare life forces itself upon the mechanisms of adaptation in the autonomic functions of the psyche's development. If this were not so, there would be no need for language. Tantrums and crying jags would be enough to get what we want and need. Therefore, it is through language that the child is ultimately tamed.

At the same time, it is also by this means that the child develops an *imago* of itself we call personality that is, ultimately, more a reflection of the society in which it lives than anything inherent in its nature. The psychopath, sociopath, eccentric, criminal, poet, saint, and artist are often the exceptions, living on the edge of the plateau of society and making only occasional forays to its center in search of plunder and supplies. On the other hand, members of the scientific establishment, regardless of how absurd and ridiculous their alleged pursuits, are regarded as high priests who will, given the right funding and enough time, make the gods of good fortune smile down upon their corporate and state patrons.

For its part, the adult seems to have forgotten that it even ever was a child. What it remembers is the *metadata* of this epoch in its development. Birthdays, graduations, addresses, names of friends, favorite teachers, elementary school, names of pets, and so on are the trivial artifacts of its dreary history, nearly identical from adult to adult and easily captured by an official form, online profile, or automated security check. Though this period was undoubtedly rich in experience, perhaps even sublime, the subject's new "adult" personality filters out what "should" be remembered from what can be forgotten.

It does this by identification with the entertainment products and consumer goods it purchased with credit off of the shelves of the social department store. And what is remembered? Only that which serves to provide an *imago* the developing child can mirror to become a *copy*, a simulacrum, of the adult. Therefore, we can say that in this way a child is "manufactured" by society through the apparatus and discourse of language as it is embodied and incarnated in the abdicated adult. *Process being* is reinforced and made permanent by the debt the subject accrues in its pursuit of the consumer goods needed to rebuild its identity in emulation of the *imago* of the society it has come to reflect.

Naturally, a *diad* of parents and an online department store are not enough to pull this off. It must be reinforced by government, education, the media, the church, and the banking system. The child soon becomes a reflection of these institutions whose collective discourse of consumerism has already consumed its parents' psyche through the relentless power of the cult of mediocrity.

The cult's one unrelenting message: *consume, consume, consume*, soon erases the dirty, nasty, inconvenient, messy, unruly, unique, eccentric behaviors of the child's natal state of bare life. And with them it obliterates the tedious drudgery of maintaining one's sovereignty. Though it may "sing in its chains like the sea," to paraphrase a line in Dylan Thomas's poem

“Fern Hill,” the child understands, at least intuitively, that its choices are prison, abdication, or a lifetime wandering in the wilderness of *realia*.

If it takes the road less traveled by, it knows it will have little to show for the retention of its personal sovereignty other than a notable lack of political connections and social accolades. Despite its rather limited possibilities, it is nevertheless faced with a choice which only it can make (except in societies where the subject is born into slavery, servitude, or intractable poverty). This choice could be rephrased as one between the priority of pure being, or process being. As W.B. Yeats puts it in his poem “The Choice,” it is between perfection of the *life* or of the *work*, where the former is *process* or *Liebensform*, and the latter *being*, or *Dasein*.

Social exorcism of the child’s native ego, though gradual, is not without its rough patches. Through the latent inevitability of the cogito in the statement “I am,” at the earliest stage of psychic development the subject already possesses a sense of sovereignty. Chomsky has described this capacity as (alternately) the Language Faculty and Universal Grammar (a matter described in some detail later). The ability to place the copula “to be” between the subject *I* and the predicate of the world is, ultimately, a mimetic power built in, as it were, to the morphology of the psyche.

As mentioned, communication requires a transmitter and receiver which must both serve as each other, either simultaneously or at different intermittent stages in the act of communication. In both directions, they remain the reversible mirror images of each other as the *imago* of the subject and the *object* of the “other.” The Monolith of Being acts as the *platform* for all communication by providing the universal quantification of *Dasein* ( $\forall$ ) and the existential process of the manifold of *realia* ( $\exists$ ) through *le devenir*. Pure being remains equiprimordial with process being in the drama of coming-into-being. The push-pull mechanism between inclusion and exclusion drives process being as an algorithmic engine, “processing” reality in such a way as to make it understandable to the ego which, ultimately, is only concerned with itself.

Once again, we find ourselves in the position of stating that the set of all sets is a set of itself if and only if it is not a set of itself. But as we have seen, Russell’s paradox is a false (F) proposition if analyzed from the position of *realia* class *a*, which does not admit paradox as a basis of *le devenir*, but only negation (0 / 1). However, seen from the position of simulacra class *b*, it is a “true” (t) proposition in that by the mechanics of its own logic it *verifies itself*. Therefore, within its own universe, and within the topology of its own Hilbert space ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ), it is indeed a “true” proposition entitled to every consideration of verification that space allows as extensions of its linear paths.

Provided every proposition about reality conforms to all vectors ( $x, y, z$ , and  $1/n$ ) of the space, it is “true” ( $t$ ). It is upon this positivist fallacy that the holy dogma of modern science bases its arrogant claims of omniscience, now and “in the future” (if it does not have a ready answer). Its tiresome spectacle of proofs of concept in the forms of magical consumer products, trivial applications, and the senseless accumulation of data occurs within this sanctified territory. There, it remains protected from what it nominates as “irrational” attacks by religion, philosophy, art, social criticism, mental illness, crime, and forms of verifiability from *outside* of its domain.

The  $\mathbb{R}^3$  of simulacra class  $b$  defines its own rule for what proposition about itself is “true” ( $t$ ), as long as no attempt is made to commute this rule into another domain where it may or may not be true. However, the fact of its existence is that it is merely an existential set of realia class  $a$ , its only attribute being, as stated by Russell, that it is a set of itself. Included in the infinitely greater set of Dasein (the only attribute of which is that it has no attribute), simulacra class  $b$  *inherits* the signification of realia class  $a$ . It is never a net producer of signification as it remains impotent as a gene of *le devenir*.

While it exploits this inherited signification in its specious claims of priority, its resources are soon exhausted because of the infinitely inefficient enterprise of masquerading as reality itself ( $1/n$ ). Its resources are further consumed by its campaign to consign realia class  $a$  to the status of the pretender to the throne of reality. Its elaborate superstructures, such as financial markets, political systems, religious cosmologies, social programs, and military power, soon fail on a massive scale. The collapse of this façade and its edifice ushers in the protracted twilight of its Empire. Without any signification of its own, and with only the permanent state of exception as its power base, each successive iteration of simulacra class  $b$  melts away into the desert of the real to become the stuff of history, legends, and bibles.

Mimesis, then, undergoes a bifurcation. For a time, there is a considerable degree of disharmony between the child’s personal and social self-images. Because of this split, it is not quite accurate to call either the imago. It is not until there is an integration, or an overthrow of one by the other, that a distinct personality emerges. With each successive stage of the child’s ego development within the context of its overall sense of self (which includes the cogito), there are residual artifacts left in its wake. These objects are not merely the detritus of defunct and transcended stages of development; rather, they are structural platforms of what might be called the ziggurat of the imago.

The ego’s project is to build a lasting monument to itself for all to regard with awe, and possibly to outwit mortality in the process. However, while

acculturation is part of this ambitious scheme, the prerogatives and demands of society outside of and beyond the pale of the ego interfere with construction. This meddling is deliberate, though unconscious, on the part of society. It just sees the child as “bad.” To be “good” it must learn to be an “adult,” a creature which is ultimately a product of an unholy alliance between state and commercial interests.

*As a result, the sense of self with a small “s” and the sense of Self with a big “S” immediately come into conflict.* For a time, it is not clear which signifies what dimension of development in the child. But the structure of the psyche is such that, at least where there is no overt pathology, the demand arises by the entire organism for one sense of self to emerge victorious. This will be the Self and, at least in a practical sense, the imago of the cogito.

When the subject speaks using the first-person pronoun “I,” it speaks from this Self, its self-image, its persona, or personality. When this point is reached varies from one individual to another based on too many variables to quantify. Timing is not as important as the *fait accompli* of this project. It is important to the subject so that it may escape from what is often characterized as the adolescent “identity crisis.”

It is important to society because as an apparatus it has a functional need to identify the role this “unit” will have in the mechanical operation of its value system. As an organism, society has a marked aversion to individuals who do not “fit in.” They are de facto a threat to its otherwise smooth operation. And while this operation (at least based on its history) is anything but smooth, it still maintains the ethical aesthetic that everything and everyone has a place in its ideal of harmonious function.

In Paddy Chayefsky’s screenplay for *Network*, Mr. Jensen, the TV network head, lays out his vision of a harmonious society to Howard Beale, a former TV news anchorman. Beale has turned himself into an anti-TV, anti-social-discourse prophet who, while getting good ratings for the network as a curiosity, has now told his followers to turn off their TV’s. Mr. Jensen lectures Beale on the nature of social reality:

There are no nations. There are no peoples .... There are no Third Worlds. There is no West. There is only one holistic system of systems. One vast and immense, interwoven, interacting, multivariate, multinational dominion of dollars .... [It] is the international system of currency which determines the totality of life on this planet. That is the natural order of things today. That is the atomic ... and subatomic and galactic structure of things today .... We no longer live in a world of nations and ideologies, Mr. Beale. The world is a college of corporations ... inexorably determined by the immutable bylaws of business .... And our children will live, Mr. Beale, to see that ... perfect world ... in which there’s no war or famine, oppression or brutality. One vast

and ecumenical holding company, for whom all men will work to serve a common profit. In which all men will hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused. And I have chosen you, Mr. Beale, to preach this evangel.<sup>34</sup>

Beale has become a liability because he has proven himself to be a social misfit, but one with a mouthpiece and a pulpit that threatens “the natural order of things today,” according to Jensen. In this scene, the head of the network see an opportunity in Beale’s apostacy. Since he already has the eyes and ears of those who do not feel in tune with the harmony Jensen peddles, he might serve as the leverage needed to bring them back into the prevailing social discourse of society’s ethical aesthetic.

In other words, the conflict between the two social selves is exploitable. In this vulnerable state Lacan identifies the potential for a “dialectical synthesis” of the two selves. “[T]he important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will rejoin the coming-into-being (*le devenir*) of the subject asymptotically, whatever success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as *I* his discourse with his own reality.”<sup>35</sup>

Whatever the outcome of this epic contest in the soul of the subject, the tendency of the subject’s self-image will always flow in what Lacan calls a “fictional direction” which becomes the subject’s “own reality.” In other words, *a* reality, not *the* reality. It is only natural to do so, since personality is not a static state but a story, a tale, and unfolding plot with a beginning, middle, and end. The only concern is if it is a brave tale of the establishment or recapture of sovereignty (which is really the same thing), or, as Macbeth complains in Act 5, Scene 5, “a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, / Signifying nothing.”

The “discourse [of] his own reality” becomes the discourse of the emergent imago, the victor in the contest for the soul of the subject. As such, *reality discourse* is the result of process being and not pure being. The latter exists *a priori* as an expression of time and space. As an outcome of process being, then, the *significance* of reality discourse (whether it signifies or not) depends upon the origin and nature of its content.

It is not necessary to enumerate the many forms of content which may populate the psychic space of the subject’s persona. Instead, it is only necessary to identify the two categories from which this content may originate: either it is an *intrinsic* expression of the subject’s coming-into-

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<sup>34</sup> Paddy Chayefsky, *Network* (1976), screenplay.

<sup>35</sup> Lacan, *op. cit.*, 2.

being through the event of *le devenir*, in which case we may describe it as the difference between 0 and 1, or it is an *extrinsic* imprint upon the subject's pure being through process being, in which case we may describe it as the difference between 1 and *n*, with *n* being *any other number*.

If it is the latter, then it must be accompanied by abdication of the subject's self-determination or will and is therefore *a posteriori*. For the imago to signify it must be intrinsic. The extrinsic, social, store-bought imago serves as an insignificant prosthesis stuck in the empty socket of the aborted development of the subject's Real-I imago, which is position II in the concatenation of being.

As Yeats says in the poem "The Choice,": "When all that story's finished what's the news?" For the subject's sense of self there will always be a feeling of *otherness* or alterity about its own "I." It will be a stranger to itself because the spectral position (I), which still functions as the basis of the contraction of the universe we call the ego, has a memory which cannot be erased in part because it is embedded in the somatic memory of the subject's experience, from its neurons to its toes. The subject will always have a nagging sense that it is an imposter, which in effect it is. Its only comfort is that it is an imposter among imposters.

Society, though, will offer it everything from psychotropic medication to immersion in entertainment to help it get its mind off of this ambient feeling of self-doubt. The lack of complete identification makes it possible for the sovereign to offer the lure of abdication and freedom from the responsibility of the form of life, which will then become a *life of form*. Identity, rather than rising from the holistic energy of a unified psyche, instead trickles down from the needlessly complex and hopelessly contradictory contents of the superego apparatus.

The superego, that which is intended to be the ego's interface with the Not-I of society, serves in place of the ego as the chief executive officer of the subject's pure being. The ganglions of its anticathexes reach deep into psychic territory where they have no place going, such as the subject's sense of its pure being which must remain undisturbed by the outside world for there to be any hope of *jouissance*. But this is precisely what the discourse of the hegemonic order craves: complete and total control of everything. Its aim is to fill the chasm where *jouissance* is supposed to dwell in the subject's psyche with the commercial and political proposition of *happiness*.

Even if this plan fails, civilization, with its ideal dream of totalitarian domination, does what it can within the limits of its overburdened resources to help maintain the subject's fealty. It is coerced through psychological

terror and purchased with ever more spectacular opportunities for self-indulgence.

But the restless psyche is a dangerous thing. As we have mentioned, it can at any moment decide that it will “take matters into its own hands.” It could simply prefer not to work. Sometimes it may even run amok in a sociopathic homicide spree, commit suicide, or (as happens often enough) both. More probable, however, is a life of crime or dependency upon the resources of the state. Drug and alcohol dependency, underemployment, bad relationships, health risks, and despondency and alienation are all common enough forms of the discontents of civilization. All are burdens which the hegemonic order could do without. But it also recognizes them as unavoidable expressions of its own socio-dynamics, doing its best to accommodate them without putting an undue strain on the quality of life of its more productive citizens.

Despite the critical necessity of keeping the hegemony’s best producers in the greenest pastures, however, time and chance happeneth to them all in the wildly random vicissitudes of a culture based on lies, deceit, corruption, and consumption.

Despite its best efforts, the consequences of its affront to pure being will be felt. When the spectral, Ideal-I stage effectively ends, and as the child realizes that there are others like itself with this same sense of mimetic *I*, it develops a pathological nostalgia for a lost world of emotional comfort it likely never had. Confused by the bewildering signals it gets from simulacra, which lack the stabilizing *everydayness* of realia, it has no way of telling if it did or did not live through a happy time when all was taken care of, “all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused” as Jensen says. After seeking such comfort in romantic partners, drugs and alcohol, important jobs, ideologies and religions, the accumulation of wealth, fame, celebrity, psychotherapy and so forth, it eventually concludes that either 1) it is incapable or undeserving of such happiness, or 2) such happiness does not exist. Fortunately for the subject, though, both are “treatable conditions” which modern medicine and the ever more intense and sophisticated distractions of digital entertainment are ready to take on—for a price.

But even these modern miracles soon lose their potency. The territory of the Self the subject once struggled to define through academic accomplishment, job titles, marriage, social standing, and its political and religious beliefs is then left behind or is relegated to the trappings of the subject’s cultural artifacts (such as its middle-class status). There is a sense of disenchantment with the proscribed and rather dusty and traditional linear path to erection of the egoic ziggurat. Not to be outdone, though, the



hegemonic order and its corporate overlords have a *new* brave new world ready to snap into position to accommodate the subject's erstwhile ennui. The subject's desperation or, rather, *frustration* with the outcome of following the social proscription pushes it into ever riskier bids for earthly glory.

What is left, then is the nomadic, pathological existence of the *compulsive seeker* after the next bigger, better, brighter, more impressive, more spectacular, more quantitatively "important" acquisition, material or otherwise. This frenzy is only possible through the assistance of credit, which the hegemonic order is happy to extend, since few will ever possess the resources for such a maniacal enterprise unless they themselves are the lenders of that credit. As the subject busies itself signing promissory notes, whatever might have been left of its "future" dissolves into ever greater servitude.

Now almost completely distracted from the project of life in the realm of realia even animals freely engage in, the subject becomes a complete synthetic *fiction*. This is the terminus of what Lacan describes as the "fictional direction" the ego takes as it is forced out of the spectral position by the pressures and constraints of society. Again, this latent position offers a choice between the prerogatives of social simulacra and the imperatives of realia in all of their forms, but especially in the form of what might be described as "social reality." Unfortunately for the subject, though, this social reality includes the mass of abdicated subjects who, through the agency of the hegemonic order, enforce the discourse of abdication. Emily Dickinson in her poem "Much Madness" makes the case eloquently:

'Tis the Majority  
 In this, as All, prevail-  
 Assent- and you are sane-  
 Demur- you're straightway dangerous-  
 And handled with a Chain

Consequently, the choice is not a choice at all, for who wants to be "handled with a chain"? Without a moment's thought, the subject plunges into a world where every statement is an invalid synthetic proposition. The discourse dubs this dream-world "reality," which, by negation, consigns realia class *a* to the pejoration of fantasy. Meantime, what the subject regards as a verifiable statement become possible only in the context of the  $R^3$  of the set of all sets which includes not only itself, but all of the rules necessary for the positivism of its own existence which may or may not be commuted into any other domain.

This is the point at which the myriad pathologies afflicting the social *I* spread roots to all corners of the psyche, fertilized by the rich soil of categorical contradiction between the Ideal-I and the Real-I. The now fictional nature of the psyche becomes what Lacan calls “paranoiac,” seeing “terrorists” under every rock, fearing enemies at every border, and condoning mass surveillance of itself and its fellow citizens. “It establishes in the defenses of the ego a genetic order ... and situates ... sessional inversion and its isolating processes, and the latter in turn as preliminary to paranoiac alienation, which dates from the deflection of the specular *I* into the social *I*.”<sup>36</sup>

It discards what are left of its sovereign freedoms like they were old clothes that no longer fit and were out of style anyway. In the process, though, its children are lost to drug and alcohol addiction, social disaffection, familial alienation, and a kind of economic wishful thinking enabling them to bury themselves under greater and greater debt until there is no possibility of escape.

Its criminal underclass, petty and otherwise, is swept into prisons. Its national treasure, borrowed from its nation’s enemies, is used to build defenses against attack by shadowy “rogue states” which exist only in the imagination of the mass media and the political parties the subject creates out of its aggregated fear of the “known unknown.” The so-called “fabric of society” loses all integrity as the relationship between one subject and another in the social schema disintegrates into isolated units of consumerism, each marked with its own “unique” identity code that makes it possible to target market not only products and services, but thoughts and ideas—as well as keep track of every transgression of the social order’s ubiquitous *nomos*.

We can inventory some of the characteristics of the persona at this stage. Coming-into-being is in *deep time* (0I), having emerged from the equiprimordial into the ideal (I1). Through a struggle between the two ontic orientations it emerges into the rudiments of the social (I2), where a new struggle begins between competing individuals for the love of mates, personal territory, access to resources, and the rights and privileges of social standing.

The political creature, or rather the creature of the polity, emerges from this struggle, as does the desire for the paternal sovereign and the maternal beneficence of consumer culture—the *infinite teat*. Then, with what looks in retrospect like the suddenness of a lightning bolt, the subject abdicates (Ix) when in fact it was a long, slow process that began at birth. At this point its sole desire is for an ever-elusive “happiness” which always lies just over

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<sup>36</sup> Lacan, op. cit., 5.

the hill of its reality in a mystical and mythological realm called “the future.”

The subject, as part of the ecology of the  $\mathbb{R}^3$ , must maintain some semblance of the Monolith of Being in the form of the dialectic between process being and pure being. Even imaginary (fictional) space is, despite its claims of universal quantification, merely an existential set of Dasein (which includes the set of all sets *even if* the set of all sets includes itself). But as this space is by its fictional nature biased in the direction of process being, to find its place within the schema of this space the subject too must always maintain the priority of *process* being over *pure* being. To do so it must accurately read the code of the prevailing hegemonic discourse which, unlike the semantic surface of the language of everydayness, is not denotative but connotative and is therefore also not *overt* but *covert*.

As a result, the equiprimordiality between process and pure being that realia demand as the *Liebensform* of “bare life” cannot be maintained. The subject then devolves, ontologically, into a permanent state of imbalance which its milieu nominates as *balance itself* in the official language of the Hilbert ecology. While the official language represents only the semantic surface of everyday communication, what matters is the discourse it carries. Those who fail to read this discourse properly and obey its attitudes, expressions, and fiats, soon find themselves at variance with the *nomos* as well as society in general. They are branded as social misfits, sociopaths, criminals, or “enemies of the state.”

Through the subject’s inherent mimesis redirected from its infantile spectral orientation for this new social purpose, the fictional story the discourse conveys becomes the subject’s own, personal, story “more unique” than the story it might have once had or that any of its peers relate (even though it is the same story). As a result, this fiction becomes the ego-reinforcing chatter of the imago. Try as it might, though, it can never replace the organic discourse of realia which, through eons of biological adaptation, are innate in the structures and schemata of cognition.

To compensate for this deficiency in the synthetic discourse, the paternal force of the hegemony’s *nomos* and the maternal force of *consumerism* unite to provide the subject with electronic gadgets it can keep always within reach so that it might use them to constantly reinforce its failing sense of Self and the ominous intimation of mortality inevitably accompanying this dissolution. The project of maintaining the imago of Self (as the cogito) through a concatenation of invalid synthetic propositions is not an easy undertaking.

In a more primitive environment without easy access to electronica the subject would have to be barraged with old-fashioned propaganda and cult-

like “brainwashing” to keep it *on message*, as they say in political discourse. The miracle of digital technology makes these highly inefficient techniques obsolete. All that is necessary is what the subject and its society has come to regard as standard entertainment and news. It is delivered using shiny, magical black gadgets, the names of which are all preceded by the adjective “personal” to emphasize that they can be carried into any situation the persona desires. In this way the subject never finds itself “alone” where it might scheme *off message*, offending the natural paranoia of the what Lacan calls the “fictional nature” of the social personality and therefore the *nomos* of the hegemony.

While all forms of the delivery of the discourse exploit the senses, which are our tools for assessing empirical reality, few *mimic* them. The book, for instance, has little to do, in and of itself, with the eyes (or ears) needed to glean information from it. However, modern digital forms of communication boast of being “electronic brains” complete with those senses which best lend themselves to their various applications. As such, they serve as extensions of our eyes and ears while also serving as the eyes and ears of the hegemony and its corporate overlords. It would seem that natural decency and the ethical aesthetics of people who live in so-called democratic societies would be somewhat unnerved by this two-way capacity, especially considering all of the highly private places these tiny “electronic brains” find themselves!

But the situation is quite the contrary; it is vastly reassuring to the subject to have this little engine of immortality within reach at all times. As soon as there is even the slightest twinge of *nonbeing*, of the dissolution of the fragile synthetic imago, the subject reaches for the antidote in the form of the latest news, entertainment, or video game.

Eventually, this discourse-mimesis becomes so embedded in the subject’s persona and psyche that the thought of detaching itself from its source is regarded with as much (or more) horror as a child would at the thought of tearing itself away from its parents. Without the hegemony, the disparate selves of the psyche remain in an inefficient state of conflict with themselves and with other personae as analogues of Self in a jealous equation characterized by strife.

They then look to the appointed sovereign for relief not only of any sense of the dissolution of the ego, which the psyche now interprets as death itself, but also of harmonious social unity where they can expect to find “all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused.” Such institutions as “civil rights” then come not from a change in the “hearts and minds” of their fellow citizens but from either a fiat of the *nomos* or, as Mao Zedong said, the barrel of a gun.

In their “turning to” the proffered sovereign power—which they perceive as centralized, remote, oblique, omnipotent and omniscient—they abdicate. During their *turning to* the sovereign *mimics* their wants, needs, desires, and beliefs in the perfect camouflage of its real purpose, which is to do the bidding of its corporate overlords which are, more often than not, at odds with the subject’s more fundamental aspirations. What inevitably occurs is that the sovereign becomes a *reflection* of the society that consists of the mass of abdicated subjects.

What the hegemony’s corporate overlords know better than anyone is that access to the apparatus of the hegemony is by consent only. Schemes of dominating the population through force and fear always fail, and are no fun, anyway. A *Tausendjähriges Reich* lasts a measly dozen years. (And who could be said to have put more effort into making such a scheme a success than Hitler and the Nazi Party?) No. The best people to work with are those who eagerly adopt their shackles and chains as safety precautions, and who internalize the discourse that goes along with this incarceration as a formula for lifelong security, peace, happiness, freedom, and, as long as medical science advances “in the future,” earthly immortality.

The mirror stage has now realized itself again but on a colossal scale, not as a stage in development of the individual but as a “state” in the sense of being a condition or mode that is permanent for all subjects as well as being the apparatus of government. The hegemonic order, which is now the sovereign power, makes this state of affairs possible by the nominal “*a priori*” state of exception. In this state “anything is possible” even *before* the subject consents to abdicate, including the complete commutation of the terms of reality through the apparatus of a language consisting of only invalid synthetic statements. In other words, the actual *a priori* of realia becomes mirrored or simulated in the *a posteriori* state of exception. What remains to be done, then, is for this *a posteriori* simulation of the *actual a priori* to be taken one categorical step further by being commuted into the *nominal a priori* of simulacra. The propositions are as follows:

- 1) The (*p*) reality of the *actual a priori* (time and space) may be (*q*) *a posteriori* simulated:  $p \rightarrow q$ , if and only if all synthetic statements are true (T) in that they do not violate the rule of noncontradiction, and all subjects are verifiably verifiable.

Using analogy, we may liken this first proposition to a *simile* which, like this analogy, is a comparison. For the subject to experience simulation there must be *the willing suspension of disbelief*, which ultimately ends in a willing (or even unwilling) return to reality. In other words, the subject never quite mistakes category *p* for category *q* and therefore remains

ontologically “true” (T) to reality. This feat may be accomplished through synthetic statements about reality *if and only if* they do not violate the rule of noncontradiction of the categories of subject and predicate, and the subject is *verifiable* (even if not verified).

- 2) The (*q*) *a posteriori* simulation of reality (*p*) may be commuted into the *nominal a priori* simulacrum (*p'*):  $q + p = p'$ , if and only if all synthetic statements are false (F) in that the category of subject and predicate contradict, and the subject is verifiably unverifiable.

This second proposition may be likened to the *metaphor* where, seen from the position of the simile, it too is a comparison. However, the categorical difference between propositions 1 and 2 is that 2, in making a comparison, *omits any indication that it is doing so*. Instead, it boldly asserts, typically in an extreme form of hyperbole, that A is B, violating Aristotle’s noncontradiction rule. In so doing there is a permanent and irreconcilable contradiction between the categories of subject and predicate. This may or may not be compounded by the use of a subject which is verifiably unverifiable. In this case the suspension of disbelief, willing or not, must somehow resolve itself in a permanent state of *suspension*. Such a state is only possible in the permanent state of *exception*.

To maintain such a dramatic and categoric departure from the reality of the *a priori* of time and space, which can at least show that it contains such verifiable actualities as *c* (the speed of light) and  $\hbar$  (the Planck constant), a linguistic apparatus must be put into place which verifies all possible statements within its universe of discourse. These are the same rules by which it verifies its own existence. As we have seen, though these language rules therefore appear universal, they in fact may or may not be commuted to another domain, meaning that they are, categorically, *not* universal.

This is the point Orwell tries to make in *Nineteen Eight-Four* by showing the potential failure of the exhaustive efforts of Minitru and the Newspeak Dictionary to control the discourse of Oceania. And it is certainly what Wittgenstein means by saying that, “No proposition can say anything about itself, because the propositional sign cannot be contained in itself .... A function cannot be its own argument, because the functional sign already contains the prototype of its own argument and it cannot contain itself.”

As reality is not easy effaced by language (try as we might), the extent to which the subject may apply what it has learned about its place in the “world” of invalid synthetic propositions depends upon the degree to which it can maintain an indefinite suspension of disbelief. As any magician will likely attest, ways of achieving this suspension vary with the effect desired. What the subject must contend with, mainly, is the increasingly fabulous

statements about reality a desperate hegemony wishes it to accept. Moreover, it must overlook what inevitably mounts to a *paranoiac* tone to the hegemony's depictions of its own and consequently the subject's state of security.

This situation is the result of what Žižek calls a “parallax view” of reality arising from a forced splitting of linear vectors branching in  $n$  directions as part of the holomorphic functions of the  $\mathbb{R}^3$ . While we can expect that in any approximation of reality, simulation or simulacrum, there will be at least three dimensions in which the subject may picture itself, it is not necessary that any dimension beyond these be accounted for. Consequently, the subject is always haunted by the sense that there is a dimension of reality *it cannot see*, has somehow overlooked, or that parallels the one it believes it is in at any given time.

From time to time, the subject feels that there it is in the “presence” of another whose identity it cannot quite process to its satisfaction as it would others it believes it “knows.” Oddly enough, this latter group includes those it knows only through so-called social media and whom it has never met and has, perhaps, only the scantiest association with. It also includes the people it works with who, at best, may show only a façade necessary to get by in day-to-day operations.

As long as the data surrounding the presence of “another” fit the correct criteria established by the collective definition of “the known,” the subject is satisfied that it *knows*. There is no personal need for the determination of truth through inductive or deductive reasoning, or through hypothesis and experiment—even if these tools are used in one's profession. Instead, an online profile, official form, job-application, resume, and personal ad for romance, for example, suffice for what is important to *know* about another.

The rest, what might be called *realia*, is just a messy biological jumble of random data the subject has no interest in or capacity to sort and comprehend. This principle holds true for most of what it believes it knows since knowledge is at best extracted from what is verifiable within its limited domain, and that which it simply accepts based on wishful thinking, vague desire, or laziness.

When the specular and social *fork* in the development of the ego, *parallel simultaneous ontologies* arise which give the subject a vague sense that it is living two lives at once. These lives grow farther than farther apart as the subject's social obligations, such as raising children, overwhelm its narcissistic spectral ego, which consequently feels neglected and abandoned. Here we see the origin of the cheating spouse, or even of the embezzling employee.

Depending upon which adaptation in its ego development it happens to identify with in the moment, specular or social, the other adaptation will remain as a kind of shadow personality superimposed upon the imago of the other.

It is also accurate to say that along with many of the more feral impulses of the psyche the spectral adaptation tends to be repressed into the unconscious by the overdeveloped superego, further darkening the “shadow” cast by this malignant mass of repressed contents. While this sensation is better suppressed during the ego’s hours of frenzied activity, during its more passive, less social hours this sensation can become oppressive. Consequently, the subject is also prone to attempts to obliterate this feeling with endless media indulgence, voluntary overwork, or the drunken random chatter of its nominal socializing.

This growing sense of “otherness” is the result of the splitting off of the ego at the point between the spectral and social stages of the development of the cogito, described by Lacan (above) as “paranoiac alienation.” While Lacan most certainly means the subject’s relationship to other egos, we may also include the subject’s relationship to the fragments of its *own* earlier ego development which linger on in the confused and chaotic impulses of its crippled will. There would not be so much disorder if the subject had been forced, at this critical juncture, to push on toward integration of its social adaptation by embracing realia as the source of signification in the universe of discourse.

But by welcoming the hegemonic discourse its place, and substituting simulacra for realia, the subject is forced to fall back upon an earlier adaptation. What is both useful and impotent about simulacra is their lack of signification. Thanks to the former they are lightweight, portable, mutable, and cheap. But because of the latter the psyche senses that something is wrong with them, that they lack the intrinsic value and meaning that make realia so powerful and sustaining. It is the hegemony’s task to disabuse the psyche of this dangerous notion.

Based largely on the spectral position of the Ideal-I, the subject’s maladaptation stands in paranoiac contradiction with the Social-I which it interprets as a threat to its love affair with itself. The Social-I is the Usurper of the ego’s affection for its own signification. As a reaction formation, the ego *projects* its paranoiac recoil from the threat of its own Social-I onto other egos.

This mechanism would only succeed in isolating that individual from others were it not for the fact that these other egos are engaged in *precisely the same action at the same time*. The result is the much more catastrophic effect of the complete disintegration of the social fabric. A pervasive ethical



aesthetic based on overwhelming alienation results. Soon, it is rationalized and normalized into the prevailing discourse of what amounts to a default culture.

In place of these failed social connections, digital networks draw the disparate and alienated individuals together into an orgy of consumerism and insignificant noise. The merger is consolidated through debt. Credit is critical in uniting paranoid egos by resolving many of the conflicts arising from the what Lacan calls (above) “the deflection of the specular *I* into the social *I*.” It at once indulges the ego’s every whim beyond the bounds of the practical demands of reality for real value while obligating the subject to commit its useful energy “in the future” (with interest) to paying it back.

The infantile spectral ego no longer feels neglected because its whims have been indulged, while the social ego feels that it has instant economic power over the other egos it would otherwise fear or be jealous of because of the reality of its feeble position. It hardly matters that those it envies are engaged in the same pursuit of gratification and vicarious potency. In a quantitative default culture based on alienation, the only possible measure of one’s value to society is the relative size of the number attached to one’s “net worth.” What follows from the madness of this ethical aesthetic is a reckless disregard for qualitative reality.

The essential conflict, then, in the morphology of simultaneous parallel ontologies, is between what Lacan designates as the *le grand Autre* (*A*) and *la petit a* (*a*). The former is the extrinsic social identity of the *nomos*, the Law, and its *inherited* dependencies; the latter is the *inherent* sense of identity of the self, or ego, reflected by, or projected onto, others. We may further extend (*a*) to include *l’objet petit a*, that which the ego desires most but can only have “in the future,” which of course never comes, effectively blocking any linear path to commercial “happiness” but ultimately psychological *jouissance*. Both are implicated in the vicissitudes of the mirror stage and its dialectic between the ideal and real.

We can also benefit from looking at the problem as the dynamic between what Freud designates as 1) *der Anderer*, and 2) *das Anderer*. The first consists of those *other than* the subject. The second is the *sense of Otherness* (alterity), which is really our greatest concern here, as it is the root of the alienation which makes *jouissance* impossible, forcing the subject to default to the “*pursuit of happiness*.” The otherness of (*A*) has been described as “radical alterity,” or perhaps that position which is the farthest from the interests of the ego. In literature it has been also described as “Big Brother” in Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which is apt for our discussion here since the characters in the novel suffer from, or are charged with enforcing, a

pervasive sense of paranoia which is the essential coercive power of the state to control the universe of discourse.

Consistent with what we have been saying here, it does so through invalid synthetic statements which are in blatant contradiction such as War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength. The presumption, when synthetic statements reach this critical level of nonsense, is that they seek an *aporia* meant to stifle the production of rational cognition. In so doing, they also force malformation of the cogito, which may be characterized as “normal” or pathological as social expedience dictates.

No doubt the means by which a society communicates also affects the nature of alterity, its degree, and its attributes. Klemperer in *LTI* describes the sense of “otherness” the German people had regarding the subversive radio broadcasts of the allies near the end of the war. True to both Freud’s and Lacan’s simultaneous and parallel designated positions of otherness, there was the citizen’s own projection of his ego onto the implications of the content of the broadcasts, and the great fear that the Nazi government would discover that the citizen was listening—a crime punishable by death. The former corresponds to (*a*) while the latter is the definition of (*A*).

“The other”—this was the general, all-inclusive term for the entire range of prohibited programmes .... Everyone knew about this listening ... knew the times, wavelengths and specialities of the individual stations and thought us rather unworldly for never having had any contact with “the other.”<sup>37</sup>

Therefore, (*a*) and (*A*) coexisted in parallel linear paths in what had become the divided egos of the German people. But what was really happening was that the government, through the *nomos* of its prohibition, was expressing its own paranoia regarding the threat to its agenda of the establishment of the *Tausendjähriges Reich*. Ultimately the Third Reich was the code name for its project to create a universe of discourse based on its Teutonic romanticism. The rules of this discourse would be those by which all other discourses would be measured, starting with the “Other” (*A*) the Nazis feared and hated the most: the Jews. For their part, the Jews had already had millennia of “otherness” during the adventures of their people, so the contest, as it turned out, was epic.

Meantime, the broadcasts themselves had a message which, once embraced by the German people, amounted to treason by siding with the enemy, containing as they did “appeals to renounce a criminal and insane government intent on continuing to fight an irretrievably lost war until Germany was totally destroyed.” Moreover, such an embrace could also be

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<sup>37</sup> Klemperer, *op. cit.*, 284.

seen as suicide. It is a mistake to think that the German people hated and feared their own government and looked toward the allies, in particular Russia and the United States, as their imminent saviors.

What were the people to believe? At the same time, they were hearing that their major cities, such as the one Klemperer had just fled: Dresden, were being bombed by these same allies into oblivion along with their populations, civilian, pro-Nazi, anti-Nazi, Catholic, Jewish, prisoners of war, women, children, and so on.

This ziggurat of the ego, this monument to the grandiose schemes of the subject, like the legendary Tower of Babel, is a complex and many-layered thing. The Nazi project did not come about by the oppression of the majority of the people; its immense success, short lived as it was, was made possible by the *acquiescence* of the people through the voluntary abdication of their personal sovereignty. Naturally, except for some of the officials in the prisoners' dock at the Nurnberg Trials, few would admit after the fact that they contributed to what they later disavowed.

We may speculate that there was a mortal sense of embarrassment about the details of the events which led to a kind of repressive forgetfulness in the collective mass of subjects who, by omission or commission, were involved in such numbers that collective punishment was impossible. Besides, it was beginning to be understood by the victors that the collective punishment meted out of the Treaty of Versailles after the first world war only fueled rather than curtailed these atrocities.

How, then, can we characterize these parallel ontologies of (*A*) and (*a*) beyond the generic descriptions of psychoanalysis? As mentioned earlier, the prerogatives of (*A*) must be, by definition, in conflict with the whims of (*a*). But then again, we know that it *is the citizen himself* who has established the *nomos*, elected (or installed) those who make the laws, obeys the police and authorities, points to the achievements of the justice system, funds the build-up of military power, and identifies enemy threats to the state, internal and external. Why then are this creature's objectives at odds with those of the state? Why is there a sense of paranoia about being "watched" by Big Brother? And why, in a democracy, is there the eternal and bitter vacillation between two essentially identical strategies of governance in an effort prove to the polity and the world that the hegemony is a product of the people, by the people, and for the people?

Returning to Russell's paradox, we find that the permanent state of exception must be based on the proposition that the hegemony is the absolute and sovereign ruler of the people *if and only if* it is not. What the people want is what Germany got in the form of the Nazi government: complete and total control through the power of voluntary hegemony made

possible by abdication of personal sovereignty. This is the ego's ultimate dream. It soon learns, after discovering that its infantile tantrums are not enough to guarantee total control of its environment and those in it, that it will be forced to strike a deal with the "others" like itself. Together, they will lead humanity into a new era of justice and power, of prosperity and security and, given enough time and "in the future," perhaps physical immortality.

Where does this collective scheming come from? The way a child relates to others will largely be determined by its first relationship with its mother or maternal figure. There is certainly much said that is well known regarding the effect of the Oedipal stage in the development of the ego. Coupled with the vicissitudes of the mirror stage, the positions correspond to  $(a)$ : I1,  $(A)$ : I2.

However, what most concerns us here is how this concatenation is overthrown by Ix, or the abdicated position which is the negation of the real or social position:  $Ix \sim [(a): I1, (A): I2]$ . This we must put this schema into the context of what comes before it (O1) and what may come after as it as latent potential: Hegel's Second negation, or the negation of the negation of the Real-I ( $\sim Ix$ ). The position of the Second Negation shall not be given its own symbol, as in and of itself it does not exist except as a negation of a negation. This discussion, however, is more concerned with the topology of abdication in the  $\mathbb{R}^3$  of a quantitative universe predicated on invalid synthetic statements than it is in the recovery of sovereignty. This latter concern will get its own treatment much later.

The state, and its supporting apparatus of science, business, the church, education, banking, and the mass media, labors to construct in the subject's mimetic psyche an image of itself. Just as the subject ( $a$ ) has commuted its own sovereignty to the state through abdication in the hope of ever greater power for itself, so too does the state commute its own *nomos* ( $A$ ) to the subject's imago by enabling the subject's ego project in limited ways. In this exchange, *le grand Autre* and *la petit a* enter into a reciprocal relationship of mutual dependency, exchanging prerogatives and attributes in rapid oscillation as material equivalents:  $a \equiv A$ .

As long as this Nash equilibrium is maintained as *process being*, it is said that the body politic is healthy and the state is well run. The psychic energy driving the subject's libido is *l'objet petit a*, the thing it desires most, which, while it may be called "happiness," attaches itself to this or that object throughout the subject's career as a seeker (for example romantic interests earlier and material interests later in life).

The motivation behind the hegemony, however, is much more grand: *total domination of the synthetic quantitative universe*. In fact, it is this

ambitious project that attracts the admiration of the subject to abdicate in the first place. Never mind that power over “all the money” (i.e. credit) lies with the state and the corporate overlords for which it serves as representative.

In short, it wants a piece of the action, realizing as it does, early in the incipient moments of the Real-I position of the mirror stage, that it is faced with a choice: forge on through life under its own puny power, or attach itself to the vast force of the mass of abdicated subjects. Offers of endless credit and first- or second-class social status, as well as preference in judicial proceedings, sweeten the deal. It would be an error to think, however, that this universe only contains the chimera of the imaginary.

On the contrary, the vast territory of the synthetic discourse contains domain after domain of entirely verifiable propositions, from the mechanics of financial markets, to the physics of semiconductors, to the endless “breakthroughs” of medical science. Any attempt to point out its essentially imaginary and fallacious nature is met with an army of proofs of concept that are irrefutable. Often enough, such criticisms, defections, and apostasies are even met with *real* armies, or at least the selective enforcement of the security apparatus.

None of this seems strange to the subject who has been bred from the start by parents, school, church, and media, to accept the status quo as the only possible reality. The natal pleasure of that first encounter with parents—those who provide protection, affection, food, and shelter—is attracted through libidinal channels to the accoutrements of state power. As a forked, bifurcated, personality living simultaneously in a real and imaginary world with equal vigor, the child also learns how it is possible to both love and fear the state.

While its fiats and simulacra lack the significant substance of realia, and therefore lack signification, the state nevertheless manages to unite the real and imaginary into what Lacan calls the *symbolic*. A symbol is not a sign, though a sign is a kind of symbol. (This is no more paradoxical than Hamlet saying, “The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body.”) A sign must mean, whereas a symbol need only represent. And while a sign also represents (because it is not the thing it signifies), that which it signifies is *in a relationship of noncontradiction* with the sign. In other words, what the sign signifies is unique to the sign, and is universally regarded as *that which is signified*.

As such, signs exist simultaneously with meaning; meaning and the sign arise together through *le devenir*. The union of the imaginary and symbolic, however, invites just such a contradiction necessary to render its “uniqueness” subject to the ever-changing prerogatives of the synthetic

discourse. What it means today it may not mean tomorrow; what it means to one person it may not mean to another. Moreover, a symbol and what it stands for are easily separated because they have no ontological connection arising out of the coming-into-being.

What matters is what the discourse of the hegemonic order and its corporate overlords want it to mean to further their agenda which, according to the discourse itself, is what the abdicated subject is supposed to want, too. When these two agendas conflict, the subject will eventually be shown to be the loser even if it wins a provisional victory at some point in its bid to challenge the discourse and its agenda. It might have had a chance had it not abdicated its sovereignty to the same power it now challenges.

The most pitiful efforts are made by those who imagine that by challenging the hegemony after their abdication they can win it back in the form of a financial settlement, a legal precedent, or a public relations victory. Whatever progress they may seem to make in this way, ultimately it is only part of a heroic adventure within the imaginary discourse, or what is afterwards called pejoratively a “symbolic victory,” which of course is no victory at all.

A grudging affinity arises between subject and sovereign, where the state continually chides the citizen, like an angry father or nagging mother, for not living up to its ideal of a patriotic taxpayer and homeowner. Meantime, citizens begrudge the ever-greater litany of do's and don'ts of the hegemony. These juridical “discontents,” with some minor variation, reflect the *nomos* of all civilizations and empires and the societies out of which they grow and which they contain. They are also the source of much *Unbehagen* for the subject's decidedly feral id and libido, as well as what might be called its “barbaric” propensity for the freedom of self-determination.

As Freud in *Totem and Taboo* and Fraser in *The Golden Bough* point out, a universal attribute of an organized society is the *incest taboo*—defined with great and arbitrary variety. And who could imagine a civilization, which must needs also be an Empire, without taxation! After all, without taxes how would it be able to fight the wars it needs to justify its existence as a “world power” and seize the territory it requires to continue funding its adventures? Based entirely upon invalid synthetic propositions, Empire must constantly justify its existence to itself, just as its abdicated subjects must do the same through the permanent suspension of disbelief and satisfaction of the perpetual imperative to consume.

## 2.5 Ethical aesthetics of the Categorical Exclusion

The subject maintains the sense that it exists through consumption of consumer goods and constant stimulation of its sense of pleasure. While this symbolic behavior represents its “contribution” to the economy and therefore to the commonweal, it must also maintain unshaken belief in the sanctity of the hegemony’s discourse. Even one doubt in the integrity and truth of the latter and the paranoia that things are not quite right starts gnawing at the psychological edifice the subject has labored its whole life to build, stone on stone.

Moreover, doubt is a form of *displeasure*, violating the first tenet of the subject’s ethical aesthetic: *pleasure good, displeasure bad*. We could say “pain” rather than displeasure, but it is not the same thing. Besides, all organisms “know” that pain is unavoidable purely on the simplest assessment of its probability. Just as the sneeze of a cold does not lead one to the gallows, stubbing one’s toe does not lead one to suicide, usually.

Displeasure comes in two basic forms: incurring the displeasure of the subject, and the absence of pleasure because of a lack of stimulation. The first may be brought on by “bad news,” a contrary opinion, or when something does not go the subject’s way, which happens often enough. The second comes about mainly through boredom but could also be the result of a lack of money with which to purchase ever greater distractions from reality’s notoriously monotonous everydayness.

The combination of the two is the plague of the subject’s life in civilization. It is for this reason the subject craves oblivion in any form it can find it, from drugs and alcohol to soul-deadening entertainment and pursuits. It is also the impetus for the compulsive desire for everything in life to be bigger, better, louder, brighter, faster, and fancier. Moreover, it is the ethical aesthetic of “more”: more expensive, more prestigious, more convenient, more powerful, more comfortable, more personal, more unique, *more famous, more wealthy, more expansive, more elegant, and more impressive*.

The primitive ethical aesthetic here is: *more = good; less = bad*. The only thing it must not be is *more difficult*. Difficult = “bad” too for the lazy citizen, who, grown passive and infantile from his modus operandi of received knowledge and mediated experience, wants life to be spoon fed into his unquenchable gullet.

One’s “ethics” is a collection of ideas. The vast and complicated literature of ethics underscore the awe and mystery with which it is regarded. Firth, in “Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer,” observes that the difficulties of analyzing ethical claims has only grown more

intractable as more effort is thrown into it, particularly in the period leading up to the Second World War: "This concentration of effort by many acute analytical minds has not produced any general agreement with respect to the solution of these problems; it seems likely, on the contrary, that the wealth of proposed solutions, each making some claim to plausibility, has resulted in greater disagreement than ever before, and in some cases disagreement about issues so fundamental that certain schools of thought now find it unrewarding, if not impossible, to communicate with one another."<sup>38</sup>

Are we to conclude that the matter of ethics is any clearer to the layperson who merely has to live by them? The closest most subjects ever get to the consideration of ethics is in the use (and abuse) of the phrase, "That's unethical." The discourse of this phrase is "I don't like it." If one does not like the way or reason someone else does something in, usually, a professional context, then it is "unethical."

Of course, there are endless lists of professional ethics. Every booster organization and professional certifying board has its "code of ethics" by which its members vow to abide. The higher one goes in politics, the more one hears the word. Ethics committees, ethics violations, and other forms of tribunal serve as leverage during purges of unwanted members and hostile takeovers of power.

Nothing plays in the media better than accusing one's opponent of being "unethical," since it is not necessary to prove it but only make the allegation, which can be met with a *mea culpa* or an angry denial as the occasion calls for. Despite the now quaint habit of having a person swear on a Bible in order encourage ethical testimony or professional behavior, though, the word does not appear in the Bible. Like the equally modern word "happiness," which appears in the Bible only three times, it is a word about which it can be said that the more it is used the less it seems to mean.

Nevertheless, if we think of it as an *aesthetic*, then it takes on a new life. Therefore, it is in the same synthetic category of words such as sublime, beautiful, harmonious, simple, ugly, grotesque, elegant, and so on. Like happiness and ethics, nothing about these words can be proven. They are words belonging strictly to the realm of synthetic propositions.

The phrase "ethical aesthetic" can be useful in getting an idea of what implications, intentions, and presumptions a synthetic discourse may hold. Taken in a larger sense, then, we may speak of the "ethical aesthetics" of a prevailing universe of discourse and the apparatus that generates it. By doing so we also get a better picture of what its objectives are. Moreover,

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<sup>38</sup> Roderick Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Observer," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research Quarterly Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 3, 1952.



we may compare it to other aesthetics, as well as make judgments about it such as whether it is sublime, beautiful, ugly, or horrible.

But as with such almost meaningless abstractions as freedom, justice, liberty, integrity, love, patriotism, security, war, peace, ignorance, slavery, and strength, there is a need to define in every instance how we intend to use the sign we call “ethics,” and what we intend it to mean within the context of what we hope to express.

As for aesthetics, it is enough that the Romans believed that “*de gustibus non est disputandum*,” taste cannot be disputed. While this no doubt kept peace at many dinner parties, it has helped promote the idea that taste, a form of aesthetics, is entirely relative and subjective. Taste’s inheritance of this genetic defect is blamed on its parent aesthetics, which is believed to be corrupted with the same disease. But like ethics, aesthetics too has a vast and complicated literature and as we all know anything with a “vast and complicated literature” must have *something* about it that lies on both sides of Plato’s Divided Line.

For instance, we all can accept that there is something beautiful about nature preceding our regard and values as *a priori*. Nature, too, has its ugliness. Few regard maggots as beautiful. And while there are, no doubt, many surgeons who regard the internal organs of the human body “beautiful,” there are likely more who regard a beautiful human body without the organs exposed to be significantly, if not categorically, “more beautiful” than its innards. As Aristotle describes, what we seem to be able to agree upon regarding beauty is that it is a matter of proportion. This becomes particularly clear when we take proportion to an extreme:

Again, a beautiful object, whether it be a living organism or any whole composed of parts, must not only have an orderly arrangement of parts, but must also be of a certain magnitude; for beauty depends on magnitude and order. Hence a very small animal organism cannot be beautiful; for the view of it is confused, the object being seen in an almost imperceptible moment of time. Nor, again, can one of vast size be beautiful; for as the eye cannot take it all in at once, the unity and sense of the whole is lost for the spectator; as for instance if there were one a thousand miles long.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, beauty and ugliness are both aesthetic values, and both seem to have something about them rooted in that which lies in the metaphysical realm beyond considerations we regard as merely human. Were this a more romantic time, we would attribute it to the gods.

Instead of codes of ethics, which would not do here, we may introduce the idea that for something to be “ethical” it must be beautiful. But what is

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<sup>39</sup> *Poetics*, VII.

beautiful? For our purpose we may say that it is that which can be analytically demonstrated to 1) possess symmetry, and 2) demonstrate simplicity. Together they form an aesthetic quality which is empirical and analytical which we may call “elegance.” Both symmetry and simplicity, too, require further definition. There is bilateral symmetry where what is on one side of the equation is on the other, as in  $AB | AB$  (or  $AB | BA$ ). But there is also equilibrium, such as we find in thermodynamics and other physical principles, which we may describe as  $A(b) | B(a)$ .

We may also take up Kant’s observation about synthetic judgments in mathematics. To make the sum of 12 we may add  $5 + 7$ , as he does, or  $1 + 11$ ,  $2 + 10$ ,  $3 + 9$ , and so on. Moreover, we see that there is the neat symmetry of  $6 + 6$ . But whatever is on either side of the dividing line of the pipe here, as long as it adds up to 12, is symmetrical in the sense that it is an *equilibrium*:  $6 + 6 | 1 + 11$ , though we cannot say about it that the symmetry is bilateral.

Simplicity, too, owes something to thermodynamics. The Second Law states that 1) in an isolated system (such as an ideal black body) time does not reduce entropy but keeps it in a steady state of equilibrium; 2) in a dynamic system (with input and output) there is only an increase in entropy which is not reversible.

For the categorical exclusion to be useful in the way it is intended here, it must be functionally simple and symmetrical and therefore “beautiful” in a verifiable and empirical way. It must have the right proposition for the application. As Aristotle implies, what good is a painting if it is a thousand miles wide and no one can see it? Arguments that earth looks beautiful from space or that an electron microscope reveals the beauty of the microscopic world, though compelling, miss the point.

In the sense that the quantifiable proportions of the CE allow us to “see” *le devenir* and therefore come to a better understanding of the difference between synthetic and analytical propositions, it is useful in the sense that a tool is useful. Inasmuch as that which is useful is beautiful in that it is beautifully useful the CE serves as a primitive ethical aesthetic by which we may observe the ethical aesthetics of systems based on true and invalid synthetic statements and trivial and nontrivial analytical statements.

We may allow, though that whether or not this is a “beautiful” ethical aesthetic is “in the eye of the beholder.” It is more accurate to say that it is mathematically *elegant* in that it conforms to two vectors of proportion: symmetry and simplicity. That a painting is a thousand miles wide is a form of complication interfering with our ability to ascertain its symmetry, or, at least, balance, unity, and equilibrium—if those are our aesthetic values.

In the technical sense the CE has an affinity for the values found in the Second Law so that it may be applied in a context where it is important to distinguish between synthetic and analytic propositions and statements. In a discussion about the categorical exclusion (CE) we must consider what it includes and excludes from its category. In so doing, we can begin to form a simple system of ethics which ultimately defines the ethical aesthetics of the subject's possible decision-making process in the events leading up to its choice to abdicate and what immediately follows when it does or does not.

In considering what choices are left for the abdicated subject, we must first understand the ethical aesthetics possible in the domain of the categorical exclusion (CE). And to understand the ethical aesthetics of the CE, we must understand what, exactly, is excluded and included in its existential quantification.

First, we must revisit the idea of the CE as it is described in the first few pages of this Preliminary. When an absolute threshold has been crossed and a thing has come into being as the signified, then we have observed a *categorical exclusion* (CE). In other words, the category of 0 has been excluded from the category of 1 and any other number, which we may represent as  $n$ . The definition of a categorical exclusion is the crossing of the threshold between 0 and 1 with no possibility of the negation of the new state to the previous state.

The equivalent in the Second Law is the property of a spontaneous (dynamic) process of increasing entropy which is irreversible. Therefore, the CE is bound by the absolute limit of irreversibility, otherwise it is not an exclusion and is not categorical.

Since integers may be expressed as either countable whole numbers (such as 1, 2, 3, ...) as well as a concatenation of the simple procedure of adding 1 to itself ( $1 + 1 + 1, \dots$ ), they are reversible. Therefore, they are endless iterations of themselves and may be reversed up until they reach 0. Is not the negation, then, of 1 ( $1 - 1$ ) a reversal of the CE and therefore also a violation of the Second Law? It would be so only in a trivial sense. In the nontrivial sense *le devenir* in the form of  $0 / 1$  is *irreversible* because we may never say about that which has come into being that *it has never been*.

We may say that *it once was*, in which case it has passed from being into nonbeing. It is for this reason that the past and future are not symmetrical. Being, therefore, is a form of entropy, not its reversal as is the tacit assumption made by sacred and secular minds alike. In fact, this fallacy may be what they have most in common, and what generates their endless bickering about the so-called "existence" of God, as if God were a termite or a beach ball. While metaphysicians make a more romantic debate of the

matter of being and nonbeing, they nevertheless fail in their bid to outsmart what they hope is a physical principle that does not extend into the rarified ether of the metaphysical.

When we say, as does Ecclesiastes 9:11, that “time and chance happeneth to them all,” what we are saying is that *entropy cannot be reversed*. Debt, the erection of the ego’s ziggurat to itself, accumulation, wars to end all wars, consumerism, the hope of medical immortality, and even various schemes of an afterlife all “rage against the dying of the light.” They are futile attempts at reversal of the diminution of life and dissolution of order resulting from the universal Second Law of thermodynamics. We may add the Second Law ( $S$ ) to the few navigable stars of we have gathered so far in this discussion, which include the speed of light ( $c$ ) and the Planck constant ( $\hbar$ ), as verifiable attributes of the quantitative universe ( $V$ ) of realia class  $a$ .

Here are the rules which must be followed for it to be said that there has been a CE (categorical exclusion):

- a. A thing may *come into being* by crossing the threshold from 0 to 1.
- b. A thing may not *go out of being* by reversing the process of *coming-into-being*.
- c. After the CE, a thing may cross any number ( $n$ ) of thresholds between 1 and  $n$  in either direction without violating A or B.

In the 1947 film *The Woman on the Beach* with Robert Ryan and Joan Bennett, Ryan plays Scott, a war veteran suffering from post-traumatic disorder from the war. He falls in love with Peggy, played by Bennett. Peggy is married to Tod, a famous and highly regarded artist who went blind as a result of a row with Peggy. At great issue between Tod and Peggy is the disposition of Tod’s paintings, which he refuses to sell. While showing Scott his paintings, Tod says, “Now that I can’t paint anymore, this stuff of mine gets more valuable every day. There’s an old saying in my trade: A man never gets rich until he’s dead. I assure you a blind painter is just the same as a dead one.” The syllogism here is a series of categorical statements:

- a. A dead painter cannot paint.
- b. Death leads to scarcity.
- c. Scarcity increases the value of paintings.
- d. Therefore, death increases the value of paintings.

But Tod adds a material equivalent to the quantity of “death” by saying that “a *blind* painter is just the same as a *dead* one.” What makes them material equivalents (*blindness = death*) is that when it comes to the value of paintings,

blindness and death *equally* and *symmetrically* lead to scarcity. Therefore, both death and blindness increase the value of paintings. Elements of both categories possess the attribute of being able to contribute to the state of scarcity. However, within the existential and emotional drama of the story, Tod is also saying that to a painter painting is life. If blindness ends his ability to paint, then his life is the material equivalent of death, or a death-in-life.

While Tod's proposition is synthetic, it is not an ISP. The categories of subject and predicate do not contradict because both death and blindness verifiably affect scarcity, which in turn verifiably affects the value of that which is desired. But the truth value of all statements and propositions here depends entirely upon the fact that both death and blindness (as his blindness is described in the film) are irreversible. Therefore, the signification of these propositions arises from the symmetry and simplicity of the categorical exclusion.

Before going further into the *application* of the CE to the psychological as well as ethical mechanism of abdication, though, we must look at what the CE implies for the schema of the modified Lacanian positions we have used throughout the Preliminary. We will use the already-stated notation: 0I, I1, I2, Ix, ~Ix meaning the primordial Not-I (0I), the spectral or Ideal-I (I1), the social or Real-I (I2), the abdicated or Imaginary-I (Ix, where x = abdication of personal sovereignty), and the negation of abdication (~Ix), or Second Negation, which could also be understood as Not-Ix. In another form:

- a. Not-I (the primordial *never-having-been*): 0I
- b. Ideal-I (spectral, symbolic order of the *coming-into-being*): I1
- c. Real-I (social, real order of the *ego*): I2
- d. Imaginary-I (imaginary order of simulacra, or *abdication*): Ix
- e. (Negation of the cumulative concatenation of the Imaginary-I, or the *Second Negation*: ~Ix)

An important conceptual consideration here is the *disposition* of the negation of negation of the sovereign self. There are two ways to express it:

0I, (I1, I2, Ix), ~ (I1, I2, Ix): cumulative expression

0I, I1, I2, Ix, ~Ix: linear expression

In the first, what is negated (~) is the whole chain of signification in the form of the symbolic (I1), the real (I2), and the imaginary (Ix), which is why the symbols of the positions are enclosed in both their positive and negative forms. To express the matter this way we have to consider the concatenation *dynamically* where each position after 0I is cumulative. This relationship could also be expressed as 0I + I = I1 (where I is "the Self"), I1 + I1' (where

I1' is "the other") = I2, I2 – I = Ix (where x is the abdication of the personal sovereignty *that had been realized* in the epiphany of "the other" as I', or what might be called "the *other I*").

While there are many ways to understand abdication, particularly because it is a push-pull mechanism where it can also appear that the subject is being *forced* into it, what is crucial to consider is that abdication fundamentally changes the subject's orientation to others as sovereign individuals.

Equally significant is the understanding that probability is in favor of the *other*, Subject B, also having abdicated and of being in the same relationship to Subject A. After all, A is the *other* of B, and B is the *other* of A in symmetrical proximity or ratio. In this sense both exist in negation, as Hegel indicates, possibly even in the mutual values of being lord and bondsman of each other (democracy).

Thanks to this symmetry, or reciprocity, we are not dealing with abnormal psychology. When we speak of "the subject" we are not speaking of an isolated individual possessed of a unique pathology who may be "treated" by a psychoanalyst. Rather, we are forming a generalization about what is necessary to be a citizen in full and good standing within the precincts of civilization and is well-known discontents.

We see this trend in the work of Freud and Lacan: their early work looks at abnormal, individual psychology seen from the point of view of a clinician; their later work witnesses the extrapolation of this pathology into the norm of mass psychology, until they can simply say that *this* is the structure of the psyche of as it lives and breathes in society.

Words such as paranoia, neurosis, hysteria, and even schizophrenia, once reserved for the diagnosis of patients in hospitals, are later credibly applied to random individuals in the society at large. They are then applied to the characterization of society as a whole, or as what we call mass psychology.

How does it come to be that what seems to start out as individual pathology transforms into, for example, "mass hysteria"? What is it about civilization that manufactures the schizoid man as a duplicatable product of society? To begin to understand the how and what of these questions, we must turn again to the what Palmer describes as Heraclitus' distinction between pure and process being.

We may understand pure being as the mere *fact*, or "facticity," of existence. As such, it belongs to Dasein in that it has no attribute other than the fact that "it is." Therefore, *it is* the primordial copula upon which we build the subject and predicate of Kant's "manifold." Process being, however, we may say is not in a terminal or final state until it is can be said,

verifiably, that has reached a static state of total entropy. This is despite the fact that we also cannot say that it is specifically dynamic.

While the burden of verifiability is upon us before we pronounce the “death” of the process, and therefore the *nonbeing* of the being that was the subject of the process, we can until then see that the entity undergoes a series of transformations commuted from one state to another along the concatenation of the story of its existence. This “story” is its *identity*, the attributes of which are drawn from those necessary for membership in a particular category. For the sake of this discussion we have limited those categories (perhaps too crudely) to realia class *a* and simulacra class *b*.

To commute from one category to another ( $a \rightarrow b$ ), the process must follow the arrow of time, the law of entropy, and logical necessity. In other words, the subject must surrender, or abdicate, the attributes of class *a* to accept the terms of surrender and the legal conditions of abdication in class *b*. Commutation requires a legal process.

As this process defines the subject’s ontological identity within the greater universal quantification ( $\forall$ ) as a member of one existential class ( $\exists$ ) or the other, we call this commutation *process being*. It is not different from the legal process which transforms an individual from being ontologically “innocent” to “guilty,” or from being “one who has killed” to “one who has murdered.” In other words, it is an ontological transformation of identity to be commuted from a citizen to a criminal.

In fact, the verb “commute” is used when a prisoner’s sentence is reduced an act of fiat by the state. As such process being is a *dynamic state* as opposed to a static state which we reserve for the entropic terminus. When it reaches its terminus, it is no longer considered to be process being, though that does not mean it is by default pure being. It is not appropriate to call pure being a static state, though, because as a child of the parent state of Dasein, it inherits the attribute of having no other attribute other than *it is*.

Taking process being into consideration in describing the how and what of the establishment of the pathological psyche as the norm of civilization will help us understand the next point about the subject’s free will in this whole affair. Namely, that property of the categorical exclusion (CE) that allows for a *recursive movement* and how it relates to nonreversible states of entropy in the system. First, we add to the linear schema of 0I, I1, I2, Ix, ( $\sim$ Ix) some notation regarding its dynamism, where “ $\rightarrow$ ” indicates a transformation from one position (or state) to another: 0I  $\rightarrow$  I1, I1  $\rightarrow$  I2, I2  $\rightarrow$  Ix, Ix  $\rightarrow$  ( $\sim$ Ix). Again, we must not consider the Not-Ix as a *positive* position, or state. (The false positive is the result of a misfortune of applying the overused and abused terminology borrowed from Hegel and Marxian

dialectics of the Second Negation.) What “→” does for us gives us two other possibilities: ← and ↔, which are useful in describing the ethical implications of the CE and therefore the effect abdication has on the subject’s free will.

It should be mentioned now that if there is “free” will then there must be will that is “not free.” To this end the first can be defined as will exercised entirely by the discrete apparatus of the subject’s reason and intention, whereas the latter is defined as will exercised by the subject in accordance with the prerogatives of any apparatus other than that of the subject’s discrete reason and intention. The former may still be considered “free” in a Nash equilibrium where the prerogatives of the other are taken into quantitative consideration in the exercise of the subject’s will, as adjudged by the subject’s reason and intention. Moreover, it is not necessary to say that will that is “not free” is not will at all; it is will *if and only if* it is in noncontradiction with the subject’s desire to abdicate, which is an act of will. Furthermore, there is the matter of volition, which we may say is a kind of will but will nonetheless.

In the abdicated state the subject acts in accordance with the discourse. But to do so also requires an act of will, for even when we are “forced” to do something the mechanics of physiology demands some degree of *volition*. Therefore, abdication forms a kind of business partnership between the subject and the hegemony, where the latter has the controlling interest. As Thomas à Kempis says in Book I, Chapter 19, of *The Imitation of Christ*, “*Homo proponit, sed Deus disponit.*” Man proposes, but God disposes. The apparatus of the hegemonic discourse may veto any decision or intention the subject may make affecting the promotion of its interests, whether or not those interests coincide with the wants and needs of the subject.

While this process most obviously occurs through the *nomos* of the law, it is also brought to bear upon the subject in countless ways in all domains of its existence, from the bedroom to the boardroom. And as all other subjects as members in good social standing are parties to the same partnership, it is not necessary that the discourse, in the form of the contractual agreement, rains down upon the subject from on high, as Thomas à Kempis might have it.

While the *things* of simulacra class *b* emit signals falsifying their identity as realia, so too do the *beings* of that class transmit signals reinforcing the prerogatives of the hegemony. These signals may also be directed toward the authorities in the form of reportage regarding violations of the *nomos* by one’s fellow citizens. This a professional criminal knows, being bound as he is by his own code of *omerta*, the code of silence, regarding “ratting” on his associates.



Those who are not in good social standing, and may even stand in opposition to the law, as criminals do, it is necessary for them to create a counter discourse that may indeed “neutralize” the first negation, as well as create its own micro or nano state of exception applied as the need arises. The discourse is the water through which the subject swims like a fish. If “resistance” makes an appearance at all it is in the form of the subject’s own self-destructive behavior where it in effect vandalizes the hegemony’s property (itself), except in the acts of the criminal which are generally also other-destructive.

It can then be said about the proposition of the subject’s will that while it is indeed a synthetic statement, it is nevertheless *not a false* one. The word “abdication” here is a logical, rather than metaphorical, necessity (though certainly the poetry of the metaphor helps us conceive of this matter in a way more familiar to our understanding of the history of the state and its laws). But we also must keep in mind that once having abdicated, the exercise of free will under any circumstances is a negation of state prerogatives. Consequently, exercise of free will, of what we call in the aggregate “freedom,” is itself a violation not only of the protocols and prerogatives of the state, but also the *nomos*.

As much of the *nomos* purports to protect the subject’s freedom, a natural contradiction arises which forces the law into a form of dogma built upon invalid synthetic statements. It is from this principle that we get Orwell’s state credos in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength.

His humor in exploiting their blatant contradiction is often overlooked because their reality in our everyday life today is so prevalent that it simply is no longer funny. It is, rather, “reality” in the Orwellian, Kafkaesque sense. Orwell’s comic trick in the book is to take the discourse and translate it into the everyday language of Oceania: Newspeak, then to make a dictionary of it that is ever shrinking in its quest for ideological purity. That Winston’s job is to “control the past” by changing historical documents is a form of hyperbole expressed as the ludicrous to make a point about the reality of the discourse. And that the novel is set “in the future” (which is now, alas, the past) only helps us suspend what would otherwise be our disbelief.

In 1948, when he finished writing it, the modern world was already well on the linear path to this dystopian reality in a completely imaginary  $\mathbb{R}^3$  quickly forming as technology, economics, and politics allowed. All that remained to make it the prevailing reality was the further development of the unlimited possibilities of digital technology which is now fully upon us.

In this sense the defeat of Hitler did not mark the end of a period of tyrannical ideology, but the beginning a brave new world of it. What

Klemperer calls the *LTI (Lingua Tertii Imperii)* of the Nazi period was the template for all modern discourse, particularly in advertising, marketing, public relations, politics, and education.

These five domains of discourse work together to form a unified, “on message,” appeal that is irresistible. It contains no irksome Jewish scapegoats. Its ingenious innovation—which seemed to entirely escape Hitler and Goebbels—is that it is the *phenotype*, not the *genotype*, that must be terrorized. Genetic inheritance, despite its glorification in modern medical biology, is a superficial characteristic that even nature itself abhors through natural selection.

What under one condition would be considered the most weak and “subhuman” adaptation may be the strongest and superior one under another, thanks to the verifiable, analytic, mathematical, and totally indifferent nature of natural selection. Politically, genocide has been a failure as a strategy of the state. The phenotype, however, has no troublesome outward genetic characteristics. Rather, the apostate is known by the *shibboleth* of its speech and behavior, which would emit as well as transmit characteristics of the outlawed principles of freedom. The mechanism described in Judges 12:5-6 is now pervasive as the basis of the modern state and its social expression:

And the Gileadites took the passages of Jordan before the Ephraimites: and it was so, that when those Ephraimites which were escaped said, Let me go over; that the men of Gilead said unto him, Art thou an Ephraimite? If he said, Nay; Then said they unto him, Say now Shibboleth: and he said Sibboleth: for he could not frame to pronounce it right. Then they took him, and slew him at the passages of Jordan: and there fell at that time of the Ephraimites forty and two thousand.

But rather than identify the retreating enemy, the shibboleth seeks to discover the “imposter” who, by his presence alone, imposes his apostasy as a threat upon the hegemonic empire, perhaps even unconsciously. The River Jordan, where the victorious Gileadites kept their checkpoint, flows through society at every level, but particularly throughout digital networks. It is not at the login page, though, that one is asked for the shibboleth; rather, it is by one’s official “identity” in the system by which one is known, for instance by one’s all-important “credit rating” which, unlike a user name and password, one ultimately has little control over.

Just *not* having a credit history is enough to condemn one to second-class citizenship as an “imposter” and threat to the political economy and pretender to the throne. One who “fails” the test of the shibboleth, even by mistake, is then considered a “fake,” a *copy* perhaps, of a real citizen, and

is marginalized or worse. In this way the discourse of simulacra *nominates* the real as the copy and the copy as the real. The ethical aesthetic of the imaginary is that which can be verified outside of its own system is de facto false and therefore fake.

The fact that it is a matter of phenotype, though, does not mean that genotype does not figure into this ethical aesthetic as well. The old prejudices die hard only because even in this system, which considers itself enlightened and modern, that which is useful in separating the believers from the apostates, the sheep from the goats, is useful. What is added to the modern system, though, is a kind of symmetry where the traditionally excluded genotypes can also be elevated to superior status by the fact that they were once (or still are) excluded. They can be, in this ideal world, *included because they are excluded*, creating a disincentive on their part to eliminate that which has and does exclude them because it is now their chief means of inclusion.

Again, *by violating the law of noncontradiction a state of exception where anything is possible manifests itself through the establishment of a discourse based on invalid synthetic propositions*. In turn, those who, by superficial genotypical characteristics, are “blamed” for this exclusion, are themselves excluded in an attempt at what is described by the discourse as social equilibrium. This effort, however, only succeeds in doing what democracy and freedom do in the state of exception: instead of freeing the slave, equilibrium (equality) simply gives the slave the equal right to own slaves, which for most is enough of payment to buy their undying loyalty.

## 2.6 Recursion of the reset of *a posteriori* positions

The Second Negation is what has been called earlier here the tertium quid. Hegel describes its possibilities with great subtlety and makes the distinction between the difference between a median term in the mechanics of its logic and what could be misinterpreted as its neutrality in the clash of the titan forces of dialectic. What we will eventually settle upon here as an application which is of some use to the entire argument of the Preliminary is that the tertium quid results in what has been called (in form or another) the *Ideal Observer*, not different from the description of which we find in the work of David Hume, Adam Smith, and Roderick Firth. It is the work of Firth, in particular, that solves some of the problems of subjectivity and relativism in the observers described by the other two philosophers.

But recursion, which shall also be known as a “reset,” only applies to a trivial commutation in the concatenation of positions on a line composed of infinite points, of what we know as the counting numbers. Also, this

commutation is in a direction which is the reverse of its last advance. If the difference between 0 and 1 is greater than the difference between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ), then we can say that the first transformation is categorical and therefore nontrivial. All movements which follow are therefore trivial in that they never add up to more than the difference between 0 and 1. It is truly a matter of Zeno's paradox when we consider that our journey to imaginary infinity using integers must always either 1) go on forever and never conclude and therefore remain unquantifiable, or 2) stop at a random number, no matter how large, and cease to express infinity. We are left with that which is not quantifiable and is therefore a *process* and not an integer, or that which is quantifiable and an integer but is not infinity. Both are not what we imagine "infinity" to be.

If we consider this random quantity to be a "rest stop" on our trip to infinity, then we are in the position described by Cantor of having to stop at an infinity of rest stops on our way to infinity, based on some mathematical system, and so on. In other words, it does not matter how we count our way into an imaginary, synthetic proposition.

What matters is if that proposition can be proven *invalid* or not on the basis of the law of noncontradiction, and whether or not it is based on a verifiable subject. Adding to our problems is the property of a synthetic statement in that it may not be proven *true* (otherwise it would be an analytic statement), but that it can be proven false by not being valid using the terms we have described here. This indirect proof gives us a T by *implication* for statements which do not contradict and are predicated upon a verifiable subject.

We could say that the only transformation is  $0 \rightarrow 1$ , while all other movement that follows is a commutation, either forward or backward along the series. By adding 1 to 0, we transform 0 into a positive value as a synthetic statement which is not in contradiction because both 0 as the subject and 1 as the predicate are both, according to Peano, numbers, but where their values are negations of each other. What we may say about this transformation, then, is that it makes the First Negation possible. Does this mean then that the negation of 0 by 1 is the "First Negation"? Or is it the negation of this negation that may claim this position in the series?

The answer depends upon whether we speak of negation in the context of what amounts to the modular arithmetic of the modified Lacanian mirror stage and its accretions we have been using here, or the natural series of integers which, in terms of signification, represent what Kant calls the "manifold"—either as *realia* or *simulacra*. Beyond these distinctions lie an infinity of operations which may be carried out by any arithmetic operation.

They either gain or lose value depending upon their movement along the linear path of the series.

Earlier we discussed at some length earlier the matter of the Second Negation. We will return to it before this Preliminary is done. What needs to be discussed now, though, is also a matter of negation but in an entirely different form: *recursion*. In this form of negation, the transition from one successive position to another has been reversed, either through a *direct*  $p = (A \rightarrow B, B \rightarrow A)$  or an *indirect*  $q = (A \rightarrow B, B \rightarrow C, C \rightarrow A)$  form of negation. The first ( $p$ ) is tautological and the second ( $q$ ) syllogistic. In the second ( $q$ ),  $B$  is a negation of  $A$  (off), while  $C$  is a negation of  $B$  (on), with the result that the negation of  $C$  provides a transform of  $A$  from *on* to *off*. Both have their advantages and disadvantages depending upon the circumstances and motivation of the subject affected.

In  $p$ , there is what can be called a “reset.” It is the same as when a light switch in the *on* position ( $A$ ) is turned *off* ( $B$ ) and then back *on* ( $A$ ). The disadvantage is that it is *binary*, meaning there is no *tertium quid*, no third thing or position which could allow for other possibilities, in this case the transformation of  $A$  from *on* to *off*.

No matter how many times we flip the switch,  $A$  will always be on and  $B$  off. In  $q$ , though, the advantage is that it is *tertiary* rather than binary; we have an intermediary position formed by  $ABC$  where there are two positions ( $BC$ ), which are negations of each other, giving us two *on* positions ( $AC$ ). Therefore, in the second we have two *on* states which are not identical, since *on* in the  $C$  position on is achieved by negation of  $B$ , which is *a posteriori*, while *on* in the  $A$  position is a preexisting state which may or may not be the result of a previous *a priori* operation, but in relation to the negation  $BC$  it is indeterminate while  $BC$  is determinate.

The mechanics of  $p$  and  $q$  is an abstract example of how negation can perform two types of recursions: one a reset and the other a transformation. Although in  $q$   $A$  is transformed from *on* to *off*, it nevertheless remains a recursion to the original position of the logical operation but with the opposite result. In the subject’s development (not progress) through the sequence of the mirror stage and beyond, one or the other may be applied *provided there has not been a categorical exclusion*, in which case no recursion to any previous state is possible. As there are  $n$  possibilities within the finer gradations of the subject’s development, it would not do to describe all of the possible recursions and their effects.

However, this is more or less what we do, *a posteriori*, in psychoanalysis. The analysand appeals to the analyst for an analysis (or description) of what amounts to the logic of its development. The analyst (we hope) is trained in picking out the peaks, troughs, and impasses of this

process, as well as interpreting what they mean not only within the literature and lore of psychology and medicine, but also within the context of the subject's own unique configuration of assets and liabilities.

In this way the analyst *reads* the subject's psychological *economy*. Based on what is discovered there that is either 1) describable in valid synthetic statements, or 2) verifiable in analytic statements, the analyst, depending upon method and theory, guides the analysand into some kind of therapeutic understanding of the problem.

The *bête noir*, as it were, in this process, is the categorical exclusion (CE). It would not do, for instance, to counsel a man who has an obsessive desire to murder his wife if he has already done so. Furthermore, based on informal survey, it seems that subjects that have discovered themselves in the cul-de-sac of the CE lose their desire (in this case, libido) for anything more than what their abdication has brought them, for better or worse. The first act of the bankrupt is to begin amassing more debt, though at a now-inflated interest rate because he is at greater risk.

But just as there are two forms of recursion ( $p$  and  $q$ ), which are categorically different, so too are there two roles at categorical variance with which the CE plays in the subject's development and, ultimately, the unfolding of the drama of its life. They are distinguished from each other by being *involuntary* and *voluntary*. As this is a matter of the will, and as the will is a matter of the subject's *sentience* or consciousness of itself as a free actor, the difference is nontrivial.

Again, we need not list all of the possible configurations of this binary. What matters the most is this: if the CE is involuntary, there is "no blame," meaning that either the exclusion was 1) fated in the sense of being *absolutely inevitable*, or that 2) it was imposed upon the subject by insurmountable and unavoidable *force*.

Examples of exclusions fitting this description are, of course, the coming-into-being of the Ideal-I (I1) from the Not-I (OI), and death, both of which are *absolutely inevitable*. In the first case  $OI \rightarrow I1$  is necessary for there to be an "I," a subject we can refer to, the cogito, which is *le devenir* from the *a priori*; the second, death, which is *a posteriori*, is a negation of the first without which there could be no *coming-into-being*. Of the latter we may say that a person imprisoned unjustly, marginalized by society by economic and political oppression, or born into slavery finds himself in an involuntary negation of his will as a free actor.

However, if it is voluntary, as it must be in abdication, there is "blame," or responsibility, on the part of the subject's free agency; therefore, if the subject is no longer responsible for its actions after abdication, and if its impotency as a free agent has been brought upon itself by an act of its own

free will, what possible role could an analyst have in this situation except as an adjunct to the subject's synthetic existence?

Furthermore, if the analyst's role is, in part, to assist the subject in parsing its own psychological complexes into valid synthetic and true analytic statements about its condition, how is the subject to process these statements when its orientation to language and the world is based on invalid synthetic statements? The only possibilities open to the analyst in this situation is either complete rejection of the apparent significance of the analyst's discursive role in analysis, or a catastrophic negation of its state of self-abnegation in the CE.

How the CE translates into the everydayness of our experience, and from there into an ethical aesthetic, we may illustrate, again, with the serial killer problem. What is more significant to the law, that a person killed or did not kill, or killed and killed more than one person? As we have seen, the mechanics of the law itself cannot even accommodate the reality of multiple killings once it has established such punishments as life in prison or capital punishment. Killer A murdered one person and gets the death penalty. Killer B murdered twenty persons and gets the death penalty.

Both A and B will be punished in exactly the same way, not because of any particular injustice built into the system, but because both only have one life to forfeit in exchange for the life they took. The matter is further complicated by a state of exception such as war wherein the killer is rewarded, rather than punished, for killing more than one person, even though in every respect the dead possessed the same characteristics as their legal killer except one: they were "the enemy."

Of course, seen from the position of enemy, the killer was also the enemy in precisely the same nontrivial way. Whatever quarrel their respective states may have had which led to the conflict in the first place is subordinated in the act of killing to a trivial proposition. While there are many qualities which may make one the enemy—ideology, aggression, territory, race, religion, and so forth—what gets the normally peaceful, and even cowardly, citizen to kill in cold blood is that he finds himself in position where he must *kill or be killed*. Therefore, it is this synthetic modification of the biological imperative that distinguishes the serial killer from the war hero. Whether or not either enjoys or abhors the act of killing does not enter into the juridical consideration. Therefore, it is trivial, relativistic, subjective, and debatable even if confessed.

However, what both share is *having killed*, which, like the Second Law of thermodynamics, is not reversible. Having killed, like *having been*, is a threshold of the categorical exclusion which, once crossed, may not be reversed. It is crossing the Rubicon. We may say that it is the entropy of

ontology. That is why there is no material equivalent between the nonbeing of 0 (*never having been*) and the nonbeing of death, which may be indicated with  $\infty$  (*having been*).

Both, however, affect the infinitive copula “to be” in the same way and are therefore material equivalents:  $0 \equiv \infty$ . What *having been* and *never having been* share as existential attributes is that in either case language forces us to omit the possibility of saying that the person “is.” For us even to say “the person” we must presume that there is a certain person in mind, which would lead one to conclude that we are speaking about one who *once was* not one who *never was*.

It is also possible to conjure up a person of some consequence who *never was*, for instance in the invention of a “straw man” in an argument; *parasocial interaction* with a celebrity persona experienced only through the media; dreams; the hyperbole of “virtual reality” (synthetic reality); and most certainly in history, mythology, and legends. Identity can be stolen and reassigned digitally or exploited as a person who no longer exists (though this has been done ever since there were death records and tombstones).

What remains of Jesus is no more substantial, or even perhaps less, than what remains of a person invented in one’s dreams who may be able to lay claim to at least being a composite of living persons, a memory of someone who *once was*, or at least the symbol of a psychological value that may be identified and analyzed. Still, there is perhaps more *non-contemporaneous* “evidence” of Jesus *having been* than of perhaps any other person, none of which is in any way conclusive in a forensic sense. Faith is called upon to supply the missing verifiability. There are, of course, the claims of the supernatural, which should be considered as well.

It should be kept in mind that the CE is not just a matter of the initial transformation of  $0 \rightarrow 1$ . It can be applied to any situation where we can at least get an idea of what ethical considerations arise from the fact that there is, existentially, no going back. Why is this important? It would seem that the news that there is “no going back” to the luxuries of the womb (matrix) would be received with acceptance and resolution, not the weeping, gnashing of teeth, and rending of garments we have grown accustomed to. The matter is similar to what Erich Fromm describes regarding man’s psychological debt to his origin as an animal in the wild like other animals:

What is essential in the existence of man is the fact that he has emerged from the animal kingdom, from instinctive adaptation, that he has transcended nature—although he never leaves it; he is a part of it—and yet *once torn away from nature, he cannot return to it; once thrown out of paradise—a state of original oneness with nature—cherubim with flaming swords block his way*, if he should try to return. Man can only go forward by developing



his reason, by finding a new harmony, a human one, instead of the pre-human harmony which is irretrievably lost [*italics added*].<sup>40</sup>

This “state of original oneness with nature” is what we consequently long for after our departure from the womb. As such, it is inextricably tied up with Oedipal feelings for that which gave us birth. It should be noted, though, that the matter is symmetrical for both genders, since what is at the bottom of the Oedipal impulses is eros itself, which is without gender. Furthermore, what keeps males and females in the same existential class in this respect is that regardless of gender they issue from the same womb.

Also, that womb was likely impregnated with a phallus. Despite medical science’s other possibilities, the womb remains, metaphorically and psychologically, that magical place from whence we issue. Although we seem to be born in a mental blackout, a state in which it might be said that there is “0I,” or no sense of “I” or the Not-I, it may be that we retain a *somatic* memory of the so-called birth trauma which could only be our displeasure at being so rudely interrupted in our dream world of “oceanic” pleasure and security.

Ignorance of one’s origin, like that of an orphan in a Victorian novel, sets one up for some surprises later in life, including inheritances, for better or ill, that one could not have dreamed of. Furthermore, the Fates punish those who forget their origins. Although Macbeth gets what he interprets as the good news that “none of woman born / Shall harm Macbeth” (Act IV, Scene I), his “o’er reaching ambition” blinds him to other possible interpretations of this prediction. He later learns, of course, that his foe Macduff “was from his mother’s womb Untimely ripped” (Act V, Scene 8). Naturally, many surprises follow from this revelation.

Which parent, person, thing, even place, eros ultimately attaches itself to is a matter of the subject’s own peculiar psychological schema. Freud calls it a “complex” because its vectors, in forming its erotic sphere (a kind of simulacrum of the womb), go in many different and unpredictable directions and often change significantly over time. Lacan depends *jouissance* upon pleasure, which acts as a kind of gating mechanism, and the phallus, which serves as a symbol and stimulus for its independent life of libidinal attachment. In proportion to which the subject has suffered trauma from its detachment from the womb it must endure a longing for *jouissance*.

The pleasure principle, however, interferes with satisfaction of this longing by setting up a libidinal economy where civilization and its potentially significant discontents are taken into consideration. This repression of *jouissance*, the state implies in all of its discourses, is our duty

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<sup>40</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*. (Harper & Row, 1956), 7.

as citizens. Meantime, its tireless efforts, at our own expense and insistence, to stifle transgression of the *nomos*, fan the flames of what Lacan calls that “twinge,” that impulse to transgress. (As Lacan so generously points out, we see the complete unfolding of transgression in the writing of the Marquis de Sade.)

What remains is to be seen, then, is to what degree the superego has developed the necessary anticathexes to stave off the pain that inevitably follows transgression in the form of punishment, banishment, marginalization, imprisonment, disenfranchisement, and least of all guilt. Agamben calls the reprise following transgression *banishment*: “He who has been banned is not, in fact, simply set outside the law and made indifferent to it but rather abandoned by it, that is, exposed and threatened on the threshold in which life and law, outside and inside, become indistinguishable.”<sup>41</sup>

Obsessional preoccupation with transgression is found in rather fresh form the child’s orientation to the mysteries of sex. While this is natural, the subject’s later adaptation to the primitive and complicated forces issuing from this period in life, which corresponds with the mirror stage and is indeed its libidinal *Kraftwerk*, will determine more than anything else its approach to the impending temptations of abdication. Why the negation of 0I (Not-I) position by the II position (Ideal-I) is so cataclysmically significant in the subject’s life is that it is *the* categorical, nontrivial event which the subject lives to experience and in its own way remember, contemplate, agonize over, and even duplicate in various simulated and imagined forms.

The same cannot be said about death. While there is post-*partum* existence, there is no post-*mortem* existence in the sense understood by the ego. Even if the subject professes deep belief in an afterlife, it still presumes that the ego, with all its pathologies, idiosyncrasies, and foibles, will be projected into the other world, lock, stock, and barrel. This is the ego’s most fervent hope. For those who have learned from the priesthood of science that religion and its afterlife is just a bunch of hoovey, they imagine that immortality is a matter of perpetual consumerism made possible by the ever-greater miracles of medicine and technology.

## 2.7 The topology of language as thought

Thought is language as landscape in the topology of language’s apparatus of discourse. It is impossible to separate thought from imagination. We may doubt that there is any thought without the activity of

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<sup>41</sup> Agamben, op. cit., 28.

imagination since so much of the content of thought consists of that which we must imagine. L.S. Vygotsky argues for thought being composed primarily of language, though he well knew that it also consisted of impressions and images.<sup>42</sup> When we ask someone, “What are your thoughts?” we receive a stream of language. Is what we get, then, “thought” per se? Certainly, when it is spoken or written it is the best approximation of thought we can expect, short of “reading minds.”

On the other hand, we could not have this discussion if we were not aware that there is conscious and unconscious thought. The latter comes in the form of unconscious and subconscious motivations which, when seen in action and revealed, look in every respect like conscious thought that had hitherto lied buried in a mass of anticathexes and repressions. Moreover, psychology indicates that conscious thought, as well as the special narrative form of thought we call dreaming, is heavily influenced by the unconscious. Often enough thought is entirely consumed by the underlying unconscious motivation, which forces us into the position of accepting that two conflicting and competing identities exist together in one being.

We might then ask this being who the real persona is. Of course, whichever one does the talking is likely to claim priority. Making matters more complicated, the one doing the talking might be “speaking for” the silent one without letting on that it is the imposter. As such, we are artificial beings, but not in an exclusive sense. We self-create through valid synthetic arguments. This is the great advantage and necessity of synthetic logic in the formation of the personality. If we were constrained to submit every nuance of ourselves to the scrutiny of positive analysis, thought would be impossible, language, if it existed at all, would be tortuous, and the pleasurable sense of life, even in its most minimal form, would soon evaporate.

We may wonder, then, why the apparatus of the state demands that we do indeed submit the minutia of our existence to the parsing and codification of its data systems. Moreover, we should be even quicker to question the prerogatives of the state’s corporate overlords in gathering this data to be used to enlarge dividends and share prices for its stakeholders in the name of making our lives “better.” The fact is, the life of the persona, built upon valid and invalid synthetic arguments, is what Schirmacher calls an “artificial life,” or what we have called elsewhere here “synthetic” existence. As such, the matter of “truth” (T) is bound up with issues of verisimilitude and verism growing out of the tension between valid and invalid synthetic arguments in the existence of realia and the deployment of simulacra.

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<sup>42</sup> Lev S. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, Alex Kozulin, ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986).

Truth is a gift of *Dasein*, which is our place and activity in the world's process. As artificial beings by nature, our body as well as our mind is “a happening of truth at work” every lived-through moment. Even in the most inhumane enterprises, truth is still at work in humanity as a silent cry toward its absence. According to Heidegger, truth is not about being right or wrong but accepting “*aletheia*,” the powerful interplay of revealing and concealing, which shapes humanity's destiny. Today's media, taken as one of our body's splendid incarnations, is involved in the interplay of instrumental technology and life technology, torn between the murder of the body and its elevation (Hegel's *Aufheben*) to an unknown status.<sup>43</sup>

Synthetic life, even artificial life in the form of science-fiction robots that have swallowed the Singularity pill and are “conscious,” is not in and of itself a problem. To criticize it as such is an *aesthetic* critique with little to back it up except, perhaps, a distaste for Frankensteinian bioengineering and computers that use the first-person pronoun, a situation obnoxious or amusing as the case may be. However, if we take Saussure's description of thought as the case, there may be a problem in organizing artificial thinking in such a way that it can begin to approximate what we hope to extract from what Heidegger calls the *humanity* (humanitas) of *Being itself*. “In itself” says Saussure, “thought is like a swirling cloud, where no shape is intrinsically determinate. No ideas are established in advance, and nothing is distinct, before the introduction of linguistic structure.”<sup>44</sup>

There is a superstition in the marketing department of every digital gadget maker that by using the pronoun “I” (but, curiously, in the lower case: “i”) before the name of a new product that people will immediately take to it like the discovery of some new dimension of themselves they never knew existed. Once they feel they can no longer be happy without this product, they are convinced that they needed it all along.

To see this in action is to see the simulacrum of *le devenir*, the godlike power of bringing the dead to life. It worked for Jesus, why not for the major manufacturing corporations of the world? But what makes this a simulacrum of the coming-into-being is that it is *a posteriori*. That which it seeks to animate has already come into being as a *thing*. It is the hope and prayer of every manufacturer that it will be able to breathe upon the cheap clay of its raw material and endow it with *Being itself* so that it may be sold for a premium with a minimal investment to the delight of its major stakeholders.

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<sup>43</sup> Wolfgang Schirmacher, “Homo Generator: Media and Postmodern Technology,” 1994, European Graduate School Articles. Accessed 29 May 2011.

<sup>44</sup> Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (Chicago: Open Court, 2008), 110.

Returning to Saussure, we may wonder if anyone experienced life as “poignant” before the word was invented to describe that feeling. Certainly, the word “romantic” has had a good run since Roman times in manufacturing feelings, thoughts, ideas, labels, periods, styles, genres, and websites people never knew they wanted or needed.

This is a function of what Saussure describes as the necessity for each signifier to be discrete. But we must ask ourselves if our experience really is as discrete as all that or if it is, as Saussure himself says of its reflection in thought, “a swirling cloud, where no shape is intrinsically determinate.” If we add to this mystery the fact that thought cannot function without imagination, we are faced with the inevitable conclusion that everything we can think, everything we can point to discretely as this or that, and every operation of thought in the form of reason, is, ultimately, a product of the imagination.

Kant says as much when he insists that mathematical “judgments” are synthetic, whether or not they can be verified. As we have seen, he has contempt for those who insist otherwise, saying that this fact “seems to have hitherto escaped the observation of those who are engaged in the anatomy of human reason: nay, to be directly opposed to all their conjectures.”<sup>45</sup>

Perhaps what Saussure did not envision was that this structural paradigm could be exploited, given the right technology, to endow inanimate objects (which computers and their software surely are) with the spirit, soul, and consciousness of humanity merely by appending the letter “i” to the product name. But for the mass of subjects, living as they do by the discourse of invalid synthetic propositions, this little promotional trick is enough to convince them of the *transubstantiation* of bits and bytes into thought itself. Coupled with the promise that they, as slaves, can be slave owners too, this magic trick of making the inanimate animate (“It’s alive!”) is enough to convince them that they are in the presence of the gods.

It is an error to imagine, though, that the *content* of communication is the apparatus. What ideology it expresses, whether it is consumerism or Marxism, is irrelevant. The structure is itself the apparatus, the discourse of the sovereign. The logic of the invalid synthetic statement is the culprit, not what information it happens to package. In fact, by conveying utterly reasonable cargo, invalid synthetic statements succeed in sneaking through the subject’s reasonable defenses—if they exist at all.

Often enough this freight comes in the form of verifiable fact which the apparatus presumes is enough to endow the whole operation with verisimilitude. Since the *appearance* of reason often *is* enough, invalid statements spread like a disease through the public discourse, consuming all

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<sup>45</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 720.

subordinate discourse in their path until the minutest utterance of the subject must be cast in an invalid form ripe with fallacies, whether or not it is also gussied up with fact. The tragedy is that the subject simply lacks, by design, chance, and weakness of will, the tools needed to discriminate between valid and invalid propositions.

But it is not just what is said, thought, and imagined within the context of culture that affects the subject's view of itself and consequently the world; it is the shape of the world itself as it begins to conform to the structural defects of the invalid apparatus. The world itself becomes an invalid machine, cranking along in its Frankensteinian, monstrous morphology. It stumbles inexorably toward "the future," which never comes except in the form of an ever-decaying and unlivable *present*. And so, it is a great delight to quote the (today) much-abhorred words of Matthew Arnold from *Culture and Anarchy* which point, in perhaps the last gasp of hope for any such world, at a public discourse encompassing the essence of five thousand years of Western aspiration toward what he might have called an "enlightened" culture.

Plenty of people will try to indoctrinate the masses with the set of ideas and judgments constituting the creed of their own profession or party. Our religious and political organisations [sic] give an example of this way of working on the masses. I condemn neither but culture works differently. It does not try to teach down to the level of inferior classes; it does not try to win them for this or that sect of its own, with ready-made judgments and watchwords. It seeks to do away with classes; *to make the best that has been thought and known in the world current everywhere; to make all men live in an atmosphere of sweetness and light, where they may use ideas, as it uses them itself, freely,—nourished and not bound by them* [italics added].<sup>46</sup>

The above passage stinks of humanism. In the "more human than human" world of the "virtual" synthetic simulacrum, what Heidegger calls "humanism" (*humanitas*) is the ideology of fools. For all its possible faults, though, humanism advocates the "free" use of ideas in such a way that makes "best" a relative descriptor negotiated by the subject, not the prevailing hegemonic discourse. It seeks to "nourish" not "indoctrinate." This will not do. It is a crime against the hegemony, and *coitus interruptus* for the permanent state of exception. Perhaps for these reasons much ire has been heaped on Arnold's pronunciamento from both sides of the pale. Those who seek the overthrow of the state see such words as "sweetness," "light," and "best" as evidence of Classical elitism in the Victorian ethos, which it no doubt is.

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<sup>46</sup> Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* (Cambridge University Press, 1932), 70.

Furthermore, Arnold says that he *does not* condemn the use of literature, broadly represented here, to “indoctrinate the masses” into the “ideas and judgments” of “religious and political” organizations. We may be sure that this latter application of literature, which today we might say is the content of the mass media which does indeed include good books, represents the efforts of the hegemonic order and the prerogatives of its corporate overlords.

Nevertheless, if we scrutinize Arnold’s logic here, we see that he is advocating a degree of discursive freedom extending in both directions: toward the prerogatives of the apparatus of “organisations,” as well as the prerogatives of what he defines here as “culture.” Is it not the right of government, religion, and corporations to inject in whatever means they see fit language promoting their own interests, even at the expense of their audience? And is it also not the responsibility of the subject to preserve, develop, seek out, and cultivate “culture” as Arnold defines it here?

The fact is, the subject may have no control over the former but should have total control over the latter, barring imprisonment and incapacitating poverty. Ultimately, he advocates personal responsibility, conceding that a dictatorship of the proletariat is, in the end, just another dictatorship. Without the *exercise* of personal sovereignty there is no personal sovereignty. Sovereignty is not like a university degree that can be nailed to the wall and forgotten.

What Arnold describes is an environment of culture created not by fiat, ideology, legislation, dogma, or liturgy, but by the personal choice of the individual. Just as most adults in a modern culture may choose between junk food and healthy food, so too can the subject choose what kind of culture it consumes. But the commercial imperative to become an apex consumer is so great, that each choice of “sweetness and light” and the “best that has been thought and known in the world” pushes the possibility of arriving at the top of the heap one choice farther away—a liability the would-be apex consumer cannot afford to make.

To qualify as a stakeholder in the economy of the hegemonic empire is a complicated affair, largely involving insurmountable debt and fanatical devotion to rapacious consumerism. One false step in the direction of sweetness, light, and even thought and knowledge is often rewarded with immediate consignment to the nasty world of the Underclass, which consists of those disenfranchised from the largesse of the hegemonic empire’s imaginary economy of derivative speculation and debt-based prosperity.

The topology of language as landscape begins with the conversion of language into thought and ends with the reconversion of thought into language. This reciprocal process—each a negation of the other—provides

the push-pull mechanism in which the subject's *Weltanschauung* is manufactured as discourse.

Here, again, negation is at work in the process of production. When we ask someone what he thinks, and he answers, is what we receive really a sample of the thought process? We tend to think of thought as being like a river. When we ask for someone's thoughts, we expect that person to dip a tin can into the river of thought and hand us a water sample. But language, as an apparatus, is not like this at all. What we get is not water; it is more like a soft drink, homogenized milk, wine, or petrol as the case occasions. To be able to convert, or transmute, thought into language, it must be *processed*.

In other words, some kind of logical algorithm must be applied to it. The process is the primary apparatus in the formation of all of what we consider civilization to be, whether it is sweet and light or bitter and dark. And it is naturally, if permitted, bidirectional. As described at the start of the Preliminary, this process follows a distinct pattern resulting in a monolith which we call *the* discourse, which stands in abnegation to what Heidegger calls the Monolith of Being, discussed earlier:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{Thought} \rightarrow \text{Language} \rightarrow \text{World} (A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C) \\ \text{World} \rightarrow \text{Language} \rightarrow \text{Thought} (C \rightarrow B \rightarrow A) \end{array}$$

The intermediary in the process is of course language. We can see, though, that as a position in the mechanism, language is overwritten repeatedly by data from the world and the thought process. In this way it is kept in perfect compliance with the *entropic* needs and wants of the ego and the world. At the same time, it allows both the thought process and the world to *simultaneously mirror and mold each other*.

As expressed at the start of the Preliminary, during the operation of the apparatus of the discourse, A is overwritten by C and vice versa. Meantime, B, which must serve as a frictionless intermediary transmission channel, takes on its own characteristics as the perfect hybrid of the world and thought. When B reaches the point of least possible friction given the values expressed by A and C, then we say that a discourse has been created.

Equilibrium, or the maintenance of the status quo in the form of *entropy*, is the priority, as the world and the ego (as the cogito) are always going out of phase. The world and thought are by default perpetually at odds. If we look at the content and purpose of thought, we see that it is largely a form of *scheming*. Its goal is to further our animal and egoic interests in a complicated and rather hostile environment of other animals and egos trying to do the same thing. Compounding the difficulty is Nature, which



simultaneously seems to want to extinguish the species while driving it onward toward the biological imperative.

Occasional interruptions of this orgy by messrs. Sweetness and Light are generally not welcome except in the most perverse of minds. Anything but the ruthless struggle for more and more and more is seen as either the luxury of an effete class of aesthetes, or the lot of idiots and saints.

The norm is the ethical aesthetic, if we may aggrandize it with that phrase, of “us against the world.” The irony is, of course, that the world always wins at the end in the form of *death*. Added to this bitter irony is the fact that death is the species’ greatest guarantee of life. The constant danger of a Malthusian event has been the bane of human history, though less commonly its fate—perhaps because of humankind’s lust for self-slaughter. In the world of simulacra, however, death is an abstraction, the remotest possibility, the preoccupation of the morbid, an antisocial idea belonging to Satanists and malcontents, and heresy if raised as an objection to the hegemony’s need for perpetual war to maintain the permanent state of exception. This fact is hardly balanced out by the fading blossom of the Life Everlasting promised by immortality cults.

What, then, serves the apparatus as the mechanism of its balancing act? What reassures the hegemonic power and its corporate overlords that their dreams of ever-new versions (2.0 and so on) of the *Tausendjähriges Reich* have any more chance than their paradigmatic antecedents? It would be easy enough to say “propaganda,” but the instrumental use of the word reveals a certain naivete about language. Even in the most *disengagé* of analyses, propaganda means just what it denotes: that which is propagated as public information by official sources, public or private.

As such, an advertisement for a mom-and-pop business is propaganda just as a simple armed-forces recruiting poster with “Uncle Sam Wants You” or “Be All You Can Be” is also propaganda. We may as well include the stockholders’ annual report and a public service announcement about preventing sexually-transmitted diseases. The connotation of the word is *disinformation*: deliberately incorrect information designed to misinform, mislead, and dissimulate.

But in the classic form of the way disinformation works, the *connotation* of propaganda has usurped the *denotation* just as the invalid synthetic statement has taken the job of the verifiable analytic statement in appealing to what might have been the ego’s more rational operations. Or worse: propaganda is just information which for one reason or another we disagree with, since our own view (which is seen by the opposition as propaganda too) is always The Truth. Why? Because it issues from our own cherished

ego, the ultimate standard by which all existence is measured, assessed, assayed, and finally, judged.

If the *input* is propaganda, then, the *output* is discourse, and vice versa. What is most effective in this process is the rendering of thought as a topological surface upon which events occur and therefore simulacra appear as artifacts of these events. Like artifacts in a museum collection, however, they only represent what *might have once lived* or perhaps something which has been drained of signification due to the irretrievable loss of the historical context necessary to decode it properly and then translate it into contemporary terms.

If we can conceive of thought as a two-dimensional string, then why not a three-dimensional space full of two-dimensional strings or vectors? Euclidean  $n$ -space, which is a real vector space, and a complex vector space, which lends itself to more imaginative representations of space as what Kant calls “mathematical judgments,” may form by default or by synthetic intent. In either case we may plot their topology if we have the means.

But we have no way of accounting for the appearance of simulacra upon these surfaces, as they cannot signify themselves but only *inherit* signification from realia as that which they displace—whether it exists or not. As we have discussed, an imaginary space is not just emptiness; it is bound by surfaces defining its extent. If this were not the case, there would be no possibility of the magician’s “misdirection” where the audience is entirely convinced that it has been possessed all along of its ability to process the input data of the environment with the usual degree of verisimilitude it counts on to make important decisions about reality. This phenomenon we call “illusion,” but that word hardly serves as an explanation of it.

Each imaginary *event* in this  $\mathbb{R}^3$  forms a distortion of the matrix of its surfaces, in mathematical emulation of the action of a gravitational field in space-time. This “dent” in imaginary space, though in truth a void, is nevertheless interpreted by the empirical faculties of the subject as a *positive* (if not Positivist) expression of whatever it is it desires to project for the propitiation of its ever-decaying sense of being. The event may be caused by anything, from natural disaster to its own perpetual debacles such as financial market crashes and wars (which tend to express themselves in tandem with a slight offset for cause and effect).

Consequently, language is given the opportunity to continue expansion of this imaginary space through its power to command the attention of others in the effort of constructing a new, improved, better, and more convincing alternative reality. This is most obvious in the case of so-called “growth economies” which are the modern-day equivalent of the various

conquering empires of the ancient world gobbling up territory as Rome did so successfully. If the modern-day empire does not continue to expand its economy to outrun its own debt, it implodes. Ancient Rome was in a similar position. If it did not continue to expand its territory to collect taxes, it would lose its ability to maintain a stable empire—as it eventually did.

The imaginary landscape has many of the same landmarks as reality. It can be navigated, mined, lived in, drawn, attacked, criticized, rejected, embraced, legislated, fought over, and expressed. It can kill, and it can bring life into the world. “So we can envisage the linguistics phenomenon in its entirety—the language, that is—as a series of *adjoining subdivisions simultaneously imprinted both on the plane of vague, amorphous thought, and on the equally featureless plane of sound* [italics added].”<sup>47</sup> In this conception, language consists of two intersecting planes, one of sound (phoneme) and the other of thought, distinguished only by a series, or adjoining concatenation, of “subdivisions.”

These subdivisions are “imprinted” upon this topology, creating what has been called here a *semantic surface*. They are created when the subject, through its own awareness and social agreement, accepts a word or phrase to mean something discrete, which is determined by its ability to be *used*. That it may be used, however, does not indicate that it is *meaningful* in some nontrivial or actual way; it only shows us that it conforms to social ideas of grammar and utterance which are always being determined and redefined as language is both used and abused. Meaning, ultimately, is a private matter one must determine for oneself. In this way language is also *symbolic*. A symbol, like any cryptographic key, must have a public and private side: one to encode and the other to decode.

Thought corresponds to the semantic surface of the *realm* created by the apparatus of language as its own “space” in emulation of physical space but without being constrained by the rules of real space. Actual, physical space has no tolerance for synthetic propositions, valid or invalid. It exists as a structure composed exclusively of analytic propositions which may or may not be comprehended, or the *real* order of existence.

As for the ISP, it comprises the *imaginary order only*; reality, in its intolerance of the simulacrum, accepts it only as a temporary “state” which, if it confines itself to the appropriate existential class, will remain unmolested by the natural heuristics of realia. Of course, the problem is that simulacra, as they gain in power through metastasis, begin to drain the resources of realia the way cancer drains the resources of the body, eventually killing it. Simulacra class *b* does this by demanding to be

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<sup>47</sup> Saussure, Op. cit., 110.

accepted by the organism and society with the *full rights and privileges of a quantitative universe of discourse*.

As a result, reality, offended, inevitably makes a stand at some point, crashing imaginary financial markets, causing mass die off through starvation and disease, igniting bloody revolutions, causing environmental disasters and so on. This is done in a way that is entirely a product of the physics involved in assaulting and offending reality through the erection of a competing, but false, “reality.” Saussure describes the native topology of language as “featureless,” and the corresponding landscape of thought as “vague” and “amorphous.” They are blank surfaces upon which meaning, through semantics, is *imprinted*.

Ultimately it is the role of the imagination to create feature and form through language. What this entire discussion is about, however, is how civilization and its subjects go about it. Will the preponderance of social discourse consist of the products of nontrivial analytic statements and valid synthetic statements, or trivial analytic statements and invalid synthetic statements? While civilization, while in the uptick toward its apogee, prefers the former, it decidedly embraces the latter during the long and painful slide toward its perigee.

Also, in this paragraph Saussure makes his famous distinction of *langue et parole*. Sound itself can be viewed as a wave in various frequencies, creating the undulating hills and valleys of language’s physical topology. While we use the tools of empirical perception to read, it is a repurposing of sight which makes it possible. Whether words are expressed in writing or speech, despite the great differences between the modes of expression they have a vast field of signification where they both overlap. In this territory, expression comes in the form of words that are highly denotative and concrete, such as “frog;” subtle and complex as in “poignant;” abstract as in “freedom” and “*eidos*;” or even onomatopoeic as in “hiss,” “plop,” and “crash.”

While speech, like reading, involves the impression of the sense of hearing to mean, it accepts a much greater range of possible expression than writing could ever allow. The result is that between speech and writing we are given a range of possible constructivist events which may be experienced upon the semantic surface of the topology of the imaginary space of simulacra. After all, what good would language be if this were not so? Its possibilities would be reduced to “pass the sugar” and “yes” and “no.”

Saussure’s “plane of sound” (phoneme) is not only a physical property but an auditory *sign*. This assertion raises two considerations. First, can a plane be a sign? Second, if sound is a signal (with a frequency and so on),

then what is the relationship between a signal and a sign? The first consideration forces us to enlarge our understanding of what a sign may be. The most limited idea is that of the “street sign” which simply gives us a piece of information, such as “No Exit.”

But here the word “sign” is used almost as a figure of speech; there is nothing symbolic, for instance, in a piece of metal with the words “No Exit” on it, or sometimes “Cul-de-Sac.” Therefore, we are not considering what Saussure means as a “sign” though this is what is often thought of when the word is used in any context: a piece of information displayed in some way for our edification and information. Nor are we contemplating what Sartre might have meant by the title of his play *Huis Clos*, a private discussion behind closed doors (usually translated into English as *No Exit*) such as a judge may have with the opposing lawyers in his chambers, or a pair of lovers may endure in the confinement of their union. Though in as much as the title of a literary work is a “street sign” of what is to come within, the description applies. Therefore, we have sign as indicator or “index,” as it is sometimes referred to in the semiology of Charles S. Peirce.

An intriguing meaning still present in the environment is the soothsayer’s “sign” of the future. Shakespeare presents the future as negotiable rather than determined. When the soothsayer “predicts” the future as Caesar passes by, she includes the imperative “beware,” meaning that it may be possible to change the fateful outcome of the prediction. The irony and tension of the scene rests upon the fact that accompanying Caesar is his one-time best friend and colleague and soon-to-be murderer, Brutus. Our sense of dramatic irony in knowing what Caesar does not know regarding Brutus dashes any hope we may have that he will wake up and do something about this plot. Instead, on the fateful day he dismisses his body guard out of what looks to all of history as hubris.

Caesar:

Who is it in the press that calls on me?  
I hear a tongue shriller than all the music  
Cry "Caesar!" Speak, Caesar is turn'd to hear.  
Soothsayer:  
Beware the ides of March.

Caesar:

What man is that?

Brutus:

A soothsayer bids you beware the ides of March.

(Act 1, Scene 2, 15–19)

Contemporaries passed down the story that Caesar's wife Calpurnia presaged her husband's assassination in a dream. On its strength she begged him not to go to the Senate on the Ides. This too was a sign, in the same class as the soothsayer's, with the idea behind it that we are foretold, in one way or another, about what might come to pass if we do A rather than B. Again, the outcome is somewhat negotiable provided there is even the possibility that we might heed the warning. If we do choose B over A, then it is unlikely if we will ever know if what was foretold would have come to pass had we chosen A.

Naturally, hindsight makes it all look "fated," whichever way we choose. Such is the psychology of the past, present, and future which, in and of themselves, are nothing except what we make of them when we superimpose the order of the folk tale upon random events guided by forces of which we have only the weakest grasp.

The second consideration, the relationship between a signal and a sign, underscores language's essential nature as sound, the phoneme. The increasing application of natural language processing by machines and the use of a synthetic voice either by a machine or a person blurs the distinction between the utterance encoded by visual or digital signs and symbols. There is much to say about this relationship, but we can point to the most significant attribute of both which is that they express an *intention*, directly or indirectly, and therefore the will, either in the form of a semaphore or as we have described in the paragraph above.

Inasmuch as they express the will, though, there is volition. But like energy, we may observe this volition as a particle (word) or a wave (as frequency). The latter comes in two forms: the actual physical production of language by the apparatus of the brain, mouth, and vocal chords, transmitted through a medium (air or radio waves), or in the concatenation of speech which, when analyzed, shows us that we do not speak in distinct words but rather in a continuous chain of sounds which the brain must then parse into distinct packets of meaning and information.

It is this *parsing* that breaks the chain into its links, just as the observation of the *velocity* (frequency) of energy tends to break it up into the *location* of particles. These analogous processes would not occur if we did not need them to be that way because of the structures of our empirical tools and the mind that processes the resulting input.

The limitations of our empirical apparatus force the morphology of the more abstract parts of our capability of processing reality. And as so much

of modern science has shown us, since the time that Newton theorized that light consisted of particles, there is the constant need to break up this universe of wavelengths into discrete quanta so that we, as a form of quanta ourselves, may understand it as what Kant calls the “manifold” of phenomena.

By necessity, then, sound itself is detached from the semantics of the word or particle. Saussure dispels the idea that the particles of language are like the street sign, merely an indicator or index which we might more properly call a label. Rather, for a particle to be called a language, it must be *articulate*. In other words, as a discrete entity it must *do* something (perform), just as a particle of electromagnetic energy is also a form of potential, measure in *joules* (J). “Every linguistics sign is a part or member, an *articulus*, where an idea is fixed in a sound, and a sound becomes the sign of an idea [*italics added*].”<sup>48</sup>

Its potential, moreover, *must be naturally compatible with other discrete entities* so that they may form the chain we call language, which is the intelligence of the utterance. A particle, or word, by itself remains a kind of imaginary abstraction, *extracted* from its meaningful context for us to scrutinize, wonder at, and corrupt. The *LTI (Lingua Tertii Imperii)* and Newspeak are not possible without this decontextualization. They required that each word, like a tooth, be yanked from the mouth that utters it. It may then be replaced by whatever the *Imperii* and Minitru see fit based on the expediency of their needs—or left as an empty socket in the mouth of the Doomed who are no longer of any use. In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, as part of Winston’s ultimately successful torture, O’Brien rips Winston’s front tooth out to show him that even his teeth, so critical in the production of language, no longer belong to him.

He seized one of Winston’s remaining front teeth between his powerful thumb and forefinger. A twinge of pain shot through Winston’s jaw. O’Brien had wrenched the loose tooth out by the roots. He tossed it across the cell.<sup>49</sup>

The *articulus* is described by Chomsky as a Markov chain, where the present “initial string” of words determines (generates) the rest of what he indicates as *Sentence*. “We can now extend the phrase structure derivations ... so that we have a unified process for generating phoneme sequence from the initial string Sentence.”<sup>50</sup> A critical concept in the Markov chain is the idea of the “random walk.” In short, this walk represents the articulation of

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<sup>48</sup> Saussure, op. cit., 111.

<sup>49</sup> Orwell, op. cit., 343

<sup>50</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1975), 33.

a system which is *stochastic*, meaning it is predictably unpredictable. “Free speech,” in the technical sense of the word rather than the imaginary and rhetorical, is speech that is disengaged from any heuristic or cybernetic control that does not arise from its own self-contained needs or potential to express meaning.

In “The American Scholar” Emerson says as much about being a *free* scholar, which he means in a rather exalted sense which could be properly called Romantic but not in any pejorative sense except in that it refers to the values of Classical Antiquity. “In self-trust, all the virtues are comprehended. Free should the scholar be,—free and brave. Free even to the definition of is freedom, ‘without any hindrance that does not arise out of his own constitution.’”<sup>51</sup>

Is there any ancient philosopher read today from the Classical periods in Greek and Roman civilization who might be called, to use the excellent French word, *engagé*? Of course not! The ideas of such a person would end up as being a curiosity to historians, if not a warning to future philosophers—and there is just too much of that material being generated today to have to look to the golden ages of ancient times for it.

In speech disengaged from the discourse, we are assured that the utterance reflects the needs of the subject rather than those of the hegemony, which may or may not be the needs of the subject. Why is this important? As mentioned above, for language to maintain its proper context, in other words to be verifiably uttered from the person who describes himself as “I,” *it must be compatible with the sentence string being articulated in the moment by the Other*. If the Other presents his utterance as his own when we may detect, through the means described below, that in fact the intent and meaning of the utterance represents the prerogatives of the hegemonic order, then there is a *contradiction*.

The rule of noncontradiction has been violated. While the person is not lying *per se*, what he is doing is misrepresenting what he says, consciously or not. Either way, the effect on us is the same: we cannot trust this utterance because it is coming from someone whose interest in his own wellbeing has been subordinated to that of the hegemonic order and its corporate overlords. How, then, can this person have our wellbeing in mind? The Nash equilibrium has been broken.

In the fairytale of democracy, this means that the person speaks from the position of “the greatest good,” an artifact from the heady days of British Utilitarian philosophy and the excesses of the French Enlightenment, best represented by the Great Terror of the French Revolution. In reality, though,

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<sup>51</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The American Scholar, Self-Reliance, Compensation*, Orren Henry Smith, ed. (American Book Company, 1911), 37.



this person's *engagé* utterance may or may not reflect our needs in a random, chance probability which we just cannot afford to accept and remain free.

How, then, can we escape the lure of wanting to be what Donne calls "a part of the main," and joining in with the ritual of the hegemonic discourse of abdication through the corruption of language? First, we must consider where language "comes from" in the production process of the subject's desire to communicate. The "initial string Sentence" must be the parent of the child phrase structures.

As such, we may say that the child phrase structures have been *generated* by the initial string. In so doing, we may be confident that although we cannot predict what will be said (otherwise, why say it?), it is at least being uttered by the genuine, verifiable "I." How do we verify this *I*? That is a complicated matter which is best properly left to our intuition in the most profound and technical sense.

But again, we may apply the relatively simple test we have been describing here all along: *Is the articulation in the form of a verifiable, analytic statement (proposition), or a valid synthetic statement with a verifiable subject?* For example, the subordinated clause "in the future," modifying the subject noun, immediately invalidates the string, indicating that what is to follow, verifiable or not in itself, is corrupted with an injection of *wishful thinking* and irresponsible prognostication. Following Chomsky's logic, then, all strings consequently generated will contain the gene of this corruption, *whether or not they are verifiable*. This is only a small, though egregious, sample of the corruption of the *articulus*.

Besides the generative position of the phrase in the Markov *articulus*, there is also the stochastic nature of what Chomsky calls *generative grammar*. Often the predicate can go either way into opposing propositions, using identical subjects, which is perhaps part of what makes language so attractive and effective: it is unpredictable for the receiver. Either the receiver learns something new (intelligence), or what is expressed is refreshing to the mind because it is a unique perspective from the Other unanticipated by the subject.

By plunging here and there into the Unknown, language fills in the opaque dimensions of our experience. In particular, it enlightens the shadows of the Other's wants, needs, experiences, and thoughts. Without this potential, this *Möglichkeit*, we would be forced to live in oubliettes of hellish isolation. The horror of the situation is that in allowing the morphology of our thought to be completely consumed by invalid synthetic and trivial analytic statements through abdication, we imprison ourselves in our own, personal, oubliette (these days, usually in the form of some digital

electronic communications gadget). In the darkness of this chamber the *best* sing in their chains like the sea, and the *worst* ceaselessly tempt others into surrendering their sovereignty in various instrumental ways such as through “social” media.

Natural spoken language is a concatenation that seems to be composed of discrete sounds. This illusion is a result of the effort necessary to produce those sounds; our acquired lexicon of words is indeed composed of atoms of sound and meaning. As we draw what we intend to mean from this lexicon, we tend to think like a typesetter inserting lead into a composing stick to form phrases and sentences. One word seems to follow another in a strictly linear chain.

But from the point of view of an attempt to parse this utterance into discrete particles in natural language processing (NLP), we find that the machinery detects only degrees of distinction. The less distinct the particles, the more they fade into a droning chant of sound that can be decoded into its components only once it reaches the ear of the listener who must be attuned to the receiving of the utterance. The degree to which this is the case varies considerably from person to person and utterance to utterance. The rate of error, for human or machine, is based in part upon the overall quality of the transmission.

Playing with a voice-to-text converter that has not been trained to one’s voice can produce a visual version of this effect. Keeping the error rate low is at first a challenge. Thinking, through the aid of its ancillary cognitive functions, parses the wave into quanta (phonemes) which are then linked to ideas and associations, which are then matched against the receiver’s own lexicon, and so on. “It is to act as intermediary between thought and sounds, in such a way that the combination of both necessarily produces a mutually complementary delimitation of units. Thought, chaotic by nature, is made precise by this process of segmentation,”<sup>52</sup> says Saussure.

The characteristic role of language in relation to thought is to supply the phonetic means by which ideas may be expressed in a *gestalt*. As a form of holistic *schema*, a *gestalt* contains ideas but is not the ideas themselves. The ideas form a pattern which we like to consider is thought per se but is in fact a larger container in which thought operates in a discrete Markov chain.

What we understand in the present we accept as what is true (T) *about* the present. However, that is always already an invalid proposition, and is therefore false (F). All that could possibly exist in the present (that is not an artifact of the past) is a *process*, not the conclusion, outcome, or output of that process. Therefore, what we accept as true about the present is de facto false.

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<sup>52</sup> Saussure, op. cit, 110.

The epistemology of a process is limited exclusively to probability, possibility, potential, uncertainty, and risk. The “efficient market hypothesis” in stock picking, for instance, states that the present state of the market, on which all decisions are based whether they reflect the quantitative gestalt of the present or a predictive outcome “in the future,” are based on data containing no more information than a “random walk.”

Understanding of the *present* is based on a process in the *past* that has been *concluded* in the present. Therefore, what we consider to be understanding of the present is, often enough, a fallacy. It may indeed be a perspicacious view of the past, though. But when it is interpreted as the present, it serves the “truth” of neither the past nor the present. In both cases, it is an invalid proposition. By implication, we may say that if it is true that our understanding of the present is false (F), then what is verifiable in the present is that we are experiencing a process that will only be understood at a later time. If it is *A*, understood at a later time as the truth of the past, then it is true (T). But if it is *B*, understood at a later time as the truth of the present, then it is false (F).

What effect is there on our knowledge of “the future,” then, if we choose *A* or *B*? If it is *A*, it offers nothing by way of our understanding of the future. If it is *B*, it immediately plunges us into a realm, or *topology*, composed of false synthetic statements. As a container, this topology consists of semantic surfaces (simulacra) which, as Saussure describes above, are the geometric product of the “mutually complementary delimitation of units,” or discrete quantities, of words involved in a matrix of meaning and expression. Under this latter regime, the subject is often compelled to make ten errors in an attempt to remedy one, since the subject keeps repeating the error to correct the initial error state. The result is a catastrophic failure of reality (*realia*).

While we may all love success, failure has its use and value. Just as workers identified as “surplus” in a restructuring of an organization are, ultimately, a drain on the profitability of that organization, so too is reality in general a liability to simulacra. Once they have sufficiently acquired the identity of their corresponding *realia* through inheritance in the process of abdication, simulacra regard reality as worse than a burden: it is a challenge to their supremacy.

First, there is the constant risk of being exposed as the child identity class *b* of the parent identity class *a* from which they have inherited their semblance of reality. Second, there is an even greater threat to simulacra class *b*’s claim as the universal quantification of all things, sentient and otherwise, by *realia* class *a* as an expression of *Dasein*, which includes both classes. Finally, *realia*’s notorious limitations of time and space (Kant’s *a priori*) interfere with simulacra’s power to redefine the criteria of reality *a*

*posteriori* such as we see in Minitru's mission statement: "He who controls the past controls the future. He who controls the present controls the past."

Therefore, reality is portrayed by the joint apparatus of media, education, and the state as a persistent nuisance which must be done away with. Those who insist upon realia and its natural laws and so forth as the prevailing and *a priori condition* of the universe, are condemned to ostracization, obscurity, and, at worst, elimination.

It is to the advantage of simulacra, then, for realia to be seen to fail as a class. Nature, for instance, must be endowed with perpetual "lack." It must be seen as humankind's constant enemy, seeking its destruction at every turn through crop failures, disasters, droughts, and plagues. Or, conversely, it must be seen as a martyred "mother," besieged by Dark Shadowy Forces—corporate, governmental, but always unnamed—bringing on the Four Horsemen of the environmental apocalypse. Either way, the discourse says, Nature, and therefore reality, is NOT your friend.

Language as the primary apparatus, when it consists of invalid synthetic statements and trivial analytic statements, serves the perpetual construction of an "alternative," synthetic (not "virtual") reality. The subject is quick to seize upon this alternative, if only for its promised liberation from the most gruesome limitation of the *a priori* of time and space: death. The price of this choice, which is made while the subject is in a free and sovereign state and therefore is completely the subject's responsibility, is of course abdication of self-determination in the form of sovereignty. We must keep in mind, though, that there are enough subjects who are born into a state of serfdom from which they will never escape either through poverty and oppression but usually both. However, these characters are worthless to the hegemonic powers. They have no future to barter, *no-thing* of value to trade, and therefore nothing to lose except their lives—a loss which the hegemonic powers deem a good outcome for them and it.

The subject born into a so-called global superpower, however, with a birthright not only of economic superiority, but also entitlement to state benefits, is of use as a conduit of value. The best use of sovereignty, says the hegemonic discourse, is to invite its abdication in the form of debt-based consumerism. If one is a Have Not, then one has nothing to offer the hegemony except parasitic dependency with no return on investment.

Meantime, the hegemonic powers of the state, media, education, banking, and religion are busy building up this alternative reality as a suitable container for their overproduction of simulacra. The semantic surfaces of this container must have just the right ability to reflect the necessary traits of the ego that flatter the subject into immortality and a kind of petty form of megalomania.

Again, this is an exploitation of the all-but-atrophied mechanisms of the Ideal-I, spectral state. In the appropriate, developmental position of the spectral state the subject, young in heart, mind, and years, finds the thrill of growth and discovery in its own reflection. But “ages and ages hence,” long after its personality has been crystalized and fossilized, what is left of its personality to reflect upon cannot be determined; it is no longer clear whom “I” is.

The pronoun, as the subject of the predicate, is now, at best, a commercial proposition better found in the simulacrum of the self. Meanwhile, the self is represented in *mimesis* to the subject through its hand-held digital gadgetry. As this is a flimsy construction of the self, the subject’s *object constancy* regarding its own self-image is perpetually dissolving each time it presses the “off” button—which it is loath to do. As a result, it develops an almost autistic-seeming habit of staring into the gadget to recompose the disparate elements of its patchwork “self.” Those who interfere with this ritual of self-reinforcement by attempting to speak with the subject or otherwise engage it in an organic, analog type of unmediated interaction are either tolerated because the subject needs something from them (such as at the point of sale) or are in effect ignored.

The synthetic construction of reality is foremost a product of language. That it has furniture in the form of quantized phonemic input, that it has hills and valleys in the form of sound waves processed, that it has images and sensory impressions, that it has industries of word generation and the shaping of discourse makes it seem substantial. But in fact, what we are looking at here is *form, not substance*. An apparatus is without content, which is the chief error those who rage against the machine tend to make. It is not a matter of ideology; it is a matter of the logical uses to which language is put. This is critical because it consequently defines the structure of thought, particularly its relationship to space and time, and therefore the subject’s orientation to reality.

Saussure sees the basic engine of this machine as linguistic, and linguistics as a matter of the confluence of sound and thought. “Linguistics, then, operates along this margin, where sound the thought meet. *The contact between them gives rise to a form not a substance* [italics added, as usual].”<sup>53</sup>

Lacan’s social position as the Real-I is closely tied to the acquisition of language in that it is *social agreement on meaning* that transforms the arbitrary phonemes attached to semantic values into mutually agreed-upon signs with the least amount of ambiguity. In fact, says Saussure, phonemes arise on a simple principle of negation and difference. As long as one

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 111

phoneme is *discrete* from another, it is useful, which is perhaps why homophones and malapropisms often figure into solecism. "Speech sounds are first and foremost entities which are contrasting, relative and negative .... In the language itself, there are only differences."<sup>54</sup>

He goes on to say that the relationship between the phonemic assignment of a grapheme and the semantic object it represents is arbitrary. All that is required is social confirmation of this arrangement. "The arbitrary nature of the sign enables us to understand more easily why it needs social activity to create a linguistic system. A community is necessary to establish values. Values have no other rationale than usage and general agreement. An individual, acting alone, is incapable of establishing a value."<sup>55</sup>

We have already spoken of value here. From simulacra and realia, we derive two classes of it: *a*, or *real*, organic, and analytic, and *b*, *imaginary*, artificial, and synthetic. The *symbolic*, then, is the confluence or intersection of the two where meaning operates as language. It is this third thing, this tertium quid, this conflation, or class *c*, that we identify as that which informs thought as well as language.

Thought, as a concatenation of symbols or signs, reflects the semantic surfaces of the container in which it finds itself. If those surfaces consist of the heterogeneity of the nature spirits of pantheism or the homogeneity of the god of monotheism, thought will serve to both *reflect from* them and *project onto* them the ambitions of the ego and the impulses of the id necessary for the resulting mental *schema* to make sense as a "world."

However, if they are the billboards, display screens, adverts, appeals, pitches, moving shadows, and invalid synthetic propositions of the commercial discourse of consumerism, then all that will be reflected in and projected by the subject's thought process in the form of language will be the prerogatives of the hegemonic discourse.

What remains to be considered in the formation of the *imago* of the self in thought is that which is strictly psychological. As we have seen earlier, it is the orientation to the self and others of *narcissism* which characterizes the abdicated subject. In a society of such individuals, one who does not ostentatiously display one's narcissism is seen as a fool, saint, or threat. Ultimately it does not matter how this type of anomaly in the social matrix is interpreted.

Lacking the earmarks of the right phenotype, this individual ceases to be a proper semantic surface. He serves as neither a reflective nor projective surface. As such, he appears to have *no meaning* in the symbolic sense. A concrete example of such an individual is one who is no longer capable of

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-112.

consuming in the commercial sense either through the loss of the means to consume, through personal choice, or by being barred from access to the temples of Mammon—on the street or online. This may be through the action of *jouissance* and transgression, a compulsive and philosophic need to remain an impartial observer, or a heroic determination to be free.

The fate of this individual is, psychologically, precarious. He defies the categorization necessary to find his niche in society. However, he is what we might call ripe for the Second Negation, as his experience of life has been de facto withdrawn from both realia and simulacra and must consequently dwell, at least temporarily, in the symbolic. Such persons make good artists, theoretic mathematicians and physicists, philosophers, prophets, and criminals.

The strictly narcissistic individual, though, is indeed *the right phenotype*. He both reflects and projects the *imago* necessary to fit into the mass of abdicated subjects clamoring for more and more and more for themselves. Others see themselves in him, which makes them like him, and which excludes him from being a threat to their egoistic desire for total control over everything, including death and the *a priori* of space and time. The metastatic mass of subjects feels that he is “one of us” because he is merely a copy of each member of the class, who are in turn copies of each other.

In Todd Browning’s 1932 film *Freaks*, Cleopatra, a trapeze artist in a circus, gets approval as “one of us” at a dinner party consisting of the circus freaks who are the friends and colleagues of the dwarf she is trying to hoodwink out of an inheritance. They “accept” her by proxy because of her association with their intimate. Though she is outwardly “normal” (which they are not), her ulterior motive of exploitation makes her the *moral* freak, while the outwardly freakish revelers would not betray each other or their comrade in such an underhanded way or in any way. “We accept her, we accept her, gobble [sic] gobble one of us, one of us ...” they chant, in ribald mockery of the silent ritual “normal” people employ in their absorption of a fellow phenotype.

This grotesque scene, though acted out by some extraordinary real “freaks,” has an allegorical power which serves well to illustrate the “normalization” of type in social situations, the matter of the inheritance of *likeness* by association, and the difference between physical and moral grotesquery.

While the other-oriented individual is reviled (or honored only after death) in the culture of abdication, the subject-oriented egomaniac is worshipped. The more he cares about himself at the expense of others, the more others want to be as bold, daring, and self-confident as he. They hang

on tales of his every selfish exploit. They ape his style of dress and mannerisms. They copy his sayings, thoughts, attitudes, and acts. As soon as the media discover that they have such a wealth magnet in their midst, they exploit it to the fullest, either under the guise of the pseudo-altruism of politics or the pseudo-artistic achievements of entertainment.

While sports could be included in the latter, its crudity nevertheless requires a level skill that is difficult to manufacture. Politics and entertainment, however, are the perfect mediums for the fabrication and promotion of the simulacrum. As such, they naturally attract the mediocre megalomaniac, making the process of the invention of a “celebrity” integral to the geometric formation of the imaginary Hilbert space ( $\mathbb{R}^3$ ) of semantic surfaces.

Like a vacation package in a far-away exotic Paradise, this *space* must be promoted by those who are themselves completely synthetic characters such as celebrities who are generated by media hype alone. They succeed in transforming a synthetic space populated by a manifold of simulacra seem like a Shangri-La where no one grows old and money is picked off of trees made of candy. Furthermore, tales of their fairytale lives of sexual intrigue and vulgar opulence, reported in intimate detail real or imagined, enthrall the mass of subjects, hungry for anything that is bigger, better, richer, greater, faster, and sexier.

Despite the fact that celebrities also become “role models” for children and teens, they are as Saussure describes, “incapable of establishing a value.” Nevertheless, it is impossible to generalize about the mass of subjects from the pathologically narcissistic individuals who attain such status. They are the exception. If they were the rule, they would lose their magical power to enchant this metastatic mass of modern humanity into surrendering its self-determination in return for the trinkets of consumerism. What is far more significant in the lives of the mediated masses is the form of language itself, in particular the application of invalid synthetic and trivial analytic statements as the basis of discourse. Saussure, then, describes language as a *form of life*, as that which shapes our thought and consequently what we make of the world beyond the impulses of mere stimulus and response.

We like to assume that it is the content of the media, the curriculum of the schools, the dogma of the church, the economy of the financial industry, and the politics of the state that define our lives when in fact it is the logical structures in which language operates. “[L]anguage itself is a form, not a substance. The importance of this truth cannot be overemphasized.”<sup>56</sup> The form of life, then, is the topology of thought which shapes the world in its

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 120.



own image, just as it was shaped at an earlier time by the semantic surfaces of civilization during the Lacanian mirror stage.

**PART TWO**

**THE APPARATUS OF LANGUAGE**

# CHAPTER THREE

We are ourselves the entities to be analyzed.

Heidegger

Always my soul hungered for less than it had, since my senses, sluggish beyond the senses of most men, needed the immediacy of contact to achieve perception; they distinguished kinds only, not degrees.

T.E. Lawrence

## 3.1 Ethical aesthetics of abdication

In the great tragic moment in Plato's *Apology*, Socrates explains to his followers that he prefers death to what he sees as ignominy. Here we see the universe of ethics and morality, as well as the contradictions and parallels arising from an ethical act rather than a symposium. We feel the passion behind the *res cogitans* arguing not for a definition of right and wrong, but for an auspicious death. Socrates invokes the rule and the exception when he cites the law and war. In both, he says, “ought any man to use every way of escaping death.”<sup>1</sup>

And yet he does not. He sees that death is not the worst thing that can befall a man. Rather, what is worse is what he calls “unrighteousness.” While death is a swift runner and has at last met up with its prey in Socrates, he takes comfort that in condemning him to death his accusers are taken over, perhaps some of them in their relative youth, by a far worse fate. Death, whether it comes now or later, is absolutely inevitable. Unrighteousness, however, is a choice.

At no time is a man so bereft of his sovereignty that he cannot choose the righteous path. Therefore, death may act as a form of winning back one’s sovereignty, for instance in the act of suicide, whereas unrighteousness as a choice condemns a man to have wasted his life in the pursuit of that which is unworthy of man. We may call this ratio of death to unrighteousness Socrates’ ethical aesthetic, obviously not shared by his accusers.

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<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Apology* (New York: P.F. Collier & Son Corp., 1937), 27.

The difficulty my friends, is not in avoiding death, but in avoiding unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them.<sup>2</sup>

In Socrates' case, death, and its consequence is preferable to unrighteousness in the world of the living. If we define unrighteousness as placing the law and the state of exception above the presence or lack of individual culpability in a specific case, then we have circumvented the juridical mandate of justice, for justice itself is pinioned not to the rule of law but to the exception to the rule of law—the inclusion of the exception. Justice is a heuristic correcting the path of the social vessel when it steers off course.

War, the ultimate expression of justice, is routinely accompanied by a suspension of the greatest provisions of the rule of law, such as a constitution. Socrates cites the “justice” of the battlefield where mercy may be wrung from the victors “if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers” and be willing to “say or do anything” to save himself.<sup>3</sup> In the *proskynesis* of the vanquished we find what Agamben calls “chaos,” which is not the “Situation” that arises when the state of exception is invoked, though it may be part of it.

If a man be willing to “say or do anything,” then there is no rule or even exception to a rule but only *expediency*. He will not be spared if there is no momentary expedience for the victor, such as a future ransom, making the captive a kind of future asset in a derivatives market of forsaken sovereignty. The ethical aesthetic of the vanquished is deontological with no reference to some future teleological state of justice in which both victor and vanquished abide by the same juridical rules. The ethical aesthetic of the victor is teleological, where “mercy” is a product of the idea of some future financial reward.

Nevertheless, the rule of a camp is invoked too. Socrates cites the law and war, meaning the apparatus of the state on the one hand and the state of exception it creates in the military camp. For there is a double meaning of “campus”; it is both the place in which the prisoners are interned, and the place where the soldiers retire, regroup, and plan the next move. Both soldier and prisoner live in camps, often adjacent to each other. If not, then the soldiers live or work in the prisoners' camp, making them, for the time they are there, prisoners too, but not of the fences and barbed wire and

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 27.

armed guard towers (for they may come and go freely), but rather of what Socrates calls “unrighteousness.”

When Berlin fell on 2 May 1945, “the fast runner, who is unrighteousness,” had overtaken the German army in the form of Hitler’s passion for the destruction of the Fatherland. This is not divine providence, fate, or even punishment. To Socrates it is simply the result of unrighteousness. Therefore, Socrates sees no need to flee his death sentence, as Hitler did through suicide, or to reproach himself for having made the intellectual and philosophical argument he made. “I thought that I ought not to do anything common or mean in the hour of danger; nor do I now repent of the manner of my defense, and I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live.”<sup>4</sup> For him it is a matter of language; he would employ the apparatus of language as an honorable machine and die rather than use it as a form of leveraging ignominy and live.

We may use Socrates as the benchmark of moral and ethical behavior in that he is willing to die for what he considers to be righteousness. It is difficult to say that a person is immoral or unethical if he is willing to die either for what he may be guilty of by his own confession or may not be guilty of by some other standard. Taking both Socrates and Achilles into consideration in our discussion, we can parse some of the implications of their words and deeds into schemata approximating the workings of the apparatus they both employ in the formation of their valid synthetic statements regarding the decisions they make.

Here we will look at Achilles’ statement in Book 11 of the *Odyssey* that he would rather be a servant in the land of the living than king in the land of the dead. What is of particular interest here is his abdication of the position of being what Hegel calls a lord for that of being a bondsman, or what Nietzsche calls a master for that of being a slave.

First, we will discover the schemata in their statements. In Socrates’ statement if death is  $y$  and unrighteousness is  $x$ , then we have an either/or situation expressed  $x \wedge y$ . He has a choice. But since  $x$  “runs faster” than  $y$ , we must express the relationship as  $x > y$ .

While they are presented as material equivalents, being the two parties of a choice, and being the *only* two parties of this choice, they are not equal in terms of their *potential*. Their potential is bound up in their ethical aesthetics. In this sense they are in the reverse. Righteousness lies in death when one is faced with its alternative: unrighteousness. Not because there is anything inherently righteous about death, but because if the alternative is unrighteousness and life, then death is the only possible path to

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

righteousness. Therefore, as an ethical aesthetic,  $y > x$ . What we witness, then, is an inversion or negation of the presumption of the priority of death and righteousness.

Priority of death over unrighteousness haunts all revolutionaries, all those who presume to fight for what is right, and all those who proclaim their devotion to justice. The abdicated individual is in a unique situation. Having abdicated, he has dramatically reduced his opportunities for the expression of sovereignty. In fact, the opportunities are 0 without reclaiming his sovereignty somehow. Death is one possibility, though Socrates is not a good example as he is one of the few in history of an individual who did not abdicate.

Clearly, he suffered the social consequences. Being in the reverse of the situation of the abdicated subject, Socrates, rather, is faced with the choice of abdicating by saving his own life and fleeing from the death sentence through the plan his supporters have hatched for his escape. Knowing this, he makes certain that he will use his death as a demonstration of his ethical aesthetic which he believes is only worthy if one is willing to die for it.

Further influencing his logic is his acknowledgment that he is “old” and that his accusers are “keen and quick.” It would be unnatural for the keen and quick to have an affinity for death, just as it would be unnatural, we presume, for the old to have an affinity for unrighteousness. Socrates chooses death not because he wants to martyr himself, but because death is simply the greater of all propositions or arguments.

Rather than join the ranks of the unrighteous and plead for his life as the vanquished soldier does, and rather than flee as the coward does, he chooses the sovereign act of suicide. It is the victory of voluntary death, not the ideas of right and wrong here, that is the ethical and moral standard. We must keep in mind that to his accusers, “justice” means condemning Socrates to death for the corruption of Athens’ youth. Again, justice is a tool of the state of exception to the *nomos*, rather than the enactment of its provisos and spirit.

### 3.2 Extrinsic and intrinsic *argument*

Let us then compare the ethical aesthetics of the schemata of Socrates’ and Achilles’ arguments. The latter says he would rather be a servant in the land of the living than the sovereign ruler in Hades in the land of the dead. Unlike Socrates, he expresses a willingness for what might be construed as a compromising situation in terms of personal sovereignty. In Socrates’ day and in more ancient times in Greece being a servant was not necessarily an “unrighteous” state of existence, as it has become today with its overtones

of class struggle and economic servitude. It was one's fate, one's lot, often arrived at by what both parties believed were the rules of the game, even if it did entail slavery. In Samuel Butler's translation of Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, Achilles says, "I would rather be a paid servant in a poor man's house and be above ground than king of kings among the dead."

But for a man who otherwise is the epitome of self-determination and self-will and the most honored of citizens, it is a profound reversal of the social expectation. He is a master, not a slave. He is a lord, not a bondsman. What makes up his mind to invert this ratio is the prospect of Hades, of life underground, of living like a worm, which, bad or good, is the fate of the dead in Greek mythology.

We might say then that Achilles, were he in Socrates' position, would do as Socrates advises for others based on the common-sense logic where a man "ought ... to use every way of escaping death" no matter what the situation. This would be true of the behavior of animals. Are we to say, then, that an animal either lacks any ethical feeling at all or would actually commit the unethical? This is not possible for most animals for reasons we need not belabor. We can hardly blame a person for trying, as Socrates describes, "every way" to live under any circumstance. We might even dismiss it to "instinct" which we naturally consider to be beyond the reach of the will.

As such, instinct is also more akin to *transgression* in the sense of *jouissance*. It is possible that instinct, which we in modern times also associate with the irresistible forces of the id and libido, may push us to transgress the laws of man and God. Nevertheless, when we consider Achilles' statement in light of Socrates', we put our money on Achilles electing to escape the death sentence rather than kill himself and risk an eternal life "underground" at least in the moment when this decision must be made.

For the sake of discussion, then, we will call Socrates' position the *intrinsic* and Achilles the *extrinsic*, since the attempt here has been to give credible argument to both positions as strategies for negotiating life's challenges *in extremis*. It would not do to label one right and the other wrong, particularly because we would not condemn an animal for doing what Achilles says he would do, and what, in fact, Socrates urges others to do when in a like predicament. Socrates makes sure to indicate that this is *his* choice, about *his* unique fate, and not some universal example of all. It is the martyr who, through the vehicle of the *auto-da-fé*, sets the example for those who are willing to submit to an "act of faith" to prove their love of God.

But there is a subtle irony in Socrates' words; by insisting that it is *his choice alone* for his particular situation, he indicates what the nature of a

sovereign act is, leaving the instinctive reaction to those who do not have the stomach for sovereignty. “Do it to Julia! Do it to Julia! Not me! Julia! I don’t care what you do to her. Tear her face off, strip her to the bones. Not me! Julia! Not me!” says Winston in Chapter 5 of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* when O’Brien tortures him with “the worst thing in the world” in Room 101.

The extrinsic and intrinsic arguments may be considered the inverse of each other and are therefore negations. Achilles is to the state what Socrates is to the stateless, having been “banned.” Since Achilles proffers the hypothetical, we must accept it as his condition: he is sovereign of Hades. Therefore, the choice of priority of one over the other is in truth a choice of the state or the non-state.

However, the choice is trivial because the “non-state” cannot exist without the state. Socrates understands this much in the same way as does Achilles. In saying that others may not be wrong in using “every means to escape death,” he also forms a hypothetical, such as we see in the mode of advice giving when we say, “If I were you ...” Achilles, conversely, posits the hypothetical by saying “I’d rather be a ... than a ...”

Furthermore, Socrates honors the state’s prerogative to sentence him to death for his crimes, which is the chief impediment to fleeing. “I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that *he must look to himself*, and seek virtue and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and look to the State before he looks to the interests of the State; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions [italics added].”<sup>5</sup> Socrates is careful to distinguish between the State and the *interests* of the State, which need not be the same thing, the ideal being a *disinterested* State.

The priority here is for the intrinsic values of “virtue and wisdom” and “the State” over the extrinsic values of “personal interests” and the “interests of the State.” We may assume that both the intrinsic and extrinsic values are, in their classes, of equal value and meaning. In other words, virtue, wisdom, and the State are in the same class, a matter clearer in the extrinsic case where both share a common word: *interests*.

It would seem that one’s “personal interests” should be, *prima facie*, intrinsic, that is, inwardly the most important to a sovereign individual. But when we contrast it to the other value in the class: “interests of the State,” we see that these two values cannot be material equivalents if the first is to mean what is most inward to the self or intrinsic.

Also, the subject’s abdication complicates the matter because at the decisive moment the subject become for all effective purposes a creature of the *interests* of the state rather than of itself or even of what Socrates refers to as “the State.” The interests of the state are by definition *extrinsic* to the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



individual and may even be at odds with the individual's intrinsic interests—as they are in Socrates' case. But as voluntary citizens of the state, we are supposed to be willing to sacrifice our own interests for the greater good, or the collective interests of the commonweal. Since Socrates does not deny being a citizen, and a voluntary one at that, of Athens, he is willing to submit to the “justice” of the state—whether or not it is righteous. This submission, which results in death, is far better, he says, than the abasement of joining the ranks of the unrighteous who, in killing him, condemn themselves to the fate of the unrighteous. Both secular and sacred history have consistently expressed a bad fate in one way or another for the unrighteous—though this is no consolation to the righteous dead, which seems to be what is also on Achilles' mind.

If “personal interests” are in the same class as state interests, then what are these interests and how are they somehow extrinsic if they are personal? The answer may be that state interests and personal interests are the same in the entity. They are the same in its *abdicated* position, having surpassed the specular, Ideal-I (I1) position for the social, Real-I (I2) position, and then onward into the abdicated position of Ix in the bosom of the state's interests. Without listing the details of *care of self* in the abdicated “personal” position, it is fair to say that the interest of the *persona* here is foremost to follow the law, whether or not there is a state of exception. Secondary are the usual concerns such as preservation of life, since the abdicated subject makes the erroneous presumption that it is the state's responsibility to preserve its life through various forms of benevolence and violence on its behalf.

But to Socrates this is not an intrinsic value, since the state itself obviously has the power of life and death. When the state has this power, then the only recourse to win back personal sovereignty is suicide—if the choices are to 1) beg for mercy, 2) pay for clemency, 3) flee from the law, and 4) commit voluntary death. Socrates chooses 4 because 1, 2, and 3 are “unrighteous,” being within the abdicated position.

Therefore, they owe their *a fortiori* power to the state apparatus and its interests. While the state might mourn the loss of a taxpayer, it will not mourn the loss of a potential liability. And while the state may claim that this is, then, “justice,” we must ask what it makes of Socrates' position regarding righteousness. We could say that he takes a meta-position, indicating that righteousness is not the same thing as justice and that it has the power to supersede it and is, often enough, at variance with it.

In the case of Achilles, there is only personal interest. His care of self does not go beyond his desire to be alive again, to walk among the living as an equal—a desire of self-interest and not even of the state. But then who

does not have this desire? Nowhere does Socrates say he *wants* to die, as we often hear from suicides as well as martyrs. Therefore, he is neither in the conventional sense. “Wherefore, O judges, be of good cheer about death, and know this of a truth—that no evil can happen to a good [righteous] man, either in life or after death.”<sup>6</sup> Protection against what he calls “evil” is what is most important; we may assume that what he means is a fall into unrighteousness. Moreover, Socrates warns that one should always “look to himself” before looking to one’s own children. He even goes so far as to say that if his children put self-interest before the state, “punish them; and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you ...”<sup>7</sup>

Each gesture he makes is calculated to emphasize his personal sovereignty, even at the expense of his children in favor of the state, in blasphemous refutation of the collective condemnation meted out by his accusers who have no proof to rely on except rumors and innuendoes regarding Socrates’ *transgressive* self-interest.

Finally, we must discuss the difference between looking to the state and looking to the *interests* of the state. As mentioned earlier, the word “interests” is critical to the understanding of Socrates’ claim. Herein lies the essential political argument, and the essence of the significance of the state of exception. Achilles shows disdain for statecraft in Hades by eschewing both the possibility of being sovereign there, and the possibility of being a sovereign in the world of the living by abdicating the position of master for that of a slave, or lord for bondsman.

But his lack of care for the interests of the state does not make him, in this sphere, an intrinsic. It seems as if his disdain may be in kind with Socrates’, but in fact it is extrinsic to the State which requires the “look” or “gaze” of the citizen to exist and serve its purpose! The state that has not been *envisaged*, or given a face, soon fades.

To be the “body politic” the state must have a *head* to guide it in the form of a leader (or leaders) who represents the state; as Louis XIV so famously said, “*l’état, c’est moi.*” From Julius Caesar to Hitler the same claim has been made in various ways, such as Rudolf Hess’s rallying cry in this speech at the *Reichsparteitag* in Nürnberg in 1934 where he shouted “*Die Partei ist Hitler! Hitler aber ist Deutschland!*” to cheers and applause.

The citizen’s gaze *permits* the state to arise. All responsibility for the nature of the state is the citizen’s, not its leaders’, though its leaders inevitably become its heroes or scapegoats depending upon how things turn out in the end. The minute this gaze turns away, the state immediately collapses. All citizens participate in statehood and statecraft by their labor,

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 25.

no matter what the system and no matter what their gripes and complaints. When they cease to participate, even as lumpen proletariat, then they are immediately relegated to low-wage slaves, captives in prison, or statelessness.

Achilles chooses to participate only as a servant, not a lord or master, removing his gaze from both the state of the living and the dead. By complying with the death sentence handed to him by the state, Socrates shows that his gaze is fixed on the state, but that the state's interest—suppressing the voice of those who would criticize it—is extrinsic to Socrates' care of self. To those who voted against him in a close poll, he says, “For if you think that by killing men you can avoid the accuser censuring your lives, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honorable ...”<sup>8</sup> By killing men, the state at once exercises the rule of law *and* the state of exception, obliterating sovereignty through killing in a mode of war and creating the eternal military camp of modern public life.

### 3.3 Extrinsic and intrinsic *strategies*

We may map the extrinsic and intrinsic strategies described above to the topology of the eccentric and centric. Achilles' strategy positions itself at the edge of experience, predicating the “state” of the ego upon the external or extrinsic circumstances such as being in the world of the living or the dead, which for him was geographical more than metaphysical. Socrates' strategy is the opposite; in his deliberations there are no hints of an afterlife. (One may wonder where, exactly, he was thinking he would be “righteous” other than in the life he was about to leave.)

Socrates' strategy is entirely deontological. Righteousness is done for its own sake in the moment, even at the sacrifice of one's own life. Furthermore, one must not seek to preserve one's life at the expense of the state. Neither consideration is seen in the words of Achilles, and yet we can and must sympathize with his predicament and desire. The difference between the two, then, is geographical and geometrical. It exists on a plane of discourse upon which all possible permutations of their statements could also be located.

However, we must also, by valid synthetic proposition, give priority to the view that significant language emanates from the centric to the eccentric positions, from the center to the circumference via the radius. Conversely, propositions emanating from the periphery, from the eccentric positions

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

(which are infinite) are ipso facto invalid. This is not to say that Achilles' statement is invalid, since the biological imperative to live, possessed by all animals, is at the core of the centric position; the purpose here is to point out that where, in the topology of language, an utterance emanates affects its verifiability as well as credibility. "Consider the source," people used to say. It should be our natural inclination to expect that the teleological follows from the deontological in matters of ethics and aesthetics. It is simply not logically possible that the ultimate outcome of a process or procedure is ethical or aesthetic if each stage of that process or procedure is not also deontologically ethical and aesthetic.

Heidegger, in *Being and Time*, takes up this distinction in another sphere as the interplay between public (extrinsic) and private (intrinsic) space. The former is "ready-to-hand" while the latter is "present-at-hand." It could be said that what is private remains present-at-hand until the time when it must open up into the public, at which time it becomes ready-to-hand, distinguishing our private from public selves. It is for this reason that one "leaves for work" to enter a public environment where what is expected of one is always one degree beyond what might be called personal and private. While this makes the world go around, it also forces us out of ourselves into the eccentric world where our centric position "dissolves," as Heidegger puts it, into those of others.

Both *what we have* (ready-to-hand) and *what is there* (present-at-hand), become possessed by the alterity of the extrinsic, eccentric other. Society, in the form of "others," and the collective apparatus of the state, church, schools, banking, and the media which the gaze of the others and ourselves gives rise to, form the environment which we come to know as our world.

Heidegger describes the territory between the centric and eccentric positions as the public environment in which Dasein ceases to be "our" present-at-hand "being," forming what we know as society in the collective being of the ready-to-hand world. But our centric self, or core identity, is not always willing to "dissolve," often preferring its more substantial and therefore more corporeal expression as the ego. "[T]he environment which lies closest to us, the public 'environment,' already is ready-to-hand and is also a matter of concern [*mitbesorgt*]."<sup>9</sup>

It is a matter of concern because it *surrounds* the intrinsic centric position with the constant threat of what Heidegger calls "they," of what has been described here as abdication into the Ix position of self-abnegation from the position of the social or Real-I (I2). "In utilizing public means of transport and in making use of information services such as the newspaper, every Other is like the next."

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<sup>9</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 164.

In other words, in abdication, one subject becomes so much like another because they share the same extrinsic, store-bought, commercial identity that their real value becomes entirely *notional*, predicated on such trivialities as net worth and credit ratings. “This Being-with-one-another dissolves one’s own Dasein completely into the kind of Being of ‘the Others’, in such a way, indeed, that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit, vanish more and more.”<sup>10</sup>

One would think that this process would at least bring us *closer* to others; instead, it tends to have the opposite effect of *erasing* the “otherness” of others, making it possible for us to exploit, capture, and violate them through a rapid process of depersonalization. We may even go to war with others who, in almost every way that matters, are exactly like ourselves except that they are *not* ourselves and are, therefore, “the enemy,” or what Heidegger calls “they.”

The “they” form the Other. This Other territory is within and without the borders of the camp, which is the surface area of the circle (finite), and the area outside the circle (infinite). The number for the surface area outside of the circle is always  $n$ , meaning any number beyond the number of the surface area inside of the circle, which is always finite. In this way the topology of the ontological territory of being follows the delimitations of the categorical exclusion.

Within the borders of this topology, from the circumference to the center, the only nontrivial relationship is binary:  $0 / 1$ . Outside of this pale, all relationships are governed by psychological infinity:  $1 / n$ . Whatever area is enclosed by the circle is indicated by  $x$  and is always a binary number. Therefore, in its simplest form,  $(0 / 1) = x$ .

William James once observed that since one cannot see the entire ocean from its shore, or when at sea from the rail of a ship; one takes what one sees and multiplies it beyond the horizon of conception. “We think the ocean as a whole, by multiplying mentally the impression we get at any moment when at sea.”<sup>11</sup> So too do we think of others, the circumference of the circle being our collective identity, whatever that may be and however we may form it.

Just as we give names to places, nations, and teams, so too do we give names to the psychological topography of extrinsic-eccentric, intrinsic-centric. In the process, we form a map of what we regard as “reality.” As long as it is marginally functional, for which we allow a great fault tolerance, we are willing to suspend any disbelief that comes our way, analytic or synthetic.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>11</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place* (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1977), 16.

The Euclidean paradigm projects into mental space just as physical space projects into the Euclidean paradigm of spatiality and location. According to Tuan, “sensorymotor and tactile experiences would seem to lie at the root of Euclid's theorems concerning shape congruence and the parallelisms of distant lines; visual perception is the basis for projective geometry.”<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the concatenation of the stages of the development of the sense of *I* follow a calculable geography, in the form of “projective geometry,” as expressed previously in the modified Lacanian concatenation of the OI, I1, I2, Ix of the mirror stage.

While these positions are transformations by *negation*, they may be described in Euclidean terms as topological as they express a definite territory in which one may be located and locate others in the binary form of “I and Thou” or Subject-Object. In geographical topology it could be said that a valley is the negation of mountain. Here we have a little lesson in such speculative logic by Lewis Carroll taken from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

“When you say ‘hill,’” the Queen interrupted, “I could show you hills, in comparison with which you’d call that a valley.”

“No, I shouldn’t,” said Alice, surprised into contradicting her at last, “a hill can’t be a valley, you know. That would be nonsense—”

The Red Queen shook her head, “You may call it ‘nonsense’ if you like,” she said, “but I’ve heard nonsense, compared with which that would be as sensible as a dictionary!”<sup>13</sup>

### 3.4 Equality of all binary positions

We have examined the topology of the state of exception where the sovereign officially steps outside of the law. This is done at the behest of the people who, voting more through their voluntary abdication of responsibility than their rights of polity, “elect” the state of exception in the name of “law and order” and what they see as other imperial and economic necessities. Using the geographic paradigm above, such exception is for the appointed sovereign the equivalent of moving from a centric to an eccentric position. In so doing, the sovereign enters into an extrinsic space which is on the border between *x* (interior) and *n* (exterior).

Once this move has occurred, spurred on by the will of the people to *be ruled* rather than *to rule*, the sovereign hegemonic power no longer represents the people *as* the state (if it ever did); instead, it represents what

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>13</sup> Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (Macmillan, 1865), 15.

Socrates calls the “interests of the state.” The mass of subjects wants to *be ruled* rather than *rule* because ruling would mean diverting their attention away from what Julius Caesar referred to as their lust for “bread and circus.” Ruling would also interfere with shopping, getting drunk and indulging in recreational drugs, playing with digital gadgets, over-indulging in food, and seeking out ever greater and more expensive forms of what Thorstein Veblen called “conspicuous consumption.” At best, the citizen clears his conscience by indulging in the periodic ritual of “voting” which serves as a kind of catharsis for a disturbing but unconscious sense that he is, ultimately, powerless.

The state of exception necessary for the enforcement of total control is as described by Gibbon regarding the Roman general in the camp. “The most sacred rights of freedom, confirmed by the Porcian and Sempronian laws, *were suspended* by the military engagement. In his camp the general exercised an absolute power of life and death; his jurisdiction was not confined by any forms of trial or rules of proceeding, and the execution of the sentence was immediate and without appeal [*italics added*].”<sup>14</sup>

And it is not only the executive principal acting as the icon of power. The legislative body, in its compromise with the executive, demands its share of absolute power, which it must then in turn apportion to the judiciary. The result is the appearance, or effect, of total power. “[W]henever the senate empowered the first magistrate to consult the safety of the commonwealth, he was raised above the laws by that decree, and exercised, in the defense of liberty, a temporary despotism.”<sup>15</sup>

Still, the sovereign’s regime is obliged by the people to maintain a certain level of juridical and legislative decorum. While there remains the option of an endless series of appeals, it is open only to those with the means and influence to prosecute it. While “execution” may or may not be banned by the whim and fashion of the people at this or that time, imprisonment itself often serves as a more cruel and unusual punishment by the arbitrariness of its ease, frequency, and the members of the politically and economically weak it preys upon.

Therefore, we will presume that the centric position, and the eccentric territories of the circle’s area and the region outside of the circle, *are of the same value*, though we may speak of them in differently and assign them to different phenomena. The intrinsic and the extrinsic, and the centric and the eccentric, are negations of each other. This can only be accomplished if they are of the same value. If the value of one is greater or lesser, there will be an incomplete attempt at negation which leaves a remainder of one or the

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<sup>14</sup> Gibbon, op. cit., 55.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 57.

other. As the mass of subjects abdicates, sovereignty transfers from the interior ( $x$ ) to the border of the exterior ( $n$ ).

We could also designate other positions algebraically, such as the absolute center and the circumference of the territory, but then we would be more concerned with the line geometry than the topology. Also, what matters the most is sovereignty itself, which defies a specific locus, and therefore delineation, though it may retain such properties as interiority and exteriority. Will is imposed from without or within, or both, with one or the other then being stronger.

Furthermore, in abdication we are not dealing with absolute values; it is never the entire mass of subjects that abdicates, just as it is never that the hegemonic power that has total control over them. Rather, it is an ebb and flow, a *Sturm und Drang*, which is the stuff of history. Speaking of the reign of Titus Antoninus Pius, Gibbon says, "His reign is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing very few materials for history; which is, indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind."<sup>16</sup>

Those identifying themselves as living in a "free democracy" like to feel superior to those who their government have designated as living in an "unfree," "undemocratic" society (which goes by various official epithets). What they seldom understand is that the citizens of *those* societies gaze back at them with mistrust and hatred at their sneering superiority, as well as their inevitable appearance of decadence and corruption. One does not wander through a "totalitarian" society thinking, "If only I were FREE!" Rather, one thanks the gods that one is not a victim of the predatory social, political, and economic system one's "free" enemies seem to endure. This only underscores the absolute meaninglessness of the word "freedom." To the criminal, freedom is not going to jail for committing a crime. To the law-abiding citizen, freedom is not being a victim of crime.

As such, a worldview forms which is entirely psychological. "Reality" serves only a kind of stage prompter for the psychodrama which the subject considers to be "normal." What Heidegger calls "the 'they'" is an *a fortiori* argument, prosecuted through language, and made "average" by the dissolution of the subject's core identity into the mass of subjects with which it must mingle in its compulsory public life. No matter what the social and political system, human beings are psychological creatures possessed of and by an ego. Therefore, they must have a sense of identity.

This identity, though, is more often than not one manufactured by their society, which is, in turn, programmed by the hegemonic powers they erect through their abdication of responsibility for their own individual destiny.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 65.



“The ‘they’ has its own ways in which to be. That tendency of Being-with which we have called ‘distantiality’ is grounded in the fact that Being-with-one-another concerns itself as such with averageness, which is an existential characteristic of the ‘they’.”<sup>17</sup>

Eccentric territories, initially in flux, eventually exceed each other. Therefore, they must seek equilibrium. What permits them to engage in this entropic process is the force of what Heidegger calls *averageness*. In opposition, though, the center stands as extraordinary by comparison—but only *by* such comparison and not any intrinsic value apart from it. Nevertheless, the center and its surrounding surface area ( $x$ ) is under constant stress from the outer territories ( $n$ ) to abdicate and be “dissolved” into *averageness*. “Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force.

This care of averageness reveals in turn the essential tendency of Dasein which we call ‘levelling down’ [*Einebnung*] of all possibilities of Being.”<sup>18</sup> (This “leveling down” is well expressed by the Chinese saying that “the nail that sticks up shall be hammered down!”)

The question remains of by what method, mechanism, or what Peirce calls “conduct,” does this incorporation (negation) of personal sovereignty occur? Heidegger has already hinted at some of the mechanisms when he mentions “public means of transport,” and “information services.” These are just examples, not the principal means, by which we dissolve our private selves into the public collective persona of averageness. Digital technology has made this process infinitely more powerful and efficient.

Something must equalize the topology of the psycholinguistic territory, just as something must initiate and initialize speech development in a child through social interaction. What brings the child into the next position from the mirror stage is precisely the acquisition of language as a social tool. Dasein does this through insensitivity to “every difference of level and of genuineness and this never gets to the ‘heart of the matter’ [‘*auf die Sachen*’]. By publicness everything gets obscured, and what has thus been covered up gets passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone.”<sup>19</sup>

Ultimately, it is the eccentric position itself that bring about Dasein, not the centric position, just as it is the state of exception which brings about freedom, not the rule of law. As the individual identity of the subject

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<sup>17</sup> Heidegger, op. cit., 164.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 164-165.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 165.

dissolves in the everydayness of its public life, its thingness also dissolves, leaving only Dasein. There is the necessity for the violation of average everydayness, either in the formation of the apparatus of the permanent state of exception or in the revolt against it and the ensuing bloodbath.

All eccentric positions are unstable, precipitating an inevitable collapse back into the entropy of static centrism. It is their metastatic nature as the aggregate of the abdicated sovereignty of the mass of subjects which ultimately brings instability to the state apparatus. In other words, that which made it possible is that which makes its continued existence impossible.

By forcing a *third thing*, a *tertium quid*, the hegemonic power undermines itself through what in its discrete form has been referred to as Hegel's Second Negation. Just as the subject's thingness has arisen as a product of Dasein's everydayness, so too does it dissolve by the same mechanism once it has been exposed long enough to public discourse where "everything gets obscured."

On the most superficial level familiarity breeds psychological invisibility; who remembers to look at the art that has been hanging in his house for twenty years? This phenomenon is all too common in long-term marriages. But on a deeper ontological level the existence of the thing, as the subject, is imperiled by its everydayness. Just as the citizen's gaze enables or disables an empire, so too do our fellow citizens' gaze enable and disable our membership in the collective psychological phenomenon we call society.

Thus, as the extraordinary "gets passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone," it fades into the ordinary and then out of our ken. "In Dasein's everydayness the agency through which most things come about is one of which we must say that *'it was no one* [italics added].'"<sup>20</sup>

The phrase "it was no one" is not so mystifying when we apply it to sentences which are grammatically correct without having what could properly be called a subject acting upon the object directly: the passive voice, as in "The crash of the financial markets *was devastating* to pension funds." The advantage of this form of language to the perpetrators of various conspicuous debacles is that it removes "someone" from the responsibility for them, putting the onus on "no one."

Our use of the passive voice, though, is necessary; we find that reality does not always require that *A* act upon *B*, subject upon object, and so on. It could be then that the ethos of the "if *A* then *B*" paradigm is a tyranny of language rather than reality, though that does not preclude it from cynical application by expediency.

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 165.

What, then, becomes of the persona, the ego that was once “behind” the subject’s appearance on the stage of reality? As Heidegger indicates, the everydayness of Dasein is that agent of equilibrium reconciling our extraordinariness with our ordinariness. The result is that we ultimately resemble that entity which we began as in the primordial fog of our coming-into-being.

The *a posteriori* and *a priori* states become equiprimordial. The mirror stage is not possible without the primordial OI stage where there is *no one*, just as personal sovereignty often only becomes possible after first relinquishing it to the hegemonic power of the state. We could say that Socrates, in submitting to the unrighteousness of the Athenian state’s system of justice, achieves the ultimate degree of sovereignty possible for any single being. More often than not, though, the subject needs to lose its sovereignty before it even knows it had it in the first place.

### 3.5 What “no one” does for someone

Which brings us to the threshold of further questions about ethical aesthetics and morality. How is it possible, when the author of our thingness is “no one,” to take responsibility for our lives and our actions? We like to think that we created ourselves. In fact, it is almost an acknowledged and sanctified ritual of adolescence to regard one’s parents as imposters whose only possible role in life is to prevent our self-determination. We know best. We know what we want. And, therefore, we know what is right and wrong.

But is there any possible actor when there is *no one* serving as the lawmaker of the *nomos* which we regard as the guide for our decisions and actions? In asking such questions we confront what is in essence a matter of linguistics. And this problem lies in the assignment of meaning to words produced by a machine incapable of meaning. Its mechanism lies at the productive core of the apparatus of language which, as we have seen in the Preliminary, is a matter of valid and invalid synthetic statements.

It is an error to think that language is somehow the product of an organic process. Human language, or what we know about it, is an artificial, synthetic apparatus that is more of a product of civilization than it is of any symptom of biological evolution. Just as great pyramids and computers do not grow on trees, so too do we find it impossible to detect what we regard as language in animals or even in the deepest regions of space to which our radio telescopes can reach. We do not deny that almost everything seems to “communicate.”

The question is, does it communicate in a *language*? It is of no use and tedious to define what language is, as definitions abound and we all have a

good intuitive sense of what it is. However, it is enough to say that no animal writes, and that even if we did detect an intelligent signal from far off in the galaxy, it would only be our own acquaintance with formal, written language that made it possible for us to even know it is intelligent.

However, it is not necessary to give an exhaustive definition of language when we can distinguish between whatever idea we may have about it (theory) and the effective uses to which it is applied, formal and informal. The *formal* applications of the mechanisms of language, such as propaganda, lawmaking, religious dogma, and political discourse, must and do show us that as an apparatus language has definite structures which we can employ to get consistent results. Otherwise, these institutions would not be possible, nor would they be the most enduring of all institutions. In what might be called an *informal* application we have *affirmative* communication, or a transaction of thought and idea requiring what in computing is called a “checksum” or a method of *affirming* that the data received are the data transmitted, and that those data have been decoded in the way intended by the sender or encoder.

One way in which both are effective is in *proof-of-concept* which, while leaning toward the formal, is nevertheless employed even in our most casual communications. Just to have communicated a complex idea, with little or no error, to another, and to have that idea acted upon effectively in such a way that we are able to verify that the message has been received, guarantees for us that there is, indeed, something we can call language and that it is different from almost anything else we know of in our experience. In a formal sense, for example, the activity of a judicial proceeding is an example of how language is used to carry out the machinations of the state apparatus, presumably in our best interest.

That someone shows up for a social meeting at the appointed time in a coffee shop, though, is just as much (or perhaps more) of a proof-of-concept in an informal sense. Chomsky describes the relationship between theory and proof-of-concept, as well as the difficulty to ascertain the morphology of language production, as the space in which we may begin to see how language “works” as a mechanism. He refers to language as “an enormously complex system ...”<sup>21</sup> which can still be described in ways that give insight into the effective procedures, or algorithms, of linguistic communication. Here he analyzes phrase-structure at the sentence level to describe how it is possible for it to carry the *intelligence*:

Suppose that we have a machine that can be in any one of a finite number of different internal states, and suppose that this machine switches from one

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<sup>21</sup> Noam Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures* (The Hague/Paris: Mouton, 1957), 18.

state to another by producing a certain symbol (let us say, an English word). One of these states is an initial state; another is a final state. Suppose that this machine begins in the initial state, runs through a sequence of states (producing a word with each transition), and end in the final state. Then we call the sequence of words that has been produced a “sentence.”<sup>22</sup>

What concerns us here, in light of the Preliminary, is the mechanical relationship between the subject and predicate. As we have seen, there are various combinations of this relationship. Most important to this discussion is the difference between analytic and synthetic statements. In particular, there is an ontological difference between a verifiable and therefore analytic statement and unverifiable and therefore synthetic statement. Among the possibilities of the latter, there are valid and invalid synthetic statements. In addition, there are further distinctions which may make a statements valid or invalid.

In looking at the discourse of abdication, however, two forms of invalid statements are employed: the first consists of a verifiable subject joined by the copula to an invalid predicate. The second consists of an unverifiable subject conjoined by the copula to an invalid predicate. That we refer to the copula “to be” in its various forms (is, am, are, and so on) indicates the importance of these utterances to ontology.

What makes these distinctions significant regarding abdication is that they all involve the existence or nonexistence of subjects, things, territories, and concepts—in other words the domain of nouns. More specifically, they have the most profound effect upon the use of the personal pronoun “I.” What does it mean, then, when “I” makes a declaration about reality using language that is mechanically fallacious? This is the question the Preliminary deals with in the greatest depth, so it will not be reviewed here. However, to get a better idea of how language can be thought of as a “machine” operated by “no one,” we will look at a few simple ways to join subject and predicate using the simple rules implicit in our impulsive use of speech.

In the first example we look at the interchangeability of subject and predicate when following simple rules. In all cases a statement is produced that is at least verifiable. Also, none of these utterances upon themselves up to the need for interpretation or the possibility of ambiguity, though, upon verification, they may or may not be “true.” This will lead us to the next part of the discussion where we look at simple statements about which this cannot be said because, as synthetic statements, they are unverifiable. Furthermore, a distinction will be made between valid and invalid synthetic

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

statements. Each has a library, initial state, instructions, and final output. In all cases we will assume that all possibilities are given, to prevent any possibility of “what if ...?”

### Example 1:

Library

Subjects: (a) Julius runs (b) Julia walks

Predicates: (p) to the store. (q) to the theater.

Initial state: Declarative statements (excluding interrogatives, imperatives, and exclamations)

Instructions: *Each subject must have a predicate. All predicates must follow the subject. Form all possibilities after tabulating probability and all possible combinations.*

(Probability: 4; possible combinations: ap, aq, bp, bq)

Output

- 1) (ap) Julius runs to the store.
- 2) (aq) Julius runs to the theater.
- 3) (bp) Julia walks to the store.
- 4) (bq) Julia walks to the theater.

What makes this “a machine” is that the sentences are complete with predicate only after the machine runs. Before that, there existed no form of these sentences uttered by a non-machine. Once the machine runs, we have sensible utterances expressive of the names, gates, and destinations of two individuals. Furthermore, we have some statistical information about the all possible outcomes, and a set of rules to follow that will prevent nonsensical utterances such as “to the store to the theater,” though “Julius runs,” and “to the store. Julius runs” make *sense*, but not in the optimal way in which the programming brings us.

This, essentially, is how we assume our informal language production to operate. It is upon this model that invalid synthetic statements are built in the state of abdication; the phrase structure and morphology is simply repurposed for the production of sentences that have an imaginary basis which cannot be verified except by reference to their own logic.

In this next example, we give verifiable and unverifiable predicates an equal chance to occupy the structural morphology of the utterance with the result that we get statements of varying degrees of *prima facie*

verisimilitude. By the introduction of a corrective heuristic, which here serves as a rule, we can avoid utterly nonsensical statements.

### Example 2:

Library

Noun phrase subjects: ( $x$ ) The dress ( $y$ ) The coat ( $z$ ) The dog

Analytic predicates: ( $a$ ) is brown. ( $b$ ) is silk. ( $c$ ) is male.

Synthetic predicates: ( $p$ ) is sexy. ( $q$ ) is nice. ( $r$ ) is obedient

Initial state: Declarative statements (excluding interrogatives, imperatives, and exclamations)

Instructions: *Each subject must have a predicate. All predicates must follow the subject. Form all possibilities after tabulating probability and all possible combinations. Heuristic:  $x$  and  $y$  must not be paired with  $c$  and  $r$ ;  $z$  must not be paired with  $a$ ,  $z$ ,  $p$ , or  $q$ .*

(Probability: 10; 5 analytic statements:  $xa$ ,  $xb$ ,  $ya$ ,  $yb$ ,  $zc$ ; 5 synthetic statements:  $xp$ ,  $xq$ ,  $yp$ ,  $yq$ ,  $zr$ .)

Output:

Analytic

- 1) ( $xa$ ) The dress is brown.
- 2) ( $xb$ ) The dress is silk.
- 3) ( $ya$ ) The coat is brown.
- 4) ( $yb$ ) The coat is silk.
- 5) ( $zc$ ) The dog is male.

Synthetic

- 1) ( $xp$ ) The dress is sexy.
- 2) ( $xq$ ) The dress is nice.
- 3) ( $yp$ ) The coat is sexy.
- 4) ( $yq$ ) The coat is nice.
- 5) ( $zr$ ) The dog is obedient.

As all possibilities have been given, there is no possibility of “error,” defined as deviation from the *instructions*, but not deviation from grammatical orthodoxy, logical validity, or semantic sense, regardless of the potential verisimilitude of the utterances. Here, then, we run into the possibility raised by Chomsky that even when following the rules

(instructions), as we are most likely to do from habit and training, the output can be illogical, unorthodox nonsense:

Colorless green ideas sleep furiously.  
Furiously sleep ideas green colorless.

It is fair to assume that neither sentence (1) nor (2) (nor indeed any part of these sentences) has ever occurred in an English discourse. Hence, in any statistical model for grammaticalness, these sentences will be ruled out on identical grounds as equally "remote" from English. Yet (1), though nonsensical, is grammatical, while (2) is not grammatical.<sup>23</sup>

What if the rules are not followed? The statements in our second machine are likely to become confused or intentionally manipulated so that the analytic and synthetic subject and predicates will become mixed, violating the heuristic that state that *x and y must not be paired with c and r; z must not be paired with a, z, p, or q*. Statements such as "The dog is sexy," or "The dress is obedient" creep into everyday usage, becoming "normal." They dissolve into the everydayness of utterances, and in so doing help facilitate the formation of the psycholinguistic topology of abdication, or what Heidegger calls the "environment" of "the They."

Whether the rules are followed or not, as in the case of the passive voice where there is no subject acting directly upon the object, Heidegger's words haunt us: "In Dasein's everydayness the agency through which most things come about is one of which we must say that 'it was no one.'" If rules are followed without regard to sense that is verifiable by a *disinterested* party in an objective way, in other words in a logical way, then do we have any "proof" that the utterance has come from "someone"? Were we not able to *envisage* the sender and receiver of the communication in some positive way, is there anything in their communication that would give us an indication of their humanity?

While this is beginning to sound like a kind of Turing Test, which in a way it is, it need not be a "machine" in the concrete sense from which the utterance issues for us to question its humanity. It can just as well be the language-generating machine of rather impressive complexity we like to think is at the core of the personality serving as its thought generator and therefore of its sense of existence. This is not to say that *everydayness* is not also the "agency through which most things come about," or, in other words, *le devenir*. It is, however, the beginning of the search for *terrestrial* intelligence in the human utterance.

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 15.



In language, “no one” is the sovereign entity because, as we have insisted here, language is an apparatus, a machine, operating by its own rules which may or may not be in accordance with those of reality. However, our tacit assumption is that language comes *before* reality, just as civilization comes before humanity. When reality is challenged by language it is more likely that language is right, and reality is wrong just as when our *humanitas* is in question civilization has the last word, otherwise war and state execution would not be possible.

The cogent example of this is how we tell if a person is “insane.” While our behavior might lead someone to judge us insane, it is definitely our *statements* about what others collectively regard as “reality” that determine what is and is not sanity. Somewhere, too, this definition will be codified into the *nomos*, complete with ostensibly objective tests deemed positive and analytical that produce the result that one is sane or insane. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychological Association (APA) is an example of how these criteria are codified in such a way that they appear *not* to be mere subjective judgments of behavior, while at the same time serving the collateral purpose of aligning drug treatments with known pathologies described in the manual.

And this determination is often not based on any logical analysis or attempt to verify, but rather on whether or not the utterance conforms with the imprimatur of the current litany of discourse. What is odd is how we make allowances for the mad utterances of children who, though they may be judged perfectly sane, seem to find more delight and meaning in nonsense than sense.

Once again, it is worth quoting Emily Dickinson’s poem “Much Madness” to bring a little sanity to this discussion:

Much Madness is divinest Sense -  
 To a discerning Eye -  
 Much Sense - the starkest Madness -  
 'Tis the Majority  
 In this, as all, prevail -  
 Assent - and you are sane -  
 Demur - you're straightway dangerous -  
 And handled with a Chain -

We tend to regard the “insane” as “not all there” as the saying goes. It is as much as saying that they are “no one,” which well describes how they are often treated, spoken about by experts as if they were not in the room though they are within hearing, and generally marginalized, disregarded, and often feared by society. Whether one is sane or insane, language

remains the *coming-into-being* (*le devenir*) of the subject and its object. As there is little that can be done *prior* to the formation of an utterance to weigh its verifiability, validity, or semantic integrity, we may assume that there is a generous fault tolerance about language in the everydayness of its use. This regard tends to be in synchrony with the nature of the things and phenomena language is used to describe. It is language that makes something hot or cold, good or bad, brown or green, silk or cotton, male or female in the *performative* sense. Language *performs* this function just as our machines perform theirs.

However, there is a problem. Our machines, in their synthetic simplicity and ease of encodability, are obligated by their design to follow the dictates of logic. While the errors they make can often be attributed to faulty logic, it is foremost that of the engineer and not the machine which, when examined, will be determined to have followed bad instructions to the letter (or number, as the case may be).

Natural language as expressed spontaneously by a human is exponentially more complex. Like all possible complex systems, then, it must have a high fault tolerance or collapse into an inert state. When we consider what Chomsky calls “an enormously complex system” of natural language, the probability (calculated at 4 and 10 above) becomes exponential. Add *n* number of intentional attempts to shape public discourse through what Socrates calls the “interests” of the state, and the situation drifts into Dasein with its famous “insensitivity” to heuristic controls.

While the state may consist of individuals, even those “freely elected by the people” (as democracies like to brag), it nevertheless has an existence apart from those individuals as an apparatus. This state Machine, then, is what Heidegger calls “no one,” yet we tend to regard the state as a sentient entity with feelings and intelligence just like us.

We may even regard it as friendly and working on our behalf. But it is only the simpleton who does not soon realize that not only does the state apparatus work solely for itself, but that it is populated with *apparatchiks* whose motivation is the furtherance of their personal ambitions, whatever they may be, and not the altruistic rhetoric carved into the stone of the buildings they occupy and the sacred documents they guard.

### 3.6 Fallacy of the subject-object dichotomy

In the examples above, the assumption has been made that the relation between subject and object, or subject and predicate, is absolute in the way that these machines conjoin them with the copula. Is this so? First, we discover that the prevailing pattern in a language's sentence structure is not

somehow a universal necessity, though we may say, as does Chomsky, that there is a “universal grammar” expressed in the deep phrase-structure of all languages. Second, we learn that consistent, repetitive, predictable structure is not needed for a language to convey emotion, ideas, and even complex information. If this were not so, poetry, for instance, would be impossible. Singing could hardly be considered speech, and yet we tend to regard it as conveying *more* than speech because of its advantages of melody and harmony. Furthermore, there are languages which do without the particles that seem essential to Germanic and Romance languages, such as articles, and even verb tenses, instead relying on explicit statements of time indicated in the sense of the utterance.

In the everydayness of any language, the rules of grammar and rhetoric fade into “usage,” which varies with region, subculture, fashion, and fad. “Usage makes the language” the saying goes. Entire subcultural languages develop in the forms of slang, vernacular, and idiom which, by themselves, could suffice as the common language—which is what they do in certain subcultures. In fact, what we know as the orthodoxy today grew out of the subcultures and dialects of the various vulgate languages of various now extinct empires.

They are often distinguished by their systematic and often deliberate violation of the rules, protocols, and even usage of the mainstream, official, orthodox language. In doing so they also assert that marginalized subculture’s defiance of the dominant culture’s hegemony. At the same time, though, they provide the dominant culture with a plethora of shibboleths that can be used to identify and consequently oppress the underclass because of whatever “difference” makes them pariahs in its estimation.

Behind, or beneath, the phrase-structure of language is the *a priori* of space and time. We can see how the *a priori* affects, or determines, the grammar of the phrase-structure. But space and time have been shown by physics and experience to be far more complex and mutable than, perhaps, we would like. What in part characterizes our age is our unique understanding of their relationship as space-time. While this was at first evident and verifiable on the macro scale, it is now equally verifiable on the nano scale.

The result is that we find ourselves in a world that is “rounded with a sleep,” as Prospero says in *The Tempest*. In addition, we are subject to the difference between psychological time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ), which is entirely quantifiable by units of measure and machines, such as timepieces, to do it, and immutable, or actual, Time and Space ( $T \wedge S$ ), which are equally

quantifiable but lend themselves to verifiability through various forms of scientific analysis.

We largely assess both forms of time and space with the combined apparatus of our empirical powers, which begin with the senses. This, says Ayer, leads us to live in a largely unverifiable world which we regard as adequately “verified” (or “affirmed”) by the same apparatus which makes it so elusive to proof. The result is that language gives rise to this predilection for the verisimilitude of the empirical while also being the product of it. “To begin with, we must make it clear that we do not accept the realist analysis of our sensations in terms of *subject, act, and object*. For neither the existence of the substance which is supposed to perform the so-called act of sensing nor the existence of the act itself, as an entity distinct from the sense-contents on which it is supposed to be directed, is in the least capable of being verified [*italics added*].”<sup>24</sup>

The irony here is, of course, that it is the “realist” analysis Ayer finds so *unreal* and therefore unverifiable or synthetic. In other words, the apparatus of language, with its empirical insistence upon the phrase-structure of “subject, act, and object,” generates not only itself as a discrete Markov chain such as we see in Chomsky’s example above, but also the world it describes. By implication, then, we can say that it also generates the sense of *identity*, or the persona, that we associate with individuality. Once this tangible property has been generated, it becomes a negotiable token of our humanity which can be bought, sold, traded, or thrown away in the economy of civilization.

Again, we are back to a binary: either the entity extends in time and space and is said to “exist,” or it does not exist (0 or 1). The latter state falls into two distinct categories of nonbeing: *having never been* and *having been*. Their respective properties are distinguished by the awareness we have of each. In the case of the former, we are not aware of that which has never been; in the latter, we are aware, for a time, of that which was but is no more. Eventually, the second fades into the condition of the first, like the inscription on a tombstone which time and weather have erased. Therefore, we may say that there is only being and nonbeing, with an intermediate state.

Perhaps to oversimplify, we may say that the *subject-act-object* progression, based on the observable cause-and-effect of the empirical “real,” is the progressive fallacy *as language*. Another way to look at it is that this machine just as facilely generates “colorless green ideas” ( $A = B$ ) as it generates verifiably true tautologies ( $A = A$ ). The *extensa* of the empirical world are what Heidegger calls the “furniture” of *Dasein*. Being

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<sup>24</sup> A.J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., ND), 122.

without attribute except the attribute of being without attribute, Dasein can only be known to us by its appurtenances.

When we observe these appurtenances reflected in the speculum of language, we begin to manufacture the discourse which we at last turn over to the governance of the hegemony in abdication. This discourse is by its nature invalid, being based on invalid synthetic propositions and trivial analytic statements. But it is necessarily so because the world of appearances is an *appliance*, just as language is. Its use-value is what brings it into our ken. That which is of no use to the ego does not exist in the psychological sense. One of the great attractions of abdication is its promise, through the “miracles” of modern medicine and the obligation of promissory notes, of eternal life and infinite consumption of consumer goods.

In this imaginary world, space and time cease to have the use-value they once had in the more rough-and-tumble world of the real. Therefore, they either tend to pass out of our ken as impersonal, disinterested values which determine our fate, or they assume a plastic, synthetic quality which makes them the stuff of fantasy. Meantime, propaganda, in the forms of advertising, public relations, and political rhetoric, is the discourse propagated. It purveys a *Weltanschauung* which simultaneously permits the ego to identify with everything as its own possession while dispossessing the subject of all possible ownership of anything through debt and other institutional obligations.

### 3.7 Being-as-subject and the eccentric position

Being-as-subject is the essential fallacy. It is not entirely appropriate to ask if the proposition of the cogito is “true” or not; the question is of its *validity* as a proposition. It is enough to say that it is valid in part because it cannot be proven to be false, but more because we cannot say “I am” without thinking it. As a result, the copula “to be” is imposed as the “act” in what Ayer describes as the *subject-act-object* concatenation of the empirical realists.

We presume that he would rather substitute the Positivists’ logical truth-value of a proposition as “proof” of the existence of the *extensa*. In any case, it is something which, he says, he cannot “accept.” Why? If our being-as-subject is a fallacy, does that not mean it is false? Not necessarily. What it does mean, however, is that it is not the *a priori* of space and time in the actual rather than psychological sense. The former belongs to the real, the latter to the imaginary, and the language generated by the tension between the both to the symbolic orders of existence. Therefore, it would be most

accurate to say that being-as-subject if declared a fallacy (F) can be proven true (T), and if declared true (T) can be proven a fallacy (F).

What is negotiable in this variable ratio of T to F is the symbolic, or language. And it is through the apparatus of language that the possibility of abdication arises as the discourse of one's *being-in-the-world* (*in-der-Welt-sein*). Just as one can be considered both living and dying at the same time, so too can one be considered real and imaginary. Language delimits the categorical difference between the two.

It is not the content of the language but the logical *form* of it which then becomes the *form of life*. If we permit the logic of invalid synthetic propositions (fallacies) to inform the linguistic and even grammatical structure of our thought, what effect does this have on the cogito? It is not that we are what we think; rather, it is that we are *how* we think. In other words, we become effigies of the formality of our thought.

It is from our unverifiable proposition as being-as-subject that all language flows in its form. But not in its entity as *expression*. Rather, it is from the biological *a priori* originating in what Chomsky calls the Language Faculty (LF), which is more a creature of the disinterested *a priori* of space and time than of civilization. Therefore, the LF is our capacity for language, not its form.

What form, and then later content, it may take on is up to the prerogatives, necessities, and vicissitudes of civilization. Kant describes the *a priori* as *primordial* and *innate*. Chomsky describes language as a form of "choice," clearly not conscious, of "grammars." What is significant here is that we can bracket the subject's being between the primordial and the innate, the former being space and time and the latter being the language faculty (LF) and its *expression* of universal grammar (UG).

The task of the child learning a language is to choose from among the grammars provided by the principles of universal grammar ... that grammar which is compatible with the limited and imperfect data presented to him. That is to say ... that language acquisition is not a step-by-step process of generalization, association, and abstraction, going from linguistic data to the grammar, and that *the subtlety of our understanding transcends by far what is presented in experience* [italics added].<sup>25</sup>

"Experience" here is the equivalent of what Ayer describes as the subject-act-object concatenation of the realists who rely on empirical data to analyze the structure of grammar. Chomsky seems to be saying that "understanding" is a phenomenon apart from experience and grammar. Its

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<sup>25</sup> Chomsky, op. cit., 180.

subtlety, which “far exceeds” the power of both to define who we are, remains the unspoken *informant* of the structure and content of thought and therefore of our being-as-subject. Once we have forsaken this subtlety for the cruder expression of civilization’s prerogatives through the power of the *nomos*, or the law, religious or secular, we also forsake our personhood through the abdication of the latent potential of the LF and UG.

This potential, then, we seek out in the byways of public discourse, in poetry, song, drama, speculative philosophy, non-linguistic expression such as art, dissent, protest, and the ravings of the mad. Apart from the deviations of slang, vernacular, and idiom, there is also the transgression of what could more formally be called a *metagrammar*.

In this linguistic space, words and their grammar operate in a supra-sensical mode, almost like a code. The modern lust for the absurd, abstract, surreal, automatic, random, and transgressive, mostly contained within the safety of art, belies our torment at the tyranny of the apparatus of language in its manifestation as a ridged orthodoxy of compulsory meaninglessness and banality presented as what Emily Dickinson describes, sarcastically, as “Much sense.”

When we consider the five proper pillars of the hegemonic discourse: the government, church, schools, banks, and media, we can see that the idea of a *metagrammar* is inherently subversive. Its encoding and expression of *that which may not be said* otherwise through the framework of the orthodoxy makes it a special language in itself serving as the linguistic representative of the unrepresented ideas dwelling in what Chomsky calls “the subtlety of our understanding.” It shows the orthodoxy that there is an *a priori* language based on the primordial and innate that is not issued by fiat. “[T]his whole complex of ideas seems linked to potentially quite dangerous political currents: manipulative and connected with behaviorist concepts of human nature.”<sup>26</sup>

Here Chomsky refers to what he calls “empiricist learning theories [that are] much too limited to be adequate.”<sup>27</sup> Like Ayer, he refuses to “accept” the empirical dogma of the subject-verb-object correlation between reality and language as the formative principle. At the time of his writing, the Behaviorists, such as B.F. Skinner, dominated psychological research. Arising from the structuralist theories of Piaget and others, Behaviorism was an extension of the idea that thought, and language, are largely expressions of the environment. Chomsky’s innatism was anathema to this idea as it also offended certain concepts of social justice and equality, quite against his inclinations.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 127.

The hegemonic discourse, despite the five pillars of its underpinning, teeters on a rickety mass of *a posteriori* scaffolding. As we observed in the Preliminary, this discourse is *derivative*, relying on an underlying asset of the *a priori* of time and space to lend it stability. Despite its dismissal of the reality of the *a priori* as cumbersome, intrusive, dirty, stupid, and wrong, *a posteriori* hegemonic discourse nevertheless maintains itself through a constant diet of abdicated sovereignty.

Like a Ponzi scheme, it must have a constant flow of inheritable sovereignty stripped from the self-determination of its citizens to maintain its imaginary bubble and the resulting dividends to its minions in political and economic power. While this sounds predatory, and is, because it involves the will of the subject, it is not possible without voluntary abdication. (Again, there are enough cases where the subject has no choice. But those are, by comparison, trivial to those where the subject does indeed make its own servitude possible and even desirable.) “Well then,” we think, “the subject must have been *fooled* by the hegemony into abdicating. Surely if the subject had known the stakes, it would not have thrown away its self-determination.”

Unfortunately, there is no evidence for this claim. Extensive forensics in the form of the last 2,000 years of Western history show us that in nearly every case the will of the people, as a collective, was to overthrow their own sovereignty in favor of *being led* rather than *leading*. Why this is so, is not the mission of this analysis, though it is certainly worth analyzing. Rather, we look here at *how* it happens in the hope that by understanding its mechanism in language we may also be able to wrest some control back from consequences of our own fatal choices.

### 3.8 Morality, ethics, and “no one”

Nevertheless, the concern above for “no one” being behind the furniture of Dasein, or what Kant calls the “manifold,” is underscored using what Chomsky calls that which is “presented in experience.” What does experience show us about the morality, or ethical aesthetics, of the subject? We have already discussed this somewhat in the previous section. It is unequivocally the thesis of this discussion that by abdication is meant the willful, voluntary surrender of something one once possessed: sovereignty, in the form of free self-determination.

The ready-to-hand nature of grammar encoded into orthodoxy is ultimately juridical and is therefore a product of the *nomos*, the Law, and the Father, the Lawgiver in Lacanian terms. Rules of grammar represent certain laws of language, just like the Zeroth Law of Thermodynamics,



marriage, the Ten Commandments, and the parking ticket represent the prerogatives of what we have come to regard as bona fide laws. Morality is an amorphous term referring to the subject's acts and deeds as they are regarded by society and weighed in the balance of the Law. However, ethical aesthetics is a somewhat different matter. Besides being a branch of philosophy, ethics has a morphology, whereas morality we tend to regard as the *outcome* of an ethical system.

Kant's categorical imperative (CI) is an example of an ethical aesthetic that cannot be regarded as a law, though it can be encoded into one: "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a *universal law* [*italics added*]." <sup>28</sup> Therefore we can consider the CI to be an *a priori* aesthetic that may be applied to the formulation of universal law, written or unwritten. But it is not the law itself. It is therefore what has been called in the Preliminary an ethical aesthetic. Ethics cannot be divorced from aesthetics.

It is absurd to think of what we regard as ethical behavior being considered "ugly," whatever our definition of that word may be. It is less difficult to think of unethical behavior as being motivated by ideas that are *ugly*. And we may assume that "unethical" means "without any ethical consideration or aesthetic." In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* we find ethics as character traits, such as liberality, magnificence, gentleness, friendship, honesty, and personal charm—all of which we might consider beautiful—as well as a juridical matter of justice, *distributive and corrective*, "in accordance with geometrical proportion." <sup>29</sup> Even his more technical approach to justice references Pythagorean ideas of geometric harmony and hence beauty.

What, then, is the ethical system of the discourse of the hegemonic order the subject erects in order to *be ruled* rather than face the bother of *ruling*? In both Kant's and Aristotle's systems, the emphasis falls on the subject; it is the subject who must act in accordance with "universal law." Kant and Aristotle presume that the aesthetics of ethics lies in its origin as an expression of the spiritual and communitarian needs of the subject, not in the self-serving, self-referencing plutocracy of the hegemonic apparatus. What complicates the matter, however, is that this Evil Empire lording over the hapless subject *is created on behalf of the subject, by the subject, and for the subject*.

It is the collective effigy of its own hopes and desires as a narcissistic ego under the illusion that is exploiting not only the system under which it

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<sup>28</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, 3rd ed. James W. Ellington, trans. (Indianapolis: Hackett, ND), 30.

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book V, Ch.3.

serves, but also the individuals with whom it shares this fate. After all, to witness a bank hand over huge sums of other people's money as a loan with little or no security and for dubious purposes is a spectacle so dazzling that the subject is immediately seduced by its own magical power to conjure wealth out of the ether. Once it took clever and bold bank robbers to accomplish what the average citizen can now expect from the modern state and its banking apparatus. All that is required of the citizen in good standing is the abdication of his sovereignty, a burden which he cheerfully renounces as every bit as bothersome and awkward as actually governing a state *res publica*.

We must now discuss *being-as-subject* and its relationship to *coming-into-being*. The difference between the two is that in the former ethics is a static quantity while in the latter it is dynamic. There is a third state which we may call *being-as-object* where the subject "downloads," as it were, the programming of the apparatus to which it has abdicated. In this case its ethical system is "metastatic," neither dynamic nor static, but ready to metastasize exponentially into all dimensions of the subject's being.

Basing an ethical system on the being-as-subject is simpler than coming-into-being because it does not impose the necessity (or imperative) of perpetual contextual relativism. Since coming-into-being is always in flux, it must have an ethics to match based on an elusive algorithm accommodating changes in the topology of its decision-making *moment to moment*.

This sort of creature is often regarded by the state as a criminal or, by the politically sophisticated, a Situationalist. Those with static ethics are labelled as old-fashioned Bible thumpers, whistle-blowers, or fools. Those with metastatic ethics are just normal. Therefore, *being-as-object* permits the exploitation of Dasein's insensitivity to the particulars of a situation and simply mandates by fiat (dictates) the conditions of the form of life to achieve what Heidegger describes as everydayness. Nevertheless, no one escapes the consequences of ugly ethics. Bereft of an ethical aesthetic of harmony and beauty, the hegemonic discourse instead institutionalizes its ugliness in the form of brutality, physical and psychological.

Prisons, wars, mass drug addiction, crime, and endemic psychological depression unite with economic kleptocracy as the subject's familiar and even comforting milieu. It soon becomes inured to this environment the way a chronic criminal offender becomes inured to jail where he can find his friends, a recognizable routine, a modicum of safety, and reliable food and shelter the state would not dare withhold. However, the "free" citizen lacks many of the benefits the prisoner enjoys.

The lack of any recognizable ethical aesthetic in the workings of the hegemonic apparatus allows it to remain in a permanent state of exception, uncorrupted by the inefficiencies and uncertainties of *res publica*. Furthermore, the absence of a human “presence” at the navigational core of the hegemonic apparatus permits it to encode rules of conduct, automating them through financial, academic, medical, civil service, and psychological testing systems that help filter out troublemakers and other liabilities. Most of all, though, it enables a pseudo-scientific regime of synthetic Positivism serving as the substitute for the apparatus’s lack of any moral compass. Ronell describes the place testing holds in the Dasein of *being-as-object*:

The test allows for the maximum freedom of scientific venturing and invites, within its borders, the free play of wholly unjustifiable conjecture. The test promotes incessant field days for the riotous or tentative spin of an unjustifiable conceptual urge. At the same time it serves the function of [the] reality principle to science’s pleasure principle, limiting and ordering the possible as it answers the call of the impossible.<sup>30</sup>

This is as much to say that being-as-subject is excluded from the state of exception by a kind of ban, putting it outside the pale of verifiability. Herein lies the essential conflict between Kant’s *a priori* ethical aesthetic of the CI, and the scientific method we derive from Descartes (or, at least, what it has come to mean in the modern sense). In the 20th-century, science embraced what it considered to be verifiability in the sense meant by Ayer, Russell, Whitehead, Carnap and others.

But as it was funded by industry and the state, what “verifiability” came to mean was that the outcomes and conclusions of its endeavors were *verifiably in line* with the ethical aesthetics of the funders. Pharmaceutical research is only a small but pervasive example. While this has produced many significant discoveries and momentous lifestyle changes, what has been the overall effect on the life of the subject in terms of its understanding of its own ethical aesthetics and how it may be applied throughout its life?

Being-as-object has been substituted for being-as-subject; the result is that the subject, in abdicating its subjectivity for the objective persona of the hegemony through education and the media, is an appliance of the state and its corporate overlords rather than using its resources in the service of its own spiritual evolution and communitarian obligations.

What is lost when we forsake being-as-subject for being-as-object? First, what might be regarded as the natural order of syntax is turned on its head. Though it is not necessarily referencing the deep structure of an

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<sup>30</sup> Ronell, *op. cit.*, 39.

utterance, the subject-verb-object concatenation suffices as an analog to our observable and therefore empirical experience. When we act, we act with this tacit structure underlying our expectations. For the most part we are not disappointed when reality bears us out. However, when, through abdication, we permit what has been throughout the formative stages of our psyche and cognition the polarity of subject and object to be inverted, this syntax becomes deeply disturbed, sending tremors down through what Chomsky regards as the deeper regions of the phrase-structure.

In effect, object acts as subject and vice versa. The unnatural configuration of the individual's orientation to the linguistic and therefore cognitive processing of reality causes a reverberation mostly in the form of "noise," which inevitably disturbs his sense of equilibrium between subjective perception and objective reality.

Consequently, the individual begins to distrust the "voice in his head," sometimes called intuition, which may have guided him in the past through the squalls and uncertainties of life. In science, this results in a compulsion to pursue what Descartes calls the "more abstruse experiences" outside of what might have been the individual's purview, which includes his ethical aesthetics as well as what he can competently handle as truth. "I noticed that experimentation becomes more necessary in proportion as we advance in knowledge. In beginning an investigation, it is better to restrict ourselves to our usual experiences, which we cannot ignore if we pay any attention to them at all, than to seek rarer and more abstruse experiences."<sup>31</sup> As a result, what seem like perfectly rational intellectuals devote their lives to such red herrings as "proving" that God does not exist.

There arises a perpetual lust not only for the exotic "truth," but also for the beginnings of things, the incipient moment, ripe with possibility. A disdain develops for the longitudinal study, the tedious investigation, and for the outcome that is absolutely verifiable but does not bring immediate financial reward and professional distinction, awards, grants, and academic fame. For at the beginning all is shining, new, and bright with promise, like an infant child. It attracts admirers, nurturance, indulgence, and hope. What is long and dragged out, uncertain, and tedious smacks of reality, of the dull, ordinary, plodding nature of discovery, and invariably invites the contempt of the generous corporation seeking an instant payoff with big dividends.

Furthermore, time has a nasty habit of lifting the veil from our eyes about many things. This is never in the best interests of the professional magician, who must trust to the magic of "misdirection"—distracting the audience from the moves needed to create the illusion of the suspension of natural

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<sup>31</sup> Renee Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Meditations*, Lawrence J. Lafleur, trans. (Toronto: Prentice Hall, 1997), 41.

laws. If this were not the case, the willing suspension of disbelief in the enjoyment of media spectacles would be impossible. But what we have here is something more far-reaching and profound: *a willing suspension of analytical reasoning*.

Despite this negation of the analytical proposition, the ethical aesthetic of the hegemonic discourse pretends to favor it. All is “tested,” even that which is not amenable to testing, such as “happiness” and such *boojums* as the “quality of living index” and so on. Moreover, a kind of intellectual crime is perpetrated by substituting invalid synthetic propositions for verifiable and even verified analytic ones. To cover up this crime, the hegemonic discourse tends to favor that which looks as if it *could be* verified if and only if it were given enough time (will “forever” do?).

This invocation of the progressive fallacy—namely that the mere passage of time improves everything infinitely—develops into a Hope Cult that hapless subjects join in droves as a refuge from the ennui and despair they inevitably feel, albeit unconsciously, once having confounded subject for object in the schema of the personality. And having offended their God by embracing the desolation of Positivism, albeit in only the weakest and most uninformed way, they have nowhere to turn except vain hopes, bank loans, and antidepressants.

The imprimatur of de facto verification, which is always *a posteriori* and relies almost exclusively on the *post hoc ergo propter hoc* fallacy, is in most cases all that can be hoped for. “Does it sell? Do people like it? Does it do the job? Did we win the war? Does it get you from point A to point B? Yes? Then what more do you need to know!” In the end, success in the marketplace, or on the battlefield, becomes the determining power of all “truth” value, just as, in ancient times, it was “proof” that God favored the victor over the vanquished.

Again, this parallel ontology gives us two forms of “truth,” just as it gives us two forms of the *a priori* of space and time: the actual and psychological, which, in the confounding of subject and object become confounded themselves (and not in the way Einstein intended).

Ronell, citing Bacon, says, “For Bacon, the mind has to be purged of anticipations, idols, and prejudices before it can apply itself to an untainted reading of nature.”<sup>32</sup> How, then, can we hope to go about objective scientific research when its results and outcomes are “anticipated” by those who fund it, and suppressed if they are not in accordance with “the truth” as seen by the “idols” of the masses and the “prejudices” of the hegemony?

It should be noted that the usurpation of the subject by the object does not establish a regime of scientific verifiability. It has quite the opposite

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<sup>32</sup> Ronell, *op. cit.*, 38-9.

effect, as Descartes points out. We must “restrict ourselves to our usual experiences,” in other words our subjectivity, to arrive at objectivity in the natural schema of reality and not begin with the alien prerogatives and “anticipations” of our benefactors and masters. How could a schema that deliberately goes against the grain of reality be expected to arrive at anything more than the imaginary? To being with reality, translate it into the imaginary, and codify it into the symbolic is the ethical aesthetic of the digital age.

As such, it *hates* reality’s insistence on always demanding to flow in the opposite direction. What makes Freud perhaps the greatest mind of the benighted 20<sup>th</sup> Century is that he—to the amazement of all who understand—took it upon himself to single handedly reverse what he saw as the tide of the *Zeitgeist*. Like the archetype of the Old Testament prophet he seemed to so admire, he not only sounded the tocsin against the devouring of reality by the imaginary and symbolic, he created a method that will stand for all time as a tool by which this process may be reversed, dragging reality back from the abyss and into the light of reason and sovereign power where it belongs.

### 3.9 Ethics of the automaton

In a world increasingly populated with simulacra, animate and inanimate, the matter of the superimposition of the subject upon the object in the morphology of speech causes a special problem; it makes it impossible to distinguish what is real from what is imaginary. By uniting an analytic (verifiable) subject with an invalid synthetic predicate through the copula (in this case “*ist*”), all language become hyper-symbolic. It ceases to denote. Instead, it becomes perpetual and intractable *metonym*.

This innovation is a great boon for political public discourse. Thanks to documentation by director Leni Riefenstahl, we know the crowd reacted enthusiastically to Rudolph Hess’ syllogistic proclamation during the 1934 *Reichsparteitag* (mentioned earlier here) in Nürnberg that “*Die Partei ist Hitler! Hitler aber ist Deutschland!*” (therefore, the NSDAP “*ist*” Germany). In the film, Party members at the rally do not seem to dismiss this ISP as mere political rhetoric, symbolic hyperbole, or categorical contradiction. Rather, judging by the crowd’s reaction, they embrace it as empirical, analytical, and self-evident Truth.

How is this possible? The emotional nature of the appeal makes it *supra-real*, more real than real. It indicates a simulacrum of the ideal world many of them thought they were living in or would soon *be living in* “in the future.” With the lazy convenience of hindsight, we see how “wrong” they

were. We pride ourselves in being so *chronologically* superior to these long-dead Nazis without considering what nonsense we now hold dear as our construct of reality. Though we see that in a few short years their dream will lie in ruins and they will be sent scurrying toward the next most expedient ideology to possess them with hardly a *mea culpa*, we thank heavens we are not similarly deluded.

Their casual prognostication was not wrong because Nazi ideology was “wrong.” Rather, it was because Germans had accepted a logical proposition that was invalid as a verified or verifiable analytical proposition. Never mind the fact that the *terms* of the proposition, readily accepted as they were, had hardly a chance to be defined by the *Zeitgeist* fomenting in their midst. In other words, like any good citizen of civilization, they wanted to be *ruled* rather than *rule*. Without this impulse, this gaze, civilization is impossible because it is nothing less or more than the expression of the abdication of one’s social responsibility to those who know better or best with the object of being ruled by them. Civilization is predicated upon the ritual sacrifice of one’s sovereignty on the altar of a god created by the magic of the invalid synthetic proposition.

In such a universe of discourse, what place does ethics have? This is a complicated question because it immediately runs into a wall of ethical systems, codes of ethics, exhortations to “be ethical” that clutter up the notional landscape of modernity. (Even the corporate culture of an Internet search engine, trivial as search engines are in the scheme of things, has the temerity to advertise its ethical aesthetic as “do no evil,” an act which should render anyone suspicious.)

Making the world safe for democracy, blowing up the infidel, fighting terrorism, “wars” on poverty and drugs, and all of the rest of the sanctimonious rhetoric of the modern state is every bit as “evil” as the more accurate and sincere words of Rudolph Hess. Why? Not because of their content and intent, but because they are based on *invalid synthetic propositions sold as verifiable analytic propositions* in the agora of cultural ideas and ideology.

All of them, however, maintain a halo of rarified sanctimony. Just the utterance of the word “Democracy” is supposed to invoke its corresponding god and bring peace and prosperity to every “emerging” nation, the ubiquitous drumbeat of the word “Ethics” is supposed to scare away all of the demons of mankind’s baser and more primal urges.

From what, and into what, are these countries emerging? While it is not the purpose of this discussion to answer such questions, we can say that those made aware of this rhetoric come to it through the media which have an astounding consistency in their discourse from culture to culture:

consume, submit, accept, fear. That the weak but passionate voices of do-it-yourself journalists and documentarians who have their radical exposés aired by media outlets owned by the corporations they excoriate should give us pause. Therefore, the search for ethics in this wilderness as bereft of logic and sense as the moon is of lemonade should make us reconsider where and on what we spend our time.

Descartes anticipates the desire in modern man to think of himself as so clever that he could make a synthetic copy of himself in the automaton. If such a creature is possible, will it also share what civilization likes to think of as its elaborate and humanitarian ethical system? Descartes is less concerned with the fabrication of such a monster as he is with the logical consequences of this line of thought. It always ends with the idea that *if we just give it enough time, technology, and the right mathematics*, we can create an “intelligent,” sentient being equal or superior to ourselves.

Understanding what he might have considered to be man’s place in relation to God, Descartes is doubtful. His objections are familiar when we consider that they are often the first to be dispelled by “futurists” and technologists bent on improving what is to them is the sorry state of mankind through the invention of sentient machinery. “The first is that it could never use words or other signs for the purpose of communicating its thoughts to others, as we do .... The second ... is that, although such machines could do many things as well as, or perhaps even better than, men, they would infallibly fail in certain others, by which we would discover that they did not act by understanding, but by the disposition of their organs.”<sup>33</sup>

The defensive engineer of synthetic intelligence would attack Descartes’ claim that the automaton could not communicate as we do with words, pointing to the cacophony of chatterbots roaming the domestic landscape. But this defense is carried out without considering whether these chatterbots “think,” which naturally demands a precise definition of thought. We like to imagine that thinking precedes, informs, and makes possible the speech we take so much for granted that is often pointed to as that which makes us human. Even cognitive scientists have yet to “prove” that thought even exists, though we know that “given enough time” this problem too will be solved to the satisfaction of industrial and social progress.

### 3.10 Apparatus tests the subject

For the automaton to approach human functioning, it will need more than language. Machines that speak and interact with us are pervasive and

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<sup>33</sup> Ronell, *op. cit.*, 36.



invasive and are therefore trivial for the purpose of this discussion. However, in the state of exception everyone is tested. If the automaton is an extension of the apparatus, its *golem* as it were, how will it test humans to see if they are not machines?

How will it apply its programmed ethical system (allowing for learning and self-modification) upon meeting someone, as humans do with their social codes and elaborate protocols? Will sentient machines also feel the need to be rich and create social classes based on what they discover about the weaker species with whom they must condescend to share the world? Most of all: will they be used to weed out those unwilling to abdicate their sovereignty to the hegemonic order and its corporate overlords?

Below is a machine that determines the relative probability of whether or not a person *belongs, mostly belongs, mostly does not belong, or does not belong* to a fictitious social order. This order has some of the criteria used by people in modern societies to determine social status, such as net worth and professional success. There are six criteria in three categories: 1, 2, and 3. Each category holds two criteria containing characteristics which are negations of each other, so that 1 contains *ab*, 2 contains *pq*, and 3 contains *xy*. Therefore, *ab, pq, xy* are negations.

For example, *ab* could be “good/bad, *pq* could be “rich/poor,” and *xy* could be “winner/loser.” To determine an individual’s profile, a series of redundant interrogatives would be presented by the automaton, such as “What is your net worth in dollars?” If it is over  $x$  units, then the person is “rich,” and if it is under  $x$  units then that person is “not rich” (e.g. “poor”).

Running this system, we derive 6 combinations of characteristics in the three columns: *apx, apy, aqy, bqy, bqx, bpx*. The positive category is to the left of the column, and the negative to the right. The “most positive” score is *apx*, occupying all three left columns of 1, 2, and 3. The most negative is *bqy*. Therefore, *apx* is the negation of *bqy* expressed ( $apx \sim bqy$ ). The remaining four states are either “more positive” or “more negative.” For example, *apy* is more positive, but *aqy* is more negative. *Bqx* is more negative, whereas *bpx* is more positive, expressed thus: ( $apy > aqy$ ), and ( $bpx > bqy$ ). Finally, there are two *logical equivalents*:  $n$  ( $apy \equiv bpx$ ) and  $m$  ( $aqy \equiv bqy$ ).

To simplify matters, we can say that there are four possible scores: *apx, n, m* and *bqy*, with *apx* being the “most positive,”  $n$  being “mostly positive,”  $m$  being “mostly negative,” and *bqy* being the most negative. These correspond to *belong, mostly belong, mostly does not belong, and does not belong*. Those who mostly do not belong and do not belong are therefore “unethical.” Their profiles contain too much of what is judged “bad” by the apparatus. Furthermore, by the standards of “good standing” in the

community, their lack of success as “losers” and the “poor” means that they are anathema to society, a threat to its wellbeing, and have (at least in terms of leading a miserable life) got what they deserve.

Just as the hegemonic order declares, by fiat, what is “just,” so too does it declare what is ethical. If it did not have this power it would have no power at all, for its power must be categorically different from that of the subject. Were it not, there would be no sovereign and subject, no lord and bondsman, and no master and slave. It is simply not linguistically or logically possible to expect the hegemony in a state of exception to abide by the edicts with which it orders the subject into servitude, and by which the subject complies with *esprit de corps*. As the test above issues *from* being-as-object, there is “no one” who is doing the testing. The question the subject consistently fails to ask itself and its society as it hurries off to abdicate is: “Do I want an automaton making ethical judgments about my role in society?” After all, who cares?

The test itself is the ontological determinant. That the subject is judged “most positive” or “most negative” is not a function of the subject's actual state in some analytical way but is rather an invalid synthetic proposition about the subject, presented, however, as an *objectively verifiable proposition* through *testing*. Testing conjures verifiability up from the abyss of its own self-referential system of ethics. In the form of being-as-object, “nothing” in the service of “no one” allows for an ethical aesthetic that is entirely programable minute to minute, even by its own recursive learning system and conditional branching. Like the slick lawyer, it already knows the answers to all of its interrogatives.

At the same time, through surveillance and compulsory submission of personal form data, it also already knows what the subject will say. Therefore, its ethical apparatus serves as a kind of ritual to humor the subject's patriotic desire for “due process,” the result of which is that the subject feels satisfied that it is, after all, inferior or superior as the apparatus dictates.

Ronell describes how the test drains meaning from knowledge through its *a priori* application of its own *a posteriori* conclusions, which is ultimately a form of the *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy. “While the test is a questioning act, and while it may prompt the necessity of counter-examples, it already contains and urges a sense of the correct way to answer its demand .... [T]he test attacks the epistemological meaning with a kind of ontological fervor.”<sup>34</sup>

Again, the test inverts the relationship between subject and object, establishing the priority of being-as-object as the “natural” orientation of

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<sup>34</sup> Ronell, *Ibid.*, p. 186.

civilization and nature's being-as-subject as a perversion of the way life should be.

Epistemologically, the test creates its own meaning *ex nihilo*, pulling it out of its arse, as it were. Herein lies the relationship between the apparatus, the discourse, the state of exception, and being-as-object. As there is "no one" directly operating this machine (it being an automaton), meaning must be fabricated through the exploitation of invalid synthetic propositions. Were there a *subject* behind the operation of the objective machine, then we might be able to make the argument that there is also an organic ethical aesthetic at work that has at least an ancestral, genetic link to Kant's *a priori*. But then this would spoil the illusion of what is regarded by the apparatus as a "completely objective test" such as the various intelligence tests and so forth.

Psychologically, exploitation occurs in the I2 or Real-I position of the Lacanian mirror stage, ushering in the abdicated position of Ix. In effect, abdication itself becomes a kind of test, just as there is a test to see if one has abdicated. Keeping up with the monthly payments on the promissory note qualifies one to be a "member" of the junior league of the hegemonic *syndicate*.

In the fog created by a matrix of invalid statements generating simulacra, the question arises of whether or not the subject even exists in the socioeconomic sense defined by the hegemonic order and its corporate overlords. "To the extent that the test, according to its more constative pretexts, delivers results, corroborating or disconfirming what is thought to be known of even to exist, it can undermine anything that does not respond to its probative structure. The status of the thing tends to topple under the pressure of the test. Somewhat paradoxically, it is not clear even that something is known until there is a test for it."<sup>35</sup>

### 3.11 Universal Grammar and the *a priori*

The *a posteriori*, then, is the self (spectral) and the Self (social), or the positions at the Ideal-I and Real-I stages of development (with the eccentric Ix position of abdication as the terminus). For the sake of this discussion, we will assume that the language faculty (LF) is innate, using Kant's *a priori* of space and time ( $S \wedge T$ ) as the primordial state from which simulacra derive their inherited characteristics of verisimilitude.

The *a priori* are categorically distinct from psychological space and time ( $s \wedge t$ ), which are products of the subjective psyche rather than objective phenomena. In Chomsky's schemata, the LF is followed by the action of

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<sup>35</sup> Ronell, op. cit., 187.

universal grammar (UG) in the formation of language in the individual. LF + UG, given the right social environment, produces language.

According to Chomsky, “universal grammar *is not a grammar, but rather a theory of grammars*, a kind of *metatheory* or *schematism* for grammar [italics added].”<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, “People confuse ‘universal grammar’ with ‘deep structure,’ because by ‘deep structure’ they understand the logical subject-predicate proposition, supposed by philosophers as underlying all language.”<sup>37</sup> We take the *a priori* to be no more nor less than Kant states:  $S \wedge T$ . Inasmuch as grammar follows this pattern, it is universal. Deep structure (DS), however, is the morphological dimension of *learned* language, and learned almost exclusively between the ages of 0 and 12. Therefore, we may make a schematic distinction between UG and DS, the former as innate and the latter as acquired.

Using Osgood's four “fundamental psycholinguistic generalities,”<sup>38</sup> below we analyze the basal DS language and its comparison to the acquired discourse informing its progressive development *a posteriori*. The aim is to differentiate *acquired* language from basal (LF + UG) *innate* language, parsing modifications made to thought as it develops into the hegemonic discourse and its apparatuses and appurtenances. It will be argued that during this process the value of  $T \wedge S$  is *inverted* with its psychological counterpart  $t + s$ , so that the relationship  $(T \wedge S) < (t + s)$  is expressed at the point of abdication.

Osgood's four generalities are:

1. At all levels (phonological, morphological, and syntactic) language systems like other behavior systems will follow a principle of progressive differentiation in their development.
2. At all levels of units in a language, the competing alternatives will be organized hierarchically in terms of frequency of occurrence and a relatively low-entropy distribution approximating the Zipf<sup>39</sup> function.
3. At all levels of language organization, whenever there are competing means of achieving some criterion of communication performances, these competing means will be related inversely as a compensating system.

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<sup>36</sup> Noam Chomsky, *On Language* (New York: The New Press, 1979), 183.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>38</sup> Charles Osgood, “Language Universals and Psycholinguistics,” *Universals of Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Joseph H. Greenberg, ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), 304-6.

<sup>39</sup> Zipf function: an observation in computational linguistics expressed by George Kingsley Zipf that the most common word will be expressed twice as often as the next most common word, and thrice the next, etc.

4. At all levels, the laws of language change (diachronic universals) will be found to reside in the principles and conditions of learning as they operate upon individual speakers and hearers.<sup>40</sup>

Osgood's generalizations apply to the *a posteriori* position following the primordial position of 0I, where all that exists as an organizing principle is S + T. What they show is that the *a posteriori* organizing principles are organic too but depend upon the social stimulus necessary for the critical period (CP) to be successful in the development of the innate LF. While it may seem that "the discourse" and "the apparatus" are somehow "the enemy" of the sovereign subject, particularly when we remember the compromising situations in which the sovereigns of history have abdicated, the fact is they are organic extensions of the *a priori* and are necessary for language development, which is their vehicle.

At any rate, they are *inevitable* influences once the subject has entered the I2 position of the social Real-I, which is perhaps what Donne means by "no man is an island." Now it is necessary to make some remarks about the significance of Osgood's generalities to the development of the schemata of language and the formation of thought and logic in the subject's consciousness.

- 1) The "phonological, morphological, and syntactic" parameters of language increase in their "differentiation" as the child develops through the 0-12 CP. In quantifiable terms, the number of sounds the child can distinguish (phonologically and as a "sign") increases through socialization, as does the understanding of compound words and phrases. The strong threshold of understanding, though, is the final one of *syntax*, which is the most complex phenomenon because it contains the most situational variables when applied. Phonemes contain the least variation because they must be consistent from hearer to hearer within the environmental milieu. As we know, sentence structure can vary dramatically and still produce similar meanings for a particular idea.
- 2) Using the Zipf law of computational frequency, the above three parameters are then organized hierarchically to decrease "entropy." That is, the latency occurring when the three components are retrieved from memory and the language centers of the brain and are then manipulated to produce semantic *meaning*. Poor Zipf law controls in language development tend to aggravate latency either from physiological causes (e.g. brain damage), lack of social environmental stimuli (neglect), or abuse.
- 3) In the *a posteriori* acquisition of language during the CP, different systems will compete. A typical example would be formal versus informal language, vernacular versus mainstream, and slang versus proper speech. After the 1x

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<sup>40</sup> Osgood, op. cit., 304-306.

position, the subject's previous psychological and linguistic orientation does not "go away." On the contrary, it remains as a *neotenic* refuge for reset to the I2, Real-I stage. But it remains "relatedly inverse as a compensating system." For this reason, the discourse, with its cult-like attributes, must cascade over the subject continually for fear of losing the Ix position to an I2 reset through the transgression of *jouissance*.

- 4) The "conditions of learning" are the attributes of the discourse itself, which is no monolith, but can be anything Dasein permits. After all, it is the voice of Dasein. Therefore, the hold can be weak or strong, the cultural cast can be religious or secular, the economic level can be high or low, the proficiency of the subject can be great or small, the orientation can be elevated educationally or modest. Here the "insensitivity" of Dasein is in play. There is "no one" to care what happens. What matters, after all, is abdication into the universal anonymity of "no one." During the critical period (CP), the mechanism of acquisition of DS might be called the "mirror" of the mirror stage.

In this sense it is the generator of our mimetic sense of imitation which is later exploited in a sophisticated way by the formation of simulacra. The speculum of the I1 position remains intact throughout the life of the subject, forever an artifact of the dissonance between the "two I's": the specular (narcissistic) and the real (conformist). The dissonance creates the unique sense of self-consciousness in humans as well as being the forge of neurotic pathology as these systems and developments go awry in a social context hostile to individual sovereignty, capitalist or communist, democratic or totalitarian.

At the deep-structure level, as Chomsky points out, such distinctions as subject-predicate joined by a copula, while fundamental to syntax, are not critical to the sense of consciousness or being, which, ultimately, is what language expresses in the form of the cogito. Political and economic systems, ultimately, are the flotsam and jetsam of humankind's attempt to make sense out of the need for society. Century after century they wash up on the beaches of civilization as artifacts of the past destined for the curiosity and wonder of a present that is busily constructing its own "final solution" to the problem of social harmony and productivity.

For the Ideal-I to serve as the foundation of the Real-I, there must be an innate organizing principle at work constructing the Real-I out of the self-referential mimesis of the narcissistic impulse—while sharing the same now somewhat tarnished speculum. This principle consists of "Evaluation, Potency, and Activity" (EPA) according to Osgood, that "have a *response-like* character, seemingly *reflecting* the ways we can *react* to meaningful

events rather than the ways we *receive* them [italics added].<sup>41</sup> The critical words here are *respond*, *reflect*, *react*, and *receive*.

As attributes of the ontological mode of *being-as-subject*, the mimetic functions need not be programed by social discourse to be effective as EPA. They function as nature intended, *a priori*, innate, as part of our ability to “reflect” upon experience and existence. In *being-as-object*, however, they are invariably programmed by the expediciencies of the hegemonic discourse (which is, after all, only yet another reflection of the subject’s reflection of itself). As such, they lose their spontaneous energy and therefore the vitality they engender as organic extensions of darker and primordial forces in the psyche expressing the organism’s embrace of its mortality and infinite finitude.

*Respond*, *reflect*, *react* are in their own class as, together, a unitary process (*p*) of development formulating the DS (deep-structure), whereas “*receive*” describes the passive cognitive infrastructure of the mind and its feeders in the form of the social “activity” of communication. From this activity arise “pleasantness, strain, and excitement”<sup>42</sup> providing the *stress* needed to make an “impression” on the *a priori* being-as-subject.

While this impression initiates the establishment of *identity* in the subject, any interruption in its initialization leads to the formation of neurotic lesions in the subject’s sense of object constancy, or its faith that it is wanted, loved, and is inexorably allied with humanity as an integral being. This seed of insecurity is soon glossed over as the formation of the psyche proceeds by existential and impetuous necessity. It continues to grow on its own, unimpeded by the initiation of the subject into the rites of passage necessary for it to enter into full socialization (thus forming the modern neurotic personality).

Once established firmly in the I2, Real-I, position, language completes its development, coiling out as *coming-into-being* (*le devenir*). From this standpoint, it roils in successive waves until the emerging psyche reaches adolescence and the brink of complete acculturation into the *cult* of civilization. Therefore, *p* represents a class of ontological functions representative of Dasein in the absence of any attribute (except the attribute of being without attribute). “Receive,” however, being in a class of its own as a *negation* of the dynamic expression of *p*, can be exploited *a posteriori* by the hegemony.

The aim is to mold the subject into an entirely passive *receiver* of second-hand wisdom, a receptacle of useless information, and an expression of social programming. In this creation of the perfect consumer-vassal, the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 312.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 312.

subject's ego at last finds peace in authoritarian assurances of its eternal persistence.

In the lifeless metastasis of being-as-object, the imperative to *receive* metastasizes mathematically throughout the psychological organism, bringing organic functions of EPA to a halt. In place of these functions, it installs the gene of simulacra in the form of the *verisimilitude* it has inherited from realia. In this categorical, ontological shift, the mimetic properties of the ego switch their allegiance from the *a priori* of actual Time and Space ( $T \wedge S$ ) to the *a posteriori* of *psychological* (or “synthetic”) time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ). The engine behind this transformation is the fear of death. To the narcissistic ego, in love with its own existence, the *a priori* of  $T \wedge S$  represents (quite accurately) its demise.

The promise of immortality, then, offered by the hegemony for the price of abdication is too great for it to resist. Such rejection would entail going against its own indomitable sense of self preservation. Putting this mechanism to work, the hegemonic power and its corporate overlords establish the cognitive schema necessary for thought to operate exclusively upon a ration of invalid synthetic statements gussied up with trivial tautologies in the form of senseless language intended as a narcotic distraction from the subject's reflection upon its mortality.



# CHAPTER FOUR

## 4.1 Discourse at the position of *a posteriori*

Through the powerful forces of Evaluation, Potency, and Activity (EPA), the process of individuation is meant to proceed in an organic and functional manner, contributing to the emotional and psychological health of the developing psychic organism. At the deep-structure (DS) level, semantic values find their sub-syntactic affinities in the organization of linguistic memory necessary for the later production of grammatical speech. That speech finds a common grammar is made necessary, of course, by the social nature of human intercourse and even in the construction of language itself.

In other words, though the DS of language may be innate and therefore not directly a product of socialization, it is only half the story of language development. The other half is indeed social. As such, it is subject to a particular kind of organization which we can properly call a *discourse*. What “interests,” in the sense meant by Socrates, this discourse represents is determined by the power of the social milieu into which the subject is born and consequently raised.

Regardless of the color of this socialization, on the semantic level the sub-syntactic affinities begin expressing a distinct worldview which will later find more fertile development as the subject moves out and into the fabric of society as a participant. For this process to occur, however, a calculus at the DS level must endow semantic affinity in the form of discourse with a value *greater than that of the sum of the words used to express it*. In so doing, words themselves take on a double life as discrete, negotiable, and even transactional entities as well as meaningful utterances which, when brought together, form a chain of meaning and syntax expressing something larger and more powerful than the sum of their individual signification. Weinreich refers to this calculus as the “combinatory semiotics of connected discourse.”<sup>1</sup>

In other words, discourse has the unique property of conveying meaning that is *more than the sum of the parts of the words concatenated*. The mimetic property of listening and hearing the words contributes to the

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<sup>1</sup> Uriel Weinreich, “On the Semantic Structure of Language,” *Universals of Language*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Joseph H. Greenberg, ed. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1966), 143.

meaning that is not semantically present in their discrete value but in the semiotic power generated by their association in a meaningful utterance. What, then, determines meaning? While there is much to say in this regard, what concerns us here is the verifiable truth-value of an utterance. This value may come in the form of a nontrivial analytical proposition (we will exclude as trivial tautology,  $A = A$ , from this class) or from a valid synthetic proposition. The latter is a proposition about which it can be said that the subject and predicate are in the same universe of quantitative discourse, and that the subject is verifiable (whether or not it is verified).

To further define discourse, we return to Saussure's idea of the phoneme as sign, as expressed by Weinrich. "We will accordingly say that a language is a repertory of signs, and that discourse involves the use of these signs, seldom in isolation [*italics added*]."<sup>2</sup> Phonemic signs exist not as particles but as parts of a whole. As a social utility, language expresses the sum of these signs. However, as we are all subjects in search of an object to listen, we ultimately have no control over how our utterance is received. It may be in our preferred form, though it is also possible to be received in a mixed or even aberrant form contrary to our wishes and best efforts. This is the liability, the risk, of all communication. This "risk" is a product of what in one form or another is the empirical nature of the sensory apparatus with which we both transmit and receive speech, as well as the social and cultural framework we bring to its reception.

T.E. Lawrence, in describing his own perception of ideas in relation to that of others, says that he thinks in categories rather than gradations; for him, ideas, which are consequently cast into words, exist as distinct entities subject only to the classes to which they belong. This, he says, constitutes his ability to perceive the world empirically, quite in contrast with the idea that what characterizes the senses best is their ability to distinguish an almost infinite number of gradations of frequencies.

In this case, we may also include the gradations of meaning each word carries, which makes it possible for it to be the synonym of yet another word, and so on. In addition, a word is subject to the various significations of its *denotations* as well which of course vary with time and place. "Always my soul hungered for less than it had, since my senses, sluggish beyond the senses of most men, needed the immediacy of contact to achieve perception; *they distinguished kinds only, not degrees* [*italics added*]."<sup>3</sup> His soul's stoic "hunger for less" is at odds with his senses' need for an epicurean surfeit of empirical data. This tension produces a natural inclination for category, or "kinds only," which as we read the record of his adventures and the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 144-5.

<sup>3</sup> Lawrence, op. cit., 135.

expression of his insights about them helps us make sense out of the objects of his experience which add up to more than the sum of their parts.

## 4.2 Taxonomy of simultaneous parallel ontologies

Once the subject has chosen abdication, it exposes itself to the formation of two ontological paths: the one it *might* have taken had it not succumbed, and the one it *has* chosen. The first is an expression of the Real-I at the social position of the mirror stage; the second is an expression of the subject's act of having abdicated its self-determination in favor of promises from the "other" of life eternal with unbridled access to the glories of consumerism. We could add a third possibility: a recursion in the form of the Second Negation where, through what Freud calls the *furor sanandi*, or healing frenzy or "rage to cure," the subject restores its sovereignty.

Moreover, there is the further potential for *jouissance* lurking in the dark antechamber of the psyche, waiting to strike at a moment when the subject can least afford to transgress the fiats and anticathexes forming the brick and mortar of civilization's edifice. We will look into this third possibility later. For now, we are concerned with the subject's bargaining of its ready-to-hand *potential* and *possibility* in return for some uncertain rewards it simply cannot resist. It is the role, if not the sworn duty, of the hegemonic apparatus, through language, to harvest this energy which seems to have been squandered by fate on such a hapless creature.

Possibility and potential are mysterious forces. While they are ripe with intimations of the future, they are also reticent, shy, always on the brink of something big but failing to grasp it. When they are played, they quickly become played out and cease to be natal, incipient, and full of life. Therefore, it often seems in our best interest to keep them hidden, showing them to the few that deserve such glimpses of the glory our everyday exteriors veil from the world. But it also seems to us that to do so is like keeping a bird in a cage. We may enjoy its song, but from time to time we find its tune tragic, plaintive, and haunting. Moreover, the ego is always desperate to promote itself. Exploiting its own possibility, as yet unrealized, as the real thing is especially easy given the circumstances of the ego's constant need for adulation and consideration.

It is no wonder, then, that as soon as the first Big Thing comes along that seems to us to be the perfect opportunity, we let that bird free, watching it fly up into a gilded aviary. It only occurs to us later that this might not have been "a good idea." But by then it is too late. Nevertheless, we learn to live with our choice and even make the most of it, confronting whatever it is that Fortuna throws our way in our relentless pursuit of unimpeded

consumerism and immortality with *joie de vivre*. One consequence of this melodrama is that we find ourselves living two lives simultaneously: that of the individual *we once were* who is the product of the mirror stage, and that of the one who *we have become*, who is a copy of the original creature, a simulacrum. The first issues from the *a priori* of Time and Space ( $T \wedge S$ ); the second issues from the *a posteriori* of psychological time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ). The first is predicated upon the Real-I; the second is predicated upon the Imaginary-I in its conscious orientation and the Symbolic-I in its unconscious life.

Simultaneous parallel ontologies (SPO's), which we shall describe in their discrete form as *ontic threads*, form the divided individual. The bifurcated psyche labors under these two masters, one stronger in the conscious sphere and the other in the unconscious sphere. The latter communicates with the former by stimulating the symbolic expression of the psyche, largely in the form of unfulfilled desire and complaint about its subordination and incarceration in the face of what it considers to be, rightly, an imposter.

The former devotes ever-increasing amounts of its resources to suppressing these intimations of disaster until disaster, or compulsive and explosive transgression in the form of *jouissance*, overwhelms the psyche in an attempt to correct the imbalance. Within the superstructure of the abdicated subject's alienation from itself are more subtle relationships and frameworks which articulate the energies of possibility and potential. The behavior of these substructures can be plotted on the topology of the subject's specular psyche in which it has become a reflection of itself, one representing the Real-I and the other the Imaginary and Symbolic I.

### 4.3 Language, thought, and ontic threads

Taken by itself, an ontic thread is constructed of what Foucault called "discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable."<sup>4</sup> Here we find a correlation between language and the ontological structure of the abdicated subject's psyche. Spoken language has high fault tolerance because, as stated previously, it is 1) in real time, and 2) is subject to the heuristic of immediate feedback from the listener. Behavior of ontic threads follows the rules of deep structure presented by Osgood above in his description of his four generalities regarding Evaluation, Potency, and Activity. As one ages, one's personal story or discourse crystalizes until one

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Deployment of Sexuality," *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 100.

comes to resemble not the Real-I *persona* (imago) forsaken at the point of abdication (Ix), but the corporate persona of the hegemonic power to which one has sacrificed one's self-determination. Increasingly, this story line is fed to the subject by the generative apparatus of the corporate state, particularly in a state of exception where even life's indifferent events become predetermined and choreographed such as in the "concentration camp."

Of particular application here is Osgood's third generality, quoted above, that "whenever there are competing means of achieving some criterion of communication performances, these competing means will be related inversely as a compensating system." What is most interesting in this context, though, is Osgood's fourth generalization: "At all levels, the laws of language change (diachronic universals) will be found to reside in the principles and conditions of learning as they operate upon individual speakers and hearers."

The "diachronic universals" indicate two threads of language operating simultaneously to produce a single effect, as in a SPO. That effect is *Dasein*, which is undivided, unitary, and without what we would consider to be the attributes of Heidegger's *extensa* and Kant's *manifold*. The subject's "being with" the world is critical to the performance of its duties as a vassal of the state. Therefore, it is in the state's best interest to promote not the subject's alienation from itself and others, but a sense of community among the abdicated serfs of its psycho-political fiefdom.

It is at this point that it may be said about the subject that it has crossed a threshold, a categorical exclusion of 0 / 1, when there is no possibility of reset to the previous state. This may or may not be so, depending upon the individual and his circumstances. Being commuted to a topological territory where both of its ontic threads must work in synchrony but within fundamentally different categorical orders (one real, and the other a synthesis of the imaginary and symbolic), the subject grows preoccupied with a need for emotional and psychological *equilibrium*. It seeks out therapists, doctors, religions, wealth, and grandiose ideas. In a mode of seeking, the subject enters a realm of metaphysical values which have no limit; there is no amount of wealth, status, power, enlightenment, health, sex, and good luck that will satisfy its lust for eternal persistence as an ego and apex consumer.

Metaphysical adventure in the unfamiliar topology of *being-as-other* defines the subject's life as its discourse. While it may be the boon of biographers at some point, in the process of its unfolding it is the subject's gilded cage. Crossing the threshold of the *categorical exclusion* (0 / 1) is a nontrivial event. The question for the subject's unconscious life becomes one of whether or not the conscious being has crossed the threshold of no

return. Though subordinated by the conscious individual's voluntary, willing, willful, and even enthusiastic choice of the abdication of its personal sovereignty, the Real-I continues to "sing in its chains like the sea" in the hope that its cries will be heard and answered. Meantime, the imaginary and symbolic self, plots and schemes its way into situations from which it may never escape, trapping both simultaneous parallel ontologies in a fate neither of them could fully have anticipated.



**PART THREE**

**THE DISCOURSE OF SPACE AND TIME**



# CHAPTER FIVE

Transcendental Aesthetic cannot contain any more than these two elements: space and time ...<sup>1</sup>

Kant

The true interest of an absolute monarch generally coincides with that of his people.<sup>2</sup>

Edward Gibbon

## 5.1 Dialectics as parallel ontologies

Kant's *a priori* of space and time provides us with the material equivalent of the OI position in the modified Lacanian mirror stage concatenation we have been using in this discussion. Furthermore, it may be said that it corresponds to the initial state of 0 in the categorical exclusion:  $(0 / 1) > (1 / n)$ , or the proposition that the difference between 0 and 1 is greater than the difference between 1 and any other number ( $n$ ). As *the* primordial position, then, it also represents Dasein, or that which is *prior* to any expression of what Kant calls "manifold." We find correlations to these values in the work of Hegel as well as Heidegger.

In Hegel, *being-in-itself* supplies an objective value standing in contradistinction to the *being-as-object* of simulacra, which is *a posteriori* and therefore a categorical negation of Dasein. Hegel's *being-for-an-other*, however, intimates the origin of the Self, the subject, and its potential for self-determination and therefore sovereignty. Naturally, as these distinctions concern *being* in one form or another, they are critical in the operation of the copula "to be" in language, and, by extension, the syntactic coordination between subject and predicate in a proposition. How, then, are these ontological values affected by the introduction of the invalid synthetic proposition (ISP)?

First, we must examine the role of notional value in the establishment of that which is brought to our consciousness as ready-to-hand from the underlying value of the present-at-hand. To better understand the context of the notional, then, we must keep in mind the inevitable and inescapable

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<sup>1</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Gibbon. *Op cit.*, 103.

effect of the psychological on our de facto concept of time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ). In this sense our psychological appreciation and application of  $t \wedge s$  can be called “notional,” or a value in the present predicated upon an underlying asset that will only achieve this value “in the future” given a certain set of circumstances. In this sense, what we claim as reality in the present is, in the state of the simulacra of abdication, a social contract between the imaginary and symbolic. Their lack of immediate substance does not, however, preclude their contractual and therefore decisive effect on the quantitative value of reality.

If we exclude psychological  $t \wedge s$  from our deliberations about reality, we are left with ontological, actual, or “real-value”  $T \wedge S$ . But this is hardly the state of affairs the subject finds itself in after voluntary abdication of its primary position. While the psychological perception of time has significance here, it is not *a priori*. Rather, it is entirely *subjective*, being a kind of echo or imprint of the objectively ontological, or the Not-I.

It is this rogue being-as-subject that hegemony fears, and why it labors to establish the topology of its being-as-object as a simulacrum of what Hegel describes as being-in-itself, the objective-correlative of Dasein. If it can only coax the subject into this territory, then the notional value of the imaginary and symbolic *invert* the natural value of the real, establishing by fiat a realm of simulacra from which the subject, rendered impotent by this linguistic apparatus, may not escape except through the compulsive transgression of *jouissance* or the desperate act of suicide, immediate or gradual.

But as we have seen in the discussion of simultaneous parallel ontologies (SPO's), ignoring reality does not make it go away. In fact, it becomes even more of a nuisance to the abdicated subject, though these pernicious effects of real value are increasingly repressed into the unconscious thread of the subject's subordinated ontology. Here we see the discontent or *Unbehagen* (unhappiness), of civilization. It is a synthetic disease caused by a plague of invalid synthetic propositions masquerading as valid, verifiable, or verified analytic statements in the thought process of the subject. Constant reinforcement, through alternate and arbitrary reward and punishment, by the government, church, education system, media, and banking system drive the subject onward into the ever-increasing subjection it craved while under the tiresome burden of self-determination.

Real-value  $T \wedge S$ , then, provide us with the equiprimordial vectors of Dasein without having any attributes themselves but giving rise, through coming-into-being (*le devenir*), to what Hegel calls the *extensa*. Therefore, we notate them as 0 in any concatenation of *le devenir*. In our linguistic and therefore cognitive embrace of the *extensa* (or Kant's *manifold*), we attune

the organism, mind and body, to the frequency of simulacra which, though lacking any substance of their own, have nevertheless inherited what *feels like* substance from the class of realia they have effectively negated. “Does it extend?” perception asks. “If yes, then it is real.” Our predilection for the empirical cripples our ability to assess reality in any objective way except through, perhaps, mathematics and the use of the scientific instruments and procedures it makes possible. In as much as a thing “extends,” it exists. When it ceases to extend, it ceases to exist.

So far, we have discussed the extensa, their topology, and the parallel ontic threads of discourse winding through the topology of being-as-subject and being-as-object. Now we turn to the dialectical movement of the resulting discourse, which is an excrescence of the “facticity” (in the Heideggerian sense) of notional  $t \wedge s$ . In particular, we look at the subject-object dichotomy in its primordial configuration and how this negation communicates the real value of Dasein, or the *being-with*. The hope is that we will develop greater insight into the mechanics of what Hegel calls being-in-itself and being-for-an-other in their relation to the apparatus of language and its power to capture or release.

Hegel shows it is only possible for two values to negate each other when they are “the same,” but not necessarily in equilibrium. “Notion” is the epistemological impulse of the output of dialectics. “[I]f we call Notion what the object is in itself but call the object what it is qua object or for an other [sic], then it is clear that being-in-itself and being-for-an-other are one and the same.”<sup>3</sup> Intrinsic knowing is not different from the assignment of meaning to a thing or idea if and only if the common sign is what the other also perceives it to be.

While this is an ontological description, it applies to the fundamental premise of language according to Saussure. The signified and the signifier must share value despite their categorical differences as members of exclusive classes. While it is true that Saussure also says the signified has an arbitrary relationship to the signified (in other words, any signifier will do as long as everyone agrees upon its meaning), nevertheless once this relationship is established their fates unite.

Such a phenomenon makes the situation ripe for the exploitation of the signifier as the signified—the fundamental linguistic principle of the invalid synthetic statement or proposition. “Although signification and signal are each, in isolation, purely differential and negative, their combination is in fact of a positive nature, it is, indeed, the other order of facts linguistic

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<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 166.

structure comprises. For the essential function of a language as an institution is precisely to maintain these series of differences in parallel.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite the subject’s natural and proximal development into the social, Real-I position (I2) from the Ideal-I (I1) position, the previous position deposits an artifact in the form of latent narcissism and egotism, perhaps as part of a schema to provide an ontological trail along the thread so that recursion is possible. Discovering the tarnished speculum of its previous adaptation, the subject now employs it for the purpose of *gazing* (lovingly) at the Self in the form of *self-consciousness*, which is conscious self-awareness, rather than understanding or wisdom, regarding its position in the world.

While this act of gazing brings with it an inherent pleasure because of its power to dispel the subject’s nagging fear of the loss of object constancy, or the love of others, it also causes dissonance in the subject’s social relationships since they consist of other subjects like itself doing the same thing! Both self and other have the urge or tendency, derived from this dissonance, to dissolve the conflict of alterity into the abducted stage (Ix), which is the unnatural successor to I2. “But in point of fact self-consciousness is the reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from *otherness*,” says Kant.<sup>5</sup>

Conscious self-awareness derives from the *a posteriori* world of empiricism, with its psychological sense of  $t \wedge s$ . Dasein’s facticity, however, over-arches this psychological movement, providing a starting point of *bare life* (0I) and working through transformational dialectics to the terminus at the point of abdication (Ix). “In this sphere, self-consciousness exhibits itself as the movement in which this antithesis is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit for us.”<sup>6</sup> When this conscious self-awareness becomes “explicit,” it is no longer the “arguable” being or presence of the synthetic proposition of being-as-other.

While this may come as a relief to the subject, it also sets the stage for future conflict with others because they are doing the same thing at the same time. Therefore, in relieving its sense of the fear of the loss of object constancy, the subject, by turning upon itself for comfort through exploitation of the specular artifact of the I1 position, succeeds in alienating itself from others. At the same time, others are indulging the same mechanism, creating a culture of alienation in which *Unbehagen*, the hallmark of civilization, becomes the normative mood or mode of

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<sup>4</sup> Saussure, op. cit., 118.

<sup>5</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 105.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

experience. In such a weakened state the subject is easy to exploit for whatever purpose.

Wittgenstein shows that the nature, or verisimilitude, of the explicit proposition and its functionality in the context of the epistemology of the self depends upon its agreement with verifiable statements. “The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with the possibilities of the existence and nonexistence of the atomic facts.”<sup>7</sup> The “atomic facts” are what Agamben calls “bare life,” Heidegger “facticity,” and Kant “explicit” propositions. They all point to the reality which the mirror can only reflect (or inherit), whether in the mirror stage or in I2 and Ix where its artifact continues to function as self-conscious awareness (though somewhat mitigated in Ix by the implantation of the commercial core identity of the apparatus).

Hegel describes the movement of what he calls the Unchangeable (bare life) through experience, with its accumulation of artifacts both psychological (imaginary and symbolic) and within Dasein (real). This accumulation he calls “wretchedness”.<sup>8</sup> Why? Again, through centuries of adaptation to the comforts and discontents of civilization, the subject has grown unnaturally averse to its *a priori* orientation of self-determination as an animal. It wants a godlike Destiny, preordained. To rule rather than be ruled; to determine one’s fate rather than have it be preordained by authority, secular or divine; to engage in mutual-aid with one another rather than to compete for resources; to exist as a monad without the need for parental object-constancy; and to have to face up to one’s mortality, *is to the abdicated subject wretchedness incarnate*.

Generations of a steady diet of invalid synthetic statements permeating every level of social discourse eventually makes reality the Enemy, to be feared and conquered rather than reconciled with in any meager way. To take on, again, the hair shirt of reality is too much for even the strongest and most gifted of civilization’s vassals. Gibbon, referring to the rule of late Roman emperor Severus, describes what can be expected both from the ruler and the ruled:

The true interest of an absolute monarch generally coincides with that of his people. Their numbers, their wealth, their order, and their security are the best and only foundation of his real greatness .... not so much from indeed from any sense of humanity, as from the natural propensity of a despot to

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<sup>7</sup> Wittgenstein, op. cit., 61.

<sup>8</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 128.

humble the pride of greatness, and to sink all his subjects to the same common level of absolute dependence.<sup>9</sup>

What the subject regards as its “consciousness,” which is more adequately described as conscious awareness, is a product of the logic of civilization’s exaggerated claim that it can provide absolute homeostasis forever and ever if and only if the subject coughs up enough taxes and makes the ultimate sacrifice. What is required to pull this off is cultivation of what Julian Jaynes has called the Bicameral Mind. While this phenomenon comes in various proportions and shapes, what characterizes it is the ability to tend to the maintenance of a permanent, enduring, and credible state of logical contradiction. Seen from this position, then, the noncontradiction of the valid synthetic statement seems like heresy at best and lunacy at worst. In modern man, behind what sinologist Arthur Waley has called “the thinnest veneer of *homo industrialis*,” the mechanisms of ruthless self-interest rather than self-determination, which are necessarily disabled, are exploited by the interests of the state which in turn serves the interests of its corporate overlords. Though one would think that the subject then wins the day by a permanent state of exception wherein it may indulge its every whim, in the end *everyone* loses equally and brutally as they did as the consequence of Severus’ Pax Romana.

The contemporaries of Severus, in the enjoyment of the peace and prosperity of his reign, forgave the cruelties by which it had been introduced. Posterity, who experienced the fatal effect of his maxims and example, justly considered him the principal author of the decline of the Roman empire.<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, movement through ontic positions in the transformational sequence, and along the line of the ontic thread from one thread to another, is driven by what Hegel calls “unchangeable consciousness” which remains unaltered no matter what thresholds are crossed. It is necessary to rein in the eccentric movement of all dialectical passes so that, in the end, there is a single synthetic output.

Throughout this process there is the irritation of self-consciousness as an artifact from the specular position of the development of self-awareness and identity. “For the movement runs through these moments first, the Unchangeable is opposed to individuality in general; then, being itself an individual, it is opposed to another individual,” yielding a sense of

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<sup>9</sup> Gibbon, op. cit., 103.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 106.

separation and finitude in being-as-subject and its relation to being-as-object.<sup>11</sup>

Hegel's concatenation finds its analog in the mirror-stage sequence. We may correlate his threefold relation of the "immediate beyond" with the OI, I1, and I2 positions of the modified Lacanian mirror stage: "first as pure consciousness [OI]; second, as a particular individual who approaches the world in the forms of desire and work [I1], and third, as consciousness that is aware of its own being-for-self [I2]."<sup>12</sup>

However, we must also consider what Badiou says about the ordinality of the multiple which he calls "the backbone of all ontology, because it is the very concept of Nature." His discussion of natural multiples focuses on the duality of "two," which "formalizes natural existent-duality."<sup>13</sup> Of course, within the region of Dasein, if there is *a*, then there is *b*; if there is *b*, then there is *c*; if there is *c*, then *c* is related to *a* as an ordinal. By this formula arises the manifold of things.

As stated at the beginning of the Preliminary, when a thing crosses a certain linguistic threshold, by the power of the copula in the form of coming-into-being (*le devenir*) we may say that "it is." Badiou calls this cause-and-effect relationship "the link between language and the sayable of being ..."<sup>14</sup>

As the social expression of the multiplicity of related things in coming-into-being, language necessitates differentiation of the discrete Name, or of what Saussure refers to as "difference," thereby making the effective application of language in communication possible. In this way the world of Dasein is "constructed" one multiple at a time arising from duality "as a program for the complete mastery of the connection between formal language and the multiples, whose existence is tolerated."<sup>15</sup> The "toleration" of multiplicity in the face of our monadic existence is none other than the forbearance of what Hegel refers to as the "wretchedness" of consciousness and the endurance of the excrescence of temporality and its myriad extensa.

Wretchedness is not to be underestimated as a power in decision-making, particular in the (largely unconscious) decision to abdicate. Nor are we to dismiss the pleasures and rewards of one's personal discourse, populated as it is with the detritus of the hegemonic line within a handy framework of invalid synthetic statements. For herein is the very "motor" of Dasein, what makes its wheels turn and the drama of one's existence

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<sup>11</sup> Hegel, op. cit., 128.

<sup>12</sup> Hegel, op. cit., 130.

<sup>13</sup> Alain Badiou, *Being and Event* (London: Continuum, 2007), 132-3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

unfold come what may. While we revel in the drama of our own peccadillos, we must also confront the infinite meaninglessness of what Hegel regards as a wretched stage play. All that endures is the story of one's life, beginning, middle, and end, at least until the last record of it fades, or the last memory of it dies.

To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,  
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
 To the last syllable of recorded time,  
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!  
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
 And then is heard no more: it is a tale  
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
 Signifying nothing. (Act 5, Scene 5, *Macbeth*)

The only non-trivial distinction, then, is whether self-conscious awareness has been augmented (or indeed replaced) by cognizance of the duality of existence. Once the subject is aware of its duality, a third “presence” arises countervailing the other two as *awareness itself*. Historically, the idea of this presence makes its appearance in the work of Adam Smith and Hume as the “ideal observer” disinterested in one or the other of the dialectic polarities of self-division. We may presume that this new consciousness in the field of possible awareness serves, or reserves, the subject's capacity for dispassion about its own significance in the context of its fellows and the world.

Smith and Hume saw this as a particularly useful quality to cultivate if we are ever to arrive at the truth of human behavior, either through introspection or the inspection of others. Duality, however, is coextensive and therefore cannot be seen directly from any single point of view. It is only sometimes felt, intuited, struggled with, and wondered at. Others may even assist in pointing out the contradictions in our words and deeds. After a while, though, the ideal observer hardens into a distinct presence in the schemata of the subject's useful experience. At that point, it may be relied upon to act like an arbiter in a contract dispute, bringing resolution to our chronic conflicts and restoring homeostasis to our otherwise disturbed experience.

A crisis of realization often signals a return to the wretchedness of bare life, sometimes in the form of the loss of one's wealth, social status, political power, or even health. It is a rare individual who maintains a dualistic perspective and even exploits the possibilities of parallel ontologies under such circumstances. More often, one either scrambles to reestablish the



status quo or drifts to the fringes of society, never to be heard from again. How complacent, then, should one be about one's mortality when faced down by Death in the arena of bare life?

Hegel sees consciousness as being challenged by an "enemy" in the cycle of sleep and awareness, leading the subject into the embrace of the imaginary and symbolic in place of the real. This threat is often the only possibility of homeostasis the subject has recourse to in the form of what it calls "work," which propels it in and through the cul-de-sacs and eddies of the flow of being made inexorable by the *a priori* of time and space, and therefore death. The German saying that "*Arbeit macht das leben suess*" (work makes life sweet) or even its Nazi derivative "*Arbeit macht frei*," gives an approximation of the idea of this "enjoyment":

In the struggle of the heart and emotions the individual consciousness is only a musical abstract moment. In work and enjoyment which make this unsubstantial existence a reality, it can directly forget itself, and the consciousness of its own particular role in this realization is cancelled out by the act of thankful acknowledgment.<sup>16</sup>

The "act of thankful acknowledgment" is by its nature a kind of forgetting, a relief, a trade of the gold of consciousness for the credit and good will of civilization. There is no particular virtue in being "wretched," even if it means a return to bare life. Prison, for instance, is a natural environment for the wretchedness of bare life, but it is not necessarily a place of virtue and wisdom (though it can be). Again, these cycles of forgetting, like the notorious history that repeats itself, do not represent an infinite process.

Rather, it is one that follows a modularity, a finite limit, a recursion where abdication is in itself an expression of the *always already existing Dasein*. Manifest in its most insensitive mode, Dasein is the signal for the way out of the double bind created when the subject, divided between the Ideal-I and the Real-I positions, gazes into the consciousness of the Other and finds only itself. Hegel says that "this cancelling-out" is in truth "a return of consciousness into itself, and, moreover, into itself as the actuality which it knows to be true."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel, *op. cit.*, 135.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 135.

## 5.2 Transcendental self-consciousness

Hegel has been criticized for taking the idea of self-consciousness too far into the transcendental realm of what seems like the “spiritual,” though what Hegel understands as spirit is more accurately described as the *mind*. Žižek draws a limit on the conception of self-consciousness by enclosing it in the psychological and ontological rather than the strictly transcendental. “The crucial mistake to be avoided is to grasp Hegelian self-consciousness as a kind of mega-Spirit controlling our history. Against this cliché, we should emphasize how Hegel is fully aware that ‘it is the finite consciousness that the process of knowing the spirit’s essence takes place and that the divine self-consciousness thus arises.’”<sup>18</sup> Žižek shows that, depending upon our frame of view in assessing the relative freedom of the abdicated subject, we may see both possibilities, the free and “non-free” (captive), superimposed upon each other like two quantum states. “For example, when we bracket moral and aesthetic concerns, a human being appears as non-free, totally conditioned by the causal nexus; if, on the contrary, we bracket theoretical concerns, he or she appears as a free autonomous being. Thus, antinomies should not be reified—the antinomic positions emerge through shifts in the subject’s attitude.”<sup>19</sup>

If it is possible to see both ontic threads—*what might have been and what is*—then the best that could be hoped for as a simultaneous vision is a kind of *parallax view* as described by Žižek. In other words, the image in a still pond where water refracts the view of the submerged portion of a reed, making it look broken at the water line, approximates our distorted view of *Being*. From one perspective the subject appears “conditioned by the causal nexus,” and “non-free,” but from the other moves about as “a free autonomous being” in a state of sovereignty. It is for this reason that the slave, though he may gripe about his situation, desires the freedom to enslave while still remaining “non-free” *more than* he desires being free but without the power to enslave.

If it is possible for us to see both at the same time, as would Adam Smith’s “ideal observer,” necessarily dispassionate about either view, then we might *apprehend* the gestalt of the subject’s condition as what Hegel calls a “musical abstract moment.” But, as Žižek describes, it is more likely that we will see alternating and seemingly noncontiguous views of the subject’s existential condition, which, ultimately, is the result of the refraction of the light of the mind (spirit).

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<sup>18</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 65.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

Furthermore, we must view any indication of consciousness as an extension of time and space, from which it arises, first as an *expression* of it in the form of the “real” *a priori* of  $T \wedge S$ , and then, consequently, as its *excrescence* in the form of the *a posteriori* of psychological  $t \wedge s$ . (From here we will refer to both categories of time and space, in notational form, in the singular.) What makes psychological  $t \wedge s$  an excrescence, which is symptomatic, rather than bare life, which is underlying, is that it is tainted with the *contemplation* and therefore subjectivity of decay and mortality.

As Hamlet notes in Act 1, Scene 1:

How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable,  
*Seem* to me all the uses of this world!  
 Fie on't! ah fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,  
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature  
 Possess it merely. [italics added]

Although “this world” would not exist without  $T \wedge S$ , the uses it is put to spring, if not from necessity, then from the myriad manifold of our imagination, fueled by the furnace of our desire. As such, Western morality easily characterizes our desires as “rank and gross in nature,” either to the delight or demise of those who embrace it as such. This point of view is familiar in the works of philosophical Buddhism and Hinduism, where “duality” is the culprit in many of the crimes of the divided, bifurcated mind. Psychological (imaginary and symbolic) and actual (real)  $t \wedge s$  are superimposed upon each other in our experience, where only the latter may lay claim to being absolute in any verifiable sense, though quantum mechanics is succeeding in undoing even this claim.

Such absolute quantifications as light speed (which nevertheless varies infinitesimally) serve us as indications that there are some tenacious *constants* left in the universe despite the efforts of theoretical physics to ferret out all relativity. The claim of existential priority by real  $T \wedge S$ , however, has been disputed since the outset of what we know as civilization in the West. Corinthians 15:55 expresses its nicely: “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Even death seems relative in the psychological and even biological sense if one thinks hard enough about it.

For nearly 5,000 years civilization’s number-one attraction: immortality, has been predicated on the idea that  $T \wedge S$  is the imposter, the game to beat, even the Devil himself, and that (paradoxically) it is only a matter of “time” before we all realize that the material world, with its notorious dependency upon the  $xy$  vectors of extension and duration, is just an illusion. It is certainly not the purpose of this discussion to dispel any hopes about the truth of the matter. However, we must consider that it is a curious thing

when our psychological needs and wants, take existential priority over what is, at least, a rather workable model of physical reality. But then again blind acceptance of reality is boring. It lacks the infinite potential and possibility “in the future” of the ultimate fulfillment of our fantasies.

Most of all, though, it is the enemy of the idea that the ego, somehow, has the potential to persist forever, either in a metaphysical Heaven (or Hell), or, once Science has had enough time to concoct it, corporeal existence. Without the permanent state of exception where anything is possible, life seems “weary, stale, flat and unprofitable.” As the state subsumes science in the creation of the religion of Scientism, it lends its power of exception over the laws of man to science so that science may overcome the frustrating dependency on the laws of nature and become Magical like religion *used* to be.

From the Kantian perspective, what we know as space (S) is defined by the extensa, or that which extends. Remove the manifold of phenomena and space itself vanishes. This is also true of time (T), since both  $T \wedge S$  can be measured in units and are, in a macro sense, the same phenomenon. Remove measurement by the rhythms of natural phenomena, such as the cycles of planets and the sun, or by artificial units, and there is little to hold on to. The modern psyche cannot bear this possibility; just as everything must be named to be “real,” so too must it be measured, weighed, and timed in the ethical aesthetic of Positivism to be “true.”

This is not to say that  $T \wedge S$  do not also possess qualities of insubstantiality and mutability that are verifiable; Einstein’s verifiable concept of space-time, when it was just a *Gedankenexperiment*, must have seemed as mystical as a hymn from the *Rig Veda*. Max Planck quipped that the only way he got many of his older colleagues to accept the idea of a thermodynamic constant was to wait until they died. But Kant is unequivocal about the matter. While  $T \wedge S$  are the elements of the *a priori*, their “absolute reality” precludes the possibility of thought and philosophy. “[T]hose who maintain the absolute reality of time and space, whether as essentially subsisting, or only inhering, as modifications, in things, must find themselves at utter variance with the principles of experience itself.”<sup>20</sup> It is possible, says Kant, that maybe existence is the way it seems.

He is not, therefore, advocating for psychological  $t \wedge s$ , nor is he making mystical claims about the insubstantiality of everything in favor of the Platonic *eidos* of reality. Kant’s view does not include overtures regarding immortality or God’s creation of the universe. Rather, he is admitting, as he says about mathematics, that what we can know about actual time and space has its limits because all statements regarding their “absolute reality” (other

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<sup>20</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 12.

than this statement) are synthetic. Valid as his own statement may be as a synthetic proposition, at best it is predicated upon a subject consisting of what we know and can prove.

Though the predicate following the copula consists of conjecture, it is, at least, within the same class or universe of quantitative discourse and therefore is noncontradictory. “[I]f they ... make space and time into substances ... they must admit two self-subsisting nonentities, infinite and eternal, which exist (yet without there being anything real) for the purpose of containing in themselves everything that is real.”<sup>21</sup> In other words, for us to assert the “absolute reality” of *actual*  $T \wedge S$ , we must also assert the equiprimordial reality of *psychological*  $t \wedge s$ , otherwise we find ourselves in a proposition containing a categorical contradiction, thus rendering it *invalid*. Kant accomplishes with logic what we fail to comprehend empirically both with measurement, which is as arbitrary as the signifier, and with our preference for synthetic reality formed, like the Golem, out of the clay of the imaginary and symbolic.

### 5.3 Space and time as synthetic propositions

Though “real”  $T \wedge S$  are *a priori*, are one, are not multiples, but contain everything, they are elements of what Kant calls the “transcendental aesthetic.”<sup>22</sup> In this sense they are the ultimate discourse because it is *extensa-as-language* which create them in their psychological form, which must be included in this aesthetic. Indeed, any aesthetic is psychological, though in what might be called the larger sense as *perception*. The subject-predicate (s-p) relationship in its deep structure (DS) both *mimics*  $T \wedge S$  and *fabricates* it in a cycle of coming-into-being:  $(T \wedge S) \rightarrow (s-p)$ . In other words, *if* Time and Space, *then* subject and predicate. Kant's aesthetic of space applies to time as well: “Space is essentially one, and multiplicity in it, consequently the general notion of spaces, of this and that space, depends solely upon limitation. Hence it follows that an *a priori* intuition (which is not empirical), lies at the root of our conception of space.”<sup>23</sup> The dependent limitation here is subjectivity in the form of the awareness of multiplicity: “If we depart from the subjective condition ... the representation of space has no meaning whatsoever.”<sup>24</sup>

We can take this to mean that without being-as-subject there is no objective appreciation in the perception of  $T \wedge S$  as, together, an aesthetic.

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 5.

In this way, this aesthetic *transcends* the subject's subjectivity, while in being-as-object, psychological time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ) are whatever they are decreed to be by expediency and prerogative. The invention of timelines, clocks, borders, property lines, infinity, and "immortality"—as if there were no "limitations" except those of the imagination—characterize civilization just as much as its obsession with edifices, the rule of law, and war.

Kant finds our perception of time to be intuitive rather than empirical, though its contact with the alien prerogatives of reality influences both our psychology and reality itself in the formation of the transcendental aesthetic. "Time is therefore merely a subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensuous, that is, so far as we are affected by objects), and in itself, independently of the mind or subject, *is nothing* [italics added]." <sup>25</sup>

This is not to be construed as saying that time and space, before and after humankind, have not existed in some sense that could be verified by human cleverness. One only need point to the geological record, or atomic carbon dating. Rather, even that which we can verify, with the full force of the available scientific apparatus, is, ultimately, more a reflection of our psychology than of what we might describe as objective *truth*, even by the same determinative criteria. For example, Creationists and Evolutionists use the same data sets to prove their theories.

$T \wedge S$  provide us with the structure to create language, which in turn creates the "multiplicity" of  $T \wedge S$  that we are able to name as *extensa* (and therefore extant). As a reciprocal process, it is the essential engine of discourse (or "the" discourse and all its threads). As each ontic thread of discourse is punctuated with micro and macro events establishing its *recoded* history, the entanglement of these monofilaments creates one great Discourse—though this story has no particular name and cannot be written or pointed to because it is built entirely upon what Kant describes as "nothing." Furthermore, Heidegger reminds us that discourse emanates from "no one"; it is a byproduct of the attempt to communicate, which presupposes the kind of duality of subject and object underlying our fundamental illusions. Therefore, it is *nothing* told by *no one*. This transcendental *void* is at the root of what Kant calls the "dialectical illusion."

The elements, such as  $T \wedge S$ , of this illusion inhabit categories of the Transcendental Dialectic. That which comes into being by fiat, or dogma, is not transcendental but an *excrescence of being-as-object*. That which is an expression of being-as-subject, however, forms into dialectical oppositions abiding in a state of synthetic noncontradiction. What we know and can verify regarding  $T \wedge S$  as elements of the transcendental aesthetic are, in the "critique of understanding and reason in regard to their

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 10.

hyperphysical use,” described as “sophistical illusion.”<sup>26</sup> In other words, though the valid synthetic proposition must find itself in the same class as illusion, being unverifiable, it is “sophistical” in that it is also noncontradictory and is based upon what we *know* is verifiable regarding Time and Space.

### 5.4 Subject-predicate as analog of the *a priori*

From nothing and no one comes what Heidegger calls an “assertion,” a “pointing out” (*Aufzeigen*) that is *apophantisch*,<sup>27</sup> an apophantic statement that “covers up” meaning more than it reveals anything about it or us. We might consider this to be the equivalent of “metadata” in a database and other forms of digital information. It is not the content itself, but it represents it in such a way that it reveals little or nothing about its *meaning*, which may also be encrypted, the public key of which is also a kind of metadata. However, despite the seeming aloofness of *Aufzeigen*, it will do perfectly well as the nature of discourse in the topological *realm* of simulacra. It need only *represent* that which it represents itself as.

In fact, representation is all that is permitted in the form of the expression of simulacra. Insistence upon unequivocal, verifiable, or inherently meaningful utterance is regarded, generally, as an attempt to undermine the prevailing discourse and therefore is a threat to the agency of its imprimatur: the hegemony. The hegemony fears that through meaning the subject may “know” and therefore act out. It reacts to this fear by the autonomic generation of the law, or *nomos*. However, it is somewhat crippled by the fact that the machinery of its apparatus simply cannot process anything but invalid synthetic propositions with or without trivial verifiable subjects used to provide an *appearance* of verifiability. Furthermore, we may also consider the matter of *Aufzeigen* which, in the case of the ISP, confounds the relationship between the signifier and signified by reversing their roles; the signified points out the signifier as the signified, thus subordinating itself to mere representation. This critical inversion is the origin of symbolic behavior, which includes speech as dogmatic discourse and law as fiat rule, the legs upon which civilization stands. The historical transubstantiation debate was a symptom of this confusion.

Heidegger breaks the process of *assertion* into three principles:

- 1) The primary signification of assertion is “pointing out” (*Aufzeigen*)
- 2) “Assertion” means no less than “predication.”

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 155.

3) “Assertion” means communication.<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, to assert is to predicate. But it is also to communicate. How much of communication, though, can we say is original speech issuing from the sovereign will of its source? What follows the copula in a proposition does the pointing-out implied, but not stated, by the subject preceding it. When we refer to the signifier, we tend to think in terms of it being a unitary thing, a sign. But signs of any sort have components, can function in different ways, and have a certain destiny just as does that which they point out.

We also tend to think of a word as an example of this unitary sign, even though we all know that the difference between a word, phrase, clause, and sentence is, in part, one of degree as well as category. The predicate tells us something (a story) about the subject. The subject stands as “bare life,” whereas the multiplicity of coming-into-being arises in the *Möglichkeit* (possibility or potential) of the predicate. The predicate, as long as it stands in noncontradiction with the subject, signifies the coming-into-being of all that is possible in the imagination of humankind.

In this context, Heidegger's three principles should be considered as forms of the verb “*ragt*”: that which juts, protrudes, looms, soars, and towers over Dasein in the form of the *extensa* and the *manifold*. First, the “pointing out” as “signification” describes in semiotic terms precisely what a sign is in its most fundamental form. Second, Heidegger equates as material equivalents “predicate” and “assertion.” The action of the semantic affinity between the two we may describe as *ragt*; the predicate “juts” into being-in-the-world (*in-der-Welt-sein*) from the assertions, implications, and inferences of communication. Prior to the assertion of *ragt*, there is “nothing” and “no-one.”

For there to be anyone or anything then what there is must be communicated, otherwise, phenomena return to their point of generation in nothing and no one. Finally, Heidegger makes “communication” the agency of assertion (a word used less often in this context than “discourse”). “Every predication is what it is, only as a pointing-out. The second signification of ‘assertion’ has its foundation in the first. Within this pointing-out, the elements which are Articulated in predication—the subject and predicate—arise.”<sup>29</sup>

As communication, then, the predicate comes into being (“arises,” *ragt*, in the process of *le devenir*) by permitting the object, the “other,” to *see* with us. In this way subject and object may share a tertiary vision of reality,

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 155-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 197.



neither objective nor subjective, in the form of the apparatus of language—a vision that might not otherwise exist without communication. In so doing we mutually *point out* what poet William Blake calls the “minute particulars” of the world by giving them each a definite character through the function of the signifier.<sup>30</sup>

Through the action of the verb, the subject and object of a sentence *emulate* what we tacitly assume as our relationship to the world. Heidegger (below) calls this “a fore-having, a fore-sight, and a fore-conception” of what we rightfully expect from the world. Our relationship to the world can be quite complicated, as James 4:4 indicates: “Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.” The process of *le devenir*, in the organic sense, is wiped out by the imposition of fiat rule and dogmatic discourse, which simultaneously freezes existence into a kind of death-in-life while at the same time igniting a frenzy of metastasis in an attempt to compensate for the loss of meaning. For example, in the resulting ethical aesthetic, being “super-rich” becomes the highest good, while being poor becomes the cosmic punishment for those who are regarded as subhuman.

The correlation between subject and object in the existential sense is nontrivial for the same reason Heidegger chooses the word *communication* over *discourse* as that which asserts, juts, arises, or *ragt* within the sphere of *in-der-Welt-sein*. Realia communicate; simulacra discourse. “[W]e may define ‘assertion’ as a ‘pointing-out which gives something a definite character and which communicates.’”<sup>31</sup> Heidegger recognizes the exquisite interplay of subject and object as the embodiment of the subject-predicate dynamic. “When an assertion is made, some fore-conception is always implied: but it remains for the most part inconspicuous, because the language already hides in itself a developed way of conceiving [space and time]. Like any interpretation whatever, assertion necessarily has a fore-having, a fore-sight, and a fore-conception as its existential foundation.”<sup>32</sup>

What we recognize in our tacit understanding (or expectation) of reality does to a recognizable extent interfere with the free play of its possibility. By classifying inference as communication rather than discourse, however, we may regain some of the *jouissance* lost in the ever-increasing proscription of language as the *nomos* or Law. *Jouissance* need not be compulsive transgression only; it becomes so when social intercourse is ritualized, proscribed, and purposive in an oppressively utilitarian or frivolous way.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 197.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 199.

Frivolity is not freedom of expression and utility is not meaning. Rather, the former is a symptom of the loss of the ability to discern meaning from stupidity while the latter is a sign of the loss of sovereign imagination. In both cases there is a tendency to rig the apparatus of language into a Henry-Ford-like conveyor belt of the mass production of expressions, words, phrases, and idiom—all in a perpetual state of subject-predicate contradiction. The result is the metastatic *death of meaning* in favor of a highly predictive system of noises and signals indicating that the abdicated subject belongs (iBelong) to a brotherhood of like-minded serfs.

### 5.6 *Ready-to-hand, present-at-hand ...*

The subject of a sentence, through the agency of the verb, *does*. It is a noun *doing* something *with* something, even if that something is itself. As such it is *ready-to-hand*, as a hammer is ready-to-hand for a carpenter. The subject, in a valid synthetic statement, is either verified or verifiable—allowing the predicate freedom to form the unverifiable synthetic proposition, provided both subject and predicate abide by the law of noncontradiction. As such, they must be in the same class belonging to the same universe of quantification.

As such, the predicate is *present-at-hand*. It depends upon the subject to *do*, and to act upon the object. It lacks the necessary synthetic propositions of space and time as its *performative* responsibility, which naturally falls to the subject. “When an assertion has given a definite character to something present-at-hand, it says something about it as a ‘what’; and this ‘what’ is drawn from that which is present-at-hand as such.”<sup>33</sup> Therefore, that which is ready-to-hand and present-at-hand are noncontradictory and belong to the same universe of discourse.

As they both draw their identity from the same source: Dasein, or that which in itself is without identity, it becomes possible for them to be united through the action of the copula to create the infinity of *manifold*. The infinity of manifold is not the result of there being, at any one time, an “infinite number” of *extensa*, but rather of there being a limitless process of generation in the form of *le devenir*. What makes language performative is that it provides the synthesis, through the mathematical power of the synthetic proposition, to always open up to *becoming*. “[W]hen we consider this ‘bond’ [the *copula*], it becomes clear that proximally the synthesis-

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 200.

structure is regarded as self-evident, and that it has also retained the function of serving as a standard for Interpretation.”<sup>34</sup>

Our subjectivity provides “interpretation” which is at the root of meaning. Disdain for the subjective, and therefore sovereign, interpretation by Positivism’s cult of assembly-line objectivity is the cause of much misery in modern culture. It strip-mines meaning from the landscape of Dasein’s *possibility* (*Möglichkeit*). It has the pernicious effect of taking that which has “arisen” (*ragt*) from “nothing” and “no one” and neutralizing it through a linear process of run-away progressivism. While it thus sanitizes realia so that it may serve as the donor of verisimilitude for the endless manufacture of simulacra, it also reduces the subject to a sign of itself, precluding all possibility of originality and therefore of ethical integrity.

The coming-into-being of the subject-predicate as *ragt* constitutes the “being there” of existence in its extension into the *a priori* of T ^ S. “[T]his phenomenon has its roots in the existential constitution of Dasein’s disclosedness (*Erschlossenheit*). The existential ontological foundation of language is discourse or talk.”<sup>35</sup> Talk, or speech, is the everydayness of discourse. It carries its memes the way aerosols carry viruses. And like aerosols, the only way to completely avoid these memes is to refrain from contact or employ a robust filter. Clearly, neither is possible in civilization.

Those who have been, historically, the best at this, such as Benedictine monks of the Middle Ages, performed such exclusion more as ritual than prophylactic. Abdication, then, is an “existential ontological” necessity if there is to be communication. For there to be civilization there must be language. For there to be language there must be discourse. For there to be discourse there must be interpretation. The problem is that interpretation belongs to the subject only as an attribute of its sovereign autonomy. How then can it be at the root of the abdication of self-determination in the creation of the apparatus of the state? Are civilization and the state one? And what role does Dasein’s *disclosedness* have in the formation of the subject’s consciousness of itself and others?

This phenomenological approach to solitary consciousness we might call “care.” In Act 1, Scene 1 of *The Merchant of Venice*, Gratiano remarks upon Antonio’s apparent depressed disposition, which he seems to feel has the look of “too much respect” and “much care”:

GRATIANO

You look not well, Signor Antonio.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 202.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

You have too much respect upon the world.  
 They lose it that do buy it with much care.  
 Believe me, you are marvelously changed.

ANTONIO

I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano—  
 A stage where every man must play a part,  
 And mine a sad one.

For Antonio to “play a part” in the drama of the world, he must embrace Dasein’s disclosedness. Gratiano’s interpretation of this performance is linguistic; it comes in the form of an apparatus of exchange, which is the ready-to-hand of communication. He sees that it is possible to exaggerate the exchange rate by buying it “with [too] much care.” The result, for Antonio, of being caught in this apparatus, however, is that the role he must play is “a sad one.” Nevertheless, “every man must play a part.” Inasmuch as we all find ourselves obligated to uphold the *nomos* of civilization or perish, we become simulacra of ourselves.

Our originality, therefore, becomes expressed only in our *jouissance*, which is why art always ends up being transgressive. It is also why we are compelled to become neurotic, obsessed, and dependent upon that which can kill us. “Discourse is existentially equiprimordial with state-of-mind and understanding” because our “state-of-mind” is a product of our thought, and thought is language.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, our state-of-mind infects others through language just as the same in others infects (affects, asserts itself) in us. Discursive thought becomes an existential “condition,” the therapy for which consists of regular and effective doses of *jouissance* and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

Art, literature, and philosophy serve the same purpose as psychoanalysis. They are the psychoanalytic process in aspic, as it were. It is worth quoting Kafka’s 1903 letter here in which he says that, “I think we ought to read only the kind of books that wound or stab us. If the book we’re reading doesn’t wake us up with a blow to the head, what are we reading for? .... [W]e need books that affect us like a disaster, that grieve us deeply, like the death of someone we loved more than ourselves, like being banished into forests far from everyone, like a suicide. A book must be the axe for the frozen sea within us. That is my belief.”

Books are the preeminent product and apotheosis of civilization just as true human language is its first and most essential Apparatus. But discourse as “talk” arises not from civilization but from the *a priori* of Time and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 203.

Space, and is, therefore the “existential ontological foundation” of all other “communication,” including writing. That Heidegger understands discourse as arising from the *a priori* is seen in the term “primordial.”

In any case, existence itself, according to Ayer, is a synthetic proposition, at least in its linguistic *assertion*, putting *existence-as-extended* as always already a form of subjectivity. It is not possible for us to “interpret” reality without thought and therefore discursive language. As such, the world as we understand it forms itself around our valid and invalid synthetic propositions. What we may discern that is verifiable from empirical data, experimental methodology, proof-of-concept, and logic inevitably ends up providing us with a base for ever greater and more grandiose synthetic propositions, for “our little life is rounded with a sleep.” From this interpretation of reality, then, the manifold arises from “nothing” and “no one,” for “there are no objects whose existence is indubitable,” says Ayer, “since existence is not a predicate, [and] to *assert* that an object exists is always to *assert* a synthetic proposition ... [italics added]”<sup>37</sup>

Existence itself is the subject, the cogito, “I think.” The matter could stop there with “I think that I think,” or “I am that I am” (the Hebrew אֲנִי אֲנִי אֲנִי, or *'ehyeh 'āšer 'ehyeh*) but the predicate, being what it is, forces us from the real into the imaginary and symbolic in the form of an extensible synthetic proposition that we may wrap around the whole world of our experience.

## 5.7 Discourse as language and thought

Being, which is “thrown and submitted to the world” (*Geworfenheit*) as Dasein, is asserted (*ragt*) through language. What Heidegger means by “language” is not any part of it—sentence, speech, text, or any discrete dimension of communication—but is, rather, the *facticity* (Fichte’s *Faktizität*) of communication itself. “The way in which discourse gets expressed is language. Language is a totality of words—a totality in which discourse has a ‘wordly’ [sic] being of its own; and as an entity within-the-world, this totality becomes something which we may come across ready to hand.”<sup>38</sup>

Language, as an apparatus, is ready-to-hand. While it remains aloof from the hegemony, it is also its primary tool. Our task is to see to it that we retain majority control, in our struggle for political economy, over its power to determine the discourse as the “totality of words” in the form of our sovereignty.

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<sup>37</sup> Ayer, op. cit., 121.

<sup>38</sup> Heidegger, op. cit., 204.

The relationship between discourse and Dasein is intimate, as discourse is the assertive manifestation of Dasein, or Being that is expressed through our power of thoughtful interpretation. Here we have a contrast between Sartre's existential idea of facticity as the doubtful "fact" of our existence versus Heidegger's *a priori* of its "mood" (or "mode"), drawing upon Fichte's idealism, in which we approach the world and what Heidegger calls its "furniture."

Heidegger looks at the facticity of our existence in the four ways in which we affect and are affected by discourse. He says that Dasein "hears" and "understands"<sup>39</sup> what discourse has to say about our presumptive reality, and in so doing delivers precisely what it is our symbolic imagination wants us to perceive:

- 1) What is the discourse about (what is talked about).
- 2) What is said in the talk, as such.
- 3) The communication [itself].
- 4) The making-known.

The first attribute generates the *story* of our existence, or the "who said what about whom" of the subject-verb-object concatenation of expression. Attributes 1 and 2 together, then, are concerned with the *interrogations* of who, when, where, what, why, and how (?). The answers to these interrogatives provide enough information about the events and facticity of reality for us to believe that we *know something*—whether or not this understanding is based on valid or invalid synthetic propositions. In 3 there is the facticity of the message's *thingness*, such as its being a speech, a message, a dialogue, or even a dialectic, as well as its rhetorical form. In 4 there is the *propagation*, for to make something known we must have a mode and channel of communication. Therefore, we have *story*, *interrogation*, *thingness*, and *propagation* at the "totality of words."

In this way Dasein unfolds into the manifold through the apparatus of signification, a compulsion that is both uniquely human and civilized. It belongs to the imaginary and symbolic orders of human psychology, whereas "bare life," the realm of realia, belongs, naturally, to the real. This contest between the imaginary and symbolic on the one hand (as thought and language) and the real (as bare life) circumscribes the essential human catastrophe of *knowing*.

Once we *know* we know, then we acknowledge our mortality. Soon after we begin a lifelong search for the eternal persistence of the ego in the form of the ultimate invalid synthetic proposition: immortality. Abdication follows

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 206.

soon after as the hegemony plays its confidence game, peddling total state security, infinite medical miracles, de facto “progress,” and perpetual and unlimited consumerism and access to debt.

We may go farther and assert that the receiver of the message *is* the message in the form of being the possessor of the *a priori* facticity, or mood, of how the message is received. This problem is illustrated by the classical example of two competing Greek orators: “When Aeschines spoke, they said, ‘How well he speaks.’ But when Demosthenes spoke, they said, ‘Let us march against Philip.’” It matters not what the sender’s intention *was*; what does matter, however, is what thought, or action, *is* the consequence of the message once it has reached the receiver. In this sense what-has-been-received embodies who (or what) the receiver is in an existential sense and therefore in the sphere of Dasein. In other words, everything existential about the communication (as a *thing*) is determined by the “mood” or facticity of the receiver. “Hearing is constitutive for the discourse,” says Heidegger.<sup>40</sup>

Dasein, as a quantitative universe of discourse, also contains the transmitter. The transmitter’s facticity, however, lies between its being and nonbeing as the mood of its imaginary and symbolic conduct. Nothing else is required of the subject in its bid for identity in the being-with of Dasein. “Dasein hears because it understands,” says Heidegger. “As a being-in-the-world with others, a Being which understands, Dasein is ‘in thrall’ [enslaved, a “thrall” being a slave] to Dasein-with and to itself; and in this *thralldom* it ‘belongs’ to these.”<sup>41</sup> Dasein, being always already negative, is essentially the vacuum, void, or abyss of our understanding, which is in turn *proximal* to but not inclusive of what is understood.

## 5.8 “Making-known” as propaganda

The fourth characteristic of discourse, the “making-known,” assumes responsibility for the formation of the historical identity of civilization in the form of propaganda. Apart from this domesticated function, the making-known, in the wild, serves our need to announce our personal identity while also allowing the ego to identify with all that surrounds it. In the most extreme cases the ego seizes the environment as its own; in its milder, less audacious posture it embraces such trivial distinctions as ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and social class.

That these five distinctions are regarded by humanity as mankind’s greatest assets and the most profound earmarks of self-worth and nobility

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 163.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 206.

only underscores the truth that they are mere excrescences of symbolic imagination run amok. However, in its most ethical sense the making-known gives voice to Dasein, articulating what Heidegger calls that which it “hears because it understands.” Therefore, without the making-known we have little chance of the “interpretation” of experience which makes it possible to form the core identity of the subject and therefore the great objective power of reality “regioning” to the horizon.

In *Discourse on Thinking*, Heidegger’s Scientist, Teacher, and Scholar discuss this matter with some profit. “Strictly speaking,” says the Scholar, “a region for everything is not one region among many, *but the region of all regions ...*” To which the Scientist adds, “[A]nd the enchantment of this region might well be the reign of its nature, its *regioning ...* [italics added]” Like Russell with his “set of all sets,” the Scholar understands the need for there to be one universe of discourse encompassing all sets, including itself. Unlike Russell, he does not stipulate that this inclusion be based on the condition that it may include itself “if and only if it does not include itself.” (Herein lies the difference between a German philosopher hailing from the great Romantic tradition and a post-Utilitarian British Positivist.)

The Scientist equates the *regioning* of this region—which we may consider to be its topological space—with the “enchantment” of its power to region. In the logic of our discussion here, this power derives from the undecidability of the synthetic proposition in its valid form of noncontradiction. Therefore, in the formation of such binary distinctions arising from regioning as “I” and “Thou,” subject and object, time and space become psychological values helping us negotiate the otherwise undifferentiated “region” lying between being and nonbeing.

Scholar: It seems a region holds what comes forward to meet us; but we also said of the horizon that out of the view which it encircles, the appearance of objects comes to meet us. If now we comprehend the horizon through the region, *we take the region itself as that which comes to meet us* [italics added].<sup>42</sup>

As such, the situation is ripe for exploitation by the hegemonic powers and their corporate overlords. A slight modification of the rules allows for the embrace of invalid synthetic propositions to be accepted as not only valid ones, but also as verifiable and verified analytic propositions. How? By allowing for no method of categorical differentiation between empirical and mathematical Time and Space ( $T \wedge S$ ) and psychological (and dogmatic

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<sup>42</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Discourse on Thinking*, John M. Anderson and E. Hans Freund, trans. (New York: Harper & Row, ND), 65.



and fiat) time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ), so that they become one and same phenomenon.

While the former is unforgiving, particularly when it comes to death, the latter, configured in the right way and cast in the most permissive forms of invalid synthetic language, allows for infinite possibility, including physical immortality. It therefore becomes the language of the state of exception where anything is possible. Nothing could be more enchanting than the infantile notion that anything is possible always. Therefore, it is *regioning's* "power of enchantment" that is exploited by the hegemonic discourse in the form of propaganda meant in the broadest possible sense as the *making-known*.

On the grosser, more practical level there are two aspects to this propagation of discourse: rhetoric and mass media. The first is the form or format of the message, and the second is the medium or channel through which the message reaches the mass of subjects aching to abdicate. The discussion of propaganda also brings us to a modified definition of discourse as the sum of a message and a medium.

While the medium is not significant in and of itself until it is combined with the message, together they form an "enchanting" region, space, or topology that forces language to adopt the morphology of its logic, which is entirely synthetic and invalid. "In language, as a way things have been expressed or spoken out [*Ausgesprochenheit*], there is hidden a way in which the understanding of Dasein has been *interpreted*. This way of *interpreting* it is no more just present-at-hand than language is; on the contrary, its Being is itself of the character of Dasein [*italics added*]."<sup>43</sup>

Language naively takes on the "character of Dasein" so that we may develop a sense of identity in this region or realm. Despite its faithful construction of reality in the psyche of the subject, it is no match for the power of the willful, voluntary, deliberate, and violent abdication of personal sovereignty which, like flying through the air and breathing underwater, is a critical part of the subject's lucid dream. All that Being asks of us is that we accept Nonbeing. Then and only then can it be said of us that we "are." Few, however, are willing to accept this state of affairs, particularly when faced with the double onslaught of religion trumpeting an afterlife for the ego and medical technology's insistence that physical immortality is just around the corner.

All that is required of the subject is bland obedience in the first case and money for the procedures in the second. Thanks to the carefully honed rhetoric of religion and science, both fates seem rich with possibility, particularly in democracies where "equality" and "freedom" are presented

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<sup>43</sup> Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 211.

in the form of access to that which guarantees as one's "right" to the infinite perpetuation of the ego and its enjoyment of the goods and services it is compelled by its emptiness to consume.

## 5.9 Assigning semantic significance

As things are named for the child, and as the child names, the "world" comes into being in the way described by Heidegger as "regioning." "That which comes to meet us" is also that which we *call into being* by our naming. It is a kind of roll call, taking inventory of both what Chomsky would describe as "innate" values necessary for the linguistic processing of reality in some social way and that which society itself impinges upon the impressionable consciousness of the child. These values, categorically different as they may be, need not roil in conflict; however, they inevitably end up in contradiction because of civilization's mission to divorce the child's natural inclinations as much as possible from the expediencies of its synthetic organization.

Such a tendency arises from society's need for determinability (or programmability) in the child. "Will this child's conscious awareness fit into our Great Big Giant Plan for Everyone?" While the child experiences only those anxieties its biological imperatives dictate, society itself is in a tizzy over its "future." If the child has the misfortune of being born into the Underclass—a vast social swath of the disenfranchised in most modern democracies—then the state, which represents the interests of the Elite, must keep an eye on this potential liability.

At the same time, the state's transnational corporate overlords busy themselves figuring a way to exploit whatever consumer power this new life will bring to its hegemonic apparatus. Also, early in the child's psychological development, society is charged with the onerous task of determining if the child will become an apex consumer with an excellent credit rating or a bottom feeder, deriving its consumer power from the largesse of the state and possibly even crime.

Despite the conflicts and contradictions which inevitably arise from this melodrama, the child's psyche enters the mirror stage with a certain amount of innocence necessary to discover some things for itself. Part of this innocence is a form of ignorance or what has been called above language's power to naively take on "the character of Dasein."

As civilization's social apparatus rushes in through the conduits of the mass media and the state education system to disabuse the child of this pernicious ignorance (aided ably by the parents themselves who want only "the best" for their child), the sovereign Self has already begun to harden as

the core of the child's burgeoning ego. Adults can only guess at what is going on in this complicated and subtle mechanism of the child's psyche as it bristles with tantrums and needs, desires, wants, unformed imaginings, and uninformed perceptions.

At the core of it all is the Word. Just as the child begins to recognize that it has an objective existence in the Ideal-I (I1) position of the mirror stage, so too does it learn, through repetition and reward, that the operational function of Others in the ritual of the satisfaction of its wants and needs is to be had through *sound*. Furthermore, it learns, through the exercise of its innate Language Faculty (LF), that the predictability of success increases as it exercises its phonemic powers in certain ways.

However, the success of this performance is entirely in the hands of society, initially in the personages of the parents, and in particular the father. The child proposes but society disposes. As the Lacanian Lawmaker, the father acts as civilization's representative in the orthodox construction of the *nomos* in the child. It is here that conflict and contradiction begin while the child is also learning how to satisfy its needs successfully.

Until they are named, the manifold of things in the child's ken are *present-at-hand*. They are not *ready-to-hand* because the child cannot name the thing to inform those whom it is beginning to perceive to bring that which it wants. At best it is like the person in a strange culture who speaks an alien language attempting to get something he cannot adequately describe. It is no wonder that we have dreams throughout our lives with this particular frustration as their theme.

In a more perceptive and ontological realm, the unnamed thing does not quite exist for the child as do its own biological needs. Things remain the bare furniture of the world, of no use except as a limit, boundary, or obstacle. Other beings lose this status more quickly than things do, only because they are livid and dynamic, responsible for the wellbeing of the child—whether it can know this or not. These Others become more distinct as the child's psyche transitions into the Real-I position of the mirror stage. In so doing they assume a role in the child's proximal drama as the Bringers of that which the child needs and wants. It is precisely at this stage that the child's orientation to the world as a Consumer begins its vast and complicated formation.

The child begins to understand that its parents or immediate caregivers, or what it perceives as the Knowns, have sounds associated with certain things, needs, and, in a vague way, feelings that will later manifest as concepts and ideas. Subsequently, these three values will express themselves as the products, services, and ideas of the commercial apparatus in which the subject must find its place as a worker and consumer. Tuan

describes how a child orients itself in the complex world of its immediate environment through language. “As soon as the child is able to speak with some fluency he wants to know the names of things. Things are not quite real until they acquire names and can be classified in some way. Curiosity about places is part of a general curiosity about things, part of the need to label experiences so that they have a greater degree of permanence and fit into some conceptual scheme.”<sup>44</sup>

This “curiosity about places” gives rise to the sense that the ego is surrounded by a topology, realm, or region with definite characteristics. The matter of whether or not it is “real” comes only later when it is possible to make a distinction between *actual* Time and Space (T ^ S) and *psychological* time and space (t ^ s). Therefore, the power of determining the contrasting verisimilitude of each is a matter for the cultivation of rational thought in the child at various stages of its development.

It takes about two and a half years, says Tuan citing Gesell, for the child to comprehend the idea of the *location* of a thing, person, or place. “He has no clear image of the intervening space between here and there, but he acquires a sense of place and security when his ‘where?’ is answered with ‘home,’ ‘office,’ or ‘big building.’ A year or so later, the child shows a new interest in landmarks. He recognizes and anticipates them when he is out for a walk or ride. Egocentrism is manifest in a tendency to think that all cars going in his direction must be going to his own place.”<sup>45</sup>

Significant here are the words *security* and *egocentrism*. The egocentric *enfant terrible* recognizes the Knowns as the primary satisfiers of both its reasonable and unreasonable demands equally. Furthermore, it *interprets* (in the Heideggerian sense) all activity around it as being on its behalf. Soon enough, though, the Unknowns, or strangers, also become potential donors of what is brought as the child learns that the Knowns have social proxies.

These strangers are then added to the menagerie of its self-drama, becoming the ethical aesthetic of the social position of the Real-I (I2). They may also provide opportunities for the transference of the roles of the mother and father as the subject leaves the nest and begins to seek its childish relationships in the wilderness of social unions.

Moreover, it is when the *wrong thing* is brought, or nothing materializes, that the child gets its first taste of what Lacan calls *Lack*. The result is inconsolable grief and pain, to the adult seemingly grossly out of proportion to the stakes involved but to the child not only reasonable but also justified by the logic of its egotism. These ad hoc lessons find their way into the child’s mythology about the world as a place with a certain probability of

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<sup>44</sup> Tuan, *op. cit.*, 29.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

getting what it wants. “Happiness” in the commercial sense will depend upon the value of this probability, as well as the temperament of the subject.

As such, the lessons Lack has in store for the child as it develops are also the start of its psychological orientation to the vicissitudes of life, compelling it, later in its development, to seek out the same forms of satisfaction it enjoyed during the mirror stage.

### 5.10 A place in the world

The child at first stops short of thinking of “here” as anything more than the body. As the locus of all worldly significance and the activity around it, the child’s body becomes the sovereign territory of its ego. The mouth, however, takes on a significance far surpassing the functions a young child otherwise puts it to. An “oral fixation” develops that will not end when childhood does, living on, often enough, until death in many different but all equally tenacious forms that are, by and large, self-destructive.

Any object the young child can lay its hands on is gummed into possession, to the consternation and vigilance of its parents. It is not difficult to discover the possessions of a child, just as it is not difficult to discover the possessions of a dog or cat: they are well chewed, drooled on, dragged through the dirt, and perfumed with glandular secretions.

Soon the boundaries of this empire encompass the child’s immediate area, special places where it has made its mark, and the favorite haunts of its modest travelogue. In the process, the child is mapping out the world as it is known, assigning nouns to the persons, places, things, and later the ideas, it comes across in the process.

Throughout this process the body maintains its identity with the ego *as* the ego. It is the one thing that was not *brought* to the child by those who bring. Therefore, like a statue of a military leader in the city square, it remains the emblem of the child’s sovereign empire. Also, as such, it is a threat to the hegemonic power that will soon offer it a bargain it cannot refuse: immortality in return for its once-precious sovereignty. In the meantime, though, the child’s body is the tool by which it measures the universe, both in terms of time and of space.

According to Tuan, the shape of this universe depends upon two geometrics: “the posture and structure of the human body, and the relations (whether close or distant) between human beings. Man, out of his intimate experience with his body and with other people, organizes space so that it conforms with and caters to his biological needs and social relations.”<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Tuan, *op. cit.*, 34.

Tuan suggests that through the bilateral, frontal orientation of the human body the psyche designates the space directly in front of it as “sacred,” with the topological horizon point nominated as “the future.” The space to the rear of the subject is “profane,” representing “the past” in all its morbid (and scatological) associations. It is indeed the human body that Tuan and Kant point to as the cosmos incarnate only because what man can touch and manipulate will conform to the needs of the body. And as the body is the ego’s analogue, and as the ego is the subject’s “world,” the body often signifies the limits of the subject’s “known” world.

What it can only perceive but not touch—such as stars—will always be *relative* to the position of the body’s basic orientation in space-time. Kant, quoted in Tuan, says, “Even our judgments about the cosmic regions are subordinated to the concept we have of *regions* in general, insofar as they are determined in relation to the sides of the body ...” [italics added]<sup>47</sup>

Whether we pilot a ship or a plane, and even in outer space where such prepositions as “up” and “down” become figures of speech, we rely on the sense that what we perceive, from the vantage of an ego ensconced in a body, is the measure of the universe. “Similarly, our geographical knowledge, and even our commonest knowledge of the position of places, would be of no aid to us if we could not, by reference to the sides of our bodies, assign to *regions* the things so ordered and the whole system of mutually relative positions [italics added].”<sup>48</sup>

The etymology of the word “stand,” as in “to stand,” says much about modern man’s propensity for the formation of the state during the past 5,000 years. Part of what makes us human in the physical sense and in relation to other animals is that we truly *stand*. Being upright is our natural orientation, in contrast to other animals, even primates, that only stand from time to time and usually for reasons of safety, surveillance, and defense. According to Tuan, the word shares its root with “status, stature, statute, estate, and institute.”<sup>49</sup> (He further points out that its etymological roots are Germanic.)

Most significant to this discussion is its association with the word and idea of the “state.” As Agamben points out, the *officio* of the state derives its form from the medieval *liturgia*, as parent to child. Today’s Western political state is a neo-liturgical enterprise, based on the Cult of Scientism, populated by pseudo-analytic Churchmen no less dogmatic than their counterparts: the *domini* of the Middle Ages.

What, then, does it mean to “stand” as the “state,” and how does this *standing* relate to the sense of the body before and after the threshold of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 36

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 37.

abdication? To begin with, it is a common observation that fealty is bought by the state with the lucre it exacts in various forcible ways from those it expects fealty from. This neat little circulation of economic power allows the state to “stand in” for the subject as its protector and benefactor, in a parental sense, despite the fact that it is the subject itself that makes this situation possible by surrendering its treasure and sovereignty.

Standing is also associated with what is “high” or “low.” Whatever is superior or excellent is elevated, being associated with height. Indeed “superior” is derived from a Latin word meaning “higher.” “Excel” (*celsus*) is another Latin word meaning “high.” The Sanskrit word *brahman* derives from a term meaning “height” as well. “Degree,” in its literal sense, is a step by which one moves up and down in space. Social status is designated “high” or “low” rather than “great” or “small.”

We can then imagine a child who, as an infant, could at first can only crawl, and who during this period spent much of its time prostrate like a propitiate before its master, eventually discovering that *standing* is the source of power over its environment. It learns, as do the human animals in H. G. Wells' novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, that two legs are “good” and four legs are “bad.”<sup>50</sup> For the hegemonic state, it is desirable for the subject to learn to fend for itself—to a degree.

In the process of dividing apex consumers from the dependent liabilities and lumpen proletariat of the Underclass, the state encourages self-reliance. In so doing it seeks to transfer the blame for the stratification of society to those who, it is nominally said, “created it” through such cathartic rituals as the Dionysian frenzy of elections and the resulting solemn ceremony of voting. Like a dog in a circus, taught to walk upright and wear a tuxedo, the subject regards itself in the mirror as it did in the early days of the mirror stage. Now, though, what it sees is that which it has been conditioned to see by the myriad choices it has made which have led it down the path of abdication.

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<sup>50</sup> H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (New York: Bantam Classics, 1994).

# CHAPTER SIX

## 6.1 A doctrine of Us and Them

A collateral excrescence of our sense of “here” and “there” is the “I” and “Thou” of the subject-object proximal correlation. As a fundamental expression of our innate and empirical modeling of space, it is only natural, then, that we elaborate these proximities unto “Us” and “Them.” Space, however, is much more than this two-dimensional plotting on a graph of the center and the radius; it is *territorial*, and therefore topological. In effect, this topology gives us an almost infinite opportunity for the cultivation of the puffery of the ego. *Lebensraum!* we cry and head off to war to get some of it.

During the intervening developmental stages leading to this catastrophe of Empire, there must be a sense of “I.” The monad of the Self manifests in many forms during the rough-and-tumble period of our formative psychic development, particularly during the Critical Period of 0-12 when the Language Faculty (LF) expresses the innate morphology of Universal Grammar (UG), which includes the precursors of analytical logic and cognition. Its value changes morphologically, then, as the subject’s selfish orientation stumbles from position to position in the Lacanian mirror stage seeking the authority and control it feels it has lacked since being “thrown and submitted to the world” (*Geworfenheit*).

Meantime, the basic relationship between subject and predicate, via the copula, takes form and crystallizes. By this point the process has already been irreparably corrupted by the prevailing discourse of the hegemonic order transmitted through the education system and the mass media. Nevertheless, the subject has a long way to go before it feels integrated and undivided again. At last the emerging Self sees what it thinks is a light beckoning from beyond the darkness of the ego’s tumultuous self-imprisonment. Caring not what this light represents in the shadow world of its tiresome sovereignty, the subject grabs for it, only to find that it has traded what Jung calls the “storm lantern” (*Sturmlaterne* or *Windlicht*) of its own understanding for a phantom glow. Like a diving beetle led astray in its lunar navigation by street lamps, the subject then perishes in the terra incognita of its own abdication.

At the same time, society sees to it (particularly through education and the mass media) that the fundamental machinery of the subject’s thought



consists of invalid synthetic propositions (ISP's) which can be manipulated, at will, by the expediencies of the hegemonic power in service of the prerogatives of its transnational corporate overlords. The success of this operation is continually tested, formally and informally, until the machinery of the apparatus can properly classify the subject as either an apex consumer, at the top of the debt-consumption chain, or a member of the dreaded Underclass.

It is a mistake, however, to think that in the eccentric position of abdication (Ix) there is no longer a sense of "I." The only position that can lay claim to this distinction is 0I, of which I1 is the negation and incipient manifestation of our sense of Self. The Doctrine of Us and Them would be impossible if at the abdicated position of Ix the mass of subjects merely joined a greater mob of zombies without a sense of personal identity. Instead, through the unifying power of commercial propositions streaming through its digital gadget, which it keeps poised before its eyes at all available times, the subject *absorbs its own telemetric profile* as it is fed back to it by Big Data. This codified, commercialized, and sanitized "self" becomes its new core identity determined by its "belonging" not only to the commercial propositions and notions it absorbs, but also to the brand of device it uses to *conduct* these ISP's into the sphere of its perception and cognition.

By instilling a sense in the subject of an impending threat from "without" of malicious Strangers, the hegemony's role as the Father-protector of the child-subject springs into position and prepares itself not only for the coming abdication of the abdicated subject's own children, but also, the maintenance of the permanent state of exception and war. To a significant extent the subject finds comfort in this new and omnipotent Father who slakes the subject's hankering for Absolute Security at All Times, which is the precursor to its more problematic demand for a guarantee of immortality and perpetual consumerism without limit.

Ever ready to promise anything, the hegemonic order, under the empowering aegis of its corporate overlords, reacts with an emphatic "Yes!" to any and all of the subject's demands in the form of Democracy. Through such magic rituals as voting, the subject is permitted to imagine that it has brought about its own security, prosperity, and immortality, and that it has the power to wipe out anyone in power who fails to deliver on its infantile demands.

During rare episodes where there is a mass expression of *jouissance* in the form of the transgression of civil disobedience, the subject is forcibly and brutally reminded of its complete lack of power. Retreating into the

sanctuary of its ego, the subject learns (quickly) to be satisfied with only the most meager of pleasures while paying the greatest possible price for them.

The social sense of space, says Tuan, is the result of a psychological default arising from assumptions we make about the position of the ego in relation to the empirical data we receive from the environment.

A distinction that all people recognize is between “us” and “them.” We are *here*; we are *this* happy breed of men. They are *there*; they are not fully human and they live in *that* place. Members within the we-group are close to each other, and they are distant from members of the outside (they) group. Here we see how the meaning of “close” and “distant” are a compound of degrees of interpersonal intimacy and geographical distance.<sup>1</sup>

As the logic of our thought consists almost entirely of invalid synthetic propositions, we find ourselves in perpetual contradiction psychologically about the use, significance, and threat of Others. We both crave and abhor the distance between I and Thou, Us and Them. As a result, even the concept of “Us” is problematic, since within that class there must be the negative elements of “I” and “Thou.” The geometry is fractal. In an effort to create Order, altruistic Hope Cults, such as Christianity, make the argument that if “Us” contains the alien and reprehensible “Thou,” then “Them” must contain the familiar and cherished “I.”

The Golden Rule however, sensible as it may seem, is generally one degree beyond the rational powers of the average mortal to see the Other, the object, as just another Self, or subject, particularly in the perpetual state of war required for civilization to thrive.

During the subject’s transformational journey through the positions before, during, and after the mirror stage, the “I” index moves from position to position depending upon the dynamic forces compelling it. As a result, the definition (or signification) of “I” is unstable; for example, the “I” of “Us” is not the “I” of “Them”; in fact, they are opposing, or negative concepts of “I” which are mutually exclusive, often with the impetus to eliminate each other in one way or another. This is the logic of the battlefield. “In many languages, spatial demonstratives and personal pronouns are closely related [and have] half mimetic, half-linguistic acts of indication. Personal pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, and adverbs of location closely implicate one another. I am always *here*, and what is here I call *this*. In contrast with the here where I am, *you* are *there* and he is *yonder*.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tuan, *op. cit.*, 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

Early in our psychological and intellectual development we discover that try as we might to move here and there, we remain imprisoned in the perspective of the ego. We are *always already* the center of the universe. Drowning ourselves in alcohol, poisoning ourselves with drugs, and dementing ourselves with mysticism are vain attempts to escape this fate. The edifice of civilization largely consists of various grandiose “containers,” entertainments, rituals, liturgies, spectacles, doctrines, and distractions designed to provide a more family-friendly form of self-forgetting and ecstasy.

Nevertheless, the human animal being what it is, we naturally prefer *jouissance* in the form of the transgression of civilization’s attempts to soothe the savage beast within us, for, ultimately, it is the only form of ecstasy that pierces to the core of the psyche by fully engaging the id at its root. Therefore, much of what civilization offers us as forms of escape from our suffocating sense of the immobilized self is precisely that from which we long to escape. Institutional religion and commercial consumerism, the two greatest contrivances of civilization, stink too much of their own self-interest to satisfy the volcanic urges of the id which civilization itself has at the same time repressed in an effort to harness its psychic energy for the enrichment of the free Elite.

For the hegemony, and for the mass of subjects it commands, the solution to all of these problems is *total war*. It is in the orgiastic thrill of mass murder that we at last find the reconciliation of our psychological conflicts brought about by civilization’s steady diet of invalid synthetic propositions and the empty promises of simulacra. On 18 February 1943 Joseph Goebbels, in his *Sportpalastrede*, expressed it best:

*Ich frage euch: Wollt ihr den totalen Krieg? Wollt ihr ihn, wenn nötig, totaler und radikaler, als wir ihn uns heute überhaupt erst vorstellen können? (I ask you: Do you want total war? If necessary, do you want a war more total and radical than anything that we can even yet imagine?) .... Nun, Volk, steh auf und Sturm brich los! (Now, people, rise up, and let the storm break loose!)*

Nothing could be more liberating for the subject, imprisoned as it is in an oubliette of its own making. All that is required on the part of the state, its media apparatus, and its banking system is systematic exploitation of the subject’s malleable sense of psychological time and space. While sense and logic tell us that if we move from *here* to *there*, then *there* becomes *here*, in the psychological politics of war such self-evident truths are the first casualty. As for time, borrowing money from the future to enjoy pleasures in the present distorts the subject’s sense of the “here and now” to the point

that “reality”—whatever it may be—is “less real” than the fantasies coaxed from the subject’s unconscious by the delights of unlimited consumption.

What makes the subject so ready to accept this vicious nonsense? There is nothing easier to ignore than the truth, particularly regarding the truth of our mortality. Who would charge into battle without being possessed of either 1) the delusion that death only happens to others, or 2) that through this glorious death in war he is at last admitted into an afterlife of pleasure and immortality? Furthermore, once we find ourselves in a situation where we must *kill or be killed*, even these distinctions vanish as the biological imperative to survive takes control of our will, leaving us a choice between survival or suicide.

The trick for the hegemony, then, is to get us into a position where we have no choice, for to kill is no guarantee of *not* being killed and is therefore no choice at all. While cajoling the subject into its own obliteration may seem an arduous task, hardly something the mediocrity and ineptitude of government seems capable of, the subject’s implicit complicity in the overthrow of itself makes its transition from sovereignty to subjection effortless. The subject is *impelled* and *compelled*, through the ego’s desire to live forever in security and comfort, to accept these terms in whatever form the hegemonic order offers them, however shabby they may appear.

## 6.2 Valid synthetic propositions

With all of this said about the discourse of time and space, we must also recognize (or remember) that Kant 1) considers  $T \wedge S$  to be *a priori*, 2) both are synthetic propositions, and 3) “Space [and time are] no discursive, or, as we say, general conception of the relations of things, but a pure intuition.”<sup>3</sup> Proposition 3 appears to be a contradiction of 2, since how could something that is “no discursive ... conception of things” also be a synthetic proposition? The answer seems to lie in the nature of actual  $T \wedge S$  being a product of “pure intuition.” Between the actual and psychological senses of time and space lies their various forms of measurement. We tend to place inordinate emphasis on metrics and testing in part because they free us from the empirical crisis of intuition.

In the so-called digital age, what which cannot be easily and expediently quantified and codified into digits simply does not exist in the political sense because it cannot be sold, packaged, regulated, controlled, and taxed. It does not “extend” in the digital sense, which is always superior to the empirical sense. What an affront, then, to this regime to claim that Time and Space

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<sup>3</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 3.

themselves, or “spacetime” if we need to get more theoretical about it, are intuitional and not empirical! Therefore, even the two vectors responsible for the realm, territory, or topology in which it can be said that we exist are subject to the “politification” of reality inevitable under the spell of ISP’s and their manifold of simulacra. “For, in the first place, we can only represent to ourselves one space, and when we talk of divers spaces, we mean only parts of one and the same space. Moreover, these parts cannot antecede this one all-embracing space, as the component parts from which the aggregate can be made up, but can be cogitated only as existing in it.”<sup>4</sup>

Every set of spaces  $S$  is within the set of what Kant calls “one space,” which we may call  $S'$ , so that if  $\Delta$  serves as the “set of all sets,” which as the aggregate of spacetime must also contain itself, then  $\Delta$  contains “all space.” Therefore,  $S'$  is intuitive, not empirical, for if it were the latter it would be subject to the limitations of the senses, which  $T \wedge S$  clearly are not and cannot be because they must be *a priori* and *a posteriori*, the  $A$  and  $\Omega$ , of Being for us to be able to say that anything exists at all. As Kant says, nothing can antecede “this one all-embracing space” which, on a macro scale, also includes time.

This we intuit, freeing us from the burden of having to prove that we exist, while at the same time allowing for what Kant calls the “aggregation” of  $T \wedge S$  (or spacetime) to be the expression of the valid synthetic proposition of the cogito. While Kant argues that the sense of spacetime is *subjective*, he makes no distinction between its psychological and actual expressions. For him, the idea of what might be considered “scientific” objectivity is itself a manifestation of perhaps a perverse subjectivity. Rather, we are bound by the “subjective condition of the sensibility” which it is quite insensible to refute.

The intuitive nature of space precludes it from being *dianoetic*, an excrescence of the “life of the mind.” While Kant (and Hegel) specify the seat of reason as the Mind, Kant leaves the specification of intuition to the power of intuition itself, which has no locus. “Space is nothing else than the form of all phenomena of the external sense, that is, the subjective condition of the sensibility, under which alone external intuition is possible.”<sup>5</sup> Because phenomena themselves “exist,” we posit that we exist as well.

While this is not a negation of the cogito, it removes it from its *dianoetic* position in the determination of what does and does not exist which, ultimately, is something we must intuit rather than argue into being. Therefore, our understanding of spacetime is the product of the application of a valid synthetic proposition through the power of intuition, rather than

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5.

the prosecution of an ISP in the form of the “discursive ... generation  
conception of the relation of things.”



**PART FOUR**

**THE PSYCHOLOGY OF DISCOURSE**



# CHAPTER SEVEN

[T]he most significant moment in the course of intellectual development ... occurs when speech and practical activity ... converge.

L.S. Vygotsky<sup>1</sup>

Give me the liberty to know, to utter, and to argue freely according to conscience, above all liberties.

John Milton "Areopagitica"

## 7.1 Politics of time and space

If we pull back a little and view Kant's *a priori* in relation to the values that matter the most to us in this discussion, then we see that we may assign psychological time and space ( $t \wedge s$ ) to the *subjective*, and actual Time and Space ( $T \wedge S$ ) to the *objective* dimensions of our experiential existence. But of course, we cannot know the latter without the former. Therefore, any casual connection between the two (as if they could in any way exist apart from the subjective appreciation of our Being) is by its nature and logic *synthetic*.

While it is true that we must make the *dianoetic* (from the Greek διανοητικός or *dianoētikós*: discursive thinking) difference between the nature of the subjective and objective distinct to understand our place in the universe, we must also admit that the expression of this difference is a synthetic product of our reason. It makes it possible for us to have a unitary sense of conscious awareness from which we view everything. From this point-of-view we extract our identity. As such, we may also consider ourselves "trapped" in this static state of consciousness, unable (or unwilling) to overthrow its stasis for the ecstasy of *jouissance*. In this sense *jouissance chooses us*; we do not choose it. We are *overthrown* by *jouissance*, often as much to our horror as our delight. After all, transgression of the *nomos* of civilization is nothing to be trifled with, as the scandal sheets show.

It is worth quoting again and in full Kant's take on the epistemology arising from the synthetic relationship of the subject and object. As

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<sup>1</sup> L. S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes* (Cambridge: Harvard U.P., 1978), 24.

discussed below, our epistemology is psychological and therefore political. To have a “point-of-view” is the essence of the political position, or what might be called the local view of the “*polis*,” the city-state of one’s sphere of influence. In the valid synthetic argument, the subject may be verifiable and therefore analytic. What matters most is that subject and predicate are not in a state of categorical contradiction.

The political proposition, however, as it affects everyone, must begin with a verifiable subject, and extend into a synthetic predicate (though it is always an invalid synthetic proposition to claim that both subject and predicate in a political proposition owe their identity and therefore their logic to that which is universally verifiable and analytic).

What can be proved universally and is therefore a bona fide member of a qualitative universe of discourse, provides the bedrock upon which we build the citadel of the *polis*; we are assured that, like the matter of actual  $T \wedge S$ , we may not have conscious awareness of it without the mimetic process of embodying it in the subjective and therefore synthetic cinema of our mind ( $t \wedge s$ ). As a result, our epistemology is shaped by the fact that the *a priori*, objective as we know it is *dianoetically*, nevertheless must be expressed through the essentially linguistic and therefore political cognition of our subjective identity *intuitively*:

As that unity must be considered as a priori necessary (because, without it, our knowledge would be without an object), we may conclude that the relation to a transcendental object, that is, the objective reality of our empirical knowledge, rests on a transcendental law, that all phenomena, if they are to give us objects, must be subject to rules *a priori* of a synthetical unity of these objects, by which rules alone their mutual relation in an empirical intuition becomes possible: that is, they must be subject, in experience, to the conditions of the necessary unity of apperception quite as much as, in mere intuition, to the formal conditions of space and time. Without this no knowledge is possible.<sup>2</sup>

But knowing is not enough for the mind to consist of anything more than conscious awareness. In its mimetic assimilation of the *a priori*, as we have seen, it must engage the apparatus of its subjective thought. The result is the *possibility* of the presence of realia and simulacra. As long as  $T \wedge S$  and  $t \wedge s$  maintain what might be called a “valid” equilibrium as subject-predicate, through the action of the copula, we live in a state of noncontradiction—no matter how exotic or elaborate our cultural cosmology.

The realia-simulacra dichotomy arises when a *third thing*, a tertium quid, is injected into the propositional logic of the generation of linguistic

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<sup>2</sup> Kant, *CPR*, 90.

thought. As death resides exclusively in the realm or topology of  $T \wedge S$ , and indeed is the reigning King of the mortal signification of the *a priori*, we are ever vigilant for an opportunity to overthrow it by gradually replacing the natural relationship between the subject and predicate with an entirely synthetic, and invalid and contradictory, set of conflicting propositions. By keeping us perpetually divided and therefore disintegrated, these propositions allow us to consider the inevitable (death) as only *possible*. This one act alone is enough to entirely *invert* our orientation to life, which includes the overthrow of realia and their replacement by simulacra.

The result of this fatal strategy is a concession from which our incipient consciousness, still serving the limited function of awareness of our identity, never recovers from. “[C]onsciousness is a being that thinks,” says Hegel, “and that consciousness holds something to be essentially important, or true and good only so far as it is to be such.”<sup>3</sup> It is not possible to “think” in the effective sense when the structural morphology of thought consists of statements in logical contradiction. “War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength” says the official discourse.

And in it we see no contradiction because the nascent consciousness has been reduced to the awareness necessary to serve the hegemonic apparatus and nothing more. Its ability to analyze in any effective sense has been appropriated for the production of war technologies and redundant, meaningless, and ultimately harmful gadgetry which only serves to distract us from our disintegrating sense of Self while at the same time hastening its demise.

The operational values characterizing what Hegel calls the “lord and bondsman” social contract are possession and work. The spiritual manifestations of this symbolic relationship express what forces and values are involved in the mutual struggle of the sense of being-for-self. In the case of the lord, there is the landlord, or possessor of the land upon which the bondsman—held in a social contract with the landlord—both lives and works.

While potential profit is ultimately measured teleologically as output, it is the *getting-there* that is measured deontologically as *work* in whatever quantitative units make it possible to insert this activity into the larger economy. *How* it is thus inserted determines the relative “being” of both lord and bondsman but only in the relative equilibrium of their notional value and its ratio to the underlying value of that which they may only intuit about reality, since it exists in the exclusively objective realm of the *a priori*.

It is expected that the outcome will, through the perseverance of the bondsman and the supervision of the lord, come to fruition in a reliable and

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<sup>3</sup> Hegel, *Phenomenology*, 121.

timely way, acknowledging both of their being-for-self. Time worked ( $p$ ), and the quantification of outcome ( $q$ ), are indicated by  $p$  and  $q$ . Therefore, we may express the three possible values of the lord-bondsman contract as  $p > q$  ( $p$  is greater than  $q$ ),  $p \equiv q$  ( $p$  is the material equivalent of  $q$ ), and  $p < q$  ( $p$  is less than  $q$ ). To the lord,  $p > q$  is the least desirable as it is the greatest amount of work with the least result. Therefore, whatever the arrangement, more resources are required to produce that which is intended to benefit the bondsman as the fruit of his possession: the land. Even in the case of forced labor, it is possible to argue, through the application of an invalid synthetic proposition, that “*Arbeit macht frei*,” since the worker must be sustained in some way to be productive, and that his sustenance is largely a result of his own labor. Here we see the externally manifest result of categorical contradiction where forced labor is presumed to “make one free.”

For both lord and bondsman, then, what is naturally most beneficial is an equilibrium ( $p \equiv q$ ) where the benefits to each of labor and land are taken into consideration in the other’s extraction of value from the real underlying assets. What, then, are we to make of the third possibility where the profits are great, and the labor is minimal? It is possible that in such a situation the bondsman is at a disadvantage because he is now less valuable to the lord, as his services are not in as great demand as in the first or even second ratio. This is the problem we see with agricultural and industrial automation. Therefore, the only possibly equitable ratio is one of relative and natural equilibrium.

Ownership is in the form of the land itself, which belongs to the lord (and in fact is the reason why there *is* a lord). Conversely, the bondsman does not own anything extrinsic, not even the “work” he puts in for the lord as that too is an extension not of the lord-bondsman relationship but of the land itself, just as it would be if the land were instead a factory or office tower owned by the lord. What, then, of the bondsman’s sovereignty? Does his status as a bondsman (in relation to the lord) mean that, ipso facto, he is not the master of himself? The answer depends upon whether or not his being-for-self is based on valid synthetic propositions in noncontradiction or an ISP in the form of a category error.

The land itself is *space* ( $S$ ), and the work itself is *time* ( $T$ ). But the relationship is purely psychological, existing only in the minds of the bondsman and the lord. Nevertheless, this relationship exists as the paradigm of the subject’s relationship to the hegemonic order. As such, it is codified into the *nomos* and enforced to hedge the possible disintegration of this critical social bond holding the apparatus together. Therefore, once again we have a manipulation of the *a priori* in the form of the psychological but not actual signification of that which can properly be called “reality.”

Whatever there may be in the objective sense, it remains accessible only through the *dianoetic* process. We must concede that even our empirical appreciation of reality is conditioned not only by the limitations and configuration of our senses, but the moods and modes of our psyche. Therefore, what we designate as the “reality” of the *a priori* is notional, while the underlying asset will always remain that which we can only assess indirectly through whatever analytic thinking is available to us as a tool to probe the Unknown.

This is a greater problem for the bondsman than the lord, since the lord owns the land which always has  $x$  (+/-) value, which, in turn, exerts its Being independently of the efforts of either the bondsman or the lord. That this relationship exists at all, then, is a matter of the ways in which it is acknowledged and recognized by the faculties we rely upon to impart to us a sense of being *conscious*, namely reason and language. “[I]t exists only in being acknowledged .... The detailed exposition of the Notion of this spiritual unity in its duplication will present us with the process of Recognition.” The lord and bondsman are “recognized” as such by the extension of space and time into the domains of their political association psychologically and spiritually as they are expressed in language and the “reasonableness” or justice of the *nomos*.

In this way, both lord and bondsman can say that “I am” while also maintaining a political economy keeping both in thrall to the sense that humankind’s relative proximity to the space in which it perceives that it exists has some kind of *natural order*. The more common phrase for this principle is Natural Law.

The natural order of their relationship, then, is independent of  $T \wedge S$  except in as much as it must reside within the expanse of space and operates within the totality of time. Otherwise, there is a constant interplay of notional values, each characterizing the relationship of its political psychology. “At first, it will exhibit the side of the inequality of the two, or the splitting-up of the middle term into the extremes which, as extremes, are opposed to one another, one being only *recognized* and the other only *recognizing*.”<sup>4</sup>

In other words, equilibrium ( $p \equiv q$ ) can be equitable, or it can draw the line between the recognized and the recognizing. When this occurs, the dichotomy of object and subject arises again in its synthetic form, ready to express itself as simulacra.

The interplay of  $T \wedge S$  and of lord (*a*) and bondsman (*b*) becomes a dialectic that, when played out through action, brings about *being-for-self*, which is subjective  $t \wedge s$ . While both are experiencing being-for-self as

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 112-13.

subjective values independent of each other, their relationship is maintained as “time worked” by the bondsman and “profits made” for the landlord, which are, ultimately, quantifications of value equivalent to whatever degree of consciousness each may recognize. “[A]ccording to the Notion of recognition this is possible only when each is for the other what the other is for it, only when in its own self through its own action and again through the action of the other, achieves this pure abstraction of being-for-self.”<sup>5</sup>

Just as the psychological sense of  $t^{\wedge}s$  cannot be escaped, except, momentarily, through the frenzy of *jouissance*, so too the lord-bondsman relationship, which is a Notion, cannot be displaced, only capitalized, dramatized, and lived. “What the lord does to the other he also does to himself, and what the bondsman does to himself he should also do to the other. The outcome is a recognition that is one-sided and unequal.”<sup>6</sup> Therefore, equilibrium cannot be achieved through a kind of officially regulated, extrinsic, state-imposed condition under which both parties must coexist; rather, it is paradigmatic of the natural order both tacitly accept as their (unequal) spiritual reality reflecting that which they perceive as being entirely objective and therefore inherently alien to themselves but nevertheless necessary for being-for-self.

If this order can be accepted in this way, then that which is “one-sided and unequal” defies equilibrium in favor of the recognition of one’s own being-for-self, which is, after all, only possible unilaterally, otherwise it would have to be “being-for-another,” expressed as forced labor or “slavery.”

The lord-bondsman relationship has three aspects: the conscious, the psychological, and the actual. While the psychological and actual correspond to  $t^{\wedge}s$  and  $T^{\wedge}S$ , the implications of the conscious aspect better express Hegel’s integrated understanding of these values. Consciousness, as close to an expression of Dasein as awareness permits, is therefore also closer to being what could be considered the universe of quantitative discourse in which the actual and psychological become categorical expressions of its manifest implementation.

But for the purposes of this discussion what is most significant in this relationship is its effect on the potential sovereignty and abdication of the individual subject. To nominate this or that individual as a lord or bondsman based on his social role is to miss the point entirely; as Hegel makes clear, *it is the struggle within us all* and its ultimate outcome that determines the character and nature of the lord and bondsman in the emergence, persistence, and ultimate demise of consciousness.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 116.

While what may be seen as an internal “class struggle” between the two has its outward manifestations, much exploited in the ideas of subsequent social and economic thinkers, it also does not discriminate between the spheres of human endeavor in which it finds itself expressed. Why? Because consciousness itself is indiscriminate, just as Dasein is without attribute (except the attribute of being without attribute). Therefore, we may look to many different spheres of human struggle and activity for evidence of the lord-bondsman relationship and its effects in the conscious, psychological, and actual principles of the Self.

It is in the legalized killing of war, however, that we find its purest expression, for in war there is no question of whether or not there is a struggle challenging any Notion of consciousness. And naturally every war is a struggle of Us and Them, of lord against the bondsman (and vice versa), however it is later scripted by history. Furthermore, though the mess may be cleaned up after the bombs stop falling, what lingers and cannot be erased is war’s effect on the consciousness of all of the individuals involved which has much to do with the perception of what is right and wrong in an absolute sense. Furthermore, modifications war has made to the state persist indefinitely.

Consequently, the *nomos* and its labyrinthine codifications become descendants of synthetic Notions generated by war’s rupture of our conscious awareness of such fundamental principles of life as what Hegel calls “enjoyment” and “work.” The *code*, therefore, becomes more real than real, supplanting the wreckage of realia left in its wake and planting the seeds for the next cycle of death and destruction.

T. E. Lawrence, in *The Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, describes the effect war has on the consciousness of the Arab fighters Britain has recruited in an effort (they say) to aid the Arabs’ fight against Turkish imperialism. What is relevant to the struggle in consciousness of the contrary values of the lord and bondsman is Lawrence’s description of the effective sovereignty of the Arab recruits. He seems to understand that this sovereignty signifies the absolute boundary of their consciousness, individually and in their tribal identities and affinities. He also seems to grasp the opportunity to witness and exploit this consciousness while engaged, *in extremis*, in the expedencies necessitated by war of any sort.

What is most remarkable, then, is the degree to which chaos and “disorder” allow for the free play of the struggle between the contraries of lord and bondsman in the psyche of the Arab rebels, thereby preserving the consciousness of their *personal* sovereignty while they fight and die to win back their *political* sovereignty. The result is a sort of bilateralism where “what the master does to the other he should also do to himself, and what

the bondsman does to himself, he should do to the other also.”<sup>7</sup> But while this may appear to have a kind of symmetry and therefore “balance,” it is in fact an affront to self-consciousness because the lord (master) objectifies *himself* while the bondsman objectifies the *other*. In the development of self-consciousness, objectification of the other provokes an equal and opposite reaction in the self, forcing what Hegel calls “recognition.” Such an imbalance of self-consciousness, says Lawrence, is in fact the surest form of effective equilibrium:

In a real sense maximum disorder was our equilibrium .... Our strengths depended upon whim .... Ordinary soldiers were made a caste either by great rewards in pay, dress and privilege: or by being cut off from life by contempt. We could not so knit man to man, for our tribesmen were in arms willingly .... the only contract was honor. Consequently we had no discipline in the sense in which it was restrictive, submergent of individuality, the Lowest Common Denominator of men.<sup>8</sup>

Such a state of affairs, he says, is not what is typically expected of civilization’s fighting men. Rather, defenders of the empire are “played down to the level of the weakest man on parade” in the relentless egalitarian search for the Lowest Common Denominator. What is valued more by civilization is *quantification* to increase the predictability of outcome—even if that outcome is to the disadvantage of civilization. The feral play of the lord-bondsman struggle is what civilization tries at all costs to avoid, in the dimensions of the actual, the psychological, and most of all in that of consciousness. “The aim was to render a unit a unit, the man a type; in order that their effort might be calculable, and the collective output even in grain and bulk.”

Centuries of scrupulous record keeping by civilization of the death toll of its military adventures, attests to the impotence of its us-and-them strategy where everything is weaponized, including human beings. Nevertheless, this fatal strategy is seized upon time and again as the surest route to social and economic homeostasis, which is its ultimate and most aggrandized ethical aesthetic. “The deeper the discipline the lower was the individual excellence; also, the surer the performance. By this substitution of a sure job for a possible masterpiece, military science made a deliberate sacrifice of capacity to reduce the uncertain element, the bionomic factor, in enlisted humanity. Discipline’s necessary accompaniment was compound or social war—that form in which the fighting man was the

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<sup>7</sup> Hegel, *ibid.*, section 191.

<sup>8</sup> Lawrence, *op. cit.*, 337.



product of the multiplied exertions of a long hierarchy, from workshop to supply unit, which kept him active in the field.”

What is most important, then, to civilization is not consciousness—which is actually seen as a threat—but that the “bionomic factor” be sacrificed in favor of a “sure” performance or job, even if it is disaster. The combatant must be a “product” of the social manufactory which turns out only “types” functioning as determinable “units.” The result is a “caste” rather than a “tribe,” for tribes are by their nature *tribal*—a characteristic anathema to the proclivity of civilization to monopolize, aggregate, seize, possess, consolidate, and control. Finally, the “product” must be kept “active in the field” to maintain the hegemony’s permanent state of exception. It is for this reason the Roman empire forbade the crossing of the Rubicon by the Legions and perhaps one of the many reasons why Julius Caesar was murdered.

But there is an even greater threat to civilization than the crossing of Rubicons: *jouissance*. In the state’s tax-funded campaign to insure economic homeostasis for its most elite citizens and the steady flow of fealty and lucre from the others, its greatest acknowledged enemy comes from within. What is more, it comes not only from within its own borders, but from within the subject-citizen itself through the agencies of its id and libido. The state’s constant problem is that the tighter its control on the multifarious vivid dimensions of the subject’s psychic life, the greater the danger is of *transgression* in the form of the *jouissance* of disobedience by its intractable subjects in the forms of crime, self-indulgence, perversion, and outright disregard for the spirit and letter of the *nomos*.

The state, autonomous beast that it is, senses this instinctively, and yet feels powerless to legislate any absolute assurances against its irruption. Therefore, employing the apparatuses of the education system and the mass media, it attempts to control the prevailing social discourse by molding the subject’s consciousness through language. As education and the mass media use language as their primary form of intercourse with the subject, it is only a matter of setting up effective incentives and coercions designed to steer the “message” they transmit in the direction of ever greater dysfunction and stupidity.

As Hegel describes, however, the struggle in consciousness of the Notion of lord and bondsman does not follow what might typically be expected of such a conflict. Rather, dialectical activity between the two tends to result in an ever-greater tendency in the bondsman toward independent consciousness and therefore sovereignty. As consciousness detaches itself from the subject in the bondsman’s attempt to do “to himself” what “he should do to the other,” self-consciousness emerges in a form corresponding to the Real-I position of the Lacanian mirror stage.

Furthermore, it does so in reaction to the *opposite* (dialectical) tendency in the lord, so that while the authority of the lord decreases in the political economy of consciousness the sovereignty of the bondsman increases. This is a signal threat to the hegemonic order, predicated as it is upon such contradictions as “War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength.”

The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman. This doubtless appears in the first instance outside itself, and not as the truth of self-consciousness. But just as lordship showed its essential nature to be the reverse of what it wants to be, so, too, bondage will, when completed, pass into the opposite of what it immediately is: being a consciousness repressed within itself, it will enter into itself, and change round into real and true independence.<sup>9</sup>

While this situation does not preclude abdication—in fact it makes it even more valuable to the state as the elimination of a threat—it does put the subject in a position where it may act as its own sovereign, and in so doing establish its domain as the territory, or topology, of the Self. (After all, what is the good of abdication if the sovereign has no realm to relinquish?) The subject now has capital in the political economy of its development. How it spends, squanders, invests, or hoards it will ultimately determine not only the nature of its character, but also its place in society. Meantime, it earns the recognition of the hegemony. It has something of value. Before long, the emissaries of the Empire come knocking at the sovereign Self’s castle gates. Whether the history of the realm will be written by the conquerors or by the sovereign individual depends upon what kind of reception these emissaries get.

## 7.2 Being-for-self as objective freedom

The dialectic between lord and bondsman provides a chance to escape the tyranny of the objective through the psychology of the subjective. If objective (actual)  $T \wedge S$  could be embraced by the subjective being, it would be an intolerable burden of impermanence and isolation for the “I.” What the ego perceives is that the organism attached by birth to spacetime dies. Therefore, it begins the psycholinguistic process of the ISP by elevating psychological  $t \wedge s$  to the position of existential priority, leaving reality behind.

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<sup>9</sup> Hegel, *ibid.*, section 193.

Since the psychological sense of  $T \wedge S$  is sufficiently removed from the organic sense of spacetime to allow the unfettered intrusion of subjectivity into what was once the categorical realm of the objective, the subject feels liberated from the relative inevitability of its impending doom. So too, then, is the bondsman liberated from his indenture and the lord from his *noblesse oblige* when all that matters, after all, is what rhetoric is to be applied to reality. Unfortunately, this inversion corrupts what would otherwise be the objective correlative of their true equality: death, for “time and chance happeneth to them all.” What effect the acknowledgement of this fact has on one’s ethical aesthetics is a matter to consider.

The benefit of subjective or synthetic “reality,” then, is most easily seen in the subject’s illusion of permanence and immortality. Since the subject is not “born” a psychological entity, it cannot “die” as one; its psychology of limitation and finitude takes a considerable time to crystallize. Once it has reached a point where this sense becomes a *threat* to the ego’s eternal perpetuation at all costs, perhaps through observing the mortal comings and goings of others or harkening to the half-hearted expressions of death found in religious hope cults, the ego immediately suppresses and then represses it. Soon enough, it hardens into the neurotic orientation of perpetual morbidity society generally considers to be the “normal” state of the “socially-adjusted” (crystallized) psyche.

In this sense, then, the lord and bondsman *destroy* each other through abnegation. “But for the subservient consciousness as such, these two moments—itsself as an independent object, and this object as a mode of consciousness, and hence its own essential nature—fall apart.”<sup>10</sup> And in their mutual negation as psychological values, Being (Dasein) is then liberated from objective  $T \wedge S$  and is released into *being-for-self*. Thinking is the principal expression of being-for-self, for the content of all thought is the same: *I am, I am, I am* (...). “In thinking, I am free, because I am not in *an-other* [sic], but remain simply and solely in communion with myself, and the object, which is for me the essential being, is in undivided unity my being-for-myself ...”<sup>11</sup> How we embellish “I am” with the nuances and inventions of civilization is a matter for another essay.

However, at the position of *Ix*, or abdication, the subject is not “in undivided unity” with itself. Rather, it is *an-other* to itself, without unity; its *dis*-integration regales it with what Jung calls a psychic “shadow,” or cloak of self-alienation, represented by the mass of aggravated and repressed unconscious material, chiefly in the form of the subject’s sense of the horror

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<sup>10</sup> Hegel, op. cit., 120

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 120.

its own mortality. It is what Jung calls in his famous “storm-lantern” dream “a gigantic black figure following me.”<sup>12</sup>

Hypocritically, though, it will not hesitate to bring about the demise of others. In fact, it revels in such events, directly or vicariously, as long as it can get away with it. The death of others is cathartic to the subject who has repressed its own sense of mortality to the point of psychological morbidity. This catharsis finds its greatest expression in war. It may even be taken to the point of *jouissance* in the more perverse and desperate of humankind as “*totalen Krieg*.”

Only in the recursion to position I2 (Real-I) from Ix (abdication), through the mediation of the Second Negation, does the subject experience the epiphany necessary to understand its predicament viz-a-viz its own sovereignty. From there, it may oscillate between the two (I2 ↔ Ix) in dialectical fashion, unsure as it may be of the identity it has now at once embraced and rejected. The *simultaneous parallel ontology* (SPO) of this necessary bicameralism leaves the psyche incapable of forming what Vygotsky calls a “crystallized” persona, which by necessity requires a stable medium in which to harden. While this is as disconcerting as it sounds, nevertheless there is a sense of freedom and liberation from its previously indentured servitude to the hegemonic order. *Jouissance* is no longer seen as an invader from its barbarian borders but rather a celebratory, if not compulsive, internal departure from the proscriptions of society in its mainstream or alternative forms. Episodes of *jouissance* become less invasively transgressive, focusing on the activity of the self rather than the exploitation of others.

Despite its sense of egoic dissolution and perhaps even confusion of all sorts pertaining to the identity-functions of the psyche, in the recursion to I2 from Ix through the Second Negation the Self has no choice but to look back to where it has most recently been and count its blessings. What it had once known as the comfort and security of abdication is seen from a distance as the Wasteland it is. It could be said that abdication is a *loss of self*, as it requires that the organic Being of I2 be sublimated into the alien architecture of Ix. At the greatest reach of eccentricity, the subject rejects its core identity. This identity is replaced with the collective *I of We*. (No ego is ever pleased to find itself a castaway on the desert island of human collectivity.)

To go pretty much overnight from being “I” to “We” shifts the control point of the Self from the center to the periphery. In this way, what T.S. Eliot calls the “hollow men” are created who, stuffed with the “straw” of society’s nonsense, move about in the hurly-burly of life’s drama with no

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<sup>12</sup> C.G. Jung, Aniela Jaffé, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (New York: Random House, 1965), 87-88.

clue as to how much has been lost and how little has been gained through the abdication of the sovereign Self.

We are the hollow men  
 We are the stuffed men  
 Leaning together  
 Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!  
 Our dried voices, when  
 We whisper together  
 Are quiet and meaningless  
 As wind in dry grass  
 Or rats' feet over broken glass  
 In our dry cellar

The “dry cellar” here is the Unconscious of the abdicated soul, with its ugly tangles of amnesiac plaques and the rusted bicycles and toys of a forsaken childhood. The question, then, is what wakes the subject up to its morbid condition and then leads it to the catastrophe of the Second Negation? To understand this mechanism, we must first grasp the subject’s reasons for surrendering the wealth of its kingdom and the freedom of its nobility.

Motivation for recursion sets in at the dawn of what Hegel calls “The Unhappy Consciousness.”<sup>13</sup> The abasing of the Self into the collective of the *We* is accompanied by a kind of mourning that we may call *ennui*, which creates constant pressure for recursion. This pressure is also found at the incipience of I at the 0I → I1 transition where *no-self* and *no-thing* is replaced by a narcissistic sense of being-for-self. Ennui at this position drives the power to shift to the social or Real-I where the burden of hermetic self-consciousness is relieved by the true delights of social intercourse.

At position I2, however, ennui again sets in over the burden of self-reliance in the social environment in the forms of envy and competition for resources with Others. This irritation ignites the lust for *We* which grows in psychological value in the day-to-day and even moment-to-moment *feelings* of the subject. It might seem contradictory that the subject would be abhor and lust for this union with others.

But it really is not, however, when we consider that what the subject’s psyche seeks is the peace of an equilibrium that always seems to elude it just at the point where it has surrendered yet another degree of freedom in the relentless pursuit of it, seeing “freedom of movement” within the social sphere as the culprit in its amorphous misery. Shortly thereafter, the desire for abdication sets in; from that point on it is only “a matter of time” and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 117.

circumstance before the subject is compelled to overthrow itself in the act of abdication.

By this point ennui has taken its primary position in the subject's psyche, characterizing its mood and mode. Modern psychopharmacology likes to call it "depression." But Hegel has a more existential-sounding term for this state of being. "The Unhappy Consciousness itself is the gazing of one self-consciousness into another [I2 ↔ Ix], and itself is both, and the unity of both is also its essential nature. *But it is not as yet explicitly aware that this is its essential nature, or that it is the unity of both* [italics added]."<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that the Unhappy Consciousness is the result of abdication, or that it is one and the same; rather, we are looking here at *motivators* for the subject's behavior, and this cross-gazing of "one self-consciousness into another" is a significant antagonist. What makes abdication an act of will, however, is precisely the action the subject takes in its quest for a feeling of being centered in its own ego and at peace with the other entities surrounding it in the social medium.

Not being aware of the "essential nature" of its being in "unity," however, the subject subsequently becomes a seeker—religious, economic, political, artistic, scientific, and so forth—pushing aside all in its path in its pursuit of something that will always lie "in the future." This behavior is decidedly antisocial, forming social turbulence around the subject's sphere of endeavor. Its only comfort is that this negative vibration is "normal," an excrescence of civilization's perpetually morbid orientation to Nature, animate and inanimate. In modern times the subject naturally turns to digital media to provide a "safe" substitute for what it has lost (or perhaps never had) in the form of various sorts of "social" media in compensation for its interpersonal impotence.

In the dialectic of I2 ↔ Ix, consciousness is in a position to gaze *simultaneously* into both positions with a sense of longing for what lies beyond the threshold of the social self and the *We* and which cannot and will not be extinguished by the hegemonic powers. This longing brings about parallel ontologies capable of operating simultaneously wherein it might be said of the subject that it remains in possession of its sovereignty *and also* that its sovereignty is possessed by the hegemony. "Consciousness of life, of existence and activity, is only an agonizing over this existence and activity, for therein it is conscious that its essence is only its opposite, is conscious of its own nothingness."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 127.

As “nothing” and “no one,” the subject is forced into a position where it must bring itself into being through language moment to moment, rather than rely on the meaningless fact of its birth for “proof” that it exists.

Despite the hegemony’s best efforts to dominate the discourse of language, it is, in the end, a net *consumer* and not *producer* of it. For this reason, it does not hesitate to encourage the production of language. The endless expansion of laws, proliferation of speech channels, production of propaganda, invention of the news, and ubiquitous and persistent drumbeat of commercial messages hammers the hegemony’s *preferred* discourse into the hard code of the subject’s mind.

This torrent of verbiage is not directly produced by the hegemonic powers, which are, after all, *dead-to-the-world* as the morbid entities of the control apparatus. Incapable of creative effort, the hegemony must rely on the subject for this energy which it may only co-opt and usurp but can never engender. Structurally, then, we may say, as we have said earlier, that realia class *a* is the actual quantitative universe of discourse, while simulacra class *b* is only an existential category of realia despite its claims to the contrary.

Ensnared in the oubliette of its egoic isolation, the subject feels it will go mad if it does not have access to ever greater media stimulation and distraction. Barred by circumstance from the more robust and corporeal diversions of, say, an Elagabalus, the subject must instead indulge in the ephemeral and transient “programming” and content it can scavenge from the dung heaps of the mass media and the Internet. As a condition of this ideal existence, the subject must make the monthly payments allowing it access to the cornucopia of prurient and narcotizing discourse it has come to associate with being and feeling “normal.” It must respond in the affirmative (when interrogated by its colleagues, family, neighbors, and associates) that it has partaken of the same lifeless compromise they have. Those who give evidence of preferring not to, are *loathed* in the Greek sense of fatal ostracization. An overabundance of science and government at every level of human endeavor makes the dramatization of this ritualistic homage to their secular god possible. The discourse must be, as Guy de Maupassant said of the God-like author, present everywhere but visible nowhere.

Being “unhappy” and “agonizing” over its existence, the subject is “in thrall” to its emotional and therefore psychological state. It is neither the master of its emotions nor the pilot of its psychology; it is therefore adrift in the Wasteland of the Hollow Men, longing for what Lacan calls the “twinge” of desire, for the throes of lust and grief, and for the transient blitzkrieg of *jouissance*. The ever-present ennui of its Being permeates the shifts in the control point of the “I” in an eternal dialectical movement,

forcing the subject to feel tossed on a dark sea of its own primordial chaos and disorder. Such turbulence ushers the Self through the modes and moods it has come to associate with the boom-and-bust cycle of its identity, mirrored, to its dismay, in the financial markets and the fortunes of its people and civilization.

While much of this activity takes place long after the mirror stage has played out its most significant positions, it is during this stage that the values which will affect the subject's thinking about all subsequent events harden into crystallized form. To get a better idea of how this is possible, we may correlate the basic positions of the Lacanian mirror stage with the "movements" Hegel describes as critical to the formation of individual consciousness. "For the movement runs through these moments: first the Unchangeable is opposed to individuality in general [0I, the equiprimordial, or No-I]; then, being itself as individual, it is opposed to another individual [I1, the specular, or Ideal-I] and finally, it is one with it [I2, the social, or Real-I]."<sup>16</sup>

### 7.3 Intellectual consequences of the speech-act

Throughout this study we are concerned with the linguistics of *speech* rather than writing, though in modern media there is the distinction between the two is blurred, particularly with the easy transition between them made possible by natural language programming (NLP). But the most significant difference is that speech is much closer to living thought, which may or may not find its way into writing and perhaps even print. Therefore, we are left with four basic linguistic values: speech, writing, thinking, and intelligence.

Vygotsky, citing Buhler, says that intelligence and thinking are often confused: "[T]he beginnings of practical intelligence in the child ([Buhler] termed it 'technical thinking'), as well as the actions of the chimpanzee, are independent of speech."<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, says Vygotsky, they are entirely dependent upon it. "This analysis postulating the independence of intelligent action from speech runs contrary to our own findings, which reveal the integration of speech and practical thinking in the course of development."<sup>18</sup> The reason, he says, is that "speech plays an essential role in the organization of higher psychological functions."<sup>19</sup>

While we may indeed observe, in the child, chimpanzee, and other higher animals, the development of practical thinking that seems

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<sup>16</sup> Hegel, op. cit., 128.

<sup>17</sup> Vygotsky, op. cit., 21.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 23.



independent of speech, it is in the human child that we observe a metastasis of linguistic influence dominating this development and projecting it into the complicated lawyers of civilization's dependence upon *synthetic* discourse.

The cogito arises out of speech as the psychological determination of being-for-self. It is only later that being-for-others emerges in what Vygotsky calls "one and the same complex psychological function."<sup>20</sup> The more social difficulties that are presented to the subject, the more developed the language faculty (LF) becomes. From these same difficulties we may also expect greater intelligence and complexity of thought from the mind's productions. Why? Practical intelligence is a necessity. It is possible, under certain extraordinary but not uncommon circumstances, that the subject in its early development meets with *too much help* from able adults who, we presume, mean well but succeed only in sabotaging the subject's ability to fend for itself later on, perhaps through engendering moral hazard.

By removing the child from life's inherent difficulties, the psychological sense of time and space may be distorted. Parents and society, if they distort the child's intuitive sense of the *a priori*, prime its psyche for a magnetic embrace of the first synthetic proposition that comes along offering the ego an eternal life of safety and consumerism.

What is then lacking is independent, *manual* interaction with the environment accompanied by internal and external speech which are meant to produce a unique and feral discourse about the subject's place in the world. "[C]hildren solve practical tasks with the help of their speech, as well as their eyes and hands. This unity of perception, speech, and action, which ultimately produces internalization of the visual field, constitutes the central subject matter for any analysis of the origin of uniquely human forms of behavior."<sup>21</sup> While the speech-act naturally branches off into the internal and external, the discourse holding it together may or may not give the child an intuitive sense of the categorical difference between simulacra and realia.

At first, it is only external speech that is used for communication, but as the child learns to write the internal speech becomes organized in the grammatical and rhetorical graphemes constituting that form of communication. Therefore, internal speech, which Vygotsky labels as "egocentric" becomes the basis of thought. External communicative speech makes a poor system for the *cogito* because its entire organization is based not on innate structures (which are present in internal speech), but on the social apparatus of the hegemony and the Commune of the *We* who are in jealous competition with the emergent Self. As the Collective, by necessity, has

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 26.

embraced the ISP as the basic structural unit of discourse, magical thinking in various forms gradually contaminates any possibility of analytic thought.

It is only internal speech that serves as the image in the mirror for the specular position. When one thinks, one “reflects.” The cogito is a reflection in a mirror, bringing on cognition in the form of thinking and recognition in the form of memory. The combination of thinking and memory is what we call the “I,” despite the fact that this control point changes its velocity as it shifts through the topology of the Self.

After ennui has motivated the phase shift from I1 to I2, the mystery of *bringing* and *getting* from the Knowns and Unknowns begins in earnest as the superstructure of social architecture. Meantime, the *sign* comes into play as an inextricable component of the signified, thus preparing the way for the later *inversion* of the priority of the signifier over the signified (S/s) as described by Lacan. At this moment in the phase shift, when the bringing and getting supplied by Others comes into play, the world explodes in a multiplicity of specular percepts, or what Kant calls “manifold,” as the reflection of the subject’s epistemology, such as it is.

A percept is anything or anyone that has come into being for the subject, with or without verification. In the priority of the ISP, however, the proof of the reality of a percept lies in the verifiable fact that it has been *perceived* by an ego that considers itself omniscient. What has come into being is, by definition, named, and therefore has been assigned a signifier which then casts its shadow upon the signified, clouding analysis of the percept. “It is to this object that cannot be grasped in the mirror that the specular image lends its clothes. A substance caught in the new of the shadow, and which, robbed of its shadow-swelling volume, holds out once again the tired lure of the shadow as if it were substance,” says Lacan.<sup>22</sup>

Ennui begins by obscuring the signified with the shadow of the signifier, a process in synchrony with the narcissism or egotism of the specular position (I1, of Ideal-I) where the image in the mirror is mistaken for the actual Self rather than its reflection. This case of mistaken identity, though, provides a critical level of cognitive dissonance necessary for individuation in the subject’s orientation to the Other. “The system of signs restructures the whole psychological process and enables the child to master her movement. It reconstructs the choice process on a totally new basis.”<sup>23</sup>

The potent combination of thought and memory brings about the sense of self. It is necessary for there to be *memory content* (data) to define the self as “someone” different from another self, a unique record and encoding

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<sup>22</sup> Jacques Lacan, “Subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire,” *Ecrit: A Selection* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1977), 316.

<sup>23</sup> Vygotsky, op. cit., 35.

of events. (The social analog of this “self” is the “consumer profile” created by the telemetry of the subject’s digital gadgets. This “other” self is then *fed back* to the subject through the same gadget, which now molds the subject’s organic core identity so that it mirrors back to its source the commercial prerogatives of the hegemony and its corporate overlords.)

This differentiation is similar to the *naming* that goes on as the child invents and learns the phonemic labels of the entities of the manifold. Memory is also critical for the efficiency of the organism, not just its functioning in the manual senses of bringing and getting, but also in its development of a personal language—for in practical application all languages are as personal as one’s thoughts, particularly internal language. Therefore, the child also needs to learn to be an expert negotiator of meaning. Such skill requires a formidable shared lexicon as well as the ability understand language in its denotative and connotative roles.

Such linguistic dexterity, says Vygotsky, begins with what use the child puts its memory to. For many years, memory is engaged not with forgetting but with acquiring. Later in life, after the ravages of the struggle for existence and the psychological and perceptive necessities of repression, memory’s role becomes more that of a triage station dividing the ready-to-hand from the present-at-hand. The latter, and particularly that which no longer fits into the adult’s value system and society’s ethical aesthetic, tends to fade into obscurity and neglect, or is repressed altogether, never to emerge again into the light of consciousness. “For the very young child, to think means to remember; at no time after very early childhood do we see such a close connection between two psychological functions.”<sup>24</sup>

The fundamental association between thought and memory is forged at this developmental stage, only to drift apart later along complex paths giving rise to the imaginary and symbolic orders. A kind of triangulation forms in the adult of the real, imaginary, and symbolic, each of which vies for psychic energy and resources as the subject makes its way, in cancrizans as it were, across the rugged terrain of Being.

Meanwhile, thought develops into a complex though disturbed apparatus that is, eventually, challenged by the hegemonic discourse in the process of abdication of its self-determination. “The content of the thinking act in the child when defining ... concepts is determined not so much by the logical structure of the concept itself as by the child’s concrete recollections. It is *synthetic in character* [italics added] and reflects the fact that the child’s thinking depends first of all on his memory.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 50.

As the real, imaginary, and symbolic attempt to keep their distance from each other (lest they become indistinguishable once again), language draws upon all three equally in an attempt to form a logical apparatus that will process Being in such a way as to be mutually beneficial to the subject and society. While this is the ideal the subject learns in church and school, it soon enough discovers (perhaps in adolescence) that all of it is a *con game*, and that in fact civilization is a kleptocracy in which every man serves himself first and the other, if there is anything left, later—the Devil take the hindmost.

This stunning realization, which every psyche except the densest must face, occurs at the point when the Language Faculty has not nearly finished its job. Furthermore, the subject is being pushed, usually by its parents, into the hurly-burly of modern life where it must find its economic niche—or perish. The outcome of this unchaperoned rite of passage is an impressionable young mind that easily succumbs to the discourse of the hegemonic order. Once society has shed any credible rites of passage into adulthood, the subject is set adrift into a den of thieves.

The mistake those who are already in thrall to the discourse make is in thinking that it is the *flavor* or tint of the content that matters, for instance if it is “liberal” or “conservative,” or “communist” or “capitalist.” This pseudo-dialectic is precisely the symptom the discourse itself generates through its structure of invalid synthetic propositions to serve hegemony.

Rather, what is so pernicious about the hegemonic discourse is that it consists entirely of propositions formed of a subject and predicate in categorical contradiction. It is a discrete Markov generator of ISP’s designed to stifle dianoetic thought and free analysis and intuition. War is Peace. Freedom is Slavery. Ignorance is Strength. The result is that what Emily Dickinson calls “divinest Sense” is reclassified by the imprimatur of the hegemony as “Much Madness,” while any nonsense suiting the prerogatives of the hegemony’s corporate overlords is the Absolute Truth, and woe unto anyone who thinks, says, or does otherwise.

Ultimately, the mind must be furnished with the associations, signs, connections, taxonomies, and categories of an ethical aesthetic is that is not *engagé*; the subject’s emerging intellect must be, as Emerson says of the American Scholar, “Free even to the definition of freedom, ‘without any hindrance that does not arise out of [its] own constitution.’” It must be guided by its own uncorrupted intuition and curiosity, and it must be furnished with the modest tools and the time it requires to explore the universe imaginatively, empirically, and analytically. But of course, the hegemony considers this to be *asking too much*. Moreover, it is considered “idealistic” (a pejorative), idle, suspicious, and even dangerous.

The persona of the “responsible (obedient) adult” emerges from these elemental structures. But this persona is inherently synthetic and symbolic. What remains to be seen, then, in the wretched melodrama of the subject’s life thereafter is the degree to which this personal mechanism will be modified to reflect the prerogatives of the hegemony’s Great Big Giant Plan for Everyone—whatever it may be: Fascism, Communism, Consumerism, Capitalism, Socialism, Scientism, and the historic and present theocracies of the various Semitic religious sects. In short, we may call this phenomenon “Ism-ism.” (It will not do, however, to espouse anti-Ism-ism.) Regardless of flavor, color, flag, or costume, it is the excrescence of the ISP Mechanism.

We may say that this tendency is the result of humankind’s innate love of the comfort and homeostasis that cults bring about through their thoughtless mediocrity. Cults serve the arbitrary need for extrinsic herd identity, while the worship of nominal and even notional “equality” crushes everyone to the same dangerously inferior level, or what T. E. Lawrence calls the “lowest common denominator.” In the process, the subject’s natural sense of paranoia about others and competition for resources with them weakens. Furthermore, the emphasis on following rules, procedures, dogmas, rituals, tradition, and “the way it’s always been done” becomes far more important than whether or not the job is done right or even done at all.

Input as to how things might be improved are seen as heresy and are dealt with accordingly. Even catastrophic failure on a grand scale, perhaps involving the deaths of thousands and even millions, is not enough to provide even a hint or clue to the cult of mediocrity that Something is Not Quite Right. Instead, *failure* merely spurs the mediocre on to ever-greater disasters and more prolonged periods of economic depression and social chaos. The paranoid may find grand conspiracies in this. The sane, however, find only ineptitude, mediocrity, and a vicious narcissism.

The greatest attraction of mediocrity, though, is that it allows for reassignment of the verisimilitude of the signified to the signifier. The lassitude not permitted to the signified, for it demands qualitative results, is found in the signifier which, when divorced from the signifier, is entirely subject to the infinite criteria of the symbolic and imaginary. Such a state of affairs is much more to the liking to the permanent state of exception and is an absolute necessity for its perpetration than the nasty, brutish, and short prerogatives of reality. Conjuring up some self-referential and pre-determined quantitative criteria for the “determination” of the merit of the symbolic and imaginary is unlimited.

For example, conferring a big cash award and international prestige upon an artist, statesman, or scientist in the form of a “prize” establishes, once and

forever, that quantitatively *This Person* is worth more than all other such persons, except those who have been blessed with the same beneficence. Done properly, the “prize” method can be an excellent form of political and social manipulation of great masses of subjects too busy to find out for themselves if the nominee has any intrinsic merit. Further on down the food chain we find the same manufacturing of mediocrity with the conferment of academic degrees, which are just the booby prize of the hoi polloi. In fact, anything not based on the few constants the universe has so ungenerously provided us with, such as the Planck Constant ( $h$ ) or the velocity of light ( $C$ ), is subject to the fabrication of testing regimes with outcomes that are self-predicting, as if each statistical bell curve were a unique surprise.

But the ultimate test of one’s human value in the cult of mediocrity is *net worth*. The more money a person can in some way verifiably lay claim to, the greater that person’s social value and ultimately cosmic, universal value in the Grand Scheme of Things, however it may be named and defined. Conversely, those who do not meet this quantifiable criterion are, to varying degrees, worth less or may even be considered “worthless,” in which case, like the trash they are, they must be disposed of in one way or another analogous to the methods used by that society to dispose of its garbage.

In poor societies worthless people are simply dumped into improvised and “illegal” *favelas* where they contaminate the landscape and environment. In enlightened societies they are more responsibly disposed of as human landfill in prisons and housing estates and projects or become civil servants.

In societies with futuristic social and economic planning they are “recycled” as slave labor, bound by promissory notes to a life of paying back insurmountable debt and interest by working meaningless jobs in offices serving whatever clerical functions the hegemony and its corporate overlords require at that moment. In official collectivist societies they are bound by their obligation to serve the state in return for the benefits they have received which in less centrally organized societies they would have had to pay for.

Again, when the signifier is exchanged for the signified through the predication of reality upon invalid synthetic propositions, the signifier inherits the verisimilitude of the signified and the simulacrum emerges. The Permanent State of Mediocrity, then, is when one does not really do one’s job but either makes believe one is doing it (simulation) or works at a job which is really no job at all but rather than *simulacrum* of one. The first may be called *nominal* employment and the second *notional*. The ubiquitous job of Apparatchik (civil servant) in all governments is an example of this sort

of imaginary position. At best, we can say that what politicians (lawmakers, judges, and executives) do is *symbolic*, whereas what the apparatchik does is *imaginary*. In effect, one need not *really* perform one's job, or have great character, strength, learning, talent, ingenuity, or even luck. One need only show up for it and go through the pantomime of work, if that.

To be a member in good standing of Club Mediocrity, one need only either 1) *simulate* the requisite qualities, or (better yet), 2) establish a regime wherein "excellence" (the favorite word of the mediocre) is determined by a testing regime where the outcome is based on the biased selection of only those candidates who will realize this outcome. Subjects are preselected to ensure that the desired (preferred) outcome, with some variation and the occasional anomaly thrown in, has a high probability, for better or worse.

There are, of course, a few forms of employment in society about which we may say that they have "real value." There are also those within each sector of employment demanding a certain level of quality and expertise. If those who fill these jobs can make money for the hegemony's corporate overlords, then they too will be exploited by the inept who, like vampires, will bleed them for their inheritable verisimilitude. If they cannot, due to a lack of demand for their skills, they will be despised, marginalized, and crushed into extinction because they represent a threat to the cult as "excess labor." There is not scope here to go into criminal activity, which generally tends to fall on the side of real value rather than the simulacrum, since there is no way to fake a crime.

For the enforcement of mediocrity to be practical, the apparatus must have a modicum of predictable success as an organizer and determiner of predetermined outcomes. Ultimately, these mechanisms serve the Lords and Masters of the hegemonic enterprise. Furthermore, they are the emissaries of its corporate overlords, who command the production of the invalid and therefore contradictory synthetic propositions upon which civilization is based.

Despite their inherently flawed and erroneous nature, though, these propositions are sufficient to maintain a realm of simulacra pleasing to the ego's propensity for self-indulgence at the expense of others and allay its fears of its own mortality—no matter what forms of reality and truth it may encounter along the way. Even death is a mere triviality to the ego happily ensconced in its empire of ISP's. The typical portrayal of the egotist as an isolated, lone, rogue monster of all-consuming selfishness ignores the dynamic that occurs when there is a society full of manufactured ego *Mechan-isms* of a unified phenotype.

They form leagues of nations, trade pacts, treaties, global banks, international laws, and a myriad of enabling protocols to ensure that any

threat to their hermetic power is choked in its crib with “extreme prejudice” and impunity. They protect their blundering surveillance networks, transnational police actions gone awry, remorseless looting of national treasuries, strategic debasing of currency, and gelding of history’s facticity to suit their prerogatives by selectively murdering any upstart of world prominence who threatens the status quo. The trail of destruction they leave in the wake of their rapacious plundering creates a void filled by extremists and criminals who then prey on the weak and defenseless of their own nations.

However, this towering humanitarian achievement—for which many of their kind receive internationally recognized awards—would not be possible if the subjects directly in their charge did not support these efforts through the ritual of democracy. Running from pillar to post, the subject of the representative democracy finds a kind of pagan catharsis in the senseless ritual of suffrage. Reality itself is so repugnant to these enlightened denizens of civilization’s empires that they will do anything to avoid it, accepting instead the transparently false promises of their leaders of eternal access to consumer goods, debt, and life everlasting for the ego and body—provided they can make the monthly payments.

## 7.4 Father as signifier

The parents or parental surrogates help construct the dichotomy between the Self and the Other by being the immediate care givers who become the *Knowns* and the *Bringers*. While it seems to the child in its earliest development that the parents have much in common with each other, soon enough their differences manifest through the conditional and behavioral effects of their respective and distinct parenting roles.

The father eventually becomes the Lawgiver, and by association is equated with the eclipsing shadow of the signifier in the specular solar system. Consequently, the mother by default becomes less of an “Other” to the child than the father. The mother is often closer to the identity of a Known than the father, in part because she is the one often in closest proximity to the child and is less likely to punish—which is a form of alienation.

The father, however, is the most familiar member of the tribe of the Others, a set intersecting with the Unknowns or Strangers. He is more likely to leave the social camp to search and hunt for food (money). The mother, as the primary Bringer, maintains a level of trust with the child that the father need not maintain. She must be the “constant,” the Pole Star, in the child’s need for freedom from separation anxiety and object constancy. In



this way she acts as protection against the more transient and therefore less reliable and at times punitive father.

Therefore, in the traditional configuration the father has more freedom to explore the world, whereas the mother often remains anchored to the caregiver role. At the same time, it frees the mother from having also to assume the role of Lawgiver, which would entail risking alienation from the child when laws are transgressed. From this the child learns that there are two species of love: conditional and unconditional. As laws are always seen as emanating from the “Other” (since they are often contrary to what seem to be our innate impulses), the father also becomes the symbol of the tribe of increasingly familiar Others. This tribe, which the child later knows as society, is ostensibly responsible for acquainting it with what it needs to become a semiautonomous member of that society. Therefore, the Others must impart, correctly and with sincerity, the Trivium, or the grammar, rhetoric, and logic necessary for the free and potent activity of social intercourse which, in a civilization, is chiefly linguistic.

For Lacan, the father-as-lawgiver is the exclusive precursor of socialization. The mother remains the nurturing force in the Ideal-I (I1) position and, we presume, helps usher in the Real-I (I2) stage for the father.

Let us set out from the conception of the Other as the locus of the signifier. Any statement of authority has no other guarantee than its very enunciation, and it is pointless for it to seek it in another signifier, which could not appear outside this locus in any way. Which is what I mean when I say that no metalanguage can be spoken, or, more aphoristically, that there is no Other of the Other. And when the Legislator (who claims to lay down the law) presents himself to fill the gap, he does so as an imposter.<sup>26</sup>

The question, then, is how does the father’s role as Lawgiver in the domestic sphere get translated into what Lacan describes as the “authority” and Legislator whom we know from such august bodies as the *Senātus Populus que Rōmānus*? His objection to this proximal translation of the real father for the “imposter” is that it creates an *Other* of the Other, which cannot be (if only because it is a negation of alterity). Furthermore, how is it possible that the Lawgiver’s voice presumes to speak in an impossible “metalanguage” (the Law or *nomos*) that is somehow in a far more rarified state than everyday speech and therefore lays claim to being “*more true*” than our impulses, intuitions, and experiences?

It is at the point of abdication (Ix), then, that the *false* (F) nature of what Lacan calls the “imposter” expresses itself as the True Sovereign

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<sup>26</sup>Lacan, op. cit., 310-11.

(psychological “truth,” expressed as *t*), rendering the subject’s already weakened state of sovereignty null. Upon abdicating, the subject steps into the shadow of the signifier, an act which immediately creates ennui, a sense of *Unbehagen*, and loss of that which it once had but possesses no more, though seldom does the subject ever think of it in these terms. Rather, it is more inclined to turn to the miracles of psychopharmacology to “cure” the symptom of the ritual sacrifice of the Self upon hegemony’s discursive pyre. Civilization’s irksome discontents, it thinks, are a small price to pay for absolute security and safety at all times, perpetual and indestructible persistence of the ego, and unfettered access to the cornucopia of consumer goods and debt.

The subject then enters the deathless world of the *symbol*, which is also the indentured world of the bondsman. The Sovereign, the Master, the Lord, who was before taken as merely an *emblem* of “law and order,” now becomes Authority incarnate, which is no longer applied but *embodied*. Lacan points out that this proposition is *irresistible*. “The work to which the slave is subjected and the pleasure that he renounces out of fear of death ... will be precisely the way through which he will achieve freedom. There can be no more obvious lure than this, politically or psychologically. *Jouissance* comes easily to the slave, and it will leave the word in bondage.”<sup>27</sup>

Having no other freedom than transgression, the subject is seized with compulsions to “sin,” pursuing ever-more fantastic schemes for the desecration and violation of all the hegemony holds sacred. What it never seems to understand is that the hegemony is the purveyor, the supplier, and the *pusher* of transgression, for a price. At the same time, the hegemony, in the name of the subject who rallies for such action, makes ever more impossible laws against transgression, or that which it sells, covertly and indirectly.

The subject, propelled into a life of desperate *jouissance* in its search for release from its self-imposed oubliette, finds itself in perpetual and flagrant violation of the hegemony’s myriad, byzantine, and often contradictory prohibitions which, nevertheless, the subject has demanded in its juridical frenzy for absolute security and immortality. The hegemony, ever-ready to invoke these prohibitions through selective enforcement, preys on the weak and the Underclass in an attempt to loot their meager treasure, intimidate them into compliance, and make an example of them to the apex consumer who is forever anxious that he may lose access to the hegemony’s commercial and political largesse.

The *paradoxology* of the imposter is most obvious in the mass media, where the *jouissance* of battle, fighting, vicarious and incongruous sex, vast

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 308.

unthinkable possessions, and the impulsive magic powers of the fairy tale become “realities.” The subject, still resentful at the parents’ (now often abortive) attempt to empty the nest, embraces the hegemonic order in the form of the State and through its commercial and entertainment apparatus as the *Bringer-par-excellence*.

The ennui brought about by the duality of signifier and signified is blurred in the shadow of a mechanical Lord looming over the puny subject in the form of this towering apparatus designed, in all civilizations, to awe the citizen. Whether the subject acknowledges it or not, the Legislative Authority it elected (or in some other way sanctions) remains an “impostor” in the sense that it has once again set itself up along the lines of an invalid synthetic proposition as the *Other* of the Other—a kind of *über Vater*.

Furthermore, although seemingly unaware of it, the subject secretly hankers for the Lord’s downfall. The disgrace of politicians and other celebrities is a perpetual source of fascination, catharsis, and even vicarious *jouissance* for the subject in the form of *Schadenfreude*. What is going on is simply the physical law of entropy attempting to find equilibrium to compensate for the gross metastasis caused by the hegemony’s destructive lust for power and money. (The French Revolution of 1789 is an extreme example where the compensation itself for this unnatural distortion veers into gross metastasis to the point of its own exhaustion.)

But it is not only the sovereign who becomes what Lacan calls the “locus” of the signifier-as-law. The subject, too, in more than just his feeling-tone about the new position of Ix (abdication), has undergone an inversion just as the Other has in its mutation from Father-Other to Other-Other. The result is what Hegel calls a “double reflection” of the specular stage now transformed through *jouissance* into the incipience of the Second Negation. “[T]he truth of this certainty is really a double reflection, the duplication of self-consciousness. Consciousness has for its object one which, of its own self, posits its otherness or difference as a nothingness, and in so doing is independent.”<sup>28</sup>

While the subject enters into this uncertain dialectic, other forces are at work as well. The economy established through the act of abdication is by its eccentric nature unstable. Therefore, it constantly seeks homeostasis, which it never quite achieves. Nevertheless, this unpleasant situation is entirely to the benefit of the hegemony, as it is ever ready to supply the distractions, diversions, and narcotics (for a price) the psyche needs to forget its obligation to itself to seek equilibrium. The torrent of synthetic illogic it provides is gratis; it comes “free” with every abdication package purchased in a frenzy of self-disenfranchisement.

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<sup>28</sup> Hegel, *op. cit.*, 110.

The overwhelming need for equilibrium remains, though, nagging at the social Identity's new prerogative of maintaining the status quo. What is sought in the process of psychoanalysis is a functional, conscious, natural equilibrium between the various components of the psyche (ego, id, and so forth) as well as between the three acute angles of experience the mind must contend with: the real, imaginary, and symbolic.

While this quest normally would consume considerable quantities of psychic energy, it must also contend with the abdicated subject's need for ever more energy to maintain its losing battle for discursive homeostasis. The *extrinsic* values of society and civilization, which are always changing and never give but only take, demand the majority of the subject's conscious awareness in the forms of indoctrination (education) and servitude (work). They also may demand the "ultimate sacrifice" in the event of war. Attempts to shirk this imperative result in a triage of the subject's quality of life into either the morass of the Underclass where crime and drug addiction take their toll, or complete disenfranchisement in the form of social *loathing*.

Serving two masters: psychic equilibrium and social homeostasis, the subject finds itself torn between the intrinsic and the extrinsic, the centric and the eccentric. Failing to establish an emotional center of its own invention that it may call the Self, the subject teeters on into the vicissitudes of life unprepared for the battle ahead. Why? It has been told since childhood that life is a fairytale of altruistic goals shared by everyone always. It has been conditioned to subordinate itself to that which-is-not-itself, friend or foe, while distrusting and even disparaging anything issuing from its own intrinsic core.

Naturally this pernicious but ubiquitous doctrine grows out of the Christian dogma of Original Sin. But to lay blame there, like a wreath of dead thorns, is disingenuous. Rather, the idea that we are *always already* wrong and bad is a strictly nondenominational expediency arising from the hegemony's accurate perception that if such a simple system of psychological manipulation worked for Christianity, then it will work for any *mechan-ism* of the social apparatus.

Without a Pole Star, and strictly forbidden to consult its own innate compass, the subject enters into the world of the permanent state of exception where anything is possible—as long as it can make the monthly payments. We may now add "nothingness" to Kant's "nothing" and Heidegger's "no one." The signifier is now *nothingness/nothing/no-one*. As the hegemonic discourse, it is a void or negation in the form of the shadow which cannot contain the corpus, but only its outline as a kind of silhouette of the "imposter." This irregularity, then, forms a constant pressure for recursion to a natural state of equilibrium in the Real-I (I2) position, known

as “independence,” which, in this circumstance, is a kind of proto-neo-sovereignty.

However, a contrary pressure for homeostasis in the subject’s new-found campus of empty “otherness” forces the psyche into fits of *jouissance* in a frenzied attempt to destabilize the whole constellation. While *jouissance* under the pressure of the *nomos* demands transgression, the consequences of this episode of compulsive “freedom” depend upon many variables, the chief of which is the character or what Charles S. Peirce calls the “conduct” of the subject as well as of its society at the time and place of the act.

## 7.5 Dialectical historicity of discourse

History is the hegemonic empire’s greatest weapon. After all the bombs have exploded and the guns are silenced, “history” descends upon the wreckage like atomic fallout. It poisons every well, taints the air with its brimstone, and builds up from the ruins of the old society a new, bigger, snazzier, *more progressive* one promising to be the Even Better than the previous debacle. A word to the contrary concerning this mission is met with the absolute fury of the victor’s wrath. As Hitler said, the victor will never be asked if he told the truth. One is either *for* this Brave New World, or *against* it.

While the parallels are not accidental, civilization’s tendency to romanticize the fairytale of itself is merely an extension of the individual’s compulsive need to feel that he is the only human alive, and who ever existed, and who will ever exist. The rest are mere wraiths and phantoms. The hegemonic order feeds into this need for infantile priority, indulging the subject’s narcissism with entertainment, satisfying its every whim with consumer goods, and tranquilizing all anxieties. At the same time, though, it also demands total self-sacrifice for the sake of “society,” as represented officially by the state apparatus.

History serves as a synthetic *a priori* to the child’s personal history which begins as an accumulation of that which the child has had absolutely nothing to do with, such as nationality, ethnicity, race, and so on. Soon enough, this history is modified *a posteriori* to reflect those events which befall the child before it has the will and the power to change their course.

Finally, that which biographers and autobiographers write about emerges which we may properly call the subject’s life story within the context of its social history—a story which the subject itself may have influenced to a significant degree as in the case of a world-historic character such as Hitler. Species, race, nationality, ethnicity, polity, community, and

family: these six threads of social discourse, whether convergent or divergent, are represented in the subject's psyche *mimetically*. As such, they are also expressed by the subject as the frame or context of *its own* discourse or history in the form of the discursive personal narrative of "I am."

However, the need for social consensus remains if there is to be peace, love, and understanding, as well as law and order, which are the altruistic *control parameters* of the hegemony. What is required of any social Big Idea is that it must enter into what Vygotsky calls a *fossilized state* so that it may be displayed in the "museum" of the hegemonic discourse's propaganda apparatus as "evidence" of the social evolution that brought into being an enchanted New World it alone made possible. To maintain membership in this existential miracle, the subject is now asked to sign an endless series of promissory notes and agree to shadowy EULA's (end-user license agreements) in which it surrenders its future treasure and personal privacy.

The goal is to turn all that is alive, feral, and free in the subject into a crystallized or fossilized *quantum* that can then be traded on the commodities and futures markets of the social economy. When a historical discourse reaches an *unrevised* equilibrium, we may say that it has become a "fossil" or is fossilized. Vivid ideas are too contentious for the hegemony, and the public, to contend with, as they are not easily scripted into stereotypes, clichés, and corporate fairy tales. Nor are they conducive to being packaged, sold, auctioned, and tapped for their underlying value in risky trading scenarios.

Behind this profound process of turning something into nothing and nothing into something is the psychological need for *absolute certainty at all times* of such mare's nests as "national security" and "law and order." The psyche's natural orientation to gradually allay its object-constancy fears by testing reality is completely coopted and short circuited by the fact that in modern societies the child is the property of the state until a certain age and therefore begins life as a *captive*. Furthermore, its release is conditional upon its demonstrated subservience to the prerogatives of the state, whatever they may be.

Compounding the emotional disorder of chronic fear of the loss of the object (the mother's love) is the doctrine taught by the education system and religion that helplessness and boredom are "good." Therefore, the reverse must be true: elf-determination and *jouissance* must be "evil." Finally, social pressure to dissolve the sense of Self into the commercial *We* and *Us* completes the fossilization process necessary to produce a statistically predictable apex consumer aligned with leading market trends. "The

fossilized form is the end of the thread that ties the present to the past, the higher stages of development to the primary ones,” says Vygotsky.<sup>29</sup>

Vygotsky quotes Marx on the dialectical nature of the historicity of change in the process of internalization. “To study something historically means to study it in the process of change; that is the dialectical method's basic demand.”<sup>30</sup> Such development arising from *change* should not be confused with *progress*. The “transformation,” as Vygotsky puts it, from external to internal is the greatest change. Herein lies the essence of what “history” is supposed to be: the study of the record of a living thing and not a fossil. This process, however, halts when seized by the strictures, dogma, prohibitions, discourse, and *capture* civilization encodes through the ever-expanding reach and power of the *nomos* or Law in service of the hegemony and its corporate overlords.

It is not that the child “progresses” through a hierarchy of stages. Rather, it is that each stage is what Vygotsky calls a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is not a benchmark in a hierarchy but a kind of algorithm repeating itself when conditions are right. These conditions express themselves in the form of a “zone” in which two elements must be present: 1) the will to change, and 2) the presence of a “teacher,” leader, or other kind of facilitator (sometimes in the form of a book) shepherding the subject over the threshold into the next zone. This is not an “upward” movement of something getting bigger and better, though it reflects a *difference*. It is arrayed on a topological plane of being, in homage to the *a priori* of Time and Space.

When this process is permitted to take control of the discourse, invalid synthetic propositions subordinate themselves into the nonsense that they are. In their place arise the meaningful, substantive, reality-based utterances of the valid synthetic statement and the analytic proposition. It is upon this foundation, or zone, that an order of existence can be founded capable of sustaining that which has engendered it and will engender further development of the psyche and personality.

Is this, then, what is called “sustained development”? No. While the ZPD is indeed part of a “developmental” process, there is a difference between the *progress* (a verb) of a process and Progress (a noun) itself. The latter is an ideology founded upon the notion that the mere passage of time makes everything “better,” and that what is in the past is “bad” and what will come in the future is “good” merely because of their relative proximity to each other. It is a form of the invalid synthetic adaptation that preceded it of the idea that everything in the past was good, and that today things are

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 64

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 65.

“not as good,” and that the future will likely make them worse, which we may describe as the *regressive fallacy*.

The beauty of all invalid synthetic propositions is that they may be run in contrary, or contradicting, directions, since they have a degree of freedom reality inherently lacks: fantasy. However, what is sinister about the Progressive Fallacy is that it runs in *both* directions simultaneously, so that things are always getting better *and* worse, which works to the advantage of the hegemonic order and its overlords in many cynical ways. As Dickens said of the period just before the French Revolution of 1789 (and his own time), “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times ...”

What is this development, and how does its movement “progress”? It is development for development’s sake. The closest algorithmic description is a discrete Markov chain where the present state, although not determined by the past state, determines the next state. How could this be? The present state is subject to a stochastic process which need not represent a causal expression of the previous state; it is discrete unto itself, while at the same time being, as Chomsky notes, *generative*.

However, that does not mean that it cannot therefore determine the next state. Rather, what it means is that the next state (if we must sequence it as *a, b, c,* and so on ...), being an expression of its stochastic predecessor, *is itself stochastic*. Therefore, each state may be described as predictably unpredictable, or “a random walk.”

The ZPD, as a stochastic process, is the opposite, ontologically, of what Vygotsky calls the “fossilized” state which follows what Freud calls the “crystallization” of the psychic process into a hardened “complex.” The difference is that Vygotsky’s term emphasizes the *morbidity* involved. *Vividity*, however, is the business of the ZPD. It is responsible, until fatal and final organic morbidity sets in, of maintaining the equilibrium of the subject’s psyche which requires foremost that its operational schemata be founded upon *valid* synthetic and verifiable analytic propositions, else it collapses upon itself into a suffocating state of fossilization.

Therefore, each episode of the ZPD must follow the same logic. It is relative only to the values contained within itself, with nothing extrinsic. By development Vygotsky means “transformation” of the same values from state to state, with no discrete state “better” or “more developed” than another, and with each being discrete but generative of the next.

Since we are dealing with human beings that have a capability and need to improve their ability to be effective in their various spheres of endeavor, there is the tendency to assume that humans develop from a useless, dependent child into a useful, independent adult. Such an assumption comes despite the fact that many children, like many animals, can be far more



resourceful (and delightful) than adults. Moreover, it is common to find great numbers of useless, resourceless, dependent adults in any “great” society. The state even *manufactures* this perennial phenotype as evidence of its liberality and largesse.

Furthermore, the actions of the hegemony’s transnational corporate overlords directly or indirectly encourage displacement of populations in the form of “refugees.” The result is the political and financial destabilization of already-established citizen populations (often consisting of *legal* immigrants), rendering them politically harmless and, eventually, socially helpless too. A collateral effect of this destabilization is that it renders whole geographic regions more open to exploitation of valuable resources the hegemony’s corporate overlords require in their metastatic pursuit of wealth and power.

Though Vygotsky makes the distinction of “primary” and “higher” states, he refers only to these proximal levels in terms of *world processing* to the point where it is internalized at the new ZPD. The difference between the classic developmental psychology model and Vygotsky’s constructivism is the method, which is dialectical, constantly iterating the same morphology with a new set of self-contained variables, whereas developmental psychology is linear and progressive.

We believe that child development is a complex process characterized by periodicity, unevenness in the development of different functions, metamorphosis or qualitative transformation of one form into another, intertwining of external and internal factors, and *adaptive processes which overcome impediments the child encounters* [italics added].<sup>31</sup>

While such variables as Vygotsky describes above are enough to indicate a chaotic, “random” developmental process defying the linear idea of progressivism, it is the final variable that gives us a sense of what helps determine its outcome: the “adaptive processes.” It is more powerful in children than adults, making them uniquely capable of overcoming “impediments.” He found this quality or power easily observable in children in experiments involving problem solving (though it seems to have escaped child victimologists who depict their subjects as powerless to overcome even the mildest of social obstacles). In particular, it is the child’s genius for what Vygotsky describes as “metamorphosis” and “qualitative transformation” that enables its great adaptive powers by necessity.

These *qualities* in particular are what maintain the child’s development as a *living process*; they are also the target of the education system and other

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 73.

pillars of the hegemony as *that-which-must-be-fossilized*. By causing a seizure of development, the hegemony can then sell the subject cheaply on the labor market without much uppity willfulness or nagging complaint from it. All that is necessary is to keep it fed, drugged, drunk, entertained, and occupied with something useful to the machinery necessary to enrich whomever holds the reins of power.

## 7.6 Testing Forces the Progressive Fallacy

To say that the process of development has been fossilized and that a “seizure” has occurred in the evolving integration of the subject’s psyche does not exclude quantifiable measurement of the subject’s “value” in the labor market as a commodity. Bereft of all intrinsic, intuitive, and even spiritual ways of evaluating the subject’s psychological and ontological condition, society turns to its most important determinant of social value: *net worth*, actual, virtual, or potential. The more money one “makes,” the greater the value of one’s assets, and finally the deeper one is able to get into debt, the more “successful” one is by every criterion of social exploitation.

“Wealth,” as it is called, gives one access to justice, medical care, education, personal safety, comfort, and a sense of belonging only *promised* to those without it but seldom delivered to them. Those who have somehow missed the boat must suffer the fate they clearly deserve, goes the discourse. Making “a contribution to society” is measured only in financial units of one sort or another. Otherwise, one is merely a parasite and is, perhaps, better off dead unless one can be monetized into a prisoner in the federal prison system.

By the numbers, then, one is triaged into levels of access to what are touted as the basic “rights” of every taxpaying citizen, regardless of the degree of wealth. That one must suffer what amounts to no access at all—despite paying *some* taxes—is simply one’s punishment for not having tried harder, or just not being as lucky as the one who has “made it.”

For there to be a verifiable progression toward this social apex, there must be a test to measure its success beyond the mere reportage of figures, however. A test ascertains the “level attained” of the subject within the context of the set body of knowledge and its proscription. In as much as it is proscription, there is a defined canonic body of *knowing*, and explicit definitions of what learning is allowed to be. These limitations are found in the course catalogues of every institution of higher education and in the state public-school curricula. The level attained is marked by a “degree” awarded

to the subject for proving, to the satisfaction of the Domini of the hegemonic order, that fossilization has been completed.

In order for this regime to *dominate* the entire discourse of society, though, it must be comprehensive, consistent, united, ubiquitous, and most of all supported and lauded by the people themselves in the form of representational government. It will not do to point fingers at the institutions the people have erected in their own image and blame those institutions for that which the people do not like about themselves.

Scoundrels are ever ready to seek out a scapegoat for their own nefarious deeds. When the subject does not get what it wants, it claims that these institutions have been “taken over” or corrupted by alien forces: Russians, Jews, Arabs, Neo-cons, Liberals, or whatever the Bogeyman de Jour happens to be. These claims, however, are as incredible as claims that the mass of subject has been “tricked” into abdicating its self-determination. Rather, they freely, consciously, deliberately, willingly, and intentionally surrender what little power Nature has given them in exchange for fantastic promises of life eternal and guarantees of perpetual consumerism. Who, then, would not jump at the chance to provide it, at a cost?

The fossilized psyche, therefore, is a kind of burnt offering laid at the feet of civilization’s god: the state. Consequently, political life is reduced to a set of simple rules. All that is good comes from the state. All that is bad is opposed to the state. Any state that is not the subject’s state is opposed to its state and is therefore bad. At the position of abdication (Ix), the canon of “what may be thought” has been absorbed by osmosis. Immersion in commercial default culture, distracting entertainment, and an education system of indoctrination serves as the subject’s operant conditioning.

By acting as a parasite upon the development of the Language Faculty (LF), which is organic, the synthetic crystallization process determines the ways and byways thought may travel in the territory of the mind. No Man’s Lands are designated throughout this topology, places where Doubt lurks in the form of cultural and political taboos. Any contact with them is considered to be the gravest transgression of the social code purportedly embraced by Everyone as the way it is and should be, by fiat.

The temptation to venture into these “waste lonely places behind the eye” as poet Theodore Roethke puts it is often too great for the subject to resist, particularly in the throes of *jouissance*. But there is ample provision for the *mea culpa*, and reeducation is available around the clock in the form of nearly all media content, from the most mainstream to the wildest, most radical “alternative” media which is just a more rag-tag version of the primary discourse. It is, at best, *the anti-discourse*, which is a welcome friend in the house of the hegemony. It is in fact needed by it to make sure

that no lambs go astray in the wilderness of discursive thought. Even the hegemony's most violent detractors rely upon its media channels to get their message out.

To manage this estate, the hegemonic order resorts to testing, creating the illusion of verifiability and certainty based on empirical and scientific data. All fossilized forms of knowing are in themselves canonic and finite. Therefore, they are easily subject to testing. Ronell describes the orthography of the canon. "While the test is a questioning act, and while it may prompt the necessity of counter-examples, it already contains and urges a sense of the correct way to answer its demands."<sup>32</sup>

As such, the test is merely an affirmation of the cohesion of its own orthography. Ronell divides epistemology into *meaning* and *knowledge*. It is one thing to *know* a fact, and another to know what the fact *means* (which is the problem with statistics). "[T]he test attacks epistemological meaning with a kind of ontological fervor. The surprise passes for a shiver in ontology; something trembles in being."

To the extent that the test, according to its more constative pretexts, delivers results, corroborating or disconfirming what is thought to be known or even to exist, it can undermine anything that does not respond to its probative structure. The status of the thing tends to topple under the pressure of the test. Somewhat paradoxically, it is not even clear that something is known until there is a test for it.<sup>33</sup>

Testing makes knowledge "real," even if that knowledge consists of propositions in categorical contradiction. All that is necessary, like a public key that fits a private key, is that the test itself and the knowledge that is tested agree logically, if not also in terms of content. Knowledge which has not been tested by the official testing organization, whatever it may be, is hearsay. When there is a developed a body of knowledge that must be learned, and when that knowledge becomes the entire content of the system of personal development, then it may be said that the historicity of that knowledge, fossilized as it may be, has become the *dogma* of the discourse.

Dogma, as the dead orthodoxy of the fossilized *nomos*, invokes an immediate organic reaction for its opposite: living, dynamic, and mysterious *gnosis*. It is as if the organism is attempting to reject an alien and morbid organ that has been transplanted from a corpse. Of course, there are injections which can stifle the rejection mechanism, forcing the organism to integrate the foreign flesh and necrotic tissue.

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<sup>32</sup> Ronell, op. cit., 186.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 186.

Nevertheless, from the organism's point of view, dogma is the enemy, since truth is what has allowed it to survive for millennia. By becoming the enemy, dogma forces life into open rebellion. Life's mission is to avoid fossilization at all costs. The job, then, of the education system is to prevent *gnosis* from gaining a foothold in favor of indoctrination into the canon of accepted and acceptable beliefs. "[I]t was believed that by using tests, we determine the mental development level which education should reckon and whose limits it should not exceed .... This procedure, oriented learning toward yesterday's development, toward developmental stages already completed."<sup>34</sup>

There is hardly a better definition of "fossilization" than an education system oriented toward "developmental stages already completed" which the subject may have left behind with good reason, such as the specular, Ideal-I position.

Seeking homeostasis rather than equilibrium, the subject enters into a *simultaneous parallel ontology* (SPO) where its level of intellectual and emotional maturity is centered in the Ideal-I position—which might be called infantile, anal, and oral—while its social orientation, having forsaken the Real-I position for abdication, remains at the farthest-most reaches of the ego's territory where the excrescence of the Other taints the sovereign identity of the Self. The result is the "divided" individual, the classic back-stabbing, heartless, two-faced character Hollywood movies portray as the villain and sometimes even the (anti) hero.

As mentioned earlier, we see this kind of paradoxology in Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, where the chaos of the French Revolution of 1789 makes it nearly impossible to characterize the *Zeitgeist*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only."

It is inevitable that this subject thus divided will go on to cause trouble in the social sphere. If the matter were of one or two pathological characters of this sort polluting the otherwise healthy pool of citizens, containment would be an option. Unfortunately, we are talking about what is considered normal by social standards. The testing apparatus in all of its extravagant forms serves as a filter to identify, nurture, and promote psychic division.

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<sup>34</sup> Vygotsky, op. cit., 88.

This is the “normal” schizophrenic walking among us, tamed into a psychotic by the demands of utility and the effects of drugs. His bicameral state allows him full functionality in the paradoxology of what are at once the best and worst of times.

Sometimes what is identified as a person with schizophrenia by medical testing turns out to be resistant to the process of being domesticated into a useful psychotic, instead “preferring not to” accept the regimen of drugs and containment offered “for his own good.” In the name of humane and altruistic treatment, those not amenable to domestication are left to wander the streets discovering for themselves a paranoid and hostile landscape, real or imagined. Meantime, the trainable, educable schizophrenics make names and fortunes for themselves by making the lives of others miserable. They are uncannily adept at spotting the apostate, even one in full compliance with the demands of the hegemony, reasonable or not. Their greatest power, however, is being able to function in the environment of a simultaneous parallel ontology with the comfort and skill of the sane.

The amazing stunt of the incorporation of madness into the definition of functional sanity that is the foundation of civilization arises from the power of language to shape not only the way people think, but who they are, how they see the world, and, ultimately, what kind of world they and others must live in. It is the generative basis of the metastasis needed to work the algorithmic engine of the progressive fallacy while predicating the underlying value of present upon the future. “Language arises initially as a means of communication between the child and the people in his environment. Only subsequently, *upon conversion to internal speech*, does it come to organize the child's thought, that is, become an internal mental function [italics added].”<sup>35</sup> The nascent mind thirsts for order and equilibrium. Therefore, it is fair to say that it is open to any paradigm that will seem to further the ego's agenda, particularly that which promises immortality “in the future” at any price.

A mind with little structure other than certain innate but latent functions, such as the Language Faculty, cannot *choose* the style of discourse that will shape it. Furthermore, it must not, for it must take what it can get, no matter how primitive, brutal, and cruel. There will always be something in it that will help it at least initially achieve its egoic ends until its cognitive genes can get a hold of some other ideas. These may be perhaps from more enlightened sources outside of the milieu in which it was born, or that are convincingly hermetic enough to seem to encompass the universe of discourse rather than the ego's own little existential milieu.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 89.

If we look at this process in its basic form, we can see how extrinsic discourse becomes intrinsic thought. Foremost, there is the necessity for the *utility* of communication. A utility by its nature and definition has no meaning as such. It is used, and that is all. However, when language becomes the vehicle for the transmission of fossilized historicity (not “history,” but the *sense* of history, for history itself is a collection of interpreted facts and not the process itself), it is subjected to *testing*. Through the testing regime, the utility of language diminishes as the subject proves itself worthy of a less challenging environment in which it must communicate with potency.

In other words, it is allowed to nudge itself away from the annoying challenges and vicissitudes of the *real* and start on the more gratifying path of the *imaginary* and *symbolic*. Communication itself is then subordinated to *that-which-is-communicated*. Consequently, to communicate the wrong thing well can be far more dangerous to the wellbeing of the subject than to communicate the right thing badly.

In other words, communication—meaningful, truthful, and clear—ceases to be the governing ethical aesthetic of language. In its place arises the fiat Orthodoxy with its vast filtration system putting everyone in one’s place *tout de suit*. This autonomic mechanism, which is called from time to time here “the apparatus,” of course has its henchmen, quislings, and apparatchiks to grease its works. But for the most part it is simply supported by everyone, always, under any circumstance, and for no reason at all other than *this is what they know*. Thus, the Cult of Mediocrity maintains its grip on the subjects that support it blindly with their abdication, indentures, and debt.

To “know” in this way is enough to be a member in good standing of Club Mediocrity. It is all civilization’s lust for the lowest common denominator allows and requires. One can muddle through life with scarcely a care as long as one toes the line; demure, however, and despite the greatest contributions to humanity and civilization one is straight away, as Emily Dickinson puts it, “handled with a chain.” Those who “prefer not to” must face the social consequences of a good classical loathing.

## 7.7 Developmental ontology and morphology

Social coercion into the status quo need not occur in any kind of conscious forum. Rather, it is so embedded in the “background” of experience in civilization that it is mistaken for reality itself. And why not? As a subclass of Dasein, the realm of the imaginary, allied with the symbolic through a shared discourse of ISP’s, *inherits* the surface identity of the real.

This fusion makes it possible to bypass simulation and go straight for the *simulacrum*, or the imitation of that which does not exist in the first place. Such a magic trick mimics *le devenir* in all but substance.

Simulation is far too obvious and subject to the necessity of the *willing* suspension of disbelief. Anything so dependent must accept that at some point the one who is doing the suspending will choose to *un*-suspend it, returning to reality when the ushers shoo everyone out of the theater for the night. As a result, the only thing the hegemonic power ever really has to fear is that its corporate overlords will decide to put their weight behind a competing regime, in which case the existing hegemony's power to conjure up infinite futures of wealth, prosperity, and peace vanish in the fire and brimstone of war.

Furthermore, development, dependent as it is on the Language Faculty, is therefore also subject to a fundamental source of contradiction and conflict in the form of the deliberate substitution of the *signifier* for the *signified* (S/s). Such an instrumental swap of assets, one imaginary and derivative and the other real and underlying, is necessary for the smooth operation of the economy of the ISP. The statements War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, and Ignorance is Strength depend upon the substitution of values of one signifier for another as contradictions or antonyms, confounding the sobering effects of free reason and the dianoetic.

The *signifier*, however, requires systematic and linguistic representation as the *signified*. In this way language, which is by its nature already an artificial apparatus, takes on a sinister role as the agent of the simulacrum the subject craves in its terrified sortie from real value, self-determination, ethical responsibility, and the absolute inevitability of death.

To pull this off, the hegemonic discourse of the *signifier for signified* swap must be transmitted relentlessly to the subject to avoid any possibility of analytic thought. Therefore, to get its way, the hegemonic power relies on the soporific distractions of the entertainment industry, complementary corporate "news," self-serving government fiat and edict, and the stultifying everydayness of one's social interactions which are, ultimately, dictated by necessity rather than choice.

What makes social life in "reality" so oppressive, driving the subject ever deeper into its gadgetry and "apps," is that the annoying demands of flesh and blood keep it away from the perpetual ritornello of "I am, I am, I am" (or "iAm") purveyed by the content of digital media at so many Hertz per second. Spurred on by the commercial idea that if it just buys the right product it will "think different" (sic), the subject spends without thought for the future only to find itself exactly like everyone else in all the ways that matter.



In effect, then, the subject has out-sourced its *cogito* to the service providers who draw monthly payments directly from the subject's bank account. If the subject ceases payment, it consequently ceases to exist! The perfect hermetic system of substitution of the signifier for the signified is held in place in service of the hegemony's corporate overlords by 1) the subject's fear of not living forever, and 2) the annoying bother of having to take responsibility for its existence. And all of it is leveraged, placing the subject's entire personal economy at constant risk of default.

The effect is that reality, or that which is represented by the signifier, becomes reclassified as "unreal" and is cast aside and despised (loathed). Meanwhile, the sign or symbol is reclassified as nominal or notional "reality," using reality itself as the underlying value upon which it inherits its verisimilitude. The expediency of this prerogative of the hegemonic power and its corporate overlords cannot be overestimated. Today, it chiefly lies in the *encodability* of the sign which can then be transmitted, tracked, rationed, controlled, manipulated, modified, and monitored in ways that ugly, dirty, filthy, troublesome reality would never otherwise stand for.

The result of the cynical substitution of the signifier for the signified is existential confusion on the part of the hapless subject regarding the significance of death to everyday life. Consequently, the subject feels that it will live forever—provided it also lives up to the language of the promissory notes and EULA's it has signed and agreed to. It soon forgets that what gives day-to-day life meaning is the feeling, as well as the understanding, that one *can* die at any moment, and that no matter what, the body *will* die.

Are we to trust such a creature who confuses the sign and symbol for the thing it is meant to represent? Would we trust the driver of a train who did so? In the political economy of the ISP, it is rather than apostate who is not to be trusted. In the ethical aesthetic of the hegemonic discourse, those who *do not* proclaim, in word and deed, that the signifier IS the signified, are pariahs not to be trusted. They have deviated from the doctrine of the cult of mediocrity. Furthermore, their reason may be unburdened with the conflicts characterizing the pathological individual who, from the earliest days of his development, has had all sense of empathy for others suspended in himself in favor of the dogma of political altruism—yet another substitution. Therefore, the apostate may act independently of the discourse, which is the greatest possible sin against the hegemony and shall be punished.

Furthermore, certain types of pathology, such a psychopathy, are favored, emulated, worshiped, nurtured, and cultivated by the hegemonic empire. It is only reasonable that the empires built by individuals so afflicted

have only one purpose: *war*, for without it, civilization becomes an impotent regime of political eunuchs, a morass of decadent artists, and a bastion of bourgeois sentimentality. Marx called the lowest of these miscreants the “lumpen proletariat,” and Hitler called them, perhaps for want of a better word, degenerates.

There is nothing quite like war to toughen up civilization’s sissies! It teaches them the lesson they should have learned in childhood: that the world is a terrible place full of beastly predators whose only interest in life is to take what is not theirs and enslave the masses for their own luxury and pleasure. However, offer those same citizens an opportunity to join the ranks of these same beastly predators, and they will forsake any freedom, any liberty, any ethics, and *anybody* for a chance to rise up from being a slave to becoming a slave master. Just being freed is yet another form of slavery, they think. It requires self-reliance, and they would find themselves at a marked disadvantage to both the slave (who gets free room and board) and the master (who gets whatever he wants). Therefore, freedom is not freedom from being enslaved, but the freedom *to enslave*. Modern civilization’s great innovation, however, is to form an ingenious hybrid of the two where *the slave may also enslave*, solving the biggest social problem of classical antiquity.

What we lack here, though, is a schema of how what are essentially psychological values affect and influence the development of the psyche and the intellect and, consequently, the logic of the thinking mind in the dianoetic sense. Before we can explore what might be pathological in the psychology of abdication, however, it is necessary to look at how the personal is formed in the first place by innate as well as social forces.

In exploring the development of the “I” during the transition from the sense of No-I (0I) to the specular Ideal-I (1I) during the mirror stage, we see that there are some fundamental values established which concentrate psychic energy in such a way that they become organic components of the subject’s psychological mechanism. One of these values is narcissism.

In among the psyche’s common structural components of ego, id, libido, preconscious, and superego lies the narcissistic artifact of the mirror stage as a kind of free radical poised to set in motion a metastatic frenzy of self-possession which is both necessary and problematic. Meantime, how all of these formations establish themselves with any identifiable certainty in the drama of personality depends upon a series of *subphases* which distinguish themselves throughout the Critical Period (1-12) of a child’s psychological but most significantly linguistic development.

The following subphases are identified by Mahler, et al., as critical in the formation of personality<sup>36</sup>:

0. Separation-Individuation (Autistic-Symbiotic)
  1. Differentiation + Body-Image Development
  2. Practicing
  3. Rapprochement
  4. Emotional Object Constancy + Consolidation of Individuality

Subphase 0 (Separation-Individuation, Autistic-Symbiotic, corresponding) is considered to be a transition from the Normal Autistic Phase of infancy at birth to the incipience of the sense of individuality through separation from the birth mother. Here we take “autistic” to mean that the child is aware only of itself (as a self with selfish needs) in what we have been describing as the 0I (and later) I1 positions of the modified Lacanian mirror stage. It is the artifact of this phase that is the foundation of the narcissistic manifestation of the metastatic ego. It corresponds to the 0I (No-I) → I1 (Ideal-I) transition, the most fundamental as it is the psychological expression of the categorical exclusion (0 / 1) and is therefore “greater” than all other subphases (0 / 1 > 1 / n). The initial position (0I) is described as a “sleeplike state” outweighing the “state of arousal” (I1). This is a common observation made by parents of newborns. Freud, quoted in Mahler, et al., describes the state as a “neat example of a psychological system shut off from the stimuli of the external world ...”<sup>37</sup>

Moreover, this stage is also characterized by the lack of cathexis with the *Bringers*, those emissaries from infancy, who *bring* with or without the infant’s prompting through Lack. Rather, they feel it is their “duty” and responsibility to Bring (nurture). It is not long before the infant’s behavior “centers [upon] his continuous attempts to achieve homeostasis” through crying, making attractive noises, gesturing at random, and thrashing about for attention. This communication phase begins to interrupt the infant’s hermetic autism. Soon, this view of the world, such as it is, enters the symbiotic phase where the dialectic begins in earnest between “pleasurable/good” and “painful/bad,” establishing the fundamental dichotomy of the pleasure principle.<sup>38</sup> As such, communication becomes a form of complaint about lack, and a means to the end of pleasure.

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<sup>36</sup> Margaret Mahler, et al., *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1975), 41.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

The period is characterized in part by the “holding behaviors” of the mother and what effect they have on the child's emotional development. There is a “normal” level of symbiosis that can be defined by negation, meaning that, obviously, *not*-holding and *abusive* manipulation are detrimental to the child's development. (Here is the first source of possible pathology, related to the discourse of affection from the principle of the primary Known: the mother.) Although it is not thought out in words, the “discourse” of this subphase is discovered as a feeling-tone with the content expressing the intuitive idea that “comfort and security come from the *Known*.”

It is a commonly observed (and remarked upon) phenomenon of language that when such a generalization is asserted, an equal and opposite generalization arises in some quarter (*l'opposition*); in this case it would be the idea that therefore, discomfort and insecurity arise from the presence of the *Unknown*, the alien, the *alteric*. As a result, the seeds of one's future distrust of the Outsider, and of others in general (paranoia), are planted in the deepest regions of the psyche only to flower at a later phase.

## 7.8 Differentiation + Body-Image Development

Subphase 1, Differentiation + Body-Image Development, corresponds to the Ideal-I (I1) position of the concatenation of the mirror stage. In it, by necessity and as part of the child's development (and the Known's role as a *mother*), there is a *pulling away*, a separation, an attrition, particularly as new behaviors such as crawling lessen the need for carrying and therefore holding.

At this moment of pulling away, of differentiation, the child immediately takes on a *transitional object* (TO) such as a stuffed animal or a baby blanket. The TO is essentially a “fetish” of sorts in the child's ritualistic approach to the mystery of its environment and the unreflecting expression of its psychological values. It also has its practical, tactile, sensual applications. The infant uses the TO as a substitute for the touch of the mother, particularly around the face and mouth.<sup>39</sup>

At the same time, the object is a type of “reaction formation” the heightened sense of which comes with the mother's differentiation from the child and Others. To ensure that object constancy is maintained when the mother is not present, the child *transfers* the significance of this presence to the TO as a displacement substitute. The transitional object becomes the Other that the child, in mimetic self-dramatization, now *Brings* to itself, the

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<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-5.

mother, and the environment, giving the child its first taste of being a self-Bringer and therefore its first experience of autonomy and “freedom.” Also, at this moment the child begins to become aware of the *cogito*, the “I am” of discourse, not in words but in *feeling tones* and without social content (that which is associated with nationality, ethnicity, race, gender, and so on).

The feeling tones of these values remain latent in the child’s preconscious, awaiting the moment when they can attach to the apparatus of language as articulate and definitive entities. Until that time, the LF is reaching out, seeking the sockets in the social sphere necessary for it to absorb the structural components it needs to adapt to whatever milieu it happens to have been thrown into by fate. This is the perfect time to begin the indoctrination of the child into the cult of mediocrity, as it is the point of maximum mimesis and minimum self-determination.

Another characteristic of this phase is the “checking back” with the mother. The father has not entered the scene with the same force as a Known that the mother has, making her the prototype of the Sovereign and therefore the hegemony. This misidentification is not meant to be permanent, as the hegemony, despite its heavy reliance upon the behavior of women, is nevertheless a *patriarchal* enterprise by incorporation. The father has yet to become the Lawgiver, the ultimate hegemonic power in the form of the *nomos*, which is necessary when the child aspires to full participation in its social position, conscious of its status and role in the organization by which it is employed.

The mother serves both functions for a time because she *gives, and takes away; brings, and does not bring*, in her *pro tem* juridical capacity. Mahler, et al., says this phase serves as a transition to the exploration of strangers as the child ventures out from the safe zone near the mother to explore what lies beyond—a territory which, by degrees of surface area, increasingly contains more Others. “The baby begins comparative scanning. He becomes interested in ‘mother’ and seems to compare her with ‘other,’ the unfamiliar with the familiar, feature by feature.”<sup>40</sup>

It seems that at each stage of development the point at which a new discourse is discovered is also a point at which a new pathology may be manifest through maladaptation. The painful/bad, pleasurable/good perception of the infant’s tiny world, which to the child encompasses Everything, must nevertheless make intuitive “sense” to it, which is clearly an innate faculty like the LF. Differentiation, or discrimination, from the mother must be binary and without trauma or ambiguity, and it must be accompanied by reinforcements such as the *transitional object*.

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<sup>40</sup> Mahler, op. cit., 55-6.

The checking-back phase must be juridically appropriate as well as both protective and permissive to have its desired effect. Finally, exploration of the Other as the stranger marks the incipient stage of the transformation. It is at this stage that we may see the beginnings of psychopathology in the form of the sociopath, psychopath, or other mal-adaptations that are not strictly genetic malfunctions, though they may be. It all seems to depend upon what *discourse* has become associated with the presence of Unknowns. If they are generally feared and reviled, then the child's orientation to strangers and the Other will be problematic.

Body-image development, also part of subphase 1, has more to do with the child's place in the world as a solid, living, biological entity with corresponding needs (such as nourishment and sexual reproduction) than it does with the more popular notions of "body image" in the media. However, both phenomena are tied to the Imago the child develops of itself as a being in society.

In the child's emerging ken, there is the tacit sense that this struggle for Identity occurs in others as well. If this sense is not present, then we have the beginning of psychopathy and sociopathy. It is only natural that the child would have such ideas about others considering that it is just discovering, through the mechanism of the ZPD and the Real-I (I2) position, that others indeed do exist not only as Bringers but also as those in need like itself. If this subphase is somehow violently interrupted, the development of *empathy* is thwarted, resulting in, at best, self-pity, and at worst, the noted pathology.

There is an awareness that the body is the locus of pain and pleasure, and that it has needs that are imperatives which must be met, perhaps even at any cost (the biological imperative). The child also develops a sense that it is someone in particular, unique, and *sui generis*. Nevertheless, it feels its autonomy yearning to irrupt in what will later, after abdication, become the fully-engulphed force of *jouissance* once its self-determination is thwarted first by its own actions and then by a repressive social regime.

The child "turns with more or less wonderment and apprehension to a prolonged visual and tactile exploration and study of the faces and the gestalt of others [and seems to] check back to his mother's gestalt, particularly her face, in relation to other new interesting experiences."<sup>41</sup> Such "checking back" is a behavior learned in the specular, Real-I (I1) position where the child first "checks back" with itself in self-discovery. Therefore, it is the *checking back* that prepares the child for the ZPD transition to the Real-I, or social, position (I2).

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 56.

The step from 0I (No-I) to 1I (Ideal-I) is binary in the form of the categorical exclusion (CE: 0 / 1); the step 1I (Ideal-I) to I2 (Real-I) is not (1 /  $n$ ), as it is iterative. The values of 0 and 1 in the CE, however, are different from each other in a discrete way as negations. Therefore, subphases 2 (Practicing), 3 (Rapprochement), and 4 (Emotional Object Constancy + Consolidation of Individuality), while dramatically different, are nevertheless not *categorically* so.

### 7.9 *Practicing and rapprochement*

Phases 2 and 3 are grouped together because of their reciprocity and similarity. In *practicing*, the child learns, mostly on its own, “crawling, paddling, climbing, and righting” itself along with other subtler skills.<sup>42</sup> The period culminates in full bipedal movement forward with direction and purpose (the “standing” as described by Tuan that is at the linguistic root of the word “state”).

In *rapprochement*, the child adapts to the consequences of the culmination of practicing with a “stage of cognitive development that Piaget (1936) regards as the beginning of representational intelligence (which will culminate in symbolic play and in speech) ...”<sup>43</sup> In this stage, says Mahler, et al., “the toddler reaches the first level of identity—that of being a separate individual entity.”<sup>44</sup>

In the child’s second year, there is greater domination of the environment. But what is most significant is not a *decrease* in anxiety as a result of this early mastery, but rather an *increase* of fear over what is called “object loss” (or, elsewhere, “object constancy”). As the child becomes more like the adult, the binary of 0I (No-I) and 1I (Ideal-I) fossilizes into an artifact of its prior development and its earlier ZPD platforms or *zones*. As the first “baby step” of the categorical exclusion (0 / 1), the somatic memory of coming-into-being (*le devenir*) colors all of the subject’s burgeoning interpretation of experience.

The discourse of this coloration is the idea that if one *comes into* being (is born), then one *goes out* of being (dies). Such an artifact, like an Egyptian amulet with the Mummy’s Curse on it, is at first a source of much anxiety; however, once the mechanism of repression is discovered, this angst becomes submerged in the morass of the subject’s unconscious. There, it festers into pathology, which tends to express itself in different but

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 76.

predictable ways. As such, this state of affairs becomes the business of psychoanalysis.

Meantime, separation anxiety from the parents (but in particular the mother) becomes both an unshakable reality and an irrational fear. It is at once delusional and concrete, possible and unlikely, significant as well as insignificant. In the child's fundamental adaptation at I1 (the specular, or Ideal-I position), and having seen the horizon of I2 (the social, or Real-I position), a gulf develops between the child's essential security and the imagined separation from the intimate Knowns who are the foundation of the child's security base for its venture into the world of strangers and Others. From this origin the essential paranoia of the isolated ego emerges, ever vigilant in the protection of its narcissistic ivory tower, leaving in its wake an ever-intensifying urge for the cathexis of *jouissance*.

The ensuing neurotic complex, brimming as it is with irrational fears, engenders the child's first "storytelling" episode. Its discursive narrative is born: the great mythology of its obscure origins in swirling clouds of nothingness, its subsequent command appearance on the stage of life, its torrid love affair with itself, its armed conflict with the mass of reprehensible Others, and at last its obeisance at the feet of the hegemony complete its pitiful life cycle.

This is the relentless tale told by mass media products, full of sound and fury, signifying little more than the ego's morbid isolation and paranoia. During this infantile melodrama there is great elaboration on these simple themes, programmed and reinforced by the entertainment industry from which the subject gets its characters and plot trajectory. Just as history is the tale of how war has made civilization indispensable, so too is the subject's tale a history of how death has made abdication inevitable. Again, the subject's tale is, as MacBeth laments, "Told by an idiot ..."

But all is not entirely lost. During this narrative arch there are numerous opportunities to assume command of one's existence. At the same time, character and what Peirce calls "conduct" are further determined by one's actions. All of this is in line with the development of the child's special view of the world made possible by the significant *zones* of its development. "With the spurt in autonomous functions, such as cognition, but especially upright locomotion, the 'love affair with the world' begins. The toddler takes the greatest step in human individuation. He walks freely with upright posture. Thus, the plane of his vision changes; from an entirely new vantage point he finds unexpected and changing perspectives, pleasures, and frustrations. This is the new visual level that the upright, bipedal position affords."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Mahler, et al., op. cit., 70.



The child's "pleasures and frustrations" are the analogs of the dialectic of *jouissance* and *ennui*, as well as their relationship to that of the ZPD between the actual and proximal. *Ennui* is the sense of the loss of the maternal and unconditional love the developing child imagines was present in an earlier zone of more dependable object constancy. *Jouissance*, then, is the catastrophic (ecstatic, transgressive) release of the built-up tension and paranoia ensuing from the subject's ever-more-vigorous attempts to repress any sign of *Unbehagen* (unhappiness or discontent).

*Unbehagen* plagues the subject in increasingly dire episodes, exacerbated by social pressure to conform to a regime promoting its own interests which are, generally speaking, not those of the individual per se. Meantime, transgression now beckons on the horizon as the taboo *verboten* option. The same hegemony guarding the locked gates of transgression, however, is also the one that throws them open from time to time—for a price. There is much profit to be had in this drama of *Sturm und Drang*. Such great forces of psychic tension, in any society, may be harnessed to achieve that society's aims of revolution or homeostasis, which, ultimately, are the same thing only seen at various phrases of identical cycles of integration and disintegration both in society and the individual.

The dialectics of *ennui* and *jouissance* and the actual and proximal propel the subject toward the abdicated position. From there, it believes it will find refuge from the stab of this double-edged sword. For most, a really grand transgression is not an option simply for practical reasons, such as not being as wealthy or powerful as Tiberius. If it is within reach, it is done in the dark of night, surreptitiously, or online, where it hardly matters. And for the rest, being caught "transgressing" can have dire consequences for their freedom as it may involve violating the law or the risk of social ostracization (as it always has). Transgression, the violation of the *antichthesis*, and consequently *jouissance*, is seen as bestial, a return to man's animal past which is, without reason or question, "bad."

What is particularly disturbing about this invalid synthetic proposition is that it makes, *a fortiori*, the contrary proposition "true" (T): that *ennui* is "good." One *should* feel sad and miserable! It is natural, right, and good and is what God and *wants* for the creature he has made in his image. There has been nothing particularly remarkable about the shameless propagation of this ethical aesthetic in Christianity (and in the other two Semitic religions for that matter). Why should it be seen as contrary to the ethical aesthetic of the modern industrial, "secular" state with its plethora of nominal and notional religions which are more political than spiritual, mystical, or ethical? What is there, then, in this "two legs good" perspective, that also initializes cognition?

While it brings about a sense of social frustration and fear of freedom (as well as overwhelming paranoia), it also irritates the subject into a more thoughtful, reflective consciousness of its existence. Indeed, this is precisely what the Church loves about it; all men, *in situ* no less, become St. Jerome. Living on grasshoppers and honey in the wilderness of their own misery, they finger the empty eye sockets of their *memento mori* while renouncing the “sins” they believe have brought on their discontent after their transgressions—real or imagined.

The first possibility to consider is that the “two legs” orientation to the industrial rather than the animal or agricultural allows for the hands to be free and the mind to be on the unnatural, artificial, and man-made world rather than the ground. After all, when one trails behind a plow being pulled by an ox, mule, horse, or donkey, is one any better than the leading beast? Rather, one ends up being a “coworker” of the dumb brute, struggling against nature shoulder to haunch. “He’s got the brawn; I’ve got the brains” the farmer thinks as he regards his ass’s hindquarters, sunup to sundown.

For the denizen of the Great Empires of civilization *this will not do*. Feeling that he has more in kind with the gods than the beasts, the Citizen strives for the greatest degree of artificiality possible, which means defying the odious laws of physics which will ultimately bring about the body’s, and therefore the ego’s, demise. The thought of returning to a patch of dirt to be fertilizer for next year’s corn sends the subject into an apoplexy that only the complete and immediate abdication of all self-determination and personal suffrage can assuage.

In childhood, the head is the leading and most mobile organ, being the central *vacuum* of the world as the place where food and water go and where substances are tested and tasted. But with hands and arms free to interact with the world and others, and the legs to carry it about at will, the subject experiences a kind of reorientation of its sense of Self. The ego begins to identify with the dexterous parts of the body, which of course includes the sexual organ.

Now that there is greater potential for manipulation of the environment, exploration of materials, and *bringing* (or the satisfaction of biological and emotional needs), the role of the parents and their analogues as Bringers *diminishes* in favor of a modicum of self-reliance for this service. Such an event in development, which is difficult to locate exactly but certainly occurs during the Real-I (I1) ZPD, coincides with the flowering of the Language Faculty. Therefore, how that faculty is engaged during the latter part of the CP (say, ages 6-12) will gravely affect the character and “conduct” of the subject’s analytical thinking as well as its sense of self-consciousness.

Despite its emotional misgivings, the young subject begins to feel that the old Bringers have lost a certain amount of their mystical usefulness and charm as conjurers of the satisfaction of its wants and needs. Satisfying its own needs to a certain extent but still dependent upon the Others, the child alternately enjoys this sense of “freedom” from the Knowns and fears the infinite possibility of the Unknown and the strangers inhabiting it that trigger its sense of paranoia and competition for resources with these *aliens*.

The subject’s freedom soon turns into a sense of technical transgression (without *jouissance*), bringing on the subject’s rudimentary feelings of guilt and of being “bad.” As these feelings, combined with competition and paranoia, are generally negative, a morbid sense of *looking-back* on the halcyon days of its earlier ZPD (mainly the Ideal-I or spectral position [I1]) make it long for release from what it regards as a vague, impending Doom. Soon enough it will learn, albeit in an abstract way even with a plethora of concrete examples, that the body dies, and with it the precious ego too.

*Looking-back* brings on the morbid emotion of *nostalgia* for the narcotic oblivion of the OI (No-I) position and the luxurious object constancy of I1 (Ideal-I, or spectral). From these positions mankind’s adoration of narcotics and opulence is born. The former, if allowed to become metastatic, may develop into the suicidal impulse; the latter, typically, results in regimens of psychotropics, endless therapies, substance abuse, and spams of transgressive (but failed) *jouissance*. In this way the young child is an “idealist,” which is why “idealism” is so often associated with youth and a certain lack of cynical experience. Meantime, *ennui* is brought on by conflict between the fossilized artifact of the *specular* self (I1) and the turbulent *social* self (I2).

[T]here is a noticeable waning of his previous imperviousness to frustration ... Increased separation anxiety can be observed: at first this consists mainly of fear of object loss ... As the toddler's awareness of separateness grows ... he seems to have an increased need for [the love of the] mother ...<sup>46</sup>

The Rapprochement stage culminates, as might be expected from the above, in an existential crisis, creating the second great psychosomatic trauma of the child's life (the first being, presumably, birth). Near the end of the child's second year, there is a critical fear of the loss of love in the form of the object constancy the child has come to expect and enjoy.<sup>47</sup> In this position the child exhibits the kind of behavior that, in adults, is

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<sup>46</sup> Mahler, et al., op. cit., 76-7.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 95.

considered to be mental illness: alternating episodes of omnipotent grandeur and prostrate dependence upon the primary Bringer, in this case the mother.

What little effective reason a child of that age can wield becomes selectively unavailable. In its place, the cranky wants and needs its crystallizing ego reinforce its burgeoning narcissism and paranoia. Such juvenile delinquency is the cue for the application of the father's law making and giving, which comes into the foreground as he attempts to assist the mother in "laying down the law" about *verboden* behavior as well as this or that fundamental rule of social cooperation and compromise with the Others. "Conflicts ensued that seemed to hinge upon the desire to be separate, grand, and omnipotent, on the one hand, and to have mother magically fulfill their wishes, without having to recognize that help was actually coming from the outside, on the other."<sup>48</sup>

There is more to the rapprochement phase for which there is no scope here, such as the emergence of gender identity, the beginning of empathy, obtaining an optimal distance from the mother (and father), and the development of a variety of emotions. These certainly deserve further analysis and do indeed round out our picture of what a child is and can be. What we have been particularly interested in here, though, for the sake of this discussion is the growing *integration* and *disintegration* of the related components of personality and how they are manifest in society as institutional mediocrity.

At the same time, these components have been tracked along the concatenation of the mirror stage and its adjacent positions (including abdication) and have been seen in the light of the effects of the traversing of the corresponding zones of proximal development. Now it is time to turn our attention to the greater significance of object constancy in this process.

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 95.

# CHAPTER EIGHT

## 8.1 Object Constancy + Individuation

The most significant and powerful force in the formation of the child's psyche in the process of individuation is the development of the sense of object constancy. The child must embrace the power to hold the imago of the emotional object, in this case the mother, "constant" in the physical absence of that object. Why? Because if the child cannot, then in the physical presence of that object the child will fail to appreciate it as "another" like itself. Not only does this failure compromise the child's sense of affinity and empathy, but also its ability to become an autonomous individual. As a result, failed object constancy makes the psyche ripe for infestation by invalid synthetic propositions and, consequently, abdication of self-determination.

The mother (in particular) is *virtualized* in the abstract emotional imagination of the child during the Ideal-I (I1) position of the mirror stage. As a combined application of the imaginary and symbolic upon the projection screen of the real, virtualization affects interaction and perception of other objects as well.

For instance, the father typically develops in the female child a strong role as the "object" of object constancy, adding yet another layer of potential abandonment to the already-existing imago of the mother. Meantime, the environment, littered as it is with the artifacts of the child's severely limited world, becomes a rich source of self-identification. While there is no sense of ownership, there is sense that there is *nothing* that does not belong to the child. The persistence of this attitude is most pronounced in psychotic adults, who see even others like themselves as possessions to be toyed with. Without the initial diad of mother and father as the prototypes of object constancy, the psyche is abandoned to the forces of the environment which will invariably be misinterpreted by the subject as potential threats to its wellbeing.

More often than not, the parent of the opposite sex serves as the *negative analog* of what will later be the adult erotic attachment to an *exogamous* object. In other words (typically), the daughter's erotic cathexis with the father and the son's cathexis with the mother is necessary so that it may be *negated* in exogamy later for whatever psychological, emotional, and even biological benefits may come out of that need. The degree to which the

incest taboo is involved is an excrescence, or an arbitrary cultural institutionalization, of this need. It varies considerably from culture to culture. It should not be considered as a “natural” absolute because of this variation as well as the lack of any evidence to the contrary, despite its prevalence.

The consolidation of identity and individuality poises the subject to feel a degree of autonomy, forming the rudiment of sovereignty. It is indeed the origin of the sense of self-possession. An unstable formation of identity and individuality, and the inability to have faith that objects “exist” when out of the child’s domain, are the basis of some of the most intractable psychiatric pathologies associated with the diagnosis of a borderline personality. Such malformations of the psyche contribute to the impetus for the motivation to abdicate.

While they may do so variously, most noticeable is the role of psychological and emotional weakness in the process of the surrender of personal sovereignty. The state, and the corporate interests that control it, sense this weakness as a *collective void* that they may fill to their benefit and profit. Their only problem is to figure out a discourse the subject will accept which will make it feel that it cannot live without them. The *raison d’être* of the hegemony could be considered the power and money it gains by purveying, often enough at the point of a bayonet, that which the subject could have done for itself if it only had the strength.

This phase, which occurs generally in the third year of life, is characterized by the presence of the father as the Lawmaker-giver. Never mind that in most modern industrial cultures the child is legally a possession of the state at this point in its existence anyway. The father, despite his casting in this role, is as much a subject of the *nomos* as the child is. Therefore, despite the father’s seeming power, his role is in fact almost entirely symbolic, the real power lying with the institutional hegemony which can override any of his homespun decrees.

Meantime, the mother’s role, having been virtualized by the child in the Ideal-I position as the imago of unconditional love, wavers between the metaphysical and the physical, between angel and drudge, in the child’s mind, which lacks the analytic apparatus to make sense of these emotions. One minute the mother is the heart and soul of the child’s universe; the next she is the servant who must change its dirty diaper and spoon plabum into its gaping mouth.

It is during this alternately surreal and corporeal period of competing, contradictory forces in the child’s life (approximately 3 to 4 years) that inherent lessons about what is “good” and “bad” begin to be sketched out by the parents. They act, in part, as agents of the prevailing, contemporary

hegemony but also of whatever “tradition” it presumes to base itself upon. The legal code of these lessons, laid down by the father, will later become the foundation of the child’s evolving *ethical aesthetic*.

The constancy of the emotional object, then, “implies the unifying of the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ object into *one whole representation* [italics added]. This fosters the fusion of the aggressive and libidinal drives and tempers the hatred for the object” when the mother or father is absent.<sup>1</sup> It is this “one whole representation” which evolves into the primary discourse of the child’s thinking.

As such, it forms its worldview of “I am that.” For the child, this worldview represents the topology, realm, domain, or territory of its own ego. The child’s *Weltanschauung* consists primarily of the morphology of its own narcissism projected onto others and the environment they and it inhabit. We see this particularly manifest during the oral and anal stages where *everything must be consumed*, even up the wrong hole, fueled in part by its nascent eroticism.

It is this stage of consumption that will be exploited later on by the imaginary and symbolic realm of simulacra, which of course is based largely on sublimated forms of libidinal impulses and is further reinforced by ISP’s. But for now, the child must deal with the fact that there seems to be an infinity of things, as well as phenomena, in need of *naming*.

Thanks to the innate imposition of the Language Faculty (LF), which serves as the morphological container of the subject’s emergent ego, that which is unnamed and unspoken gets a name—whether it likes it or not. Concrete objects have a “thusness” to them that the child easily falls into during the naming process. Abstract ideas, however, remain in a cumulonimbus of semantic meaning, ever shifting their alliances, associations, and significance.

This “need to name” dominates this period of the child’s development because naming helps the child overcome the paranoia and fear of the loss of object constancy. In other words, no matter what it is, it must be *translated* into “an object” through naming so that it *is*. If it *is*, then it is *there*, and if it is *there*, then it is *constant*. This power to comfort oneself is so significant that it never quite goes away. If an adult hears an unknown noise in the dark, his fear is quickly allayed by assurances that it is this or that—even if there is no evidence for such a pronouncement. A parent routinely comforts a child by saying, for example, “it’s only ... the wind.” Therefore, this period is also the ideal opportunity to begin the indoctrination of the child into the hegemonic discourse by at first preying

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 110-11

on its fears of the Unknown, and then inviting it into the magical realm of the ISP where “anything is possible.”

Consequently, the possibility of that which is not only greater than the child but also greater than the Father, does not occur to it at this time. The child truly has no idea of the scope of its ignorance, a condition which may persist throughout adulthood. Without any sense of a “higher power,” it naturally endows the father and the mother with godlike powers. Soon enough the child discovers, first to its disappointment and later to its delight, that the parents are not only mere mortals, but are in fact inferior to its narcissistic omnipotence.

As a legal possession of the State, which the parents nominally are not, it wields the state’s power in a way unavailable to the parents. Its abuse or neglect, the child learns intuitively, will be punished. Furthermore, it cannot but help notice that the parents dance and cajole to its every whim, no matter how unnecessary and selfish. This is a lesson it will never forget; in fact, it will spend the rest of its life seeking out those who it can lord over the way it commanded and commandeered its parents. A metastatic example of this kind of personality is the megalomaniac. A more common example is the politician. The personality type is sought out and empowered in modern society to head organizations of questionable social and economic worth. The martinet, the petty tyrant, the autocrat, and phallocrat are the ubiquitous archetypes of the modern “boss.” Each makes an inestimable contribution to the destabilization and decay of society’s ethical, moral, and humanitarian integrity.

While the child feels love for the parents as they do for it, it does not have much respect for these seemingly unfree, overburdened, constrained, and downright *old* creatures of “the future.” It *feels* the truth of the fact that the parents are weak, pursued by debt, trapped in jobs they hate, and bound by social obligations they resent. Of course, it does not “know” or “think” this; but in the way that only children and animals can, it *feels* this. It begins to perceive—and rightly so—that it is in a golden, iridescent time that will, soon enough, come to a nasty end with the onset of adulthood and its obligations and responsibilities. Therefore, the child naturally tries to make the most out of its status as a slightly mad, emotionally unstable, tyrannical, and insufferably selfish creature.

The sense of power the child derives from this perception is balanced only by its lack of physical strength and practical knowledge. Every child understands that if it were the size and strength of its parents it would be their terror and undoing. No adult is more dangerous than one who has failed to abase his childhood sense of power to the will of society, whatever it may be.



Most of all, though, the child senses that these big creatures who are in charge of its health and wellbeing seem to have lost their sovereignty. What the child treasures the most—the free expression of its overpowering id—is precisely what it sees as that which has been practically snuffed out in its parents and later the Others who are, by association, parental analogs. Conversely, the child also senses, or *feels*, that its psychic energy as well as the vital force generated by such autonomic processes as the LF must be given free play if they are to develop without distortion into a healthy organism. If a child did not have a powerful, innate sense of this development as its “birthright,” its chance of healthy survival would be significantly reduced.

Such truncation may seem contradictory to the thesis that the hegemony, in its pursuit of the perfect simulacrum, capitalizes upon the psychic energy of the id, the gullibility of the imagination, and the necessary generation of language’s symbolic analogues. After all, sexual fantasy is its stock-in-trade. Its “realm” is the entertainment industry. Its *nomos* consists of legal code dreamed up by its lawmakers to enable their profession and pay off their corporate backers. Its “economy” is populated with the “animal spirits” (to use Lord Keynes’ phrase) embedded in the legerdemain of its financial practices and policy. And its ethical aesthetic consists of marketing prurience and titillation to those in need of transgressive jouissance more socially acceptable than serial killing or mass murder.

Finally, by manipulating the use of signs and symbols through the semiotic crime syndicate of the its public information apparatus it is able to keep the hapless subject in thrall to its magnificent miracles of technology, the wisdom of its governance and laws, and a marketplace overflowing with unnecessary goods and services.

The entire topology of the hegemonic empire is a dreamscape encoded bit by bit into a virtualization of its lust for total control over everything always—including death. How, then, can it achieve anything by curtailing the child’s imagination, id, and libido? By exploiting the organism’s natural “drive” for its own self-development into a being capable of autonomous mastery of its surroundings, it manipulates the need for object constancy, plunging the subject into a pathological sense of self-doubt and self-hatred. Then, it offers itself up as the solution to all of the subject’s problems, including a bitter and painful repression of the instinctual drives and an imagination drugged with endless entertainment.

The slow establishment of emotional object constancy is a complex and multidimensioned process involving all aspects of psychic development .... Numerous other factors are involved, such as innate drive endowment and

maturation, neutralization of drive energy, reality testing, tolerance for frustration and for anxiety, and so forth.<sup>2</sup>

Through pharmaceuticals and consumerism, these pains are assuaged. Before that, however, the developmental factors described above by Mahler, et al. must be addressed. Behind the entire process is what they call “innate drive endowment.” We may consider it to be the child’s *capacity* for the instinctual drive behind its psychic and somatic impulse to seek self-mastery over the immediate environment on its own behalf.

Here we have a rudimentary form of sovereignty and self-determination. As such, this drive must “mature” through *self-discovery* which, often enough, is in part a matter of the adult enabling the child to have free reign over its environment. We see this idea applied in such educational philosophies as that of Maria Montessori. However, when we consider that the adults must “permit” the child to do this, then we see that the matter immediately becomes political, since what political coercion is all about is the granting and withholding of *permission*.

Consequently, the code of the *nomos*, encoded and enforced by the “lawmakers” (politicians), represents the will of the hegemony. In as much as any other will conforms with this will, *ipso facto*, it is permitted. The hegemony’s will, though, consists of none other than the collective will of these individuals who, as expediency would have it, owe their power to those with the money and the influence to secure it. Despite a modicum of what may seem like ideological opposition, ultimately these lawmakers realize that if either party is going to see their will done here on earth as it is in their imagination, they must make compromises. As a compromise requires sacrifice, however, neither side is typically willing to make it unless the subject-citizen is the one who must suffer the resulting burdens, privations, and debt obligations.

While the political aesthetic of *res publica* would have one believe that the power to make this compromise comes from “the people,” or what has been known for centuries in Italian as the *piccolo popolo* (little people), there is little evidence that it comes from anywhere but those who already have the money and power to secure it: those Churchill refers to as the Big Men. The proof is in the historic support by the state’s corporate overlords of both sides in any and all controversies, and any and all wars, no matter how fundamental and no matter what is at stake.

What follows the resolution of the maturity problem is tinkering with 1) the “neutralization of drive energy, 2) reality testing” and 3) “tolerance for frustration and for anxiety.” There is no doubt that the child’s bold overture

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 110.

for complete mastery of its environment borders on the megalomaniacal. The word “tantrum” is almost exclusively associated with childish behavior, or what is called above the expression of frustration and anxiety. Therefore, at some point this drive must be “neutralized.”

The question, then, is by whom and how? Just as the child’s physical “growth spurts” are checked by its innate biology, so too are its psychological flowerings. For example, it is not necessary to check the former by starving the child, depriving it of certain vitamins, and containing it in braces so that it “stops growing.” However, it is necessary to deal with the physical problems arising from this prolonged period, the buying of new clothes, and most of all the complications, psychological and otherwise, that manifest during a child’s sexual awakening. It would seem absurd to artificially manipulate the child’s physical growth to make it stop, however.

Why, then, is psychological, emotional, intellectual, and libidinal “growth” such a problem for civilization? Why has it predicated its entire structure upon the manufacture of its “discontents” (*Unbehagen*) to serve as attempts to prune, stunt, truncate, and hinder what it sees as an imminent threat to itself in the form of the child’s unfettered spiritual, emotional, and intellectual development?

Finally, lest the subject discover the truth of its predicament, the possibility of analytic reason is replaced by a lazy system of ISP’s which propagate virally in the mind, consuming any “truth” that may jeopardize their linguistic dominance. Herein lies the decisive apparatus of the mind: language. Attempts to discover the hegemonic cabal in the halls of governance, justice, finance, and education are doomed to fail for this reason. While conspiracies abound on this point, none have produced the culprits except *ex post facto* and *in absentia*, since the chief perpetrators are to be found in the thoughts of the subject itself.

The truth that the conspiracy theorists themselves are the “carriers” of the disease of the conspiracy they abhor is, once again, too opaque for them to see—and is so *by design*. Ultimately, the only real possibility of hegemonic power is through the voluntary abdication by a subject in full control and power of its will and destiny. The subject must bring *something* to the table worth bargaining for besides its ability, as Leonardo Davinci once noted, of being able to fill a latrine. One must, with open eyes and a heart full of joy, turn over complete control of one’s only true possession to the state and its corporate overlords. *Otherwise, the token has no value.* Anything less than this is summarily rejected by the hegemonic power. It is left to rot in its favela or is tossed summarily into the meat grinder of war.

Therefore, “reality testing” and “tolerance for frustration and for anxiety” become matters of state. By fiat, the subject, through the

hegemony's vast network of corporate information and "news," learns not specifically what is true or false, but how to take in *all knowledge* while screening it for the possibility of deviation from the prevailing social discourse. It is indeed a feat to achieve such an exalted level of discrimination, which is why such an inordinate amount of the state's treasure is weighted toward "education" in an attempt to train the subject to recognize that which lacks the imprimatur of the state and its corporate and financial overlords around the planet.

The public education system, however, succeeds only in imparting a patina of indoctrination. The great universities, public and private, serve as the state-and-corporate-sponsored "concentration campuses" for the hegemonic discourse. The primary discourse in these institutions, regardless of the discipline, is "Believe and we will leave you alone; demure and you will be smashed." Of course, it is transmitted in the language of the marketplace as "Get this degree and you will succeed; fail to complete your course of study and your poverty and misery will be *your own fault*."

The most critical achievement, which does not come about without a sense of secure object constancy, is the emergence of the *persona* as the core of sovereign individuality. The vehicle of the Language Faculty, platformed on the emotional stability of object constancy, provides the *drive* that makes individuality and the sovereign persona possible. All language flows from the subject-phrase, or copula, of the cogito: "I am," which also is the framework that juts (*ragt*) into the predicate of the world of appearances.

Provided these appearances are predicated on analytic and valid synthetic propositions, the fabric or morphology of cognition will function in accordance with the requirements of reality and verification. If they are not, then *any other configuration (n)*—none of which are in accordance with reality—is possible. This latter outcome is precisely what is required for the state of permanent exception which is, after all, an exception not only from the state's own imaginary nomos, but also from the objective imperatives of reality itself, which include death.

The child's first experience of this "jutting" is with analytic phrases which seem, *prima facie*, to be the basis of "truth," such as: I am a boy, I am a girl; I am a son, I am a daughter; I am a brother, I am a sister, all of which are modifications of the cogito "I am ..." These tautological propositions (n-v-n) are then extended to synthetic tautological propositions such as, I am a *good* boy; I am a *good* girl (n-v-adj.-n). Ethnicity, nationality, and eventually one's position in society are extensions of this primary identity. "During the period of normal symbiosis, the narcissistically fused object was felt to be 'good'—that is, in harmony with the symbiotic self—

so that primary identification took place under a positive valence of love ...<sup>3</sup>

What is “symbiotic” about the relational process is that, for example, the “good” part of the synthetic tautology must be injected into the otherwise analytical proposition by a *trusted third party* (TTP). The primary third party to do so is a member of the class of those who love the child and who the child loves. Therefore, all such individuals are endowed with an irrational aura of object constancy, real or unreal. Post abdication, this aura is later transferred to social institutions, such as banks and government.

As we have seen, the primary third party of the child’s first Other, the parent, is typically the mother figure during the start of the Real-I (I2) ZPD. Soon after this period the father figure is identified as a secondary Other. However, having crossed the threshold of the categorical exclusion with the mother (0 /1) in terms of moving on from the Ideal-I (I1), narcissistic position, the child now sees the father as representing not another “I” in relation to its “I,” but, rather  $n$  ( $1 / n$ ), or “any other number.” The father is at once “this father” but also “all fathers” and, consequently, the parental state associated with the *nomos* and, by extension, the authority of the state and its banking system. The introduction of  $n$  into the calculus of the child’s developmental trajectory allows for “all others” to be endowed with the symbiotic value of “ $n$ .”

As such, they become sources of possible “love,” foremost in the form of a mate, or even one’s children by that mate, but also in the forms of one’s peers, friends, coworkers, memberships, congregations, and so forth. The commercial arm of the hegemony, however, ruthlessly exploits this possible source of emotional insecurity (and therefore loss of object constancy) by relentlessly reminding the subject that *without* this or that product, degree, loan, or job title “no one will love you.” If the commercial message is not enough, the hegemony sees to it that social attitudes enforce these consequences as fabricated forms of mild to severe marginalization and even ostracization in the form of loathing.

As there is no difference, in this sense, between an individual designated as “ $n$ ” and any number of individuals so designated, the child comes to accept that there is a “society” ( $n!$ , or  $n$ -prime) and that this society represents others who are Not-I as opposed to its primary state of No-I (0I). Therefore, Not-I becomes affirmation of the subject’s sense of being, whereas No-I is now assigned the feared value of “nonbeing” or death. Consequently, its natural social orientation becomes exclusively to the herd. If enough people believe it to be “true,” then it is true. Naturally, the reverse is necessary for this arrangement to be effective. Apostates are dealt with

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 117.

severely and are made examples to others of what will happen to them if they too step out from under the shadow of the prevailing social discourse.

The introduction of “death” into the equation, however, produces conflict, since the child also always longs for the senseless oblivion of No-I (OI) from which it feels it has been expelled by the birth trauma. In this way *jouissance* becomes transgressive, even without an elaborate *nomos* of “thou shalt nots.” It intermingles the sense of death with the sense of life in the form of the child’s polymorphous perversity or *eros*. The “drive energy” of the “drive endowment” is, alas, fueled by psychic energy from the id animating the libido which, disconnected by prematurity from the biological imperative of procreation, operates as a wild *cathexis*, affixing itself to whatever object offers the most immediate and gratifying satisfaction of this irresistible urge. In such a way this relationship is “symbiotic,” since the *n'* cohort of the Not-I class consists of other subjects who are in precisely the same relationship of symbiosis with the individual.

This tumultuous period of the deployment of the sovereign personality is highly nuanced and colored with complexities as well. Along with the volcanic drive to grow through the harnessing of erotic energy is the need to differentiate from others and to form a truly autonomous ego. As mentioned earlier, such a process must be given the space and indulgence to proceed unhindered by the gross limitations of the child’s crippled and compromised parents who have long ago abdicated their sovereignty.

Such an ideal condition, however, is not to be. In fact, if the state and its agents (who surround the parents as educators, social workers, and even neighbors) detect that the parents allow the child “too much freedom” to grow, the authorities will be alerted and there will be consequences, mild or severe depending upon how much zeal can be expected from the respective apparatus.

Intervention, as it is often called, by the authorities preempts any attempt to allow the child to develop, during its most formative cognitive stages, the greatest powers of speech, imagination, and analytical reason of which it is capable. Instead, it is coerced, cajoled, and coopted into whatever arbitrary standard of mediocrity prevails at that particular time and place. “Thus, [this] subphase is characterized by unfolding of complex cognitive functions: verbal communication, fantasy, and reality testing.”<sup>4</sup> The ultimate goal of all education is to retard intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development until such time as the subject may be sold cheaply on the job market.

Later in the subject’s life, after the hurly-burly is done, the consequences of abdication are felt as *pathology*. Naturally, this too is fully anticipated by

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 117.

the apparatus of the hegemony in the form of its vast prisons and pharmacopia. It presents the subject with certain channels through which it may seek remedy and distraction, from pharmaceuticals to entertainment, power, and money, though crime is always an option. Nevertheless, there remain the possibilities (provided the subject has not crossed the Rubicon of the categorical exclusion) of recursion from the abdicated position of Ix to the previous position of I2 (but in the form of I2', or I2-prime), *jouissance*, or suicide. While the apparatus presents its limited channels of release, the apparatus also presents *hazards* which can make recursion, *jouissance*, or even suicide impossible.

Failure to recur could be a function of having crossed a certain threshold where the subject is imprisoned because of war, having committed a crime, or just being a victim of plain old persecution. In the case of imprisonment, for instance, there is no possibility of personal sovereignty beyond what the terms of imprisonment have to offer, which, stingy or generous, amount to the same thing: a loss of self-determination in the larger sense.

One complication arising from these choices is the distinct possibility of *forced abdication*, which, in the truest sense of the word, really is not abdication because it is not voluntary and is therefore a deposition of the sovereign self. By hook or crook, it is a surrendering of one's personal sovereignty, which is what is of value in this exchange of categorical status, and therefore it is of significance to the subject whether or not it is voluntary.

To the hegemony, however, the abdicated subject is, more often than not, a liability. As a prisoner or a dependent expecting an entitlement in return for its sacrifice, the subject can be less than a useful idiot. Still, the state is willing to accept this liability in return for the less direct benefit of getting an uppity nuisance out of the way without having to institutionalize murder on the home front. Though it may, with extreme prejudice, systematically murder its threats abroad, as long as this behavior is seen by the mass of subjects as part of their cynical bargain with the hegemony for "complete and total security at all times," then it is accepted as the "price of freedom." While the population may also, during times of great distress, sanction systematic murder of apostates at home, it will do so only if the state can make a good enough argument for the "otherness" or alterity of these miscreants, who must exhibit the requisite shibboleths.

## 8.2 Etiology of abdication pathology

Referring back to Mahler, et al., we see that the quality of object constancy around the age of 3 is a value of great important in the child's development. Malformations, then, reverberate at later stages of its

development throughout the Critical Period (CP) of language (until age 12). The harmonic overtones of malformation will result in a disordered personality and consequent pathologies of various sorts depending upon temperament, environment, biology, and the choices the subject and its cohorts make as a result of these variables.

Language, as the voice of the cogito, demands a speaker; if that speaker cannot be identified, then language is uttered by what Kant calls “nothing” and Heidegger “no one.” How, then, are we to trust the data of that utterance? The hardened, core personality or identity is what might be considered the “underlying asset” of whatever nominal value, and even notional value, the utterance may have on its surface. Remove the “underlying” and the utterance has no value at all except as whatever use may be made of it by an *interested third party*. In other words, the “face value” of the utterance, being backed up by nothing, represents the perpetration of a fraud in the form of the ISP.

However, as simulacra are based, necessarily, upon there being “nothing” and “no one” underlying their verisimilitude, they are then worthless in and of themselves except as accessories to whatever interests a third party may have in them as tools of hegemony and profit. What value, *prima facie*, they seem to have, is inherited from the realia they have supplanted in the negation or inversion of the sovereign verisimilitude of the what they are meant to represent in the schema of reality. Consequently, reality itself suffers a blow to its own verisimilitude as the ambient principle in the region of Dasein. Though Dasein is not affected by this reversal of value, it nevertheless becomes unwillingly complicit in an ever-growing conspiracy to defraud the mass of subjects out of any real value they may have left over and transfer it to the hegemony’s corporate overlords who employ the state, through the mass media and *nomos*, to do their bidding.

Such a transfer of value, however, is not possible without the systematic destabilization of the subject’s core identity at an early stage of language and personality development. However, this is no excuse for the subject’s own reprehensible behavior in so freely and easily abdicating its sovereignty for promises “in the future” of prosperity, safety, and immortality. Were this not the case and were it possible for interested third parties to usurp the subject’s sovereignty *without* its voluntary cooperation, then there would be no possibility of freedom at all. Writing such a book as this would be (and may be anyway) pointless. We would all dissolve into one amorphous mass of unconscious servitude forever—a ridiculous proposition and one that certainly plays into the worldview of the hegemony as its ultimate apocalyptic heist which, we must consider, is perpetrated by the Cult of Mediocrity.



As the fossil of the psyche establishes the hardened core of the subject's identity, its weak malformation tends to result in *eccentricity* in the geographic and not colorful, social sense. What we are talking about here is not the delightful, romantic, and legendary eccentricity of the those who do mimic society but nevertheless maintain a creative and profound presence in it, which often includes those who "prefer not to." Rather, we are referring to those who in essence have no *core identity* except what can be programmed into the temporary holding cell of their *ad hoc* personality, which is the result of constant interruptions in their early psychological development by the discourse of the hegemony. These "hollow men," whom we have met before here, stand as the ghostly intermediaries between the rising crop of young egos and the embittered, compromised, deluded, and unstable citizens comprising the norm of civilization's beleaguered empires.

The Hollow Men are not hard to find today, and their history has been recorded in great unsparing detail for the past 5,000 years. "Our dried voices, when / We whisper together / Are quiet and meaningless" says Eliot, speaking for them. They are always in need of a mouthpiece, in one form or another. Poets from Homer (in his depictions of Hades) to Eliot attempted it. But certainly, the contrivers of history have much to say not only in favor of the victorious hegemonies that have made their mark on history but also the alternative and revisionist voices that suggest there may be more to the truth.

The persona, by necessity and purpose, must instead occupy a *centric* position in the psyche for there to be self-determination. Its content is what draws together the otherwise disparate forces of the psyche, such as the super ego, ego, preconscious, and the forces of the unconscious together into one command and control center as what Nietzsche calls the Will to Power. Morphologically, as that which is meant to be *most* conscious in the subject, it will not do for it to function as an unconscious, autonomic "blackout" component of a biologic automaton.

The persona, or core identity, is not meant to run in the *background* of the psyche. Rather, it runs in the *foreground* of awareness. It is meant to be educable, trainable, and accessible to others. "Let it all hang out" people say to those who seem to lack character. But it is also meant to give off semantic signals, in the form of meaningful free speech, assuring others that what it says comes from an emotional core, a center, and that the being uttering those words takes full responsibility for them. He who cannot take responsibility for his words cannot take responsibility for anything else.

Not only is this point critical for the health and wellbeing of the individual, it is also critical for the cohesion and efficacy of the community. If the community is to be more than a helpless collection of mediocre

dependents and slaves waiting for a more powerful force to tell it what to do, then it is hard to say that it has any purpose at all. Just as the individual without a core identity seems to have no intrinsic purpose except its own biological survival, and sometimes not even that, so too does the community without a sense of common purpose devolve into a mass of human waste products draining the environment of resources and contaminating what is left of the more cogent sector of society.

This is not to say that it must organize into a “collective” where the individual is subordinated to the will of the group. Rather, it is the opposite. Social cohesion is only possible among a group of free individuals working together to preserve each other’s freedom and independence—not only from hegemonic powers and other predators, but also from each other.

It would be a mistake to imagine that economic pressures are not critical in the malformation of the ego to the point that the core identity is not furnished with the content necessary to anchor it in the psyche. Such pressure is enforced and exacerbated by the imperative of the Big Five: government, church, education, banking, and the media. Together they labor to maintain the “capture” of the abdicated subject. While there is no conspiracy among them to lure the subject into abdication of its sovereignty—since it would have no value if there were—there is, however, a conspiracy to keep the subject from negating its abdication and regaining its self-determination. It is only natural that the Big Five would want to hold on to that which makes their existence possible and fruitful. Therefore, they reflexively *loathe* the one who dares to defy their self-appointed mandate to serve the state and its corporate overlords.

More to the point, though, the topological realm created by their collective effort where simulacra reign supreme must be maintained at any cost, even if it means the casual and systematic disposal of heretical subjects or simply those who are no longer useful to the objectives of the hegemony and its corporate overlords. War is this mediocre cabal’s most expedient method of disposing of excess subjects and the accumulation of free largesse that the mass of subjects might employ to gain their freedom in the Second Negation.

By pruning the dead and dying limbs from the hegemonic tree, the Big Five maintain their dominance in the everyday affairs, dreams, goals, fantasies, likes, loves, and preferences of the mass of abdicated subjects. In particular, their role in the local and global economies guarantees that they will maintain their grip on that which they have captured so easily and thoroughly. “Periods of economic uncertainty, exemplified in the roller-coaster boom-and-bust scenarios, have become the rule not the exception,” say Kreisman and Strauss. “Some of these changes may be related to

society's 'failure to achieve a kind of social *rapprochement* [italics added].'"<sup>5</sup>

As we have seen earlier in the developmental subphases described by Mahler, et al., *rapprochement* is necessary for the child to reconcile its individual need for freedom with its social need for community (in particular, the family). After its initial flight from the safety of its mother's legs into the open fields of freedom, the child returns to the legs as a rabbit does to the tree trunks of a dark and secure wood.

To avoid a malformation of the sense of object constancy and to encourage the fossilization of the persona, the subject must be able to dramatize both its Ideal-I (I1) spectral and Real-I (I2) social positions from the mirror phase so that it does not lose sight of its autonomy while also enjoying the safety and comfort of a free and open society.

There must be, though, what Kreisman and Strauss call "representational intelligence," or the ability to *virtualize* the object, or signified, as the symbols or the signifiers within the holographic topology of the core identity. Representation of this sort is only possible if the LF has been allowed to do its job without interference from interested third parties polluting, corrupting, and distorting its natural formation. In other words, what "exists" as a symbolic representation of "the world" in the psyche of the subject must inhabit a multi-dimensional "space" where the subject can justifiably assume that reality is expressed with verisimilitude and without corruption.

This also requires a healthy imagination not commandeered merely for the consumption of distracting media products. While simulacra may also express verisimilitude, they can only do so *by inheritance* after negating the objects of realia through a morbid process of abdication and the application of ISP's about the nature of reality. "Disruption of the *rapprochement* cycle often results in a lack of trust, disturbed relationships, emptiness, anxiety, and an uncertain self-image—characteristics that make up the borderline syndrome."<sup>6</sup>

The inverted state resulting from the malformation of the core identity (without recursion) leads to linguistic confusion where the signified is inverted with the signifier, causing thought to *subvert itself* in a way that precludes analytical thinking, self-determination, and epistemological truth-testing. As a result, ISP's serve as false links between concepts and ideas, uniting them in a fantastic web of misremembering, incongruent connections, and absurd propositions—all of which are assumed to have

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<sup>5</sup> Jerold J. Kreisman and Hal Straus, *I Hate You—Don't Leave Me: Understanding the Borderline Personality* (New York: Perigee, 2010), 83.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

passed the intrinsic test of reason and extrinsic test of community approbation.

While this arrangement produces both useful and useless idiots, ultimately the consequence of it is that the content of the core identity becomes reflected imperfectly in the environment as what Žižek calls a “parallax view.” In terms of personality, then, a “borderline” forms that is like the refraction of a reed seen through the optical parallax created by a still plane of water. “Like the world of the borderline, ours in many ways is a world of massive contradictions,” say Kreisman and Strauss. “We presume to believe in peace, yet our streets, movies, television, and sports are filled with aggression and violence.”<sup>7</sup>

This parallax cleaves in different directions: from the subject to the objective, and from the individual to society, and from the sane to the mad. As with the simultaneous parallel ontology (SPO), apparently ontological and even existential contradictions may and do exist side by side. This bare fact of Dasein’s disclosedness, however, is institutionally exploited by the any third-party apparatus (such as the state) which deems it to be its prerogative to not only filter “reality,” but manufacture it. According to Žižek,

The philosophical twist ... is that the observed difference is not simply “subjective,” due to the fact that the same object which exists “out there” is seen from two different stances, or points of view. It is rather that, as Hegel would have put it, subject and object are inherently “mediated,” so that an “epistemological” shift in the subject’s point of view always reflects an “ontological” shift in the object itself.<sup>8</sup>

The result is what Kreisman and Strauss call a “mythical polarity” of “black or white, right or wrong, good or bad” reinforced by the juridical protocols and imperatives that become the basis of the *nomos* and therefore of civilization and the “rule of law” itself. “The legal system, built on the premise that one is either guilty or not guilty with little or no room for grey areas, perpetuates the myth that life is intrinsically fair and justice can be attained ...”<sup>9</sup> The “myth” is an excrescence of the prevailing discourse which becomes a randomly vacillating substitute for what would otherwise be the dialectic necessary to arrive at the truth. “Creativity and intellectual diligence are sacrificed to convenience and precision,”<sup>10</sup> say Kreisman and Strauss.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>8</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 17.

<sup>9</sup> Kreisman, 83.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 83.

In a desperate bid for “law and order,” society opts for ever-greater totalitarian control *over itself*. Meantime, the hegemony’s dispossessed subjects become increasingly more difficult to herd and manipulate as they turn on each other, ignoring the state’s vain imprecations and exhortations.

Meantime, the state’s corporate overlords scrutinize their balance sheet with consternation, seeing that this or that empire on their books is not bringing in its share of the extortion money (in the form of usury) and profits from its various military-industrial enterprises. They begin itching for a war that will throw the entire arrangement into chaos and provide the opportunity for a more decisive takeover of what little remains of the subject’s collective sovereignty within the failing empire they mismanage.

This skullduggery, lame as it is, also includes the seizing of assets which the subject can no longer maintain a grip on through insurmountable debt. This is despite the fact that it has every right to these assets and the documentation to prove it but has found itself overleveraged by its own choice. Somewhere in its frenzied signing of promissory notes for debt to acquire more things it cannot afford the subject eventually loses sight of what is required to retain possession of that which it already owns.

### 8.3 Abdication in the social order

While it may seem that abdication is entirely a private affair in terms of motivation, the fact is that in order for it to be even a possibility there must be an *inductive* force drawing the subject into a position where surrender of personal sovereignty seems good. Certainly, throughout this discussion abdication has been made to sound like a really *bad* idea. But if we step back and look at our own fear of death, poverty, and disenfranchisement we see that to live in civilization’s empires one must be ready to compromise.

Are we to conclude, then, that none of what has been said here regarding the nature and consequences of abdication has ever occurred to the subject? Of course not. Such a question, though, forces us into a position of having to answer for either *all* subjects, which is not possible, or the generic “subject,” which is not wise. Therefore, we are faced with the task of attempting to look at the process of abdication from the point of view of that to which the subject abdicates. After all, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” says Mark 8:36.

The question, then, is what, constructively and instrumentally, is offered the subject that makes this deal irresistible? In other words, the question of motivation arises, the answer to which may explain a few things about why sovereignty and self-determination is so repulsive to the mass of subjects. It may also help us understand why surrender of all self-respect and human

dignity is much preferred over the arduous confrontation with the raw vicissitudes of bare life.

For its part, civilization provides an inducement, in the form of an inductive argument, into the contractual terms of its promissory notes; the world of simulacra allows for one to have one's reward before one does anything to earn it. In this way the hegemony bets on reaping the future profits of usury by gambling on the underlying asset: the subject's future earnings. Therefore, the promissory note is a kind of futures contract. To grasp the power of this inducement, however, we must understand why the *valid* synthetic proposition (VSP) is seen as being painfully limited because of its inability to sustain categorical contradictions. We must also investigate why the verifiable proposition is only welcome when it produces profit for a corporation through the creation of some new gadget or gives the state some advantage in armed conflict.

Let it suffice to say that the world of realia (R) has its limits, based on such laws of the mathematical universe as the velocity of light and the Planck constant, that make it distinct from the ontological state of exception "existing" in the realm of simulacra. While both "exist" in the same universe of discourse (V), the fundamental difference between the two is that simulacra (S), as an existential set ( $\exists$ ), deliberately superimposes itself upon the universal as what Lacan calls an "imposter," as in  $S(\exists) = V$  which, as a proposition, invokes its negation as  $R(V) = \exists$ . This pernicious inversion, as a "motivation" for abdication, is at the logical core of the ISP and its fatal strategy.

The ultimate effect of this fatal strategy is that Being is corrupted into a commodity vended by the hegemonic apparatus and its corporate overlords. To understand this effect better, we may allude to Sartre's (and Heidegger's and Husserl's) distinction of Being in-itself (*en-soi*) and Being for-itself (*pour-soi*). In this context, reality properly consists of a harmonious (not homeostatic) confluence of the two. The former provides for the "thingness" of things so that we may recognize them as such; the latter provides for our conscious awareness of those things. Together they also allow for two properties of reality which together form the *Being-in itself* necessary for us to live and work within a statistically reliable, though limited, realm of the *real* instead of wallowing in the unlimited and contradictory possibilities of the imaginary and symbolic. In turn, *Being-in itself* endows reality with the properties of the *ready-to-hand*, which is the utility of "thingness" so that we may manipulate reality, and the *present-at-hand*, which is the ability of things to be assigned to categories so that we may have words and language to describe our world, communicate with others, and reinforce the object constancy of the "things" that make up our world.

Simulacra, though, must disengage themselves from the inherent discourse of *real* as described above. Relying as they do upon the possibility of sustaining categorical contradiction through the application of invalid synthetic propositions, they must represent an “alternative” reality which is *more real* than reality itself. Part of its ad hoc discourse is that for anything to be “real” within the topology of its discursive realm it must be *without limit* and be capable of *sustaining contradiction*.

While it would not be accurate to say that this proposition is at variance with what we know about Dasein, since Dasein is without attribute (except the attribute of being without attribute), it is “true” (T) that the reality of Being-in itself, as thingness, demands the opposite: that 1) there must be definable and verifiable limits to everything, and 2) that no proposition may be in categorical contradiction, between subject and predicate, with itself.

For the apparatus of the ISP, these problems are solved by adding the psycholinguistic phenomenon of “the future” to the mainstream of ontological discourse. The hegemony and the Big Five, so as not to spoil the magic spell of the fragile nothingness of the realm of simulacra, provide induction in the form of the future qualifier where anything, including immortality, is possible “in the future.” This is what the subject initially finds so irresistible. It has at last discovered a discourse which does not include death “in the moment,” but, rather, immortality in a limitless fantasy land that always lies just over the event horizon of immediate experience. First, though, “*Lasciate ogne speranza, voi ch'intrate,*” as the inscription reads over Dante’s Inferno. One must *abandon all hope* of blaming the subject’s voluntary, willful, wanton abdication on the trickery and subterfuge of the hegemony if one is to begin to understand the motive for abdication.

To the hegemonic power and its corporate overlords, the subject is just a burden without voluntary, conscious, preferred, desired, and self-engineered abdication. The subject must “come over” with its personal desire poised to jump at the first object that attracts its cathexis—like the fox and the grapes. The willing suspension of self-determination delivers the subject into the servitude of the hegemony with all its vast potential for being an apex consumer intact. At the same time, it allows the subject to maintain the illusion of Democracy and *res publica*, so that it feels, even as it rattles its chains, that it has made the best possible choice.

Under the spell of such a self-induced coma, however, no amount of evidence to the contrary will acquaint the subject with its existential situation. If there will be any change on this score, it will have to come from a profound spiritual awakening (the likes of which we are not equipped to deal with here). It has attained with abdication that which with *jouissance* it

has only attempted to achieve: an eternal state, provided it has good credit, of egoic satisfaction. The only possible interruption of such an idyllic state is the failure to make the monthly payments necessary for the continued enjoyment of this rich world of magical simulacra. All along, however, it cherishes the “hope” that its access to the wonders of the hegemony will never be interrupted, either by unexplained changes in the economy or by the violent actions of those who seem, through their atavistic intolerance, to object to the happiness of others.

The complicated matter of *hope*, then, is a good place to start in unraveling the complex of motivations behind this seemingly irrational act. “Hope” is a psycholinguistic phenomenon in which it is possible to include an interpretation of reality that has no limits, and that allows for categorical contradiction. Were this not the case then there would be “no hope” for “the future,” for hope is an exclusively future-oriented human emotion.

The landscape of civilization’s empires in the West, from their earliest history to today, is littered with the detritus of what might be called Hope Cults. Every pyramid, every teetering Greek and Roman column, every cathedral, every big mound of dirt tells us that someone, somewhere, had the hope that there is more to human existence than what can be accounted for among what Kant calls the “manifold” of appearances and Heidegger the “furniture” of Dasein.

Aside from a few standard deviations from what we now know, humankind has been able to use the simple instruments it is born with to understand the infinitely complex word around it with a reliable degree of utility and even accuracy. With this limited understanding it has managed to survive for millennia and, in the last 5,000 years, build metastatic empires in the form of “civilization.” What more, then, could it want?

Perhaps the psychological significance of the concept of “immortality” holds the answer. First, though, we must agree that while this word “immortality” is indeed a signifier, there is nothing that it signifies. At best, we can say that it is simply the negation of mortality, otherwise pointing to an inconceivable terra incognita. But then again, *intellectually*, at least, we accept “mortality” to be our condition, not one of *two* contrasting conditions, the other of which somehow eludes us.

As a *psychological* concept, though, mortality has been that which humankind has never been able to swallow. There is no end to the hallucinatory, harebrained, metaphysical, and hysterical ideas about “what dreams may come / When we have shuffled off this mortal coil ...” Nevertheless, they add much color and delight to the works of imagination as well as to the masterpieces of metaphysics and the dogma and lore of religion. As Hamlet so aptly puts it, it is,



... the dread of something after death,  
 The undiscovered country, from whose bourn  
 No traveller returns, [that] puzzles the will,  
 And makes us rather bear those ills we have  
 Than fly to others that we know not of ...

The “dream” of immortality, in this life or “the next,” makes the earthly sojourn so much more “hopeful.” Most of all, though, it provides an absolutely irresistible impetus to abdicate our personal sovereignty to what we see as a force infinitely greater than ourselves. We believe that in surrendering the responsibility for the sustenance of our lives, and for the protection of ourselves and our families, as well as for any possible happiness we may experience as a result of our labors, we will enter into a magnificent Heaven on earth.

In this Paradise there is, as Jensen says to Howard Beale in the film *Network*, “no war and famine, oppression and brutality.” It is a place where “all men ... work to serve a common profit, in which all men ... hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused.” This superlative, unbearably altruistic existence is easy enough to attain if one lives in a modern, industrialized society (or in one that at least has access to the goods that are *produced* by such societies). All that is required is a good credit rating, the right social credentials, and the willing suspension of one’s self-determination. The addition of a selective blindness to the blatant contradictions of this paradise, and the billions who have no access to it, is a plus.

However, there are some problems that the Discourse must resolve to our satisfaction if we are to give ourselves over completely to the hegemony. The first is that of the immortality of both the body and the ego. In a more primitive, ignorant time, there was a greater number of people content with the idea that their “soul” had a chance at immortality if, during their mortal phase, the body and ego obeyed the rules set down by God and his special agents on earth. They understood that the body, in its sensuous state, must be left behind at some point. Whether or not the ego and the soul are the “same thing,” though, has remained a question for philosophers and theologians who, like everyone else, must perish.

But ever since science has “proven” that the soul does not exist, and that there is no God, the stakes have been much greater; we will only be content if the body and consequently the ego that goes along with it, lives forever. Thanks to what we see as the miracles of modern medicine, we know that “in the future” we will no longer have to part with the body and therefore its precious ego—the possessions we value even more than our freedom to *use* the body and *be* the ego.

This does not mean that there are not plenty of people who believe in the old ways. They are, however, fringe atavists who reject the “truth” of science, which every sensible, modern person carries around with him as his tacit worldview. As fanatical fundamentalists, mired in the superstitions of bygone traditions, they must suffer their nasty, brutish, and short lives and just *hope* that they are right about an “afterlife” without the body. The mainstream, though, which the full force of the Apparatus is aimed at, *knows* the Truth of existence. Old age and death are merely diseases that will be conquered, like smallpox.

While the subject still has need of good old-fashioned *hope*, it is not of the metaphysical religious variety, which demands faith, but of the commercial-industrial variety that comes with a money-back guarantee. The modern sensibility has translated this primitive religious hope into the idea that if we only wait long enough and maintain our full faith in science, we will manage to live forever without the messy necessity of dying or the bother of living up to some metaphysical God’s old-fashioned ideas about how we should live our lives.

The next problem is the one of financing. Immortality is expensive, if we are to judge from the cost of routine medical care. Here science turns the matter over to the financial industry. Through easy and limitless debt with usury, any mortal can become immortal. But like all of the contrivances of mankind, credit has its problems too. For it to work, the subject must be entirely convinced that there will be absolutely no negative change whatsoever in its financial status. And in the case of immortality, this must be so forever and ever, amen. From the need for this assurance the hegemony’s greatest ethical aesthetic is born: *homeostasis*. All spoken and unspoken decrees of the *nomos* state that any threat to this ethical aesthetic will be met with action of *extreme prejudice*, up to and including death and war. Otherwise, its cover is blown.

An additional problem is that one of the two Semitic tribes, Islam, considers debt-interest (*riba*) to be an act of war on God and the greatest sin (*haram*). Therefore, that the entire global financial system is based on *riba* has become an uncomfortable concern for the multitudinous regional hegemonies and their corporate overlords who depend upon *riba* for their existence. Those who, because of their personal or religious beliefs, refrain from willful participation in *riba*, are nevertheless forced into it by the state acting without their consent. The hegemonic powers borrow with interest without these subjects’ acquiescence but ostensibly on their behalf. Consequently, the dissenting subjects and their children are responsible for paying back the principal plus the interest—whether they like it or not. If

they refuse, then they are labeled enemies of the state and are dealt with accordingly.

In the topological realm of simulacra all empirical and verifiable evidence is regarded with suspicion if not derision and even censorship. Consequently, evidence that living things die has small effect on the psychology of the subject. The VSP, as well as the verifiable and verified analytic proposition, is regarded as a seditious attempt to undermine the discursive priority of the hegemonic discourse. For one thing, propositions so constructed lack the potential to be both right and wrong at the same time, like an ISP can be. Furthermore, valid statements and analytic statements claim to have a species of verisimilitude categorically superior to any competing or contrary one.

Majority rule, the fundamental principle of democracy, is considered to be “proof positive” of the truth of any proposition. Therefore, all attempts to contradict this majority proof with another, however it may be arrived at, is not only apostasy and a pack of malicious lies, but downright *undemocratic* as the minority opinion. Compensatory systems such as super majorities, consensus, and an electoral college have small effect on the outcomes in the statistical long run.

Nevertheless, mortality, that existential *Fort! Da!* (or “here today gone tomorrow”), often makes grisly intrusions upon our otherwise blissful state of discursive affirmation. Consequently, we do from time to time reflect upon the human condition. In such a contemplative mode, we are often faced with the choice of suicide, or homicide; self-destruction, or other-destruction. We soon find that either possibility can be preempted with some online shopping, immersive entertainment, a good drinking session, or a heavy dose of pharmaceuticals. As Hamlet further points out,

... conscience does make cowards of us all,  
 And thus the native hue of resolution  
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,  
 And enterprise of great pitch and moment  
 With this regard their currents turn awry  
 And lose the name of action.

Ultimately, though, death also makes *martyrs* of us all. It is little comfort, then, that “Jesus died for our sins” when, even if we do not sin, we too will die as miserably as he seems to have done. And for what? Therefore, to function day to day we naturally repress this thought, put away childish things, and grimly devote the rest of our lives to finding a way to get out of the only thing that is *absolutely inevitable*. By putting all of our effort

behind a campaign to stave off this impending disaster, though, we squander our vital energy on a parabolic curve resulting in the entropy of death.

Fortunately, the hegemony and its commercial apparatus is there to collect this energy and channel it into its corporate overlords' store of *value* in the form of the various financial markets but in particular the global derivatives market. The wealth from this value is then used to maintain the apparatus which keeps the mass of subjects from ever discovering that they are, in fact, mortal. Through the scribbling of their signatures on promissory notes bearing usury (*riba*)—the ultimate act of abdication—they get precisely what they paid for: the discursive realm of simulacra supported by a maze of ISP's.

To better understand hope, though, it is important that we look at the opposite: *hopelessness*. One notable study on the phenomenon of hopelessness as a psychological syndrome used laboratory rats as subjects. In this study we find some parallels to the human subject's everyday predicament in the maze of the hegemonic order and the society it generates based on its ethical aesthetic of hope for ever-greater progress "in the future." Seligman cites the work of Richter where rats died of "hopelessness" in controlled situations. Some were "given hope" and others not.

In the first part of the experiment a rat was placed in a container of water with no escape. The animal swam for up to 60 hours before giving up from exhaustion and drowning. Then, another rat was held in the investigator's hand until it ceased struggling (gave up) and was afterward placed in the water just as the first had been. It died much sooner than the first rat. The presumption is that the second rat, after being in the "death grip" of a predator, instinctively surrendered whatever fight it might have had in it in comparison to the first rat which maintained hope as long as it had the physical energy to do so.

The third rat had its whiskers trimmed and was held in the same way as the second rat (until it gave up). Then, it was placed in the water as the previous two had been. According to Seligman (citing Richter), rats in this last cohort could be said to have died *sudden deaths* compared to the rats in the previous two cohorts. The demoralization of being trapped, held, and then having their whiskers, which rats rely upon to survive, cut, made them lose all hope of surviving the swimming ordeal. The act of the powerful predator (the analog of the state) left them in a condition of complete abdication, we might say, of any modicum of self-determination they might have had left.

What might this mean for us? "Richter reasoned that being held in the hand of a predator like man, having whiskers trimmed, and being put in a vat of water from which escape is impossible produces a sense of

helplessness in the rat”<sup>11</sup> as we have concluded. While this finding sounds rather clinical and self-evident, it nevertheless shows that psychology must be taken into consideration when trying to understand the limitations of what animals can endure depending upon their psychological condition. In humans, perhaps the only difference is that this psychology is bound up with language and therefore the *logical structure* of that language.

How do these data correspond to our observations regarding the motivation and limitation of the subject in civilization? Is not civilization the “container,” society the “water,” and the hegemony the “hand”? Moreover, is not the trimming of the whiskers the equivalent of the subject’s insurmountable debt, rising prices for necessities, lack of mobility and self-determination, and the perpetual feeling of being taxed dry or tossed into war by a corrupt hegemony?

The difference, of course, is that the rats are in no way responsible for their fate as test subjects. Whereas, the human subject, we might say, *is almost entirely responsible* not only for the hegemony it has installed in its pursuit of eternal access to consumer goods, debt, and the possibility of immortality, but total security in all things at all times—regardless of the cost. Never mind that the human subject also has the option to: 1) “prefer not to” and, like Bartleby, bravely suffer the consequences; and 2) engage Hegel’s Second Negation where the subject may *negate the negation* of its abdicated sovereignty.

The rats described above were given no hope. Instead, they had the *potential* for hope reduced with each successive demoralization. But what of the rats that were similarly demoralized but then were given hope that there was a possibility of survival despite their misgivings? Richter further experimented by holding the rats in the same way and then *saving* them from drowning at a critical point in the ordeal. He returned them to the water-filled container where they swam for 60 hours like the rats that were *not* held. In other words, they now had “hope” that they would be rescued despite their demoralization prior to their predicament.

There are two sides to this demonstration: 1) we see that the hegemony not only taketh away, but also giveth hope, in the Biblical sense; and 2) herein we see the root of what is called in the event of fiscal rescues “moral hazard.” This cohort of rats may have had hope restored, but hope for what? They were still captives entirely at the mercy of their captors.

Finally, some were put into the water and removed and then put back into the water several times. These rats too swam for 60 hours (before drowning), with the expectation that they would at some point be saved.

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<sup>11</sup> Martin E. P. Seligman, *Helplessness: On Depression, Development, and Death* (San Francisco: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1975), 169-70.

Being removed and then put back in and then removed did not affect their basic level of hopefulness regarding their odds of survival *if they kept swimming*. Note that even the strongest swimmers were left to drown, with hope or without.

We can see that these experiments tell us something about the problem of what might be called “moral hazard” as well as the psychology of defeatism and failure. In Richter’s experiment, the rats found themselves in a dire situation through no fault of their own. However, humans are notorious for engineering their own untimely and unnatural demise, economically, politically, and existentially. No creature, in the state of nature and without the contrivances of man, ever died of a gunshot wound.

When a person so bollixes up his own situation that the only possibility of survival depends upon rescue from a (trusted?) third party (the state), the ethical aesthetic of moral hazard is brought to bear upon it. If it is his own fault, should we not let him suffer the consequences of his bad choices? Perhaps. The matter, however, becomes more complex when the individual involved has been charged with the health and wellbeing of many innocent parties who will *also* suffer if a third party does not step in and save the day.

These experiments also tell us something about the ethical issues involved in accepting the possibility of living forever. The ethical aesthetic of immortality says that if only we would allow medical technology to save us from the evil “disease” of death, however we get to this point and whatever use we make of our life thereafter is justified. Medicine becomes the third party, breaching cause-and-effect as well as raising the sticky question of whether or not one deserves to clutter up the universe for all time with one’s needs, wants, and whims. It is the ultimate teleological argument. In the religion of Scientism, which takes credit for modern medicine, death is unnatural, wrong, bad, and the handiwork of its enemy: Nature. The Evil One, death, is responsible for the acceptance of beliefs Scientism has decreed as “ignorant” and “superstitious,” such as God and the Afterlife. It is, in short, a disease that will be cured—given enough time and money “in the future.”

Death is mankind’s well-deserved punishment for not doing what the state, advertising, websites, magazines, and self-help books say is necessary to live forever. The formula is simple: Life = Good; Death = Bad. The “death penalty” need not be dished out by the state. It is mankind’s original sin. Each of us must devote ourselves to the heroic attempt to outlive death by surrendering our sovereignty, treasure, energy, and even progeny (who must pay the public debt back “in the future” for the promise of eternal consumption we enjoy “now”).

What can we learn from the “learned helplessness” experiments that tells us something about the psychology of the abdicated subject in its orientation to reality? How does the psychology of hope interfere with the subject’s ability to accurately assess its odds of survival and success in the face of that reality? In the “container” of civilization, the subject is placed in the “water” of society where it must “swim” (work and pay interest and taxes) to survive. We may presume that the apex consumer will swim to the greatest of its ability only because it has no reason to believe that it will be interfered with, for better or worse, by the “hand” of the hegemony.

However, considering the circumstances above, we see that the subject’s psychology and consequently its behavior change depending upon how much interference there is from a power significantly greater than itself: the (trusted?) third-party of the state (TTP) and its banking system. If the subject finds itself in the *grip* of the hegemony, say through debt, incarceration, or oppression, then we may presume that this treatment will reduce its survival rate as compared to an unfettered attempt at survival. But if the hegemony “rescues” the subject (or a bank or a corporation) from disaster, then the subject’s psychology changes. Hope returns, and it swims on as if it has not been manipulated.

Even if this scenario repeats itself, the subject continues to harbor the hope that *no matter what*, the state will save it from 1) the wanton mistakes it has made or that have been made on its behalf; 2) the threats imposed from without beyond its control, such as terrorism, illegal aliens, and the mysterious “nuclear capability” of so-called “rogue states”; and 3) global financial collapse.

If the hegemony trims the subject’s “whiskers” (autonomy, sovereignty), though, “sudden death” (suicide, execution, and death from depression, ill health, and so on) may result. Why, then, does the subject not drop dead upon the advent of its abdication? The reason is simple: it has *chosen* to have its whiskers trimmed. Herein lies the greatest psychological effect of the subject’s unilateral choice to abdicate: while it has indeed been held in the hand of a predator (the state), and while the state ultimately will let it drown (debt, war), by a policy of capture and release repeated at strategic intervals the hegemony *trains* and *conditions* the subject to expect that if it swims hard enough (surrenders its labor and treasure) it will live forever.

Repetition of the capture and release ritual is the primary mechanism of the secular hope-cult of political Scientism and its ally the Cult of Mediocrity. Of course, we know that the hegemony will let even the strongest swimmer drown. It must. That is the absolutely inevitable fate of

all creatures anyway, so why waste energy fighting it on the subject's behalf?

In the permanent state of exception, the hegemony does not suffer from the illusions that the subject it lords over must reckon with. It knows the score. It guards the secret of its confidence game. However, in the meantime, it gets a considerable amount of labor and verisimilitude out of this human rat. Moreover, it gets a piece of the largesse the subject has mortgaged of its future earnings and assets in the derivatives game through usury (*riba*). Thanks to the psychological device of the hope-cult's promise of eternal life and unrestricted access to consumer goods and debt, the subject keeps struggling—even though its cause was lost before it started to swim.





## **PART FIVE**

# **CONCLUSION: POSSESSION, ABDICATION, AND THE APOPHANTIC**

# CHAPTER NINE

It is as if another soul had entered into the body and thenceforward subsisted there, in place side by side with the normal subject.

Traugott Österreich<sup>1</sup>

The other man, whose name was Giotto, was such an extraordinary genius that there was nothing of all that Nature, mother and mover of all things, presents to us by the ceaseless revolution of the heavens, that he could not render with pencil and pen and brush—and so closely that it was not just similar, but seemed to be the thing itself, so that people’s visual sense was often deceived by the things he made, taking for reality something that was merely painted.

Giovanni Boccaccio<sup>2</sup>

## 9.1 Being possessed by a possession

There are two basic meanings of “possession.” The first means something one owns as in “a possession.” The second refers to being under the control of something *alien* to or *other than* oneself (or the metaphorical equivalent thereof), such as we note in the quote above from Österreich. The first we may introduce with the indefinite article “a.” The second is a phenomenon, a state, and as such is not a thing. Therefore, it does not earn an article. The first seems simple enough but is not, and the second seems complex and strange and is. The first, we like to say, is “nine tenths of the Law.”

Much of the mission of the *nomos*, then, is to safeguard one’s *ownership of things*. The second, these days, we tend to use as a figure of speech to indicate a psychological condition that can be good or bad. Statements such as “he is possessed by the desire to help others” or “he is possessed by demon rum” are common enough. There was a time, though, when the word was used only *denotatively* in the sense of its original meaning of being possessed by (*real*, not imaginary, or symbolic) demons, spirits, or the Devil himself.

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<sup>1</sup> Traugott K. Österreich, *Possession, Demoniactal & Other Among Primitive Races, in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and Modern Times* (Hyde Park, N.Y.: University Books, 1966), 17.

<sup>2</sup> Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, “The Sixth Day, The Fifth Story” (Ware, Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 2004), 437.

But there is also the possibility, figurative or literal (as we like), of *being possessed by a possession*. Here the two come together, the former, the thing, taking on natural and supernatural powers; the latter, the state, describing the consequence of the exercise of those powers. In both configurations, being possessed by a possession is a colorful way to look at the predicament of individuals who have abdicated their sovereignty—whether they think they have abdicated or not is irrelevant.

The fact is, one *cannot be* a member in good standing of civilization's great empires without being *possessed by possessions*—singly or collectively. It is the hallmark of the apex consumer. In other words, of being, however one chooses to look at it, a *domesticated* beast, which is absolutely necessary for any progressive participation in the drama of civilization and its empires. Those who, like Bartleby, “prefer not to,” shall suffer the consequences of what was called in ancient Greece “loathing,” or being shunned by society until one starves to death.

Without this hallmark of domestication, one is *eschewed* from the paradise of consumerism, social belonging, and the largess of the state, one way or another. If one does not exhibit, ostentatiously, the branding of the phenotype of the domesticated beast, one is, eventually, denied access to the food source. One becomes a threat to the status quo, which will brook no dissenter. One becomes the fox in the hen house.

The matter is put nicely in Revelation, 13:16-17: “And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: *And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark* [italics added] ...” As John so prophetically points out here, the nature of one's entire character hinges upon one's participation in the great empires of the world as a *consumer*.

The *feral*, on the other hand, *possess nothing*, nor are they possessed. In their contemplation of death as an imminent threat at all times, they become dispossessed—in the moment—of even that which chance, effort, and the law provide for them. Rather, they exist in the existential condition idealized by Rousseau as *l'indigene*, the indigent or the indigenous people, and romanticized in Western literature as the vagabond, knight-errant, troubadour, bum, beatnik, noble savage, and by Baudelaire as *le flaneur*. They are by nature *fauvists*, wild beasts. In effect, they are part of the landscape, like trees and lightning. Therefore, they cannot be separated from its flora, fauna, biology, geology, meteorology, and mythology.

They are regarded with the same combination of fear and contempt *homo industrialis* has for Nature in his jealousy and ignorance. As such, they are no more possessed than the animals they prey upon in the wild, or what they gather

from the detritus that civilization, in its violent campaign for Empire, leaves behind in the process.

If one is possessed by possessions, then the only possibility of being *dispossessed* is not to possess those possessions. The ascetic renunciate interprets this imperative as a vow of poverty. The Marxist imagines that property shall be collectively owned. But is it possible to be “rich,” or even, as Fitzgerald purportedly said to Hemingway, “very rich,” and still not *be possessed* by one’s possessions, including one’s wealth? Matthew 19:24 says no. “And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.” Nevertheless, dispossession “happeneth to them all,” saith the Bible elsewhere.

Despite man’s boundless arrogance, no one knows what tomorrow holds, even the rich. All that seems to be required for dispossession, then, is that *one face death head on*. To the subject of the hegemony of the corporate state, this is the greatest of folly and heresy. It is characterized as morbid, depressing, negative, suicidal, and fatalistic. Day and night chemists and criminals cook up drugs to “treat” this disease, not stopping to think that many would prefer it to the consoling delusion of immortality.

The first step for those brave enough to give it a try, however, is the abandonment of the notion that the PF will bring about the miracle of medical immortality “in the future.” Even if such a wonder were advertised tomorrow, access to it *would be extremely limited*. Only the elite of the elite would “get” immortality. It would create a new class of human gods called Immortals, forming the greatest of class distinctions in the history of human existence. Never mind that the potential for an ensuing population crisis and stress on resources would bring about a world that few would care to live in anyway. Revelation 9:6 has this one covered, too. “And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.”

So then, let us ask again the question at the beginning of this book: Why do we talk about reality as if it were something outside of and other than ourselves? As we have seen by our analysis of the psychology of language, reality is as much *within* as it is *without* what we consider to be ourselves. It seems that in order to admit to ourselves that death is the only reality, we must also admit that what dies is not only the body, but the *ego* too.

If we take it a step further and embrace the idea that the ego *does not know and cannot know* if there is some other part of “us” that continues on after death—the soul or spirit or whatever one wishes to call it—then we will settle any possibility not only of religious delusion, but also of the narcissistic fantasy of medical immortality. The ego, as the mind, while maybe not entirely “within” us, certainly is not entirely outside of our mortal

coil, either. Why, then, should the world it creates exist as something *other than* and *apart from* ourselves and the language we use to interact with and describe it?

After what we have been through here in following the argument resulting from this question, we must also ask what it is about civilization that is *not us*, that lies outside of and apart from us, and that does not and cannot touch who we are. Is this illusion of reality responsible for our lack of understanding and consciousness regarding the degree to which we are not ourselves but are, rather, *possessed* by the idea of being subjects of a hegemonic state?

Is it not at the root of the problem that we regard the loss of our possessions as a loss of ourselves too? Furthermore, could it be the cause of the delusion that if we did not have unrestricted access to the goods and services of consumerism, infinite debt, and medical immortality we would not exist?

To answer these questions, let us look at what it means to be civilized. The first meaning of the Latin *civilitas* is the practice and art of organized government. Its other meanings and connotations cascade from there. To be political, and consequently “civilized,” is to separate oneself from the natural landscape and embed oneself in the artificial environment fabricated by man. To those sucked into the maelstrom of Empire, however, by the ritual of abdication, civilization is something altogether different, as we shall see.

There are of course degrees of separation from this natural order wild creatures enjoy, though the *raw fact* or binary of detachment from the condition of Rousseau’s *l’indigene* is a categorical difference expressed as a potential *state* of man’s political economy. It is in the historical paradigm of agriculture, however, not in industry and technology, that we find mankind seeking a new definition of himself as something other than the *fauve*, or wild beast.

Emerson, in the poem “Farming,” describes what the “possession” of land means to what the Romans knew as the “arator,” or cultivator of the soil. In this paradigm land may be owned by the arator himself, owned collectively by he and others engaged in farming, or by no one at all as it was for millennia in the idea of the “commons” or land shared by all but that belonged to Nature—a concept only recently obliterated from the political economy of society. His description is in contrast to the possession of parts of the earth as a store of value or an investment, which is generally regarded today as the first instance of the necessity of the political economy of civilization.

To these men  
The landscape is an armory of powers,  
Which, one by one, they know to draw and use.  
They harness beast, bird, insect, to their work;

They prove the virtues of each bed of rock,  
 And, like the chemist mid his loaded jars,  
 Draw from each stratum its adapted use  
 To drug their crops or weapon their arts withal.  
 They turn the frost upon their chemic heap,  
 They set the wind to winnow pulse and grain,  
 They thank the spring-flood for its fertile slime,  
 And on cheap summit-levels of the snow  
 Slide with the sledge to inaccessible woods  
 O'er meadows bottomless. So, year by year,  
 They fight the elements with elements,  
 And by the order in the field disclose  
 The order regnant in the yeoman's brain.  
 What these strong masters wrote at large in miles,  
 I followed in small copy in my acre;  
 For there's no rood has not a star above it;  
 The cordial quality of pear or plum  
 Ascends as gladly in a single tree  
 As in broad orchards resonant with bees;  
 And every atom poises for itself,  
 And for the whole.<sup>3</sup>

The poem is a pastoral vision serving as an extension of that Romanticism we see in Rousseau's idea of *l'indigene*. The arator seeks to harness, prove, draw, drug, turn, set, and, as agricultural man has for time immemorial, *thank* Nature for its bounty. Here we see the first step of possession: the harnessing of the land the way animals are harnessed to work it. But as we can see by Emerson's buildup of verbs, it is possession earned by *doing*, in harmony with what Nature can do for itself, not the passive idea of the abstract ownership of private property, though that too may be involved.

Though the "savage" may hunt and gather from, and even defend, his territory, he is *doing* nothing more than the wild animals with which he lives must do with claw and tooth. The arator, however, employs the artifice of human society for the continuance of his race. Naturally, then, the next step in the development of this society is the *city* with all of the benefits enjoyed by its concentration of talent, resources, and manpower. Beyond the city, though, is the *state*, or the collection of cities into one administrative unit with a certain national identity. History shows this is a relatively recent invention of human society which, in its metastatic form, we call Empire.

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<sup>3</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson: Society and Solitude* [Vol. 7] (New York: Houghton, Mifflin, 1903-4).

Emerson does not quite anticipate the extent to which civilization will later be dominated by industry. The desire for the accumulation of capital soon outweighs the potential of agriculture to “put out” economically, tied as it is to the annoying vicissitudes of Nature. Therefore, first the traditional agricultural order of independent ownership and food-growing must be *smashed* in favor of the “integrated” industrial machine’s needs for raw materials to produce its profitable products and accumulate and invest capital. Then, it must be made to conform with man’s, not Nature’s, ethical aesthetics and needs.

Once cities and the agriculture supporting them have been collected into a “state,” the *imaginary* and *symbolic* come into play as *national identity* (NID). As such, NID marks the beginning of the *hegemonic ego* which, as it contemplates its fragility and artificiality, reflexively develops a lust for the mass abdication of the subjects under its power while at the same time developing a mental illness not unlike a kind of organizational paranoid schizophrenia. It demands that they abdicate their *core identity* in exchange for the NID. But their abdication (as the word implies) must be voluntary. Therefore, incentives must be offered, which come in the form of the promise of unrestricted access to consumer goods and services, infinite consumer debt, and medical immortality “in the future” (provided the subject makes its monthly payments).

The only thing standing the way of this ambitious project is the *real*, which independent, traditional, historic agriculture comes to represent as the individual’s means of feeding himself without dependency upon the state’s apparatus.

From the climate of the NID the *nomos* is instituted to protect the corporate state from various forms of internal and external threats as well as to enforce the rights of possession, or property rights. In the communist paradigm things are the same, only the rhetoric is different. The consequent laws become what Emerson calls “the highest proof of civility” which is “that the whole public action of the State is directed on securing the greatest good of the greatest number.”<sup>4</sup>

Rather than judge civilization by its military victories and self-encomia, he turns to the fact of its behavior as a state and the disposition of its citizens. He sees a difference between being civilized, being barbarous, and being wild. Barbarism is not the same thing as being “free” like the beast of the field, or self-reliant like the arator.

While the rhetoric of this high-minded utilitarianism is infectious once we are all thrown together into the hurly-burly of cities and need to eat, at the same time it must depend for its existence on an ever-increasing number

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



of devotees to its ethical aesthetic or go bust. It does not matter if its ethical aesthetic espouses the political economy of communism or capitalism. Like all cults, then, it must fend off any challenge while at the same time feeding its insatiable lust for growth and Progress. Moreover, it must tend to its ever-increasing paranoia. Soon, its humble mission of “the greatest good of the greatest number” becomes a campaign, internal and external, for the total security and autocracy of Empire.

How, then, from what Emerson clearly sees as the apotheosis of the state, do we end up with the murderous, predatory, incompetent, mediocre, kleptocracies we generously accept as government? What of the rapacious and relentless wars among them for the dominance of Empire benefiting only the elite among their hegemony?

Are these metastatic examples of human society *also* civilization’s “highest proof of civility,” or are they some kind of aberrant, cancerous growth within the body politic? Finally, why can the mass of subjects generally be counted on to uphold, support, praise, cultivate, and fight for what is so clearly a defective, sick, and tottering empire of half-baked ideas?

Emerson says (in the same essay) that the issue is not “civilization” as a concept but whether or not *the government itself* and its citizens behave in a *civilized* manner.

But if there be a country ... where knowledge cannot be diffused without perils of mob law and statute law; where speech is not free; where the post-office is violated, mail-bags opened and letters tampered with; where public debts and private debts outside of the State are repudiated; where liberty is attacked in the primary institution of social life; ... where the [mechanical] arts, such as they have, are all imported, having no indigenous life; where the laborer is not secured in the earnings of his own hands; where suffrage is not free or equal;—*that country is, in all these respects, not civil, but barbarous*; and no advantages of soil, climate or coast can resist these suicidal mischiefs [*italics added*].<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, the difference between *barbarity* and *civilization* is what Peirce calls the “conduct” of the government and its citizens. If the government routinely murders the leaders of other sovereign states, imprisons its people for petty crimes, doles out tax revenue to its cronies to keep them on its side and those it has disenfranchised to keep them quiet, deliberately throws the military and mercantile order of the world into chaos

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* (Omitted from this quotation is his mention of what he calls “the position of the white woman ... injuriously affected by the outlawry of the black woman” for, as Wittgenstein says, “the sake of experiment,” though this does not excuse Emerson’s excess.)

for its own gain, and subjects its most passionate citizens to oppressive and arbitrary surveillance, it is no civilization at all. However, it may likely be an Empire which, far from being diminished by these forms of corruption, thrives on them.

In its relentless quest for total control and dominance, with only cursory and perfunctory regard for “the greatest good of the greatest number,” Empire violates its mandate of *humanitas*, the absolute core of civilization in any meaningful sense of the word. Therefore, while it fails the test of the “highest proof of civility” and cannot be called civilized, the state nevertheless enjoys the prerogatives of Empire until such time that its own metastatic growth kills the body politic that once sustained it and gave it its biological imperative. History is littered with such examples.

The difference between empire and civilization is that the former is a metastatic disease the prognosis of which is the death of the organism it infects, while the latter is simply the alternative to what Emerson calls “barbarity.” Empire alienates itself from the prerogatives of Nature and the needs of the arator, or farmer, who is the foundational citizen, sovereign and self-sufficient, and the human cornerstone of *civilization* as essentially an agricultural enterprise (*agricultura*).

The rest of the Medieval *Artes Mechanicae*, which include *architectura* (architecture and masonry), *militia* and *venatoria* (warfare and hunting), *mercatura* (trade), *vestiaria* (tailoring, weaving), *coquinaria* (cooking), and *metallaria* (blacksmithing, metallurgy, and technology) provide the support the arator needs to sustain the social order *from the bottom up, not from the top down*.

Robert Burns, in his poem “To a Mouse,” embodies the thinking the arator applies to his relationship not only to nature, but to society and God. This kind of holistic thinking is precisely what is absent from the metastatic frenzy of Empire’s simulation of life, which has everything in it that life does except life itself.

Burns, the arator, apologizes to the “beastie” whose “wee-bit housie” he has turned up while plowing a field. He understands that man has more in common with a mouse as a “fellow mortal,” such as the need food and a house, than with the immortal gods. His apology is an attempt to reconcile what he sees as a *violation* of the mouse’s sovereign right to exist as well as eke out a living. He is apologetic and embarrassed that “Man’s dominion,” or the idea that the property is his and his alone, has violated the higher law of “Nature’s social union” which the mouse, through no fault of its own, must now suffer.

I’m truly sorry Man’s dominion  
Has broken Nature’s social union,

An' justifies that ill opinion,  
 Which makes thee startle,  
 At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,  
 An' fellow-mortal!

This *mea culpa* is an expression of the arator's ethical aesthetic which also includes what Emerson describes as his act of "thanks" to the "spring-flood for its fertile slime," the same "slime" that made Egyptian civilization possible through the action of the flooding of the Nile for the almost 3,500 years up until the death of Cleopatra.

Perhaps what Emerson means is that for there to be anything worth calling "civilization" it must be ruled over by *reason*. "Civilization is the result of highly complex organization [reason]. In the snake, all the organs are sheathed; no hands, no feet, no fins, no wings. In bird and beast, the organs are released and begin to play. In man they are all unbound and full of joyful action. With this *unswaddling* he receives the absolute illumination we call Reason, and thereby true liberty."<sup>6</sup>

He equates reason with the potential for manipulation, or the use of the hands and limbs in the effecting of man's imaginative desires and the satisfaction of his needs. "Unswaddling" is the power *to dare to know* (*sapere aude*) or "unpack" the questions and propositions of life in a constructive, valid, and potent sense. For there to be *civilitas* that is anything more than a form of corruption, exploitation, and incarceration, then mankind's vision, as the *imaginary* and the *symbolic*, must be made *manifest* through the action of analytical thinking, or reason in the apprehension of the *real*, not its contemptuous dismissal.

Saying so, however, conjures up the ghost of Manifest Destiny, the 19<sup>th</sup> Century mission, in North America, to "conquer" the untamed lands of the West in the name of agricultural "progress." While we may recoil from the idea that we are destined to conquer the territory of *l'indigene*, or the indigenous peoples (thus spoiling Rousseau's feral utopia), that we have done so directly or indirectly and have benefited from it is the fact. Therefore, we must count the mixed blessings of civilization that *have been* manifest from such ambitious but short-sighted visions while taking stock of what has been lost and gained—which is not the purpose of this discussion but nevertheless a task incumbent upon us. What we *are* concerned with, however, is the loss of personal sovereignty in the hurly-burley of the manifestation of *civilitas as Empire*.

The next important question is this: Is it necessary for us to surrender our personal sovereignty if the state is to achieve "the greatest good of the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

greatest number”? Is Emerson implying that we must subordinate the individual to the collective in order for there to be “good”? Is “personal sovereignty” a form of selfishness that mankind can no longer afford? More to the point: must this subordination be enforced, managed, supervised, and encoded by the state whether the citizen wants it or not?

Emerson correctly surmises that it is a matter bearing upon the “complex organization” of civilization. At the root of this complexity is the matter of *possessing* and *being possessed*, as we have indicated. If we are to read correctly the ideas that have dominated political and social philosophy during the last half millennium, “possession” is what is at stake in the contest between the competing ideologies and economic systems of capitalism and communism and their various permutations, old and new.

As with the question regarding free will versus determinism (or God’s will) of a time when theological questions occupied the stage of reason, the one of whether the subject should be subordinated to the state to achieve “the greatest good for the greatest number” remains contentious in theory if not practice.

Still, we find that language has something to do with our relationship with things as possessions, particularly as the *nomos* is involved when it comes to the idea of private property. When someone *possesses* something, a subtle change comes over the person as well as the thing as there is now a “third party,” *the Law*, involved. The Law serves as an extension of the ritual of consumerism which magically transforms someone else’s property into one’s own. One has now endowed an objective presence in one’s ken—a thing—with a *subjective* quality as being an extension of the subject. At the same time, one brings into play the whole core apparatus of civilization, which exists in the space between the Law and the marketplace as the token of possession.

The thing itself could in no way bring these qualities into our ken on its own. It needs agents, which we find in the state’s security and banking systems. Note that neither the law nor banking fit into the definitions of the *Artes Mechanicae* or the *Artes Liberales* (though we may say that *militia* and *mercatura* come the closest). Rather, our senses, interacting with the inherent properties of the thing, interpret those properties in such a way that we can understand it which, ultimately, is a matter of thought and language in human beings. In so doing, a *discourse* about that thing emerges which is then passed along to society for collective approval.

Once it has reached a point where it is generally accepted as the “truth,” the real, formed out of a conflation of the imaginary and symbolic, emerges. The matter is grossly more intricate when we consider the possession of a

human being in the form of slavery, since the slave can also possess as the slave owner possesses.

If we look at recorded human behavior over the past 5,000 years, throughout the world, we see that it has been more desirable *to possess* another than it has been *not to be possessed* by another. The problem with the state of the latter condition is that if the *nomos* includes prohibitions against one person possessing another, ostensibly protecting us from being possessed, then we will be prevented from what has historically—for thousands of years—been considered the “right” to possess another. Therefore, we abdicate our sovereignty so that *we too* may be able to possess as we can *be possessed*, in the meantime girding our loins in an attempt to fend off the Other’s attempts to enslave us.

Part of the problem of conceiving this idea of wanting *to possess* another more than wanting *not to be possessed* is that the popular iconography of “slavery” involves skin color, chains, ships, and an elaborate mythology born of an even more elaborate historical reality. However, in any random, ordinary love affair we can see that the “desire to possess” the object of one’s ardor can all too often result in extreme violations of that other’s liberty and safety. Ask any cop.

Moreover, and much more to the point, it is critical to our understanding of the problem to countenance the many different and inventive forms of slavery practiced right under our noses. Chief among them is the signing of the promissory note. What one effectively does when borrowing money at interest is sign away one’s future for what will soon be in the past. The result is a form of *indenture* which has more in common with slavery than with banking. But this is only the most obvious example. It is not the purpose of this discussion to venture into all of the ways we overthrow our freedom in the quest for things we prize more highly, whatever they may be.

However, we *can* say a few words about what opportunities there are to possess another. At no time in history has the possibility of possessing another been stronger than it is today. Digital technology, weapons of mass annihilation, mass telecommunications, and the globalization of economic power have made it possible for the free citizen in a so-called first-world state to enslave, by proxy, a citizen in a so-called third-world state. There is no longer a need for the denizen of the modern state to have to witness the bullwhipping of a recalcitrant slave in the town square. This is done, thousands of miles away, at legal “arm’s reach,” by overseers working for the firms providing the citizen with the consumer goods and agricultural products he cannot live without.

Furthermore, when the free man lives among slaves, and they must drink the same water and breathe the same air, there is no danger of contamination

and pollution. But when the slave lives in a far-off hellhole where disease is rampant, life is cheap, and there are no laws protecting health, who cares if the environment itself becomes deadly?

Most of all, though, today everyone can get in on the action of possessing the future of another human being by investing in the *debt markets*, which comprise a substantial portion of all of the financial markets and their products. Though one may be “enslaved” by one’s debt, that is OK; one can use the profits from enslaving another to help make the monthly payment which are often the so-called “minimum” payment of the interest only and not the premium. Therefore, one never pays off the principal and is, consequently, indebted for life.

Just as the word “privacy” has replaced the word “freedom,” so too has “indebted” replaced “enslaved.” Even if a citizen manages to steer clear of this mousetrap, his government will get him into debt through borrowing from other states on his behalf but without his direct permission, and with the citizen being the obligee of that debt. And just as in the “old days” of slavery, this debt, inevitably left unpaid at the citizen’s death, is passed down from generation to generation under the pain of imprisonment.

The genius of the present hegemonic order is that it is entirely transparent. It is the transparency itself that serves as the greatest cloak of secrecy and camouflage for the crooked goings-on the state indulges in, largely on the subject’s behalf. The people themselves “elect” (in one form or another) their slave masters, feed them, shower them with riches, support them rhetorically, serve them with their labor, worship them as celebrities, know the most intimate details of their private and professional lives, often can view all of the records of their state activities, and, most of all, are willing to don the trappings of war and fight and die for them. Why? Because they believe that given the right circumstances, they too could have the same job with all of its powers and perquisites.

Put this way, it may not sound like such an attractive proposition, particularly considering that there is a nagging doubt even in the mind of even the most credulous citizen that it takes a certain amount of influence and money he does not have to become a true master of the universe like the politicians he worships. But it is only rhetorical style that makes the citizen carp about his servitude and incarceration, since he believes that complaining is “good for a democracy.” He is more likely to cheer it on in its fight against the enemies without and within jeopardizing whatever it is he has been able to accumulate through borrowing.

Attempts to pitch the subject back upon its own resources in order that it might become its own master are met with the utmost violence and resistance, and not just because of any strident rhetoric against self-reliance

by the hegemony. If anything, the hegemony is the greatest cheerleader for freedom and justice, being the appointed guardian and proprietor of both. East and West, North and South, governments feel obligated to lead the propaganda effort to spur their subjects on to achievement and sacrifice for “the greater good.”

Claims that the hegemony does not take its responsibilities in these matters seriously, that it is duplicitous, and that it seeks to “trick” the subject into surrendering its rights are disingenuous. This is obvious when we consider that much of its operations are out in the open and transparent (in most modern states, but not in all). Those that are not are pitched as matters of “national security,” which the subject accepts. Nearly all of its treasure is applied toward protecting the nation from the enemies of freedom and justice within and without, guaranteeing prosperity, and providing social services and opportunity for the needy.

Those activities which are not accessible and are perhaps the most dubious eventually come to light through the ritual of the whistleblower, the modern-day martyr who sacrifices his freedom and happiness to get the truth out. The public receives these revelations with shock one day and forgets about them the next. Meantime, those who were “damaged” by the revelations are disposed of and new operators with a longer shelf life are installed. It is an absolutely seamless operation and exactly as the abdicated subject wants it to be in order to feel that there will be no more threats to its unrestricted access to consumer goods and services, infinite debt, and the possibility of medical immortality “in the future” (as long as it keeps up with its monthly payments).

What, then, keeps the subject in thrall to its condition? What keeps the subject fixated on maintaining its servitude and incarceration despite invitations for liberation dangled in its face in most so-called “free” societies by those who “prefer not to,” and by the promises of spiritual freedom from religion? And why is the subject terrified of the true reality of its situation? Should not the subject be longing for the truth in order to plot its escape? As John 8:32 exhorts, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free,” and yet it is a commodity which has failed on the open market and is therefore thrown around in the darker recesses of social communication like a hot potato.

It is the notion of the possibility that if the subject works hard enough, knows the right people, gets the right education, bends the right rules, and has the right luck (or maybe even commits the right crime), then it too will be able to enslave others. *Once having abdicated, the subject can only see freedom as the power to enslave others, not as the power to free itself from slavery.* The subject knows, consciously or not, that if it somehow wiggles

out of its *own* indenture, it will likely remove itself from the possibility of getting others indentured. Moreover, it has been made clear to the subject that attempts to scale or undermine the walls of its socioeconomic prison will be dealt with quite harshly. But it is not the threat of punishment for apostasy that it fears; it is the threat of losing a chance to become a slave driver if not a slave owner, where the ego can lord over the other in a dominion of deathless consumerism.

Certainly, this “state of affairs” has little to do with *humanitas* except in as much as it is the opposite of it. Despite the hegemony’s obvious grip on the power of the subject’s destiny once the subject had abdicated, there are still wild ideologies afoot in the world and within the state that threaten its schizophrenic paranoia about its own security. In addition, there are long-held beliefs, embraced by millions, which the state, East and West, considers to be its Enemy—whether or not these ideas actually do pose an effective threat.

Chief among these ideologies and ideas is that of the *haram* (or sin against God) of *riba* (usury, or the debt-interest) in Islam. According to this haram, charging interest on loans, or *riba*, is a *haram*, or mortal sin and war against God. It is not unlike the prohibition against usury that another Abrahamic religion—Christianity—once enforced with some vigor, though with considerable loopholes which took advantage of yet another Abrahamic religion historically and in practice without such a prohibition: Judaism (more on this later). The *haram* against *riba* is an institutional form of preventing the enslavement of another Muslim and of encouraging one’s (Muslim) *brothers* to become prosperous and therefore economically independent and free to worship God.

Those who swallow down usury cannot arise except as one whom Shaitan has prostrated by (his) touch does rise. That is because they say, trading is only like usury; and Allah has allowed trading and forbidden usury. To whomsoever then the admonition has come from his Lord, then he desists, he shall have what has already passed, and his affair is in the hands of Allah; and whoever returns (to it)—these are the inmates of the fire; they shall abide in it.

(Quran, Al-Baqarah, 2:275)

The haram is an extension of what is sometimes called the pseudo-Golden Rule (since it applies only to Muslims and not the *kafir*, or unbelievers) from the Quran (Volume 1, Book 2, Number 12) which reads, “The Prophet said, ‘None of you will have faith till he wishes for his (Muslim) brother what he likes for himself.’” As few *like* to be enslaved, and as it is regarded in the Quran that usury is a form of slavery, whether



one profits from it or not, one must not deprive oneself of “faith” in this way or one will be, in effect, declaring war on God. To do so would be a sin against Allah as well as the brotherhood of Believers. Exodus 22:25 is equally unequivocal: “If thou lend money to [any of] my people [that is] poor by thee, thou shalt not be to him as an usurer, neither shalt thou lay upon him usury.” Note that “usury” here does not mean “excessive” interest as it has recently been modified to mean; it means *any* interest.

Interest, or “usury,” as both the Quran and Bible call it, has had a tendency throughout history to enslave individuals and nations, thus preventing what the Quran calls “charitable deeds.” It is a “charitable deed” to help one’s fellow by loaning money, without interest, or investing outright, win or lose, and sharing the risk of a new venture.

Although nowhere is it stated explicitly that this is the practice, the aim of interest often turns out to be, in reality, a force undermining payment of the principal and therefore repayment of the loan. As a result, the borrower is either pitched into a lifetime of paying the interest with minimal impact on the principal (indenture) or forfeits whatever equity and property he may have in that which he, at least nominally, once possessed. The *effect* of *riba* on one’s sovereignty speaks louder than the platitudes regarding the beneficence of borrowing when we consider what might be the underlying and ultimately covert *purpose* of usury.

That Islam seems to be the last holdout among the Abrahamic religions in the militancy of its prohibition against usury is likely the chief cause of it being targeted by non-Islamic states, East and West, as the #1 Threat to the global status quo which depends for its survival upon usury. However, blame is to be spread all around; all three Abrahamic religions exploit the loophole that the other consists of *unbelievers*, thereby allowing for usury if and only if the borrower is a *kafir*.

Polonius’ aphorism in Hamlet (Act 1, Scene 3) is often quoted as good sense: “Neither a borrower nor a lender be, / For loan oft loses both itself and friend, / And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry,” “husbandry” here meaning farming, or what is called in financial jargon a “real-value” occupation. While Polonius is of uncertain religious persuasion, like most of Shakespeare’s characters (except, notably, Shylock), he gives a good summary of the more secular risks of usury. However, we must consider that Polonius is cast as a tiresome old fool in the play, throwing some doubt on anything he says.

Again, that nearly all of this is well represented not only by anecdotal experience but also by vast amounts of literature, from scripture to financial websites to even the “fine print” on the loan documents, seems to have no cautionary effect on the subject’s *modus operandi*. Typically, the unbridled

subject dives headlong into an orgy of the abdication of its sovereignty, as well as its future, by scribbling its signature on promissory notes as fast as they can be put before it. The subject tends to regard access to debt as not only an opportunity and privilege, but also an indication of its present worth and future prosperity—come what may. One’s “credit rating” is considered to be an accurate indicator of one’s social status. No one forces it to sign these notes. Protestations to the contrary of various forms of social and financial coercion into it are disingenuous at best, and dishonest at worst. What the hegemony wants from the subject is its *free will*, not its terrified obedience—at least not until *after* it signs the papers.

Consider that what the subject desires most: absolute security, perpetual comfort, and physical immortality, *must come with a price*. There is no such thing as a free lunch, Austrian economists like to say. The days when overt acts of religious devotion and a voluntary tithe to aid the poor are over for most citizens of the modern industrial state. Though largely divorced from its instincts by design, the subject nevertheless intuits that this price often costs more than the sum of the energy any one person can produce in a lifetime. But ... *c’est la vie!* “You only live once,” the denizen of the secular hegemony imagines, “so you might as well make it *eternal*.”

Consequently, it is necessary to put oneself in a position to be able to help *obligate others* to remit their energy (and therefore sovereignty) to the hegemony’s banking apparatus so that these otherwise unrealistic goals may be attained in a realistic amount of time. By systematically eliminating any meaningful adherence to the fundamental tenets of the Abrahamic religions, *everyone* become a kafir. Therefore, one may lend to and borrow from *anyone*.

By having an opportunity to enslave others, through a consumer society based on slave labor abroad and investment in the international usury markets, the subject believes it is guaranteeing itself unrestricted access to consumer goods and services and medical immortality “in the future” (provided it can keep up with the monthly payments). Having forsaken the religious immortality of the afterlife as “superstition,” the subject must set about supporting in any way it can the “scientific” project of curing the disease of death.

The logic of this operation is only possible through the proliferation of the invalid synthetic proposition in everyday speech and mediated public discourse. This orgy of unreason must prevail in a stable atmosphere of the ethical aesthetic of simulacra class *b*. War is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength. The hegemony sees to it that the price of possession of what the subject wants is nothing less than the surrender of its sovereignty so that it may become a possession of the state and its corporate overlords.

The subject does this willingly, consciously, intentionally, enthusiastically, and with nothing more than the stroke of a pen or by clicking on an EULA, despite its bitter accusations and complaints when things (inevitably) go sour.

What is necessary in our psychology for this to be possible is *complete abandonment of the exercise of self-determination*. But to do so paradoxically requires that we negate the sovereignty of others. Why? Because when we lose our own ability to determine our fate, those who have retained it are immediately seen as a *mortal threat*. Therefore, their self-determination must either be dragged down along with our own in some way (and there are any number of ways to do this, therefore they need not be enumerated), or we must install and support a regime the chief purpose of which is to make everyone “equal” by neutralizing their self-determination. The suffrage of democracy is the perfect cover for this covert operation. While extoling freedom and self-determination, it works to undermine these values through mob rule, corruption, theft, prevarication, and most of all: *war*. War is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength.

The objectivity of the Other must be obviated with the tacit understanding that the universe, and everything and everyone in it, including God, *belongs to our individual ego alone*. This (mistaken) impression is reinforced by transferring the subject’s sense of objective reality to media products which may be clicked on and off at whim and manipulated in ways reality would never tolerate.

To blame this “state of affairs” on the hegemony is disingenuous at best. It is not possible to bring it about without the willful, deliberate, voluntary, preferred choice to abdicate one’s sovereignty in favor of eternal self-gratification at the expense of others. This fact is the ipso facto proof of this proposition. Those forced into it at bayonet point are useless to the state. They are often either too stupid to realize that this is what they must do to get with the social program, or they are by phenotype contrarians who “prefer not to” and therefore should be snuffed out. The former often end up in jail and prison; the latter are *loathed* into starvation or coopted into the system by giving them a bully pulpit in the form of social media channels owned and operated by the state’s corporate overlords and sanctioned by its *nomos*.

However, from the point of view of our *humanitas*, or our obligation to effectively maintain our self-determination and sovereignty and help others to protect theirs, this is an ultimately *fatal strategy* in every way except as a means to a cynical end, whatever that may be. In abdication we *alienate* ourselves from Dasein by insisting that for something “to be” (the infinitive

copula) it must have the attributes what we, through language, *impose upon it* rather than that *emanate from it* as something *other than* ourselves. A thing, therefore, must have no being apart from what we regard as its “official” attributes in accordance with the dogma of language and the dictatorship of our narcissistic needs.

What we do not see about this orientation to things is that by insisting upon our need for absolute control of everything all of the time, instead of possessing the thing we become possessed *by* it. Since things, and the Other, cannot and will not be controlled by us in either the existential or phenomenological sense in the *a priori* of time and space, which is entirely objective, our expenditure of energy in the attempt to do so becomes an *asymptote*. We end up being called upon by our ethical aesthetic to expend an infinite amount of energy in the attempt to remake the entire universe in our own image, which of course is a grotesque inversion of the idea of the universe (or “God”) making us in its own image.

The ensuing parabolic curve (asymptote) subsequently ends up in a parallel to life itself that attempts to get closer to reality through simulation but is condemned never to touch and meet with it. As a result, we feel forever unfulfilled with this empty, simulated universe ( $\emptyset$ ) which, rather than waking us up to the reality of the situation, just makes us redouble our effort to find solace in drugs (legal and illegal), consumer goods, digital gadgetry, debt, entertainment, and the quixotic quest for medical immortality.

It is as if our perception (gaze) itself, in allowing for the attributes of the thing, orients us in a relationship of possession with and by the thing. Therefore, we may say that the object’s property of being our possession is entirely *subjective*. Its other properties, variously interpreted by our senses and instruments, is entirely *objective* as they are brought to us *by* the object—even if we are the ones who have created this thing in the form of an idea.

So much for the effect of narcissism on the objectivity of the possession. But what of the effect on the *subjectivity* of the possessor? What psychological and ontological changes may we associate with the act of possession?

First, we must consider the likely possibility that in a society with the institutionalized concept of “possession” it is possible to possess and be possessed simultaneously. In the wild, so to speak, we are more likely to find one who possesses and is possessed than one who is the exclusively the former or the latter. It is easy enough to say that this is made possible by the *gaze* of our perception, which is entirely subjective unless we apply various instruments and methodologies to counteract this natural orientation.

Nowhere do we find the requirement that to possess we need to be free, or, on the contrary, do we find it necessary to possess *if* we are indeed free. In fact, there is a vast literature (largely Hindu and Buddhist but also Christian and Marxian) indicating that *to be free we must not possess*. Perhaps the most famous of the Bible commentary on this matter is Matthew 6:19: “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal . . .” The New Testament abounds with similar sentiments.

The fact, however, remains that when we possess a person, place, thing, and now even an idea (for example a trademark, copyright, or patent) then we must jealously guard against being *dispossessed* of this possession in one form or another. Meantime, it is exactly dispossession that is necessary for the Second Negation (SE), or the recovery of our sovereignty, so that we may move from *being possessed* by our possessions to *possessing ourselves*. But the SE is so remote a possibility in society because it is 1) anathema to the principle of the subordination of the self to “the greater good” in the utilitarian sense, and 2) it is regarded as the greatest “sin” against the ad hoc social contract of consumerism which demands that we crave to possess *something other than ourselves*.

Since we are busy exploiting our possessions and blindly acquiring *more* (because the formula is *more = good, less = bad*), we must turn the responsibility for guarding our possessions over to a *trusted third party* (TTP). Thus, the hegemony of government (TTP) is born based on what it likes to call the “rule of law,” or the *nomos*. Naturally, this is with the proviso that it will create and enforce the law if and only if it is exempt from it at will and as expediency requires in the state of exception.

Whether or not we ourselves are possessed in the same way by government in so doing we do not like to consider. In addition, we prefer to ignore the consequences possession has for our degrees of freedom to move about, employ our attention, and interact with others. As Thoreau quips in *Walden*, the average agricultural householder of his day was enslaved by his land, buildings, and chattel, grossly limiting his degrees of freedom.

How many a poor immortal soul have I met well nigh *crushed and smothered* under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty, its Augean stables never cleansed, and one hundred acres of land, tillage, mowing, pasture, and wood-lot! The *portionless*, who struggle with no such unnecessary inherited encumbrances,

find it labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh [italics added].<sup>7</sup>

The “portionless” are the dispossessed of the Second Negation. Those “crushed and smothered” by their possessions are the possessed, who are “possessed by their possessions” as we have been saying here all along. In Thoreau’s day (the 19<sup>th</sup> Century) it was not as easy for the “portionless” to get a portion of what they saw others with by simply *borrowing* the money to buy it at interest. Although loans were, even then, an important part of society, and although lenders did charge interest, debt was not the absolute basis of the ethical aesthetic of all of society as it is in the more permissive and imaginative time of today.

Generally speaking, we are utterly incognizant of the pernicious effect on “the future” of our borrowing to *nominally possess* now and *actually possess* later, if ever. As interest (usury) eats up much of what we might be paying toward the day when we actually possess that which we are enjoying now but do not legally possess, the chance that we will ever reach this Shangri-La of freedom from debt and full (legal) possession grows less and less probable as time passes between the incipience of the debt and its satisfaction. This is particularly notable in wild vicissitudes of today’s financial marketplace caused, in part, by the fact that so much of it is based on usury and notional value which is inherently unstable.

If we think of the reality of this situation at all, it is with a sense that the bearing of the discontents of debt is worth the trade-off for the benefits we reap in the present, such enjoyment of the goods we otherwise would not be able to enjoy, or “in the future” in the form of the profits from a leveraged marginal investment. Therefore, however we come to be possessed by what we possess, the outcome is the same: an *exchange* of our sovereignty for the nominal possession of what our ego craves in its grandiose project of self-indulgence and a reckless bid for medical immortality.

Whether or not this is a *fair* exchange is hard to judge, since risks and sacrifices are made on both ends of the bargain. Even if it is *not* fair, though, we are so enticed by the fantasy of having something for nothing that we will jump at the chance to throw away our only real possession—sovereignty—for the putative delights of a nominal, notional, and imaginary universe of discourse, such as it is.

The modern civilization of simulacra and invalid synthetic statements is born from such an infantile impulse, even if that civilization is predicated

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<sup>7</sup> Thoreau, Henry David. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers; Walden, or, Life in the Woods; The Maine Woods; Cape Cod*, Robert F. Sayre, ed. (1985). Library of America edition, Literary Classics of America.

upon ideas of collective ownership, “the greatest good,” and other sophisticated rhetoric. In the collective state, variously named, the sense of personal paranoia is simply relocated from the subject’s immediate area to the borders of its national territory as well as the limits of its abstract ideological topology.

In many ways this paranoia is *worse* than that of the solitary citizen since it is aggregated, concentrated, and therefore multiplied to the point where the state pours so much of the subject’s resources into defense against ideological threats that there is little left for anything else. Instead of the solitary adventure of paying off one’s debts, one is burdened with “building a strong and powerful socialist country” that never quite materializes, and then protecting it from “foreigners.” The forms of manipulated global capitalism prevalent today fall into the same trap but in a different guise, and with their own brand of rhetorical camouflage.

Inevitably, even if one eschews the *haram* of *riba* in one’s personal finances, one is inevitably obligated to pay off the “national debt” one’s government gets into on behalf of the subject—whether the subject likes it or not. Naturally, this debt bears interest that consumes a large share of the taxes the subject pays at the point of a bayonet. For the devout Christian, but especially the Muslim with faith in God, this is the equivalent of being *forced* into a sin, a *haram*, which is a horrible injustice and the epitome of dishonor and servitude.

The state’s complete indifference to these values belies its agenda which, though it varies and is difficult to characterize, is nevertheless revealed as being something other than even the humble goal of “the greatest good of the greatest number.”

Generally speaking, in a debt economy, through the various processes of the exchange of value and so on, we come to possess something as our “property,” ignoring the fact that we are making monthly payments for access to only the *nominal* “possession” of it, which can be taken away at the slightest provocation as described in the promissory note we have signed. Therefore, it is more accurately described as a *simulation* of possession, and the foundation of simulacra class *b*.

The subtleties and technicalities of this form of possession in modern times are well described by the law and common use, if not also by the proponents and opponents of associated ideologies and financial practices. Nevertheless, it is hard to understand why we enter so willingly into these deals where we are, ultimately, at an obvious disadvantage and are exposed to considerable risk.

Let it suffice to say that when we buy something outright or the materials to make it and then put in the labor to do so, without the intervention of

debt, the legal agreement is that it is “ours.” At the same time, the signification of the word “possession” is accurate, analytically, *and* empirically. We truly *possess* this thing.

That we are so willing to enter into the simulation of possession, considering the complications arising from debt, leasing, and public and private shared “ownership,” shows that the simple-minded conception we like to entertain about this matter must be, at best, some kind of psychological Notion shielding us from the Horrible Truth. *Therefore, possession as simulation is at the core of the psycholinguistics of the invalid synthetic proposition and the abdication of the sovereign self.*

Further complicating the matter are theories contrary to the idea of “private property” such as collective ownership which, for a century at least, have dominated nearly half the globe’s statecraft and economy and therefore have to be considered in a discussion such as this one about our sovereignty. We find, though, that these paradigms simply shift the locus of the simulation of possession from the individual to the national identity (NID), while enslaving the subject through a social contract rather than a promissory note.

How one can be possessed as a thing by another is of interest as well. That a person can be bought and sold, modified, exploited, used, abused, and disposed of just like anything else is commonplace in practice, though the rhetoric of the modern state likes to rail against it and even go to war to “change it.” A person in this situation we like to call a “slave.” As such, they always exist in unenlightened “dictatorships,” “rogue states,” and places where the “human rights” *everyone* in our own state enjoys are not in play.

Since we somehow do not know any of these people, imagination conjures up the popular, comic-book conception of this condition as (almost always) people of a different (inferior) race from our own laboring under state and corporate overseers who have no connection in the global marketplace to our wants, desires, and needs.

Despite dumping what seems like enormous amounts of treasure, bombs, troops, sanctions, and NGO “aid” on these places, things only seem to get worse. Even when we are reminded of our culpability in these regimes by the provenance of our worldly goods, natural resources, and geopolitical objectives, we shrug it off as “not our fault” after all. We further console ourselves and assuage our guilt by predicting great technological changes “in the future” that will alleviate our dependence upon these far-away slaves.

We turn to Science’s hype about “artificial intelligence” (AI) for salvation, hoping that it will soon produce a race of “smart” robots that will



free us from any humanitarian concerns that were tainting our otherwise paradisiacal experience of Empire. These machines, we are told, will free us from dependence upon slaves abroad, while at the same time liberating *those* people from their servitude in a brave new world where, to use Richard Brautigan's phrase, we are "all watched over by machines of loving grace." It seems only to be the natural extension of the Progress we have already experienced in the advent of the household machine, the digital gadget, and the service economy—even if the "poor people" abroad do not even have electricity.

It is not uncommon, though, that the poor are also found in modern industrial societies performing these duties as servants even with the ubiquity of automation. It is still unclear, looking back on history and subjecting it to true analytical scrutiny, to what degree a person has been treated as a "thing" owned by another. The terms change, the social roles vary, and the values and ethical aesthetics of the ancient cultures are sometimes opaque to us today. What would have been a "slave" in ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, China, or Rome 3,000 years ago might just be considered a laborer or office worker today, bound by debt and ruled by powers far greater than he can even imagine.

But it is less clear, as such things always are in their own milieu and time, to what degree the "free" citizen of the modern state *is a possession* of that state. This is also true of the role in one's freedom of powerful financial institutions such as banks financing the worker's every whim by lending him his own future labor on the premise that his earning power will be as good or even greater "in the future" as it is now and that the value of the money he earns today will remain stable until such time that he may free himself from his obligation—with no guarantee that such a time will ever come.

Putting aside the niceties of what it means to be a slave in the modern era, we might inquire as to the changes that come over (or overcome) those who are possessed as *things*. One obvious element is the apparent *helplessness* and *ennui* they express about their condition. It is not clear whether these emotions manifest as conscious extensions of the idea of slavery, or are just the ambient "modern condition" of what Auden called the Age of Anxiety (which seems to have extended from the end of World War II to today). Either way, these feelings are *impotent* without translation into action, which the subject is loath to take lest it jeopardize its access to consumerism, debt, and immortality.

No matter what the brainpower or brawn-power of the slave, though, often his condition is characterized by extreme passivity (helplessness and *ennui*) toward his many masters. The apparent *sang-froid* with which the

subject seems to accept its fate is misleading and disarming, in the literal sense. How could things be this bad, we say, if no one is complaining and the shackles, chains, and bullwhips that are supposed to go along with slavery are not visible? Furthermore, why are citizens of modern states throughout the world either clambering for a chance to be such a slave, or going through the charade of despising it while at the same time doing everything they can to become invested in it?

We like to presume that the threat of state violence enforces this passivity, and hence its helplessness and ennui. However, if we look at the actual role of violence in most modern societies and its quantitative reportage, we see that the preponderance of it comes from the *citizen himself*, perpetrated against other citizens. What the government perpetrates against the citizen, if we exclude that violence which the citizen himself has *demande*d of the government as protection from various threats, is by comparison moderate. Also, if we look at the Underclass which commits most of the violent crime, we see that the violence done to its members by the state only seems to spur this class on to even more violence rather than curtailing it. So what good is it?

Therefore, we must concede that what keeps the citizen of the modern corporate state in line is not the threat of violence *from* the state, but rather the citizen's free desire to knuckle under and obey the edicts, fiats, proclamations, injunctions, prohibitions, and myriad "thou shalt nots" raining down upon him from the official mouthpieces of the *nomos*. He either lacks the imagination or the fortitude to question what the status quo has promised as the reward for obedience "in the future." Meantime, members of the Underclass spend their life in jail or prison for the violent crimes they commit where they experience not the state's violence toward them but its indifference to their plight.

The subject also gets to enjoy the life of a much richer individual by borrowing from its future to have things that it has not yet earned today, now, with many years to "repay" the debt. Moreover, it chooses the path of least resistance in the hope of getting the reward implicit in the social contract it believes it has signed as part of its association with the NID. This contract includes not only military protection from a hostile world it is convinced is ever ready to separate it from the womb (matrix) of the simulacrum, but also protection from an unruly and ungrateful Underclass of subhuman beings which it must tolerate as part of the rhetoric of democracy it both professes and despises.

If it cannot get the totalitarian government it craves, the subject will settle for debt-slavery. Once this matter is settled, it will seek two alternatives to the "dictatorship" it publicly reviles and privately longs for:

1) the state that wears the stern mask of the patriarchal authoritarian, or 2) the more “nurturing” one of the matriarchal egalitarian who wants only the best for her children—whether they like it or not (popularly known as the “nanny state”).

Then there is the problem of the slave’s *psychology*, particularly if he is born into such a situation. It allows for his existential predicament to be regarded not only as “normal,” but “the way it *should* be” (i.e. the status quo). As “normal” can be statistically, clinically, and even “scientifically” defined, the subject has the utmost confidence in the verisimilitude of this definition as the god of the Gaussian bell curve.

Moreover, like anyone else he has the desire for a happy, pleasant life of enjoyment uninterrupted by terrorists and gangsters. Therefore, he will do *anything* to protect his social status, fearing freedom as a form of criminality, provided he is given a name (worker, taxpayer, voter) that eschews the stereotype of the shirtless slave of the Old South with the raised scars of the cat-o-nine tails displayed across his back.

According to the discourse of patriotism, preserving what is “normal” and “the way it should be” is every citizen’s *duty*, regardless of his feelings about government and what his status may be in the hierarchy of that society. The problem is that the status quo is not always what everyone thinks it should be. Moreover, whatever the citizen’s expectations—be he free man or slave—there is no telling what a government will do once it is in power and how far it will go to *keep* that power.

The cornerstone of democracy, says Churchill, is what he calls the “plain, humble, common man, just the ordinary man” who “marks his ballot paper in strict secrecy, and then elected representatives meet and together decide what government, or even in times of stress, what *form* of government they wish to have in their country [*italics added*].”<sup>8</sup> Churchill’s statement raises the question of whether this humble peasant knew that what he was doing by voting was authorizing his representatives, the Big Men, to “decide ... what *form* of government” he will be subject to. What if that “form” of government is *not* democracy?

Does this mean, then, that the government coming to power as a result of suffrage could be a toss-up between the totalitarian, authoritarian, and egalitarian models based on what the Big Men decide is in the best interest of the “plain, humble, common man.”? Sadly, the history of the modern state since 1944 when Churchill made this speech seems to point, statistically, to this casino-like gamble on the part of the voter where the voting booth is more like a slot machine in a house of chance. Whether the resulting government is the elected representative sort or a “people’s

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<sup>8</sup> House of Commons, 8 December 1944.

republic” where leaders believe they *intuit* the public will without the ritual of general elections, *the first priority of every government is self-preservation at any cost.*

In either case, ultimately it is the *state’s will* that shall be done, by fiat, proclamation, decree, or, if necessary, by *force* in the name of “the greatest good.” Despite the “plain, humble, common” man’s grumbling when things do not go his way in these hegemonic crapshoots, his alternating fear of homeostasis and metastasis keeps him marching steady down a predestined path of voluntary servitude. It is in fact the uncontrolled metastasis of his lust for progress that fuels his longing for the homeostasis of a preordained, quotidian existence.

Such a contradiction, embodied in his steady diet of invalid synthetic propositions (ISP’s), is expressed in the idea that war is the path to peace. The “plain, humble, common” man’s choice of timidity over temerity all but guarantees that along the way he will shed his freedoms while acquiring greater access to the consumer goods and debt he believes the Big Men, like Churchill, have as their divine birthright.

Then there is the matter of making the “ultimate sacrifice” to preserve hegemonic homeostasis in the form of dying for one’s country—as if to die in battle were nobler and more beneficial to the state than living to fight another day. Could it be that this idealized voting peasant, at the drop of a silk top hat, abandons his “wife and family” and marches off to die on foreign sand to preserve that which has just been taken away from him? As a historian of some renown, Churchill had every right to believe his description of the “plain, humble, common” man to be accurate, supported by centuries of warfare, statecraft, and privilege.

In fact, history is replete with tales of slave armies fighting to preserve the regime that kept them enslaved. Is anything different today? (“Wars and the administration of public affairs are the principal subjects of history” says Gibbon.<sup>9</sup>) It is difficult to argue that these soldier-slaves did so out of fear of being punished, considering that they likely knew full well that they would not survive their military adventure. Why prolong the agony, then? Why not simply refuse to fight and at least die execution style rather than bleeding to death on the battlefield?

The natural tendency at this point in the discussion is to begin thinking of the subject as the “victim” of forces far greater than itself. But is this so? Sir Winston thinks not, as evidenced by his words in the same speech where he states that the citizen “should [vote] without fear, and without any form of intimidation or victimisation ...” There is much circumstantial evidence to conclude that the subject *volunteers* its sovereignty through abdication to

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<sup>9</sup> Gibbon, *op. cit.*, 197.

become a possession of the state so that it may maintain its access to debt and consumer goods which it might otherwise find difficult to procure without an ideological boost from the state.

If anything, the subject in this case is its own victim just as it used to be considered that the suicide “murdered” himself. Victim or not, the cartel of the state’s corporate overlords sees *no value* in a subject that has been *forced* into servitude. Its model of indenture is based on *debt-consumerism*, which requires for its successful operation at least the vicarious and virtual (or synthetic) satisfaction of the deepest desires of the subject’s *id*. It is a ploy carried out through language and psychology, not guns and the noose—if it can be helped.

In the process, the political economy must also somehow fulfil the subject’s infantile wish to exist in a magical universe where *anything* is possible, and death is only for *others*. The hegemony is willing to go through the motions of trying to make this happen, only because it wants the subject to grease the way for satisfaction of its own need to abide in a permanent state of exception. But to do so requires the collaboration of the mass media as well as the public education system to convince the subject that this is that path that is right and good in some honorable way lying at the core of the culture’s ethical aesthetic.

It is not possible to cultivate such profound and useful emotions in one who is *forced* to do something, since fear is the most powerful of emotions and will soon overwhelm the subtler ones needed to keep the terrified subject from driving off future prospects. The subject harkens to the siren call of its masters through the media channels, news outlets, and entertainment it cannot live (contentedly) without.

Once upon a time the media served up what they *hoped* the public audience wanted, whether the public wanted it or not; now, the public has the unprecedented power (made possible by digital technology) to *seek out* exactly what it desires—no matter how trivial, exotic, or transgressive—in the festering dunghill of the Internet. Therefore, the media’s content becomes not a reflection of its prerogatives, but of the subject’s *id* and its lack of anticathexis toward that which, ultimately, compromises its sovereignty.

Most of all, though, the subject seeks out *just the right public discourse* that will help convince it that abdication was the best choice, and that everything “will be OK” in the end. In *Propaganda*, Edward L. Bernays trumpets the ethical aesthetic of public discourse pervading modern culture in his day. In this passage, he refers to the way information about candidates and political issues is propagated to voters during election cycles. As he makes clear, what is most important is that the public *volunteers* agreement

so that public opinion may then be “engineered” by the Big Men who, behind the scenes, mirror and mold this opinion because they know what is best for Churchill’s “plain, humble, common” man:

We have voluntarily agreed to let an invisible government sift the data and high-spot the outstanding issues so that our field of choice shall be narrowed to practical proportions. From our leaders and the media they use to reach the public, we accept the evidence and the demarcation of issues bearing upon public questions; from some ethical teacher, be it a minister, a favorite essayist, or merely prevailing opinion, *we accept a standardized code of social conduct to which we conform most of the time* [italics added].<sup>10</sup>

Written in 1928 as an encomium of a New Age of social acquiescence and agreement made possible by improvements in mass media technology and central banking, these words describe what was in Bernays’ day only the incipience of the rising phenomenon of mass psychological “conformity.” Today that core has enlarged to the periphery of the topology of the rhetorical surface of *all* public discourse, embracing the pro *and* con of whatever issue is in contention. It permeates *all* utterances—even those refuting, contradicting, and rebutting whatever the prevailing discourse might be.

As this discourse is without exception based on ISP’s and therefore contradiction, it reverses itself from time to time like a flag in the wind. Far from being a disadvantage, though, this prevarication only serves to keep the subject guessing and alert, waiting for the next cue from the Big Men as to what it should say and how it should think and act.

Without the slightest trace of self-conscious irony, those who believe they are “fighting” the spread of the hegemonic discourse choose to host their screeds on platforms *owned* by the corporations which create, maintain, and protect it. When their discourse is challenged by those agencies which have been providing them with what is often enough free access to potentially millions of viewers, they cry that it is a violation of their “right” to “free speech,” as if they were the one who owned the servers, paid the electric bills, and obtained the business licenses of the corporations providing them with the bully pulpit. In so doing they make the same categorical error as Fitzgerald when he stated to Hemingway that the “very rich” are “different from you and me.”

It is easy to track the currently ubiquitous meme in the discourse of all of these DIY (do-it-yourself) media channels on the Internet of the vocal filler “y’know?” to cover cognitive latency in speech. We may take this as

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<sup>10</sup> Edward L. Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Horace Liveright, 1928), 11.

a collateral and insignificant but indicative *marker* of what Bernays calls the “conformity” of “a standardized code of social conduct ...” Asking, perhaps hundreds of times in a discussion, if “you know?” is also to engage in an aggressive form of *mutual verification* that both parties are upholding whatever the orthodox discourse happens to be. It is a symptom of how tenacious and pervasive the logic of the ISP really is throughout the mainstream and alternatives channels of a society addicted to the chatter of digital media, whether this chatter supports the hegemonic discourse or attacks it.

Consequently, there is only the most superficial distinction between the “mainstream” and the “alternative,” the boosters and the knockers, the pros and the cons, the right and the left, the liberals and the conservatives, the communists and the capitalists, the fascists and the antifas, and the radicals and the conformists. They are, with rare and few exceptions, the witting and unwitting purveyors of the prevailing Discourse of the abdication of the sovereign self.

They *all* must ingratiate themselves with the privately-owned Apparatus of digital media infrastructure if they want to be heard by anyone besides their friends and family. Even after this abasement to the Apparatus they despise, they often end up preaching to the choir. These obligations and outcomes reduce them all to cool customers of the apparatus rather than the wild-eyed, bomb-tossing radicals they imagine themselves to be in the world of simulacra class *b* they have embraced as realia class *a*.

They seem unconscious of the fact that this apparatus is privately owned or publicly traded by the corporations they feel the need to excoriate. They tend to regard the Internet, which exists only because of the investment these corporations have made in its vast infrastructure, to be like the electromagnetic waves of the atmosphere which, ultimately, belong to everyone and no one in particular and require only the merest of electronic tinkering to exploit.

The earth’s electromagnetic field (which is indeed also used by the Internet) would exist with or without mankind and technology, whereas the Internet would not, though it is subject to the same physical laws of electrodynamics. Furthermore, they fail to note that despite the “likes” they get and the clicks that might even bring them revenue from corporations owned by the Big Men, no law or constitution guarantees “free speech” on what is, ultimately, private property.

Using their free or nominally priced accounts, they complain through those same outlets (or similar ones) about being censored on private digital property belonging to these corporations and their shareholders. Meantime, even the governments they complain to (or about) are, in the balance of

economic power, obligated to the wants and needs of these corporations and their investors first, rather than anyone who happens start an account as a customer. Finally, they all have to make a living. Therefore, they are often ready to make whatever compromise is necessary for them to fight the revolution from the comfort and convenience of their computer keyboard (like some authors) rather than risk their lives and property in a righteous street battle.

Worst of all, these media accounts are subsidized (as stated in the implicit EULA) by the gathering and selling of personal data (and metadata) about the individuals who frequent the protest platforms. The security apparatus of the state and its transnational corporate overlords benefits from the intelligence gathered from the subject's lack of discernment and discretion about what platforms it uses to get out its message of rebellion. Furthermore, the disgruntled subject's inability to "prefer not to" indulge in these cheap platforms as pulpits for its complaints about the local and global hegemony make it a sitting duck for surveillance and the power to pull the plug when the discourse gets too accurate and pointed, or perhaps even violent (when indeed violence may be called for).

There is, though, a deeper and more virulent class of dissenters who do indeed "prefer not to." So-called cyber- and cypher-punks, working unseen on what might be called the back end of the Internet's infrastructure, hold the most promise for the disengagement of the prevailing hegemonic discourse. Not much can be said about them, however, as they "prefer not to" be in the glaring light of popular DIY media channels.

The state hegemony and its corporate overlords know better than anything else that those who would expose their misdeeds and challenge their policies often do so by showing their hand to every player at the poker table well before it is time to fold. The hegemony's blasé regard (with some notable exceptions) for the noise of protest overheating their servers is testimony to the degree to which their agenda is well on track and is approaching its target—whatever that may be. The discourse of these protest channels that are by default sanctioned and permitted by the hegemony (in most countries under the guise of "free speech") tends to be a *mélange* of shocking fact mixed with paranoid conspiracy.

Any signs of real disorder, such as street protests and even systematic violence and "terrorism," only serve the hegemony's purpose to an extent it could not have properly and more successfully organized on its own. As such crises generally happen spontaneously, the hegemony does not even need to stage them with false-flag events, covert agitprop, and psyops. It is the abdicated subject itself, the serf, the slave, that sets fire to its own assets, attacks and murders its own kind, and gives the hegemony yet another



excuse to curtail its freedoms—all with the people’s “voluntary agreement” to let the “invisible government” clean up the mess and make sure it does not happen again, even though everyone knows that it will no matter what course of action is taken.

The hegemony’s only concern, then, is that this activity *does not impede the subject’s access to debt-consumerism*, for it is this energy source upon which, at least for now, its derivatives gambling and other forms of “wealth creation” feed. Without this kleptocratic apparatus the digital network of the global hegemony would find itself powerless overnight. What would be most radical on the part of the subject would be to invoke the Second Negation and “prefer not to” support the simulacrum of debt consumerism and the narcissistic pursuit of medical immortality. Few, however, are prepared for this lifestyle and the risks, discomforts, and inconveniences it entails. Moreover, he who *dares* tamper with this notional, imaginary source of wealth *shall be smashed*, regardless if he is a head of state, a popular reformer, or an upstart hacker with an axe to grind.

Wealth generated by the consumer’s acquiescence to the discourse of the corporate state is needed to buy up the assets the subject surrenders when it can no longer live up to the terms of its promissory notes that it signed in full knowledge of such consequences and without a thought for the reality of time and space. The *a priori* so critical to the working of the valid synthetic proposition (VSP) and any form of *verifiable verifiability* (or *apophantic* discourse) is anathema to the magical wishful thinking of the infantile, narcissistic mind of the abdicated subject. Therefore, what is regarded as the subject’s faculty of reason is in fact an asset to the hegemony’s campaign to overwhelm the subject’s cognition, through language, with the contradictions and prevarications of its sinister logic.

As such, the subject must be permitted to freely engage with the apparatus that harvests its psychological, emotional, physical, and even spiritual energy for the purpose of diverting it away from its friends, family, and social group into “one vast and ecumenical holding company, for whom all men ... work to serve a common profit, in which all men ... hold a share of stock” as Jensen “evangels” to Beale in the film *Network*. The hegemony accomplishes this in a practical way through the digital telemetry that funnels even the subject’s heart rate and physical movement to a great pool of Big Data that can be used by the Big Men to create a *consumer profile*—a kind of “copy” of the subject—in order to dig the subject even deeper into the morass of its abdication and farther away from any possibility of the Second Negation.

Such an ambitious project would not be possible without Democracy coming to the cartel’s aid to create the illusion of unfettered “choice” which

is the hegemony's and the subject's highest ethical aesthetic. The state, despite the hearty collaboration of the media, education, banking, and even religion, would be obliged to squander even more of the resources otherwise destined for redistribution to its corporate global clients if it were obliged to forcibly police a reluctant citizenry into borrowing money to buy its wares and support its political agenda. It is under strict orders from its corporate overlords to cynically discover the cheapest, easiest, and above all most effective way to entice the unruly citizen into abdication.

By using the simple-minded soporific of representational government in its various bifurcated forms where the voter has a choice between A(B) and B(A), the modern hegemony accomplishes in a fraction of a lifetime what took generations for the tyrants of ancient Rome. Those whose faith in the system is not shaken by its perpetual failures console themselves with the notion that it has been hijacked by what they see as the bad guys. They think that it is "only a matter of time" before things are set right again "in the future" when the good guys can be ushered in to reform what amounts to a reform of a reform of a reform.

It is precisely the idea that the subject is a victim not only of the hegemony but also its corporate overlords that keeps the subject in a state of permanent abdication. Having relinquished all responsibility for its actions, its victimology is inevitable. Its sense of paranoid oppression, a relic of its maladaptation to the Other during the formative period of its object constancy, alternately prevents it from experiencing, freely, the ecstasy of *jouissance* while also forcing it into forbidden channels of transgression where it will inevitably get into trouble with the *nomos* and the hegemony's defensive heuristics, particularly with the subject's almost unrestricted access to the Internet.

Its desperate bid for escape from the oubliette of its own narcissism propels the subject into seizures of compulsive (rather than free) *jouissance* that are maladapted, antisocial, and sometimes deadly (such as in the case of mass murderers and serial killers). Society is always left scratching its head after one of the more public episodes of violent chaos fueled by a "loner's" overture of ecstatic, though violent, *jouissance*. In a tour de force of panic and ignorance, society then enacts another blizzard of laws designed to "prevent" such anomalies "in the future," not understanding that pages in lawbooks do not stop the thwarted *id* from getting its way.

The role of the subject in the perpetration of violence highlights the fact that despite having abdicated, it nevertheless retains much more power than its compatriots typically suppose. With the exception of prison, the subject is more or less free to murder as many as it can lay its hands on. The *jouissance* of the serial killer or mass murderer is an expression of the

moment when he wakes up to the fact that his social impotence *is an illusion* endowed into the nuclei of his brain cells by the discourse of the hegemony from the earliest days of his psychological development. This epiphany's resulting sense of freedom is ecstatic.

What methodology he uses to perpetrate the ensuing orgy of bloodlust is irrelevant. If he is of the more sociable type, he might even be able to negotiate a position of controlling the mass killing machines of the military into which the state pours the treasure of the citizen's peacetime labor. Moreover, society is blind to its institutional role in the fomenting of violence within the walls of its own medieval fiefdoms, from the workplace shot-up by a "disgruntled employee" to office buildings blown up by "terrorists." What society thought it had shut out with reams of statutes and armies of cops turns out to be that which at any moment can erupt behind the doors of its own schools, hospitals, churches, and homes, even on a *good* day.

The freedom and ferocity of this behavior gives some credence to the idea that the subject's abdication is a psycholinguistic matter that is ultimately translated into action. This is not to say that it is "all in the head" of the perpetrator. Rather, it is in *everyone's* head, all the time, in a nimbus of explosive gas just waiting for the spark of ignition. Such volatility is the result of the enormous pressure created by the power of the simulacrum to enforce a mass illusion that is *more real* than reality itself even though it is based solely on the "synthetic reality" of the imaginary and symbolic.

Critical to the power of this existential possibility is the subject's willing, voluntary, free, desired, longed-for, cherished, and entirely conscious choice to *surrender all responsibility for its behavior and self-determination* to the hegemony and its commercial and financial apparatuses. Having thus surrendered, thinks the sociopath, there is no need to give up to the police, too.

A scene in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* provides a chilling narrative regarding the willing abdication of sovereignty. In this scene law clerk Jonathan Harker is greeted by Count Dracula at the threshold of Dracula's castle far away in Eastern Europe. It is clear that without Harker's voluntary acquiescence to the Count's will, he is of no use to Dracula's plans to invade London. But it is equally clear that Dracula, despite his immortal powers, can do nothing to influence the clerk unless Harker makes the first move of the abdication of his self-determination.

"Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own free will!" He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. *The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold*, he moved impulsively forward, and holding

out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed cold as ice, more like the hand of a dead than a living man. Again he said, "Welcome to my house! Enter freely. Go safely, and leave something of the happiness you bring! [italics added]"<sup>11</sup>

Has Harker been tricked, bamboozled, hoodwinked, captured, forced, coerced, or enslaved by Dracula? Quite the contrary. The instant he steps over the threshold ( $0 / 1$ ), his further and future acquiescence to the Count's will is ensured ( $1 / n$ ). Similarly, to counter that the subject has been "tricked" into it, or that smarter people should have patronizingly "saved" it from its bad decisions made through ignorance, opens up a swamp of ISP's it is not the purpose of this analysis to drain.

Therefore, it is an ISP to suppose that we are "enslaved" by the modern state when in fact we *are* the modern state. Furthermore, to claim that the bourgeoisie, aristocracy, landlords, banks, corporations, and other social bogeymen have wrestled us into financial straightjackets is simply an attempt to find a scapegoat for the unconscious anxiety inevitably resulting from betraying oneself through abdication.

The enormous financial success of some Marxian states in the 21st Century and the wholesale failure of others protesting to be "capitalist" stand as negative arguments testifying to the truth of the assertion that it is the *subject* that chooses its own path of abdication and slavery, regardless of what economic system its labors under. The fact that the subject is otherwise worthless to the cartel of the hegemony's corporate overlords as an apex consumer is justification enough, whether a government professes an economy of communism or capitalism.

The problem is that the proposition that the individual has had its sovereignty either forcibly stolen or has been tricked into parting with it violates the law of noncontradiction. The subject of the proposition, that the individual *exists* (the cogito "I am"), belongs to realia class *a*, through the action of the copula "to be." It points toward Dasein without assigning any attributes to it of what Kant calls time and space (as  $T \wedge S$  rather than the psychological values of  $t \wedge s$ ) and the resulting *manifold*. The individual's existence is verifiable, whereas its *nonbeing* cannot be verified. Therefore, it *is*.

Furthermore, any element of the subclass "individuals" in class *a* must *be in possession of* the attribute of sovereignty to be an "individual." If not, then it must belong to another verifiable class, most likely the class of "the masses" but possibly also a class of imaginary individuals (presumably

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<sup>11</sup> 1897 ed., 15.

Straw Men, but also the villains and heroes of the mythology of “freedom”), which, though imaginary, does not preclude them from being verified as imaginary.

If the predicate is to remain in the same category (realia class *a*), and subclass (*individual*), then the attribute of sovereignty must be equally attributable and distributable to whatever it is that the predicate asserts, otherwise the predicate is in a contradictory category, invalidating the proposition.

However, as it is a synthetic proposition (since we cannot “prove” sovereignty), all that is necessary for the statement to be valid is noncontradiction. Verification of the predicate is not necessary. Therefore, to say that “the hegemony” has forcibly taken the individual’s sovereignty, either by hook or crook, belongs to simulacra class *b* just as much as saying that the abdicated subject is “free” in the sense that it can still choose *not* to abdicate once it has abdicated. As the subject reserves the right to *negate* the *negation* of his sovereignty through the Second Negation, though, it is therefore not possible that its sovereignty has been *taken* from it provided it has not crossed the critical threshold of the categorical exclusion into slavery or imprisonment.

If the subject finds that what amounts to any self-determination at all has been excluded from the realm of possibility, as it might be in indefinite imprisonment in solitary confinement, then we can say that the subject has crossed a threshold where the possibility of negating the negation of his sovereignty is impossible (0 / 1). While this is certainly the fate of many who have, whether they deserve it or not, found themselves entirely at the mercy of the state, this loss of freedom is verifiable, with attributes universal to all of those to whom this fate has befallen. Therefore, we cannot say of this individual from whom the state has taken all sovereignty through imprisonment that his assertion of this fact is an ISP.

The matter is made clearer when we consider that he may have done something, in full conscious awareness of the consequences, that is considered to be a *universal violation of the natural and sovereign right of any individual*, whatever that right might be. In such a case, then, the individual has *chosen* his incarceration or even execution and has therefore made a *free* choice. We cannot then say that he has been *forced* by the hegemony to abdicate his freedom and sovereignty, which in this case would then also be an ISP.

The attraction of class *b* is that it allows for contradiction in a way that valid synthetic statements and analytic statements do not. Therefore, it allows for the dominance of the imaginary and symbolic over the real, *as* the real. In this paradise of contradiction, it is possible to say war is peace,

freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength and have all three propositions be true (t, not T) by the class's existential ( $\exists$ ) rather than universal ( $\forall$ ) rules. The invalid synthetic proposition allows for substitution of  $\exists$  for  $\forall$ . Just as it insists that  $(A = A) \equiv (A = B)$ , it also insists that  $\exists = \forall$ .

Not having to deal with the messy and demanding rigors of the universal ( $\forall$ ) permits free reign of the imaginary ( $\exists$ ) in places where it was never meant to go, such as in the determination of natural law, the principles of physics, and the theorems of mathematics. But more often we find it in the discourse of social policy, academic priorities, and in the prevailing social discourse of everyday chatter.

Moreover, if it were not so that the subject has *volunteered* to abdicate by an act of free will, then there would be no possibility of the subject *ever* regaining its sovereignty through another act of free will. If there were no possibility of regaining its sovereignty through the Second Negation once the hegemony has captured it, then the proposition that it had done so by its own free will would be false. And if this proposition were false, then why would the hegemony (or Dracula) want what the subject has to offer if its cooperation is coerced? It could instead simply take the subject's sovereignty by force in the form of slavery, but slavery has been proven to be an expensive, bothersome, old fashioned way to get things done. It requires a large security apparatus and produces a race of angry, uppity individuals who learn to hate their masters. Therefore, waiting at the threshold (0 / 1) for the subject to "enter freely and of [its]own free will" is a much better strategy and in line with the modern corporate state's ethical aesthetic of freedom and democracy.

Furthermore, if the individual has no control over the loss of his sovereignty, how then could he have any control over regaining it? While the individual who has freely chosen to be *not free* is no longer free in the sense that he can no longer *choose* not to be free, he is free in the sense that he may negate, through the Second Negation, the negation of his sovereignty. The negation of his sovereignty through abdication is not a negation of the possibility of the exercise of his free will.

In fact, the Second Negation is an exercise of his self-determination, and in that exercise the subject regains his sovereignty—provided he has not crossed the threshold of a categorical exclusion such as finding himself in prison in which case effective self-determination has been irretrievably swapped for the determination of his fate by others. It is in this way, too, that children can be seen as lacking in self-determination.

Without the possibility of the Second Negation, or the negation of negation, there is no possibility of freedom of any class. Moreover, if there were *only* negation, then the universe would cease to exist as such. Surely

holding onto sovereignty when one has it is *easier* than getting it back once one has lost it! If this is true with love, money, health, reputation, and youth, surely it is true of self-determination.

How could one ever suppose that self-determination, one's only real possession in life, is easy to get back once it has fled to who knows where? In Hamlet's case, he is only able to achieve it through the sacrifice of his own life. And yet it is a commonplace of most discussions, arguments, statements, and propositions about the matters of freedom, sovereignty, and slavery that all that is necessary to establish freedom forever is to elect the right candidate "next time."

An invalid outcome is therefore absolutely determined by this logic, whether one argues from the point of view of those who decry what looks like to them the hegemony's rape of sovereignty, or from the point of view of the "smartest guys in the room" who believe, as Bernays did, that for civilization to function "smoothly" (as he puts it), a ruling elite of clever propagandizers must dominate all social, political, financial, and cultural discourse.

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country. We are governed, our minds are molded, our tastes formed, our ideas suggested, largely by men we have never heard of. This is a logical result of the way in which our democratic society is organized. Vast numbers of human beings must cooperate [sic] in this manner if they are to live together as a smoothly functioning society.<sup>12</sup>

Hamlet's meditation on suicide, perhaps, gives us a better idea of what motivation possesses the subject in its dithering over the abdication of its only true possession of self-determination. The voluntary act of suicide and abdication have much in common as equal and opposite acts of category. The difference is that the former asserts one's sovereignty and self-determination while the latter surrenders it. Their morphology, or *structural schema*, however, are mimetically the same. Consequently, Hamlet finds that thinking about death leads him to think about sovereignty and vice versa.

For in that sleep of death what dreams may come  
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,  
Must give us pause. There's the respect

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<sup>12</sup> Bernays, op. cit., 9.

That makes Calamity of so long life:  
 For who would bear the Whips and Scorns of time,  
 the Oppressor's wrong, the proud man's Contumely,  
 the pangs of despised Love, the Law's delay,  
 the insolence of Office, and the spurns  
 that patient merit of the unworthy takes,  
 when he himself might his Quietus make  
 with a bare Bodkin?

Making one's "Quietus," or suicide, says Hamlet, is an existential degree of freedom representative of the sovereignty we are naturally born with. While we do not choose to be brought into the world, we reserve the right to usher ourselves out of it. Still, even this degree of freedom is negated by the thought of "what dreams may come" after death, since, as Prospero notes elsewhere, "our little life is rounded with a sleep." While we seem to be indifferent to death, particularly the death of others, we are quite particular about our *dreams*. It was not the threat of nonbeing that frightened the historical Christian into behaving himself; it was the threat of going to Hell. Therefore, what motivates our bid for medical immortality is fear not of nonbeing, which many of us often long for, but of entering the *terra incognita* of death where we will lose access to the lucid dream of simulacra class *b* with its unrestricted access to consumer goods.

Hamlet's meditation, despite its immediate importance to his dramatic situation, is ultimately a political argument. After all, what has caused his troubles in the first place is the death of his father the King, the *sovereign*, who was secretly murdered in what appears to the us on the surface as a romantic intrigue but is, in terms of consequence, a palace coup.

The "forced abdication" of Hamlet's father through murder conscripts Hamlet into a battle to regain the sovereignty he is heir to, though his immediate object is not revenge but justice. The words "consummation," "calamity," and "contumely" tell the story. One's "marriage" to death is "consummated" through suicide, which, like marriage, is a voluntary act.

The state figures heavily into Hamlet's list of what makes "long life" a "calamity": the Oppressor's wrong, the Law's delay, and the insolence of Office. Though the brutality of time and love of course figure into everyone's life as antagonists, it is the "proud man's Contumely" that delivers the final, unnatural blow to our will to live.

The Proud Man (the Big Man of the Churchillian universe who makes the decisions the little man is incapable of making for himself) is the *apparatchik* of the state apparatus who, while enjoying its largesse, ensures that the wrongs of institutional delay and insolence are the prevailing ethical aesthetics of government. In particular, he is the one who makes is possible



for civilization to continue its long march toward Empire through its prerogative of *war*. After all, war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength.

The act of contumely clears the way for the Proud Man's establishment of a political and economic kleptocracy based on the exploitation of the citizen who has volunteered to be exploited in exchange for the promises, real and unreal, made to him by the state and its corporate masters. At this point in the narrative we should draw away in horror at the Proud Man's apparent venality. But in doing so would we not be setting up a straw man, or worse, a scapegoat for our own culpability in civilization's imperative of Empire? If it were not for our voluntary abdication of sovereignty, civilization's evil world-domination plan would halt. Are we "forced" into it, then? It is not possible to be *forced* into abdication, unless we count imprisonment and slavery.

But as we have seen, the criminal often *chooses* to commit an act for which he knows he has a significant risk of losing his freedom. (Though we must consider a character such as Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* who steals a loaf of bread to survive after being wrongfully pitched into poverty.) And he does this often enough for access to the same consumer goods and services for which the subject abdicates its own sovereignty.

As for the slave, the situation is particularly heinous since he is in effect imprisoned without having committed a crime. However, there is a long history of nations being enslaved that were simply on the losing end of an effort to enslave those who have subsequently become their masters through victory. Ultimately the subject does not want to be free; *the subject wants the power to enslave*, which is its definition of freedom, even if *to enslave* it must *be* enslaved.

While Hamlet's father the king was murdered and therefore it was not an act of his father's will, and although Hamlet must give up the throne to his father's murderer or make the accusation (as he eventually does), he does not stand idly by and accept the situation. He spends the rest of the drama righting the wrong and regaining his sovereignty, even though it ends in his own death. Again, power is not given; it is *seized*. As Claudius has seized power, Hamlet must also seize power in return to get it back. So too is it with the Second Negation. One must *seize* one's sovereignty back from those who profit from its surrender.

It is necessary first to consider that the Proud Man's systemic exploitation of the masses—who collectively are infinitely stronger than he—would be impossible without the willing, conscious, deliberate, joyful, and even eager *participation of the citizen himself* in his own undoing. Couple this with his unwillingness to take responsibility for his own

freedom and self-determination, and the situation becomes nearly intractable.

If we are to base our analysis of his motives on the record of his behavior over the past five millennia of civilization's empires, we must conclude that his most ardent desire is to live without thought and with the greatest amount of comfort, convenience, and irresponsibility. The citizen's fervent prayer is that very thought, every action, every freedom, every choice shall be predetermined by Those Who Know Better (the Proud Men, the Big Men)—whoever they may be, in a totalitarian utopia where all necessities are provided, all anxieties are tranquilized, and all boredom is amused.

In the end, Hamlet gets what he has earned for his apostasy, while at the same time he is, at last, free from that which he had enumerated as the “contumely” of the Proud Man, Claudius:

HAMLET

O, I die, Horatio;  
 The potent poison quite o'er-crows my spirit:  
 I cannot live to hear the news from England;  
 But I do prophesy the election lights  
 On Fortinbras: he has my dying voice;  
 So tell him, with the occurrents, more and less,  
 Which have solicited. The rest is silence.

*Dies*

Claudius, Hamlet's “uncle-father” as he calls him, is the *picture* of official state corruption, including the murder, sexual scandal, and incest which, since Oedipus Rex, have been characteristics of the archetype behind all forms of misrule and the bread-and-butter of the news media. Hamlet references the news, the “occurrents,” the “election” of Fortinbras, and even mentions the law (in “solicited”). His struggle and his death are the modern struggle, too seldom exercised by the individual in his own life, for the negation of the negation of sovereignty against the chief hegemonic apparatuses of the media (propaganda), government (power), and the *nomos* (law).

Why is his struggle so solitary? As he himself points out, the public is too in love not only with itself, but with the public figures that promise it the glamor and excitement of power, the security of the so-called rule of law, and alternating doses of the stimulants and narcotics, or “potent poison,” of the media.

In Act 2, Scene 2, he refers to his uncle's actual "picture" as an example of how the once despised and corrupt politician, after seizing power through power, becomes the *cause célèbre* of those he exploits:

[M]y uncle is King of Denmark, and those that would make mouths at him while my father lived give twenty, forty, fifty, a hundred ducats apiece for his picture in little. 'Sblood, there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out.

Naturally, something "more than natural" indicates the *unnatural*, an indication which we presume is one function of incest in both *Oedipus Rex* and *Hamlet*. (If Hamlet were referring to the appearance of his father's ghost, then he would be referring to the *supernatural*.) We also must consider that of all of the official, popular abominations of transgression incest is the premier act in the prurient imagination of the scandal-hungry mob.

Therefore, we see that the greater the power and intrigue of the state the greater the pressure for *jouissance* in the form of transgression, in this case the one that is guaranteed to shock audiences from Athens to London. In neither play is incest specifically the issue, though Freud finds the dynamic explicit enough to use both plays as *exempli gratia* of incest as a complex. In both the body politic is corrupt with the patricide of the sovereign; much is made of what is "rotten" in Denmark and cursed in Thebes. And, as Hamlet notes, "there is something in this more than natural, if philosophy could find it out," which of course is our task here.

In literature, therefore, we find that the relative sovereignty of the individual has been a theme woven in and about the vicissitudes of empires, civilizations, dynasties, and kingdoms. We also find that the theme of demonic possession and the influence of the supernatural coincide with these episodes, something Shakespeare exploits not only with the presence of Hamlet's father's ghost, but also the "more than natural" conjurations of the witches in MacBeth. And we know that Shakespeare was not ignorant of his later patron King James I's penchant for witch hunting in an effort to protect himself from what he saw as the political influence of witchcraft. Witches were to King James I what terrorists are to superpowers.

What the Sovereign fears, so too must the people fear. As above, so below. If it were otherwise, then there would be the possibility that the people might *embrace* what the Sovereign fears, and what he fears the most is his own deposition by his people. The people, then, must fear themselves (or "fear itself"). Therefore, the sovereign preempts this possibility by demanding *their* abdication in cascading tiers from one social echelon to another, each with its own appropriate form of abasement and humiliation

in exchange for imperial forbearance and favor to individuals or classes of individuals.

While this pervasive paranoia emanates from the Sovereign and is “personal,” in the collective polity, such as in a “democracy” or a “people’s republic,” it emanates from the body politic and is social. Unlike the monarch, the hegemony formed by the body politic to protect itself from its own deficiencies and flaws is obliged to create incentives for abdication of the sovereign individual. These incentives, East and West, come in the form of unrestricted access to consumerism and debt.

Moreover, as a creature of its transnational corporate overlords, the political hegemony must preserve the citizen’s capacity to perform his role as the apex consumer upon whom the fortunes of these corporate interests depend. The state must guarantee fealty not only to the edicts, fiats, proclamations, and whims that help enrich its minions and apparatchiks, but also that satisfy the rapacious lust for power and money of the hegemony’s Big Men in the light of the mass media and also hiding in its shadows. The primary element of the psychology of apex consumerism is to equate consuming commercial products with patriotism and national security. This works every time. It matters not if the “enemies” of the state are from within or without, witches or terrorists, aliens from space or across the border, as long as *paranoia* can be whipped up about impending threats emanating from *the Other*.

Once this concept has been endued into the nuclei of the subject’s brain cells, it is the *subject itself* that is the fiercest, most ruthless, most bloodthirsty, conniving, and vicious protector of the status quo that oppresses it. Such power to shape its future by eliminating all dissent and opposition is precisely what the subject has wanted all along, though it may complain bitterly about it from time to time when it inadvertently becomes the target of its own campaign, since it has learned to fear itself, too. Its vehemence in seeking out and persecuting apostates who scoff at the contradictions of the simulacrum helps it maintain its homeostasis with the agenda of the corporate overlords who otherwise could care less about its welfare.

If this homespun exorcism of “demonic possession” is performed correctly, the state need not expend much energy to maintain homeostasis vis-à-vis the subject’s compliance with the specifications handed down to it for robust apex consumerism. Those who “prefer not to” must be dealt with in some way. In a commercial democracy, *loathing*, or exclusion from the food source, is the preferred method. For the more rambunctious among them, jail or prison works just as well, though it tends to produce martyrs that only make the hegemony’s job more difficult.

For such an unnatural state of affairs to maintain its ascendancy through the economic and humanitarian horrors of the Business Cycle built into it, the subject must demonstrate the mentality of the slave with the same lethargy, shiftlessness, and surliness born of hopelessness that goes along with being a rat in a vat destined to drown. But in a society where “slavery” (in its comic-book version of whips and chains) is considered to be the Embodiment of Evil, a new twist to an old ploy must be found.

The hegemony and its financial apparatus, by ensnaring the subject with insurmountable debt, gradually “possesses” all the subject labors to produce. *But this is not possible without the subject’s wholehearted consent.* There is no need to camouflage the snare in the underbrush. It is put in plain sight, festooned with warnings about its lethality. Mountains of consumer-protection laws attest to this, including those mandating that all of the financial instruments of enslavement and *capture* state clearly, and in the best legal prose, that they are obligations from which there is no escape except to do the will of the owner of the *bearer instrument*.

No one forces the subject’s hand to sign the Promissory Note, which spells out in precise language its legal obligations. If the subject has not the ability to read or understand the note, the “miracle” of the Internet is there to put it all in plain, folksy words any idiot could comprehend—with or without an education and in any tongue. That this is also the argument of the so-called Oppressor when the subject complains of his indenture *does not negate it as a fact.*

The subject must feel, foremost, that abdication is a deal worth taking, and it must enter into it with both eyes wide open and be ready for action. Otherwise its energy, labor, and loyalty will be *worthless* to the hegemony and its global masters and it will be loathed or, worse, scattered before its enemies in endless war as a ritual sacrifice to the mutual agenda of empire between rival superpowers.

When such a default of the hegemony’s expectations takes place on a scale too large for it to comfortably handle, it simply goes to war, throwing the devalued subject into a meat grinder made from the weapons the hapless subject itself has spent its life paying for through taxes and national debt. The preponderance of laws protecting the citizen and consumer are in place to produce a historically unprecedented degree of transparency (with some opaque Asian exceptions). This fact makes claims that the subject was been hoodwinked and bamboozled sound disingenuous.

However, even if the subject acknowledges that its servitude is its own fault, in democracies and republics it expects there to be a way out. Emotionally infantile, it wants to be saved. The idea of saving itself never occurs to it. Once it has pitched itself into vat of servitude, it is ever on the

lookout for a reprieve, pardon, legal loophole, tax dodge, class-action lawsuit, reform, revolution, or special dispensation that will exonerate it from this fatal lapse in judgment and allow it to start the process of enslaving itself and others all over again.

The hegemony, having anticipated the subject's every move (which is not hard, as the subject is, by nature, commercially predictable), positions itself not only to get the subject into perdition, but to get it out of it, too, for a price. The price, of course, is yet more indenture and servitude. The model for such a system was perfected by the Roman Catholic Church when it was selling indulgences throughout the late Middle Ages, until it was challenged by Martin Luther in 1517.

While it is not difficult to evade these well-earned assaults by the powers-that-be, the hegemony nevertheless expects guarantees that the subject will not resort to more violent and decisive means to regain its freedom. To defend its hegemony, the corporate state wages a campaign to undermine any impulse or thought in the subject of constructive or effective resistance, particularly of the violent or subversive sort. While it allows symbolic declarations of frustration in the form of public protest, and provides the psychological release of suffrage, it works tirelessly behind these scenes to discover any and all meaningful opposition to its agenda and neutralize it with extreme prejudice.

Like the child taking medicine from its parents, the subject willingly ingests whatever its overseers prescribe. While heavy doses of pharmaceuticals for the endemic plague of "depression" go a long way in producing a docile subject, it is the entertainment industry that provides the most narcotizing, available, and ubiquitous soporific ("available without prescription," as its advertisements shout).

That the subject is *never without its digital gadget* to channel the neural stimulation of manufactured distraction and commercial appeals to the centers of the most primitive regions of its brain nearly guarantees that it will never "awaken" and decide to shoot up the mall, schoolyard, or tourist attraction in a maniacal orgy of *jouissance*. That such (statistically *rare*, though notionally "frequent") massacres do occur with a kind of periodicity, though, only serves to provide the infotainment industry with yet more prurient programing for the subject to drool over.

However, there is the real danger that unemployment or underemployment resulting from the artificial but devastating privations of the business cycle will cause an interruption not only in the subject's medication, but most importantly its access to the pacifying effects of its cherished gadget. Moreover, there is the fear that the tranquilizing effect of the digital mass media will evaporate if the subject starts to miss the monthly

payments on the stash of other ill-gotten goods obtained through loans it should not have qualified for, which includes its student and car loans.

The result if the hegemony lets this state of affairs drag on is that the subject's worst fear becomes reality: loss of easy access to consumer goods and the credit needed to buy them. Worst of all, though, is the threat of cancellation of its subscription to the continual neural stimulation it gets from its digital gadgets and networks that otherwise prevent it from facing the horror of its tenuous existence.

In such hard times *alcohol* is the greatest refuge. It requires no prescription, is a legal narcotic, and is readily available even on Skid Row. That it is also a strong enabler of injurious behavior assists the hegemony in filling its prisons with excuses to charge the taxpayer enormous sums for the upkeep of drunken miscreants which then fills the coffers of its corporate overlords who provide prison services, shares of which are traded on the financial markets and are bought up and resold by the big banks that ultimately cause the business cycle in the first place.

But for those who have been pushed too far, or who do not have the *anticathexis* necessary to remain obedient to a system that has humiliated and reduced them to penury, occasional sprees of random violence are the only recourse—without or without a stiff drink. Far from being disruptive to the hegemony, though, these titillating media extravaganzas give the state more excuses to curtail the few rights and freedoms the hapless subject has left. Despite the obvious motivations of the state and the inconveniences caused by the sudden revocation of the subject's privileges and even natural rights, the subject remains the biggest supporter of government's crusade to stamp out all effective resistance and feral self-determination.

The stubborn group of those who “prefer not to,” though, tend to remain in the background not by choice but because the media and its audience find them boring. Rather, they are like the “good-looking old man” met with in Chapter 30 (the Conclusion) of Voltaire's *Candide* who, when asked about the intrigues of the latest political assassinations, replies that he knows nothing about them. Instead, he says, “I am contented with sending thither the produce of my garden, which I cultivate with my own hands.” It is by chance that the Bartlebys are not more aggressively targeted by the hegemony, which, like the paranoid who hears voices in his head, is ever vigilant for real and imagined threats.

How, then, does the hegemony manage to sustain itself through the vicissitudes in the economy and the wars and disasters it has caused? The negative ethical aesthetic of popular pacifism can be accomplished through a cocktail of fear, disenfranchisement, and disarmament. The judicious application of severe prison sentences for relatively minor offenses and the

alternation of low interest rates and high foreclosures, or high interest rates and little access to loans for members of the Underclass, is a particularly effective combination.

From time to time, though, the banking apparatus lets loose with debt targeting the credit-starved Underclass who eagerly lap it up, thinking it will deliver them unto the condition of perpetual prosperity they imagine their betters enjoy. This inevitably results in more foreclosures which, though decried as a catastrophe by the media, serves to double and treble the assets of the real stakeholders of hegemonic power. For the more privileged classes that are, nevertheless, somewhat below the status of stakeholders, just the mere *threat* of consignment to the horrors the Underclass faces as its daily experience is enough to maintain a climate of cowardice and compliance among them.

A careful though autonomic filtration system in the various forms of political representation from below found in republican democracies and democratic republics guarantees that those who reach the helms of power have been thoroughly vetted by the hegemony's overlords for compliance to whatever their agenda happens to be at the time. More often than not, though, compliance is carried out through arbitrary or selective enforcement or disproportionately draconian penalties, usually targeting the weakest and most vulnerable only because they are, cynically, the easiest and cheapest to target.

And when all else seems to fail, the hegemony simply redoubles its effort at perpetuating armed conflict with vague, distant, strange, alien threats from what it calls rogue states and terrorists—in other words, states that will not for one reason or another submit themselves to the will and whim of the agenda of the hegemony's global domination plan on behalf of the abdicated subjects' lust for more and more and more and more of ... *whatever*.

Meantime, the subject's hegemony wages a war of nearly equal proportions at home on what it portrays in its media outlets as the scourges threatening the integrity of society's fabric, such as drug lords, serial killers, religion and Satanism, terrorists, mass murderers, right-wing extremists, communist insurgents, hippies, and the sex trafficking of minors. These evils the public can understand better than the seemingly incomprehensible, foreign forces abroad which seem to think in either atavistic religious or arcane geopolitical terms.

Criticism that the domestic problems only seem to get worse despite the enormous treasure thrown at them borrowed from the state's enemies and confiscated from its citizens at bayonet point is met with the claim that the



situation would be *even more dire* without such Sisyphean efforts and therefore cannot be changed or stopped.

What is most important, though, is that the subject's nominal autonomy and notional value be maintained by engendering a chronic sense of helplessness such as we find in the disposition of rats in the "helplessness" experiments of the 1970's described by Seligman. By keeping the subject impotent and ignorant, it can then be sold cheaply in the job marketplace the way slaves used to be paraded at public auctions in manacles and chains. In the psychological phenomenon of what Seligman calls "*learned helplessness*" we find a psychological paradigm, based on *valid* synthetic propositions (VSP's), that will suffice for our lack of a verifiable description of the condition of the slave as a possession.<sup>13</sup>

Seligman gives us some insight into the psychology and mentality of a creature possessed by a power infinitely greater than itself (in this case a human), whether that power be the bank, the state, the church, or even God. He has identified six criteria correlating with what he calls *learned helplessness* (below). Moreover, he says that the six symptoms are the same for clinical depression as they are for learned helplessness, thus accounting for modern society's seemingly endemic "depression" crisis and its pharmacopeia of remedies:

- 1) Lowered initiation of voluntary responses
- 2) Negative cognitive set (difficulty seeing cause and effect)
- 3) Time course (repetition of the lesson increases helplessness)
- 4) Lowered aggression
- 5) Loss of appetite
- 6) Physiological changes (lowered norepinephrine)<sup>14</sup>

This last physiological effect of lowered norepinephrine is of particular interest. Wild creatures in captivity (such as animals in a zoo) are often characterized by a certain listlessness and maladaptation to their unnatural environment. The complaint about them is that they "sleep too much" to be entertaining for the visitors who observe them. They are looking for a thrill beyond the pale of their *hyperindustrialized* landscape where everything becomes an "industry," even education, which is also "monetized" into a commodity to be bought, sold, and traded. Such a condition is similar to that produced when there is a lack of norepinephrine in the brain in humans and specifically in the rat subjects tested in the studies in Seligman.

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<sup>13</sup> Seligman, *op. cit.*, 169-70.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

Norepinephrine affects the amygdala, where attention and response are managed. Most of all, though, it affects heart rate. An unnaturally lowered level causes a slower heartbeat and therefore less of a possibility of excitement and agitation. Hence, the lazy, listless zoo animal. In the "flight or fight" scenario, which demands a greater than normal heart rate, norepinephrine increases. Therefore, a chronically low level will help to preempt flight or fight—a condition which works well into the agenda of the hegemony in its attempt to maintain homeostasis between the willing suspension of sovereignty in the subject and the voluntary exploitation of the mass of apex consumers.

While there are other pharmacological ways to decrease norepinephrine, we need only consider this effect in the rats that were manipulated in such a way by these experiments to make them lose hope of ever getting free of their infinitely more powerful captors. Their response and symptomology are not unlike what we find in the human slave, hostage, prison captive, or prisoner of war. What is of the greatest concern to us here, though, is that it is also not unlike the description of the most common of all of psychiatric complaints: depression, as described in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V* (DSM-5) of the APA (American Psychological Association).

The impact of being a human possession the way one possesses a thing stretches across the spectrum from energy level to intelligence quotient (IQ) on the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scales. "Lowered response initiation may also be the cause of a variety of other so-called intellectual deficits in depressed patients. For example, the tested IQ's of hospitalized depressives drop during the disorder, *and their ability to memorize definitions of new words deteriorates* [italics added]."<sup>15</sup>

Such symptoms of *learned helplessness*, which is the primary subject-of-study in the public-school system, help explain modern society's worship of stupidity and distrust of intelligence. In Hollywood movies the villain is often more intelligent than the hero (as indicated by the professional title "Dr." before his name) though the hero's heart is in the "right place" even if he is just a righteous simpleton. The hero's "human" qualities over what are considered to be the anathema: the villain's intellectual qualities, are what help "good" triumph over "evil." *Amor vincet omnia*. Furthermore, the villain is often an effete intellectual, while the hero is, miraculously, an athletic body builder by genotype.

Of particular interest is the deterioration of the "ability to memorize new words." What the presence of this deficiency means is that the helpless, depressed slave is *less able to engage in the development of self-expression*, which would inform and embolden his communication and thought and

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 83.

possibly make him more “uppity” in a way anathema to the hegemony’s agenda and monopoly over the channels of mass communication. In other words, his learned helplessness stands in the way of becoming a *rhetor*, one well-versed in the Trivium, who is part of the liberated establishment of free men. The emphasis on vocational training and weapon and product research at the major universities effectively guarantees this outcome.

In this passage from *Nineteen Eight-Four*, quoted earlier in the Preliminary (but that bears repeating), Symes boasts to Winston about his progress on the Newspeak Dictionary: “You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! *We’re destroying words*—scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. *We’re cutting the language down to the bone*. The Eleventh Edition won’t contain a single word that will become obsolete before the year 2050 [italics added].”<sup>16</sup>

The quest in modern discourse has always been to reduce everyday language—especially that which is used in the media and online—to snippets of text, hasty epigrams, sound bites, idiom, clichés, common sense truisms, autofill, jargon, argot, and even the anti-linguistic “emoticon.” “Big men use little words and little men use big words,” says Churchill, the expert on the relative size of men.

The inarticulate citizen cannot “find the words” to express his state. He looks to professionals, such as song writers, TV personalities, celebrities, politicians, and popular authors, to do it for him. In so doing the subject *chooses* to trade his power of subversion and self-determination for *being subverted* and having his thoughts and choices predetermined by corporate and state interests which, though they claim to represent the subject’s interests, make no secret of the fact that their own interests come first (a policy which, they say, is *also* in the subject’s best interest).

## 9.2 Verifiable verifiability and the apophantic

After the 17<sup>th</sup> Century in Europe and North America demonic possession became an isolated affair. Prior to this time, it was often manifest as a *collective* phenomenon, possessing towns, monasteries, abbeys, and sects. In its transition from a mystical social problem to individual pathology during the medicalization of anything mysterious, those who claimed to “believe” in demonic possession came to be regarded as somewhat possessed themselves, not by demons, but of Science’s new embodiment of Evil: Superstition.

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<sup>16</sup> Orwell, op. cit., 65.

While there was no possibility of defining such a term except in the negative as anything “unscientific,” nevertheless there was a new standard of “knowing” (*gnosis*) established which, due to the miraculous effects of the mere passage of time and the Progressive Fallacy, was ipso facto better than any other standard that had come before it. Such thinking is in contrast to what Aristotle calls the *apophantic*, or that which declares or reveals the truth. In the works of Marcuse, it is defined as the logic of *judgment* in the Kantian sense as the result of a logical operation, analytic or synthetic.

Despite the difficulty of defining the undefinable, a minority of scientists and other intrepid minds has applied sound analytical reason to the problem of determining what might be regarded as the appropriate object of analytical reason. The Modern Age was born out of the attempt to map out this topology upon the rhetorical surface of Truth (T). In the process, the worst of the previous “dark” ages of superstition and ignorance has subsequently been gussied up in the finery of Latin names and the pedantry of “method” to become the prevailing discourse of the Modern Age.

Based upon the excitements of the imaginary and symbolic arising out of the infinite potential of sustained contradiction in the form of the ISP, the world of simulacra finds fertile soil in the possibilities of convincing illusion that digital technology offers over the cumbersome analogs of its predecessors. The old models relied too heavily upon the *real* for their illusion to be expedient enough to create the necessary simulation of a “world” that is *more real* than reality. Herein lies the difference between illusion and simulation. A magician is an illusionist; a media technologist is a *simulationist*. Both, however, rely on the principle of *misdirection* where the subject’s attention is distracted in order that the mechanics of the illusion or simulation may be realized before it is noticed.

Meantime, Aristotle’s *apophantic* (ἀποφαντικός, or the *declaratory*) proposition in which the subject and predicate are in categorical agreement became the domain of those who, often enough by temperament and disposition alone, refused to accept contradiction as the logical basis of a “valid” argument. We have been referring to this class of subject as those who “prefer not to.” We may extend and update this definition to include that which is *verifiably verifiable*.

Much of what we can consider to be the VSP falls into the category of that which is verifiably verifiable but cannot necessarily be verified for one reason or another. We verify such a statement by saying that the predicate is a product of the subject, and that both are categorically noncontradictory.

A.J. Ayer uses the far side of the moon as an example. At the time of the first publication of *Language, Truth and Logic* (1936) it was not possible to travel to and orbit the moon to have a look. However, he says, it is a valid

synthetic proposition, based on what we *do* know, analytically, to say that the side we cannot see looks like the side we *can* see. This is a matter of informed probability, or what is called in analytic philosophy *statistical inference*.

Rather than attempt to verify that  $x$  is true (T) based on a hypothesis we cannot verify or declare that we cannot “know” because of limitation  $y$ , we eliminate all other hypotheses we *can* verify as being false (F). By doing so we dramatically increase the probability of  $x$  being T to the point where we *infer* its probability by eliminating all possible objections to its verisimilitude. Consequently, the limitation of  $y$  is overcome by the verifiable probability of  $x$  being T.

This is a form of apophantic knowing compensating for the problem in the synthetic proposition of the presence of the excluded middle and therefore of a critical part of the proposition being, by its nature, unverifiable. But this is only possible in *valid* propositions.

Of course, now that we have seen the far side of the moon, we know the proposition to be verifiably true. The side we cannot otherwise see from earth “looks like” the side we can see. But before this visual verification it could be said that the proposition the far side of the moon looks just like the near side ( $x$ ) is a *verifiably verifiable* proposition despite appearing to be “synthetic” and unverifiable because of limitation  $y$ .

No rocket has yet been invented which would enable me to go and look at the farther side of the moon, so that I am unable to decide the matter by actual observation. But I do know what observations would decide it for me if, as is theoretically conceivable, I were once in a position to make them. And therefore I say that *the proposition is verifiable* in principle, if not in practice, and is accordingly significant [italics added].<sup>17</sup>

The same cannot be said about the “far side” of Being, which of course is Nonbeing. We could say with some probabilistic certainty that Being is not Nonbeing ( $A \neq B$ ), which, by inference, leads us to conclude, analytically, that one is the negation of the other. Beyond that we become helpless with any other method of intuiting reality except faith or perhaps mystical experience (which is of course discounted by science as being superstitious). Therefore, there are some propositions, such any regarding the existence of God, which are verifiably *unverifiable*. Therefore, whatever we say about God must be *synthetic*, since what is joined by the copula on the subject or the predicate side cannot and will not be verified.

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<sup>17</sup> Ayer, op. cit., 7.

Science, however, sees this aporia as apostacy and trudges on undaunted in its final and absolute proof that there is no God (or, rarely, that there *is* one)—whatever this “God” may be, as it is not clear what is meant by this word except through one’s personal faith. The verifiably unverifiable has forced science to admit that there is at least one proposition in the entire universe not subject to the hubris that all propositions are verifiable given enough time “in the future” for Progress to invent a theorem or gadget to do so.

The case with the moon’s far side may seem like a vindication of the proposition of the PE that it is only a matter of time before all is revealed to science. But only a fool would think it so because of the fallacy of generalizing from a particular. That there have been many such “particulars” in the history of science does not eliminate the possibility that there are infinitely more propositions that will never be verified in the same way. However, what we can say about the verification of the far side of the moon is that seeing it did indeed verify that an analytical statement can be formed from the *verifiably verifiable* even with the limitation of  $y$ .

Those who embrace the *apophantic* as all we can ever really know tend to be cast into the role of philosophers, though they are often just blessed or cursed with the predisposition, upbringing, education, circumstances, and intelligence to question the status quo in some effective and constructive way (at their peril). Meantime, there remain those for whom the far side of the moon remains a mystery: namely, the “deniers” of 1969 moon landing who believe it was a hoax. (They never mention the Soviet Union’s first landing of a manmade object on the moon in 1959, which, it seems, would be hard to fake but even harder to prove.) The difference between the two approaches to knowledge are significant to consider.

But who these characters are and what they are up to is not the purpose of this discussion. Let it suffice to say that the apophantic are only properly recognized as such by others of the same logical ilk. Otherwise, they tend to be marginalized or even loathed in the mainstream of public discourse. At best they are boring Cassandras; at worst they are crackpots and lunatics.

Their discourses naturally fall on the deaf ears of those who will not be nudged from their belief paradigms by any type or quantity of evidence. Nevertheless, they tend not to be among the Masters of the Universe since the hegemonic power of Empire is concerned with the establishment of illusion rather than the ascendancy of reality. The simulation of reality and what amounts to the defense of it are seen by the power hegemony as competing conceptual paradigms or even as corporate rivals in the marketplace of common belief—as if there could be more than one reality, virtual or not.

Furthermore, the apophantic are not what Bernays refers to as the “invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.” On the contrary, they are distinguished by the fact they rule nothing but themselves, often finding it, as Thoreau put it, “labor enough to subdue and cultivate a few cubic feet of flesh ...” The balance of their phenotype “prefer not to,” not out of any vehement rejection of the status quo, but because they have better things to do.

This does not mean that they remain invisible to the autonomic antibodies of the hegemony’s heuristics, the job of which is to search for and destroy any threat, real or imagined. Because of the metastatic emphasis on technology above every other form of endeavor in modern society, though, they have enjoyed a certain ascendancy and power that is *imposed upon them* by the needs of the marketplace rather than emanating from them as an expression of their desires, thinking, and agendas. Often enough, their prerogatives are in fact the opposite of those of the marketplace.

They can be found among the engineers who have the knowledge necessary to make the apparatchiks of the hegemony and the clients and executives of its corporate overlords rich through their ability to understand the reality principles of the physical and mathematical universe and apply it to technological development. Such development is the only thing driving the economic growth of the marketplace besides gambling in imaginary and notional derivative products. But having this knowledge does not mean that they *want* to be a lucrative part of this global Cult of Mediocrity. More often it just means that they *have to* be a part of it.

They can also be found among those who take the matter one step beyond utility, seeking to undermine, sometimes by their mere presence in the machinery of the Apparatus, the effects on them and their kind of the subject’s lack of self-determination and sovereignty—whatever the actual cause of it is. They are whistleblowers, hackers, inventors, developers, farmers, artists, and thinkers who dwell in the apophantic by disposition and unshakable ethical aesthetic—something which sets them entirely apart from the abdicated subject and its fealty to the prerogatives of the hegemonic order.

Addicted to the imaginary womblike bubble of the ISP, the hegemony and its mass of abdicated subjects protect themselves from its puncture with a barrier of pseudo-scientific language, particularly when it comes to evaluating the nature of those who oppose them at home and abroad. This language becomes the discourse of the mass media, which in turn dominates *all* discourse, public and private. It consists of a series of propositions, contradictory and unverified, that help build the official worldview of the leading industrial nations.

They include the following: All “fundamentalists” are “fanatics.” All eccentrics are “crazy.” All protestors are “violent.” All whistleblowers are “traitors.” All political ideologues are “dangerous.” All historical revisionists are “deniers.” All who defend free speech use “hate mongers.” All who refuse to devote their lives to their digital gadgets are “antisocial.” All artists (unless they make a lot of money) are “losers.” All strong leaders who refuse to cash in their country’s natural resources to the banks of self-appointed global commissions, NGO’s, and superpowers are the “ruthless dictators” of “rogue states” who “gas their own people” to stay in power. All those who wish to remain outside of the value systems, networks, and protocols of international finance are “drug dealers,” “sex traffickers,” “human rights violators,” and “terrorists.”

And, most of all, a people who effectively attack the practice of extracting *interest* from debt known as the *haram* (or sin) of *riba* in Islam, *shall be dealt with using the utmost prejudice and force*, up to and including murder of their leader and invasion of their (often resource-rich) territory.

Any instrumental and constructive attempt to disrupt the status quo is met with ubiquitous media vilification, political isolation, covert assassinations, or, worse: total annihilation in the existential sense by the vastly superior arsenals of mass destruction paid for by the cowering subject back home on whose behalf this action is taken. Meantime, this subject, ignorant of reality and addicted to simulacra class *b*, wants nothing more than access to the cheap goods fabricated by the peasants of these beleaguered states. But not without a guarantee of total “national security” and personal safety at all times from the swarms of “terrorists” and criminals circling the paradise of their consumer empires.

At the core of this effort is the mass of subjects living in superpowers willing to abdicate to become apex consumers. They fuel the march toward Empire with the many uses to which their physical and psychic energy may be put in the *crusade* to establish a unified, total, invulnerable, and seamless Simulacrum which will, one day “in the future,” include the now-happy former peasants of what were once the “rogue states” that oppressed them. The discourse is that through the “economic development” of their countries by seizure of their natural resources using economic blackmail, military attack, and political subterfuge these former peasants will (eventually) enjoy a “middle class” existence that even today’s subject no longer enjoys in his first-world utopia.

Consumers in first-world industrialized states are shielded from the consequences of their hostile acts and narcissistic self-indulgence by their governments’ overtures *by proxy* on their behalf. The brutality of this “arm’s length” proxy war is all but blacked out by the news media appointed to



control the ebb and flow of propaganda through the empty chambers of the subject's entertainment-paralyzed mind.

Peoples who have managed this “economic miracle” in their lifetimes through luck, favorable circumstances, and often enough arduous work and personal sacrifice serve as unwitting media icons to remind the subject living in a hegemonic superpower that he is “doing good” by supporting the “poor” through foreign aid, world banks, NGO's, and charity. The rest are just the unlucky ones because of their race, location, choice of dictator, atavism, religion, sins, or bad attitude. That they suffer from war, disease, famine, and a complete lack of the benefits of technology is simply their *fate*.

This “state of affairs” is impossible without the complete subordination and near elimination of the *apophantic* in everyday life and discourse. The first frontier to be conquered in this respect are the schools and universities—none of which are in fact “private” since they all feed from the trough of federal funds supplied by taxpayers who have no choice in the matter.

It is accurate to say that the goal of education, high and low, is to be free from the possibility of the apophantic. Instead, the political criteria of quantifiable Positivism and the paid-for projects of industry, the military, and the cultural and political agendas of the hegemony are what matter in the “education” of the subject, never mind a thorough indoctrination into the prevailing social discourse, whatever it may be.

Benedetto Croce, in *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*, describes the early stage of this process and the intrusions it has made on the territory of the apophantic in philosophy. “The natural sciences are very well in their place, but [their discoveries] are of infinitely less importance to the race than the smallest addition to the philosophy of the spirit. Empirical science, with the collusion of positivism, has stolen the cloak of philosophy and must be made to give it back.”<sup>18</sup>

The word “science,” which had been allied with the *apophantic* for many centuries, has ceased to mean simply “knowing.” It has instead taken the religious vows of a holy order of commercial and military Positivism. Its credo is “if it sells, it is true (t); if it does not, it is false (f).” Thus, the apophantic has instead become the creed of the apostate, the heretic, and the lunatic who threatens the flimsy membrane of the simulacrum Scientism sets out to nominate as “reality” with the formula of the ISP:  $(A = A) \leftrightarrow (A = B)$ , in other words A equals A *if and only if* A equals B. The ethical

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<sup>18</sup> Benedetto Croce, *Aesthetic as Science of Expression and General Linguistic*. (*Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale*), Douglas Ainslie, trans. (1909, 1992).

aesthetic “to know” endangers the sanctity of the nominal world of the imaginary and symbolic orders that is the foundational ethical aesthetic of Scientism’s self-proclaimed omniscience (in the absence of God) and progressivism.

The newborn social class of the Scientist-Priest has donned the surplice of the old Semitic religions it negated with unrelenting scorn and “proof” that the objects of superstition, mysticism, and religion do not “exist.” But this ascendancy does not come without a price. The new religious order of Positivists must contend with the subject’s loss of the psychological support systems the old beliefs so successfully purveyed as their message and product, such as earthly salvation, peace and happiness, and life everlasting in a world beyond the manifestations of reality.

Unable and unwilling to turn to the *apophantic* for whatever benefits might come from knowing “the truth” in an analytical sense out of fear that doing so might reveal its *misdirection*, it turns instead to *consumerism* which manages to exploit the analytical discoveries of science while helping build an imaginary world free of the pernicious effects of the *apophantic*. Hence, the ethical aesthetic of consumerism fulfils the vacuum left by Scientism’s largely successful attack on the bastions of Semitic religion weakened by the revelations and miracles of science, the magical products of industry, and the ravages of perpetual war.

To call the Modern Age the age of the Individual, though, despite the ingenious invention of individual psychology in the work of Adler and Freud, is too generous. At best, it is the age of the narcissist who, in being characterized by a generic pathology, is no different from his fellow. The narcissist’s imperative to “think different” (sic) results in a homogeneous schema of mechanically predicable “thinking”—conveniently just the opposite of the command and thus an excellent example of *misdirection*. Mental uniformity and conformity are precisely what the hegemony desires to maintain control and enforce the profits of consumerism it depends upon to keep its corporate overlords satisfied with the political effort it is making on their behalf.

The individual, like the catalyst in a chemical reaction, serves only to provide a target for the commercial appeals and political dogma thrown at it to maintain the status quo, and then disappear. Once the effervescence of the chemical reaction necessary to transform a sovereign individual into an apex consumer has fizzled out, the sovereign individual *vanishes* from the resulting concoction.

The Apex Consumer is the apotheosis of modern technological civilization’s quest for total and absolute Empire. This creature emerges as a humanoid “profile” described by data transmitted through telemetry to the

information pools of the hegemony by the subject's ubiquitous digital gadgets which are always "listening" for it. The resulting "profile" then becomes *more real than the subject itself*, taking on a life of its own entirely apart from the subject and almost completely hidden from its view.

This doppelgänger resembling the subject only in the most artificial ways will nevertheless determine the subject's social position and even if it will be free to roam the streets or will, instead, find itself in prison. Far from being alarmed by its limited knowledge of this other self, the subject champions and finances its further development in the hope that by doing so it will improve its chances of getting unrestricted access to consumer goods and services, infinite credit, and, "in the future," a good shot at medical immortality—provided it keeps up with the monthly payments.

### 9.3 "21<sup>st</sup> Century Schizoid Man"

We may conclude, if we are so inclined, that the subject possessed by the demons of yore is now "possessed" by a clinical pathology identified in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V* (DSM-5) as *schizophrenia*. While there are other pathologies that fit the bill, there is nothing quite like *this* diagnosis to ignite the social imagination of civilization's clients and customers.

This is not to discredit the possibility that there are *other* causes of possession as it is described throughout thousands of years of folklore and religious literature. It is just to make a generation that we can use below to make a point about what amounts to the pun between demoniacal possession and the possession of a thing. Therefore, in the medicalized language of psychiatry the indications of schizophrenia certainly have analogs in religious and folkloric descriptions of demoniacal possession.

As quoted above, Öesterreich summarizes the theological and folkloric description of possession thus: "It is as if another soul had entered into the body and thenceforward subsisted there, in place side by side with the normal subject." The use of the word here as referent we may regard as curse, metaphor, disease, affliction, or for what it is: an enlightening analog between the symptoms of demonic possession and the standard clinical diagnosis of schizophrenia. Consequently, we have three uses of the word: demoniacal possession, possession of and by a thing, and the designation of a thing as "a possession" or something that belongs to certain party and not to another.

To begin with, then, we may use Öesterreich's description as the baseline of our comparison between possession and schizophrenia. Despite being a clinical pathology, schizophrenia serves as both society's picture of

complete madness and detachment from reality (derealization) and as its highest goal and good as the mind that can allow for categorical contradiction as its normal, operant state. The difference between the two is only a matter of prescribing the proper medication.

The popular conception of a person with schizophrenia as having a “split personality” does not accurately represent the DSM-5 definition. Rather, the DSM-5 describes it as a complex of symptoms which could be found in other pathologies such as mood disorders and psychosis, arrayed along a spectrum. However, to make the diagnosis, mood disorders and psychosis *per se* must be *ruled out*. Symptoms such as disturbed sleeping patterns, depression, anxiety, phobias, hostility, and aggression are sprinkled generously through the DSM-5 in the associated indications of other disorders.

What chiefly characterizes this diagnosis, though, are the potent combination of 1) *derealization*, or the sensation that the surroundings are “not real,” 2) *depersonalization*, described as feeling “disconnected from oneself,” 3) *delusions* and *hallucinations*, often paranoid, and 4) “disorganized speech.” Those who know the person with schizophrenia as the homeless man wandering the streets babbling to himself in a private conversation consisting of seeming nonsense or persistent delusions, paranoid or otherwise, do get a sense that there is “more than one person” involved: the possessor and the possessed.

Were it not for the funding of research into brain disorders and the resulting chemistry necessary to produce psychotropics for common conditions identified in the DSM-5, psychology would still be languishing in the more philosophical and even political morass of the clinical studies which preceded the full-blown deployment of psychopharmacology. At the same time, if psychiatry were still chiefly a matter of the analysis of the contents of the unconscious and associated emotions, there might be a more robust modern narrative regarding what Freud calls the psychopathology of everyday life.

These early clinical studies before the psycho-pharmacoepia revealed uncomfortable insights into human behavior—without producing anything that could be prescribed by doctors and sold in pharmacies. Therefore, these insights were gradually overshadowed by the results of research funded by pharmaceutical companies into promising and sometimes invasive therapies to treat a growing catalog of disorders patients did not previously know they could have. These researchers have been alternately vilified as drug pushers and praised as saviors by laymen and medicos alike. In the end, it is an otiose distinction.

What matters is that we attempt to understand a psychiatric condition that has certain distinct characteristics that are generally recognized. As they can be arrayed along a spectrum, and as they occur in other pathologies, it is not a stretch to say that even “normal” people not only exhibit such symptoms from time to time but may also succumb to induced states that are similar, identical, or even the same.

Also, before we discard the idea of the “split personality” altogether, we must take into consideration the subject’s digital *Doppelgänger*, or “data profile,” accumulating through the efforts of the telemetry of its digital gadgets and consumer behavior at large and online. As this homunculus of data becomes “more real” than the subject itself in the eyes of a society dominated by consumerism, the physical subject become “less real,” subordinating its role in its own destiny to that of the *procurer* of the money needed to buy goods and services. The feeling of slowly losing its grip on reality that results contributes to the subject’s sense that its digital profile is “more powerful” than it is to affect its environment and destiny. Consequently, it turns to the miracles of psychopharmacology to obliterate these unpleasant feelings. In this way, the subject’s loss of its core personality mimics that of the clinical schizophrenic in progressive illness.

After the revelations of Stanley Milgram’s research into obedience to authority and Martin Seligman’s insights into learned helplessness were published in the 1960’s, funding shifted swiftly and decisively *toward* what can make money for investors with shares in pharmaceutical corporations. At the same time, it shifted *away* from embarrassing questions that the kind of research Milgram and Seligman conducted brought up about the nature of the modern society and the subject inhabiting it.

As Jensen says to Beale in the film *Network*, the ethical aesthetic of postwar prosperity in the West was the invention of “a perfect world ... in which there’s no war or famine, oppression or brutality .... In which all men will hold a share of stock, all necessities provided, all anxieties tranquilized, all boredom amused.”

As a result, the emergence of what seemed like an epidemic of anxiety, depression, psychosis, addiction, and schizophrenia must have come as both a disappointing social shock and also an industrial-commercial opportunity unprecedented in the history of the marketplace in the four decades following the Second World War. What is of particular interest in the description of schizophrenia, though, is the symptom of “disordered speech.” Can any sense be made of speech that is “not in order”? Also, is it any surprise that a person with a mental “disorder” would have speech that is similarly “disordered”?

We must wonder, then, why what comes out of the mouth of the person with schizophrenia is often incoherent to us but appears to make perfect sense to the utterer. If it is coherent to the utterer, it may well express an elaborate paranoid schema drawing its salient details from the more popular conspiracy theories of the day that we too share, or it might be a private Hell with demons we can only wonder at.

It is in part the frustrating inability to “see” into such a mind that makes it so intriguing; at the same time, we must wonder how much of what the person with schizophrenia imagines and thinks is similar to our own internal monologue and the daily impressions we would not dare communicate for fear of being thought of as “crazy.”

There is the possibility, based on what we know about this speech, that these articulated inner monologues may have something in common with the themes, notions, assumptions, and beliefs of the “normal” subject. For example, were not Christianity a well-accepted and well-established religion it might seem rather insane to imagine that Jesus is always watching us, that he is the “Son of God,” and that when we die “we” will either rise up to Heaven or descend into Hell as the case may be.

It is hard to find anyone who cannot articulate a list of imminent threats not only to his person, but also to society and even civilization but be unable to produce a bit of evidence to support any of it except hearsay and second-hand anecdote. Moreover, if given the opportunity to express the chatter occupying our thoughts during our waking hours, and the dreams which overtake us during sleep, what we would describe would seem little different from the ravings of a person with schizophrenia expressing himself indiscreetly in public to, seemingly, himself.

Jails and prisons overflow with “normal” people who have carried out “insane” acts of crime and violence, many of staggering monstrosity, often enough under the influence of alcohol or because they had some idea about how they, too, could participate in the orgy of consumerism their jailers enjoy but through criminal means. We could say, then, that they are expressing a kind of sociopathic *jouissance* denied to them by the *Unbehagen* of civilization’s discontents, though this is no excuse for their behavior. Only, perhaps, what motivates it.

Conversely, the “21<sup>st</sup> Century schizoid man” is just what the political and commercial apparatuses need to establish a topological realm based on simulacra made possible by *synthetic contradiction*. Like his clinical counterpart, this creature—the apotheosis of *homo industrialis*—lives on a steady diet of ISP’s. All his speech, thought, and discourse consists of the fundamental contradiction between the real and unreal, brought together into the proposition that  $(A = A) \leftrightarrow (A = B)$ , or the world is *real* (realia class

a) if and only if it is *unreal* (simulacra class *b*). This ISP has also been expressed earlier as  $(A = A) \equiv (A = B)$ , or that reality is the material equivalent of unreality.

It should be mentioned at this point that the Four Noble Truths of Buddhism are based on the idea that the world is *samsara*, or illusion, which it is not the purpose of this discussion to refute or even to deal with in any effective way, as it requires a level of metaphysical consideration better left for another day. However, it is profitable to consider what these truths regard as the *nature* of reality:

The truth of suffering (*dukkha*)

The truth of the cause of suffering (*samudaya*)

The truth of the end of suffering (*nirhodha*)

The truth of the path that frees us from suffering (*magga*)

What they have in common, of course, is the idea that any serious consideration of what is real must include the fact that one way or another life is a matter of *suffering*, if not in the more inventive human forms such as war, or in the frequent occasions of natural disease and accident, then certainly in the contemplation of death and the physical compromises leading up to it. Therefore, the idea of suffering is not at variance with the idea that the subject, in embracing the categorical contradiction of the ISP, does so to avoid suffering and to pursue narcissistic pleasure and egoic immortality, presumably without the benefit of enlightenment which is a form of higher consciousness not lower ignorance.

If war is peace, freedom slavery, and ignorance strength, then a unique psychological state of mind allowing false (F) statements to be processed as true (T) must be maintained and sustained as the officially enforced definition of “normal.” The subject’s innate sense of homeostasis and rationality must also be numbed with alcohol, drugs, mindless entertainment, and handheld gadgetry so that its only form of enjoyment becomes *consumption*.

Conversely, the absence of consumption is “suffering,” since the other forms of suffering that might be more familiar to the Buddhist monk have been washed out of existence by the much greater degrees of freedom simulacra offer over the painful restrictions of realia. The degree to which the subject’s artificial environment is metastatic is the degree to which it seeks out homeostasis in the imaginary and symbolic distractions offered up to it as the “cure” for its *Unbehagen*. This discontent results from its chronic *derealization*, *depersonalization*, and detachment from reality in the forms of informational, notional, and emotional *hallucination*.

Meantime, the psyche must also be simultaneously destabilized by a relentless process of metastasis where no one social or economic achievement can be accepted as the goal of any other. This dichotomy, or perpetually unresolved dialectic with no possibility of negation or tertium quid, helps titrate the “schism” allowing the subject to become the perfect apex consumer “possessed” of the single-minded ethical aesthetic of ever greater and more fantastic (though futile) *consumption*.

The more quotidian symptoms of this disease, such as depression and anxiety (*Unbehagen*), are easily palliated by the powerful tranquilizers and pain killers generously dispensed by the psycho-pharmacopeia as yet another product to be consumed by the subject in its rampage of narcissistic self-indulgence and self-pity.

Deleuze and Guattari describe the reinvention of the possessed persona as the schizophrenic who becomes an essential part of the frenzied production necessary to maintain this ethical aesthetic of *More*. While extreme cases are isolated and medicated, the ethos of schizophrenia, and its milder and more social manifestations, are harnessed for their uncanny grasp of the nature of civilization itself as a matter of relentless consumption, debt, accumulation of capital, and war.

Insistence on natural rights and law (which includes the much-maligned Law of the Jungle), spirituality, self-sufficiency, a modest lifestyle of classical proportion, and the rule of innate reason rather than of the state’s otherwise arbitrary and self-serving *nomos*, belongs to the fringe *apophants* who just will not get with the hegemony’s *More* program. According to Deleuze and Guattari, this program sees Nature as a “natural resource” only, to be exploited for the production of *More* in order to combat *Lack*.

What the schizophrenic experiences, both as an individual and as a member of the human species, is not at all any one aspect of nature, but nature as a process of production .... It is probable that at a certain level nature and industry are two separate and distinct things: from one point of view industry is opposite from nature; from another, industry extracts its raw materials from nature ....<sup>19</sup>

While the dysfunctional person with schizophrenia is medicated and marginalized as much as any other person with a debilitating mental illness, it is the otherwise healthy person who simply will not abdicate who can expect to be, as Emily Dickenson says, “handled with a chain.” Society demands surrender of one’s personal sovereignty as admission to receive

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<sup>19</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. (Minneapolis: U. of Minnesota Press, 1983), 7.



the benefits it nevertheless makes all subjects pay for, including those who reject its ethos but meet every other criterion of belonging to its national and legal identity (NID). Therefore, to navigate the Scylla and Charybdis of *homeostasis* and *metastasis* one must embrace both simultaneously in a clear case of *ontological contradiction* made possible by derealization, depersonalization, and the detachment from reality of hallucination.

The schism between nature and industry results in the necessity for the psyche to embrace ontological and categorical contradiction as “normal” and harmonious, embodied in a *single proposition*: that without consumption, conspicuous and otherwise, one is “insane.” It has even found its way into the everyday chatter regarding the decision to buy or not to buy, as in “You’d be *crazy* not to buy that house!” (Or, as a great hawk of cheap goods on TV once said, “Our prices are INSANE!”)

It should be noted that it is possible and necessary for the mind to sustain contradiction without devolving into delusion, particularly if it has not enough information to tip the scale in favor of one conclusion or another. We sometimes call this a “suspension of judgment.” It is symbolized by blindfolded Lady Justice holding a balance scale. The *valid* synthetic proposition (VSP:  $A = B$ ) serves as a necessary container for such ideas. We commonly call this “entertaining an idea,” or, in a more technical sense, forming a hypothesis. Peirce applies *abductive reasoning* to the investigation of the VSP so that we may overcome the analytical limitations it poses to the usual processes of deduction and induction.

There are also matters which cannot be resolved, or seem that they cannot be, and therefore are pondered and entertained in the mind at a sustained level, from time to time influencing thought and behavior in unpredictable ways. But in every case where this is so, it is a matter of the mind weighing two *valid* synthetic propositions which, because of their synthetic nature, lack the analytical power of verifiability to put an end to the competing possibilities they present. Since the speech of the person with schizophrenia has been described as “disordered,” we must conclude that it represents a fundamental flaw in the *logic of his thought* as it is expressed in his speech and, possibly, reflective of the morphology of his disorder.

To be considered an apex consumer in good standing the abdicated subject (schizophrenic or not) must be entirely comfortable with the ISP as the basic structural unit, or morphology, of the linguistics of its discourse. It should see no contradiction (or hypocrisy) in asserting that war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength. This is the lesson O’Brien tries to impress upon a stubborn Winston who, once the right fear is threatened, succumbs by betraying Julia.

The objection that “disordered thinking” is not what is needed by the means of production because production demands ordered thinking fails to acknowledge that disorder in thought and language is *precisely* what is needed if the Apex Consumer is going to consume on the epic scale needed for Empire. However, the clinical schizophrenic, while not the ideal consumer in the usual sense, nevertheless suits the economic prerogatives of the medical establishment and third-party social services which seek to “help” him by intervention, therapy, and drugs.

According to Say’s Law, the consumer appears on the scene to buy the goods *if and only if* they are manufactured in sufficient abundance. While the cause and effect here is complicated, we can see it easily in Emerson’s quip that if one builds a better mousetrap the world will beat a path to one’s door. If we couple this with Keynes’ idea of creating aggregate demand by freely lending money to manufacturers at a cheap interest rate to increase production and reduce unemployment, we have the general theoretical formula for the modern economy, such as it is, but with one difference: personal debt.

The great economic innovation in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century was to *also* lend money *directly* to the consumer (who, unlike the manufacturer, produces nothing) to buy goods and services, rather than *indirectly* by supporting manufacturers to reduce unemployment and get money into the workers’ hands. While this approach goes against Say’s Law, it seems that the ethical aesthetic of *More* wanted to hedge its bet on the manufacturers stimulating the economy and lowering unemployment by also artificially doping the marketplace with debt so that the consumer would be *compelled* to buy, and the manufacturer *induced* to produce.

As long as this schema has had the full support of the government the subject believes it elects or otherwise supports through voluntary abdication, it has worked well to contain any excess *jouissance* the subject may have indulged in by rebelling against this “state of affairs.” It has not, however, had any positive effect on the criminal who finds it to be a license to seize what he cannot obtain in other ways that satisfy his virility, cunning, and personal power.

Aided and abetted by the mass media, which gets its profits from advertising, the result has been and is an artificial consumer marketplace that can then be exploited at the abstract and covert level of investment banking and the financial markets to the vast enrichment of a certain class of hegemonists who are integral to both government and big business.

Rather than feeling bamboozled and hoodwinked, though, the subject-consumer instead *demand*s a piece of the action, which it has gotten in

various forms ever since the inception of this regime in order to shut it up and prove to everyone involved that a hierarchical society of economic echelons and selective privilege does indeed enrich everyone. And it continues to hope for *even more of it* “in the future” when it will be admitted into the higher levels of the hegemonic order.

It is the thesis of the conclusion of our argument here, however, that it is not possible to create such a system without cultivating in the consumer chronic *Unbehagen* (or what Lacan calls a sense of *Lack*) resulting from systematic and systemic *derealization*, *depersonalization*, and *detachment* (DDD) from reality. Furthermore, DDD is accomplished by the various consumer-supported apparatuses of the hegemony through the proliferation, codification, and dogmatization of the ISP. The result is the establishment of the realm of simulacra class *b*, the ubiquitous, metastatic Empire of the holographic plane of the unreal ( $\forall^a \equiv \exists^b$ )  $\rightarrow$  ( $\exists^b = \forall^a$ ).

In other words, the fundamental proposition of the corporate state is that *if* the universe of discourse ( $\forall^a$ ) of realia class *a* is the material equivalent ( $\equiv$ ) of the existential class ( $\exists^b$ ) of simulacra class *b*, *then* the existential class ( $\exists^b$ ) of simulacra class *b* is equal to ( $=$ ), the same thing as, and cannot be analytically distinguished from the universe of discourse ( $\forall^a$ ) of realia class *a*. This proposition is the fundamental and fatal contradiction of the ISP.

The contradictory nature of this proposition is obvious by the fact that what matters most to the consumer is not if the product is made in his home country by skilled workers with a good education like himself who receive fair wages, benefits, and healthy working conditions; what matters is if it is *cheap*, and therefore available in ever greater quantities and perpetually newer “versions” and “generations,” even if it is made by strange alien people in far-off countries who have no skills, education, and benefits and who labor under unhealthy and even inhumane working conditions *forced* upon them by economic necessity and a consortium of hegemonic powers looking to provide greater dividends to their shareholders.

The fatal contradiction is expressed in a practical way by the consumer’s willingness to accept such a state of affairs as “normal,” despite the fact that it goes entirely against not only the Golden Rule of what he wants for himself but also the foundational credo of his representational democracy or people’s republic. Such blind hypocrisy is only possible in a regime where DDD is the prevailing psychological disorder of society, whether or not we wish to tip our hats to the DSM-5 and use the word “schizophrenia” to describe this complex of the symptoms.

The ethical aesthetic of *Cheap + More* is what matters most to the apex consumer, that apotheosis of civilization, even if it means that he must live with the moral and ethical hypocrisy of enjoying the produce of slaves in

far-off lands. The result is that this ethical aesthetic of production transcends all other social values. If the Believer is forced into the *haram* of *riba* by the *kafir*'s alien and antagonistic state, so be it. That is Progress. If the Believer will only cast off his atavistic beliefs and embrace the doctrine and dogma of apex consumerism, he would cease to be such a problem for the consortium of hegemonic states and a threat to the consumer's desperate attempt at absolute and permanent homeostasis, including medical immortality.

It is true that these uppity Believers are perhaps the last remaining ideological threat to the homeostasis of the corporate state. They and their beliefs serve as the agent of entropy in the hegemony's delicate balance between metastasis and homeostasis. An upset in this balance can precipitate the crash of financial markets (because it pops the "bubbles" of the simulacrum) and puts stress on the steady flow of goods and natural resources extracted by hook and crook from states and regions which have been all but destroyed by the consortium's policy of perpetual war on all apostates.

By design, this ethos must be powered with *more debt* at every level, personal and national. Of course, the ultimate beneficiaries of this policy are the hegemony's corporate overlords who manage to titrate the largess flowing to the subject. As the *prima causa* of the hegemonic state, the subject must now justify the sacrifice of its self-determination through narcissistic self-indulgence in unbridled consumption and perpetual distraction and entertainment fueled by drugs, legal and illegal, and alcohol.

It is the hegemony's mission, in collusion with its media and educational apparatuses, to beat into the head of any remaining apostates the "truth" that abdication is the only possible way it is going to get what it wants "in the future" and that all resistance, so to speak, is futile (whether it is or not). The possibility of the Second Negation is portrayed as the fool's choice, suitable only for social misfits and religious fanatics.

Non-growth, which in the hegemonic order is a mortal sin (in contrast with the *haram* of *riba*), is seen as *non-production*, even if all necessities have been provided for by it. The result is that efforts at stability are undermined by attempts to seize assets and control the means of production through the proliferation of insurmountable debt at compounded interest rates.

The ethical aesthetic of *production for production's sake* distorts the idea of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his need" into a hierarchy with clear baselines for participation in what might properly be called civilization. Those who do not make the grade, even within society

itself, are consigned to economic and social *favelas* where they must, as best they can, fend for themselves in a wretched parody of self-determination.

“Help” for them, like help for the rats in the “learned helplessness” experiments described by Seligman, comes in the form of *arrest* for the crimes they are forced to commit to assert their sovereignty over the tragedy of their disenfranchisement. This is not to excuse the other motivations for their violent and sociopathic behavior which are often no different than the motivations of their law-abiding apex consumer brethren who, perhaps, have just had more luck.

The fact is, though, that the “help” they get from society often comes in the form of warehousing in jails and prisons. By putting them in the lockup or under correctional supervision, society feels it has brought homeostasis to an otherwise metastatic problem that has gotten out of hand. Unlike the apex consumer, members of the Underclass find themselves in the same hopeless situation as the citizens of the third-world country that is dunned for transnational debt forced into their hands by world banks for “development.” Meantime, their states are pitched into chaos through interference in their economic and political systems by *superpower-sponsored* insurgencies, right-wing or left-wing.

These contrived “revolutions” are designed by the superpowers to destabilize the states in order to plunder their resources and otherwise further corporate and financial agendas in the region. The disinterested men, women, and children caught in the crossfire are of no consequence, except in as much as they may be used as *camera fodder* for the hegemonic consortium’s media sideshow designed to press the right humanitarian buttons on the voters and consumers back home.

Perpetually staring into their digital gadgets awaiting the next thrilling episode in the unfolding drama of third-world mayhem, the subjects feel reassured that “something is being done” to “stop these dictators” from “violating human rights” in places they have never been where the leaders are “just like Hitler” and must be murdered *tout de suite* and with international impunity.

Even if the person with schizophrenia is *not* the producer, he or she is the *object* of the productions of medicine. In fact, we may say that pharmacological treatment is *called into play* by the schizophrenic who, under certain conditions, is considered a threat because of reports of violence attributed to sporadic sociopathy. When Big Pharma is criticized for narcotizing society with drug therapies that treat what used to be ably handled by religion, families, society, and other therapies, it simply points to the person with schizophrenia and says, “Do you want *HIM* wandering

your streets unmedicated?” As the answer is always “no,” the industry rests its case until the matter arises again with the same result.

The person with schizophrenia, then, serves as a model for all other persons afflicted with real or imaginary diseases the pharmaceutical industry can summon during its cycles of research, development, clinical trial, approval, and marketing. He also represents the possibility of *homeostasis* in a world otherwise compelled to be metastatic. Homeostasis is a cooperative effort between the interested parties among the hegemony’s complex infrastructure.

Although illegal drugs cause much of the social chaos and violence, and therefore crime, society must suffer, it is the legal, prescribed drugs of the pharmaceutical industry that are supposed to restore law and order among the population of those who seem compelled to commit crimes because of a lack of medication. Therefore, it is the job of the medical establishment and social services to see to it that everyone with a psychiatric disorder is properly medicated for the good of those who are not. It is only natural, then, that the pharmaceutical industry is one of the most if not the single most profitable of all industries.

Moreover, anyone can invest in its stock. The egalitarian nature of the pharmaceutical industry as an investment allows for it to be a supporting player in the overall maintenance of civilization’s desperate need for homeostasis, both economically *and* therapeutically. It is the job of the pharmaceutical industry to see to it that *all anxieties are tranquilized*. It is the job of the retail consumer industry to see to it that *all necessities are provided*. And it is the job of the entertainment industry to see to it that *all boredom is amused*.

Since Deleuze and Guattari describe the schizophrenic’s pathology as “nature as a process of production,” are we to conclude that nature’s manufacturing of pathology somehow holds the key to our understanding of what it means to *be possessed* rather than *possessing*? After all, the “means of production” is intimately caught up in disputes regarding the nature of capital and the economic sovereignty of the worker.

Moreover, “possession” is precisely what is at stake in the idea of the common ownership of everything from where we live and work to what we acquire through the efforts of our labor. The fact remains that for the modern state to produce, it must maintain the schism that we regard, both as metaphor and pathology, to be what we observe in those diagnosed as schizophrenic: *derealization*, *depersonalization*, and *detachment*, or DDD.

Where this takes us in our description of the subject’s state of abdication—or the relinquishing of self-possession for other-possession—travels varied and storied paths. These possibilities are embedded in

civilization's mythology of possession and freedom as well as its discourse regarding its own necessity and value a stabilizing and benign force in relation to the subject's needs and wants.

For the present, let it suffice to say that production in the modern sense is not possible without the categorical contradiction enabled by the application of invalid synthetic propositions (ISP's) to our judgment regarding the reality of the nature and disposition of economy and society. That this phenomenon goes beyond what we may encompass in descriptions of how we use language demonstrates that we are dealing here with a psychological (DDD) as well as linguistic (ISP) state, as Deleuze and Guattari show. Moreover, this state has its roots in the natural expression of our desire to produce not only what we need, but also what we desire based on the impulses and requirements of the id and libido.

If the class of simulacra (*b*) thus produced were not a subclass of the greater class of realia (*a*), and therefore of Dasein, it would completely lack the verisimilitude necessary for it to be such a tradable, and desirable, commodity. Therefore, we can say, as has been stated here already, that simulacra class *b* is the child of the parent realia class *a*, in that for it to function as a simulation of reality it must *inherit* the attributes of its parent. The fatal contradiction of simulacra class *b* lies in its self-claimed priority over realia class *a* as *its* parent. If this were not the case, then such imaginary financial products as derivatives, which extract their power of reality from an underlying asset class that is (in some tangible or intangible way) "real," would not be possible.

The entire bubble of the modern economic juggernaut would implode immediately into the nothingness that it really is if its elements could not inherit their *thingness*, such as it is, by the function of the derivative. As a result, those responsible for the maintenance of the status quo will do *anything* to protect the illusion keeping this state of affairs from entropic collapse, which is its constant danger because of its *notional* nature. As this is the *reality* of the situation, however, it is fair to say that implosion has *always already* happened. All that is lacking is the manifestation of it within the mainstream focal point of the attention of those who live and die by the portrayal of the world molded by the mass media.

Beyond this myopic tunnel of collective narcissism lie the hundreds of millions of human beings just like themselves who have no fresh water, no electricity, no medical care, and little food and protection from the weaponized predators engaged in the war for hegemony by the superpowers on behalf of that apotheosis of civilization and empire: the apex consumer.

The discursive effect of the prevalence of the fatal categorical contradiction of the ISP permeates the imaginary and symbolic realm the

schizophrenic subject inhabits as the *raison d'être* of the holographic plane of simulacra we are all forced by our own desires and choices to inhabit. Consequently, contradiction *must be* accepted as noncontradiction, by fiat, because the latter will reveal the truth of the matter, thereby introducing entropy into a fragile ecosystem of elaborate lies and deceit that are, nonetheless, immensely profitable under the right conditions.

The hegemony's eternal quest for homeostasis seems in contradiction with its perpetual need for metastasis. However, as it thrives on such contradiction, it is therefore absolutely necessary that these two conflicting values be at eternal odds with each other in a *pas de deux* of invalid propositions. Otherwise, production will result in natural cycles of expansion and contraction based on its own internal logic free of manipulation, as well as free price discovery for assets, free trade for commodities, and fair compensation for labor and natural resources. It is precisely this *freedom* that the hegemony and its corporate overlords fear as anathema to their agenda—whatever that agenda may be.

But it would be a mistake for the subject of the modern superpower yearning for Empire to take the position of the victim. Above any identifiable hegemonic power is the apex consumer, which is why the search for the evil geniuses behind the global hegemony is so fruitless. The searchers *themselves* are the culprits they are searching for, if they even bother to look.

The infantile subject is *always ready* to blame others for its powerlessness and servitude. Before the abdicated subject in any hegemony attempts to accuse its leaders of taking away its freedom (which it now calls “privacy”), it must first accuse *itself* of being the perpetrator. It must acknowledge that it *longs* for life in a totalitarian paradise where everyone gets a share of stock, all necessities are provided, all anxieties are tranquilized, and all boredom is amused, as Paddy Chayefsky so eloquently put it.

If it does not, then it is truly powerless, for at all times, unless it has crossed the threshold of the categorical exclusion (0 / 1) into the compromise of incarceration, the Second Negation, or the negation of the negation of its sovereignty, is its prerogative and its prerogative alone. No one can *give* the subject power; it must *seize* power by first taking possession of itself.

This does not mean that it would not have much work to do afterwards to dismantle the system it has so carefully and painstakingly erected to further its narcissistic, infantile whims. The tragedy is that besides death, the subject's worst fear is that it would have to spend the rest of its life cleaning up the mess it has made across the globe during its relentless



campaign to drain the sovereignty, freedom, and resources that belonged to others for its own benefit.

While freedom remains a *possibility*, the entire apparatus of the hegemonic order locally, and the hegemony's corporate overlords globally, focus on maintaining an ever-expanding sphere of influence and power into the as-yet-untapped reaches of their burgeoning empires. The ethical aesthetic of Progress sweeps out from its epicenter in a tsunami of weapons, personnel, factories, farms, food, satellites, soldiers, cars, digital gadgets, TV's, cheap clothing, natural resources, disease, crops, drones, ships, world bank loans, NGO's, and medicine.

In the process they exploit the digital networks subjects cannot under any circumstances live without and that they keep before them with their gadgetry like lights guiding their way through the intolerable darkness of Reality. Therefore, the subject is as much responsible for this state of affairs as those it points its finger at in gratuitous accusation in an effort to defer blame and throw the apophantic hounds off its scent.

Expanding exponentially in successive iterations of hegemonic control driven by geopolitics, the tidal wave of mass abdication reduces all the identifiable features of the human landscape to one neat, digital surface on which it may carry out its operations with impunity. Across the ice of this topology the mass of subjects skitters, seeking the grains of sugar strategically left here and there to sweeten the bargain they have made with their masters in an effort to relieve themselves of the burden of freedom, the bother of self-determination, and the tiresome chore of humanitarian responsibility.

Meantime, the considerable number of those who have no choice in the matter are at best corralled into townships, favelas, prisons, projects, housing estates, refugee camps, and ghettos. At worst they are simply exterminated through disease and war on a scale that makes any previous efforts seem amateurish and provincial. While this fate is nothing new in the history of the world's empires, this is the first time in history that such a phenomenon has occurred for the purpose of creating the apex consumer, drifting aimlessly in a synthetic reality made possible by its ubiquitous digital gadgetry.

As a result, it is only possible for the *schizoid* subject that has abdicated its personal sovereignty to function effectively in the regime of the invalid synthetic proposition (ISP). Those who insist upon an *apophantic* discourse of reason, valid synthetic propositions, and verifiable and verified analytical propositions are automatically and autonomically attacked by the hegemonic apparatus as crackpots, deniers, perverts, criminals, apostates, troglodytes, hippies, terrorists, lunatics, atavists, fanatics, fundamentalists,

supremacists, and enemies of society at large and therefore of the state that does its dirty work.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century schizoid man pays the price for the abdication of his sovereignty. His addiction to the hope of physical immortality promised by medical science “in the future” and to unfettered access to consumer goods and distracting entertainment now keeps him in thrall to whatever cynical adventure the hegemonic order and its global corporate overlords wish to undertake. Abdication of personal sovereignty and self-determination is not without its psychological (and physical) consequences.

Its psychiatric symptoms include derealization, depersonalization, delusion, hallucination, and paranoia. Moreover, the linguistic and logical structure of the invalid synthetic proposition quickly contaminates the subject’s thought process, producing “disorganized speech” which, once it is shared by the entire discursive population, becomes “normal” and is even formally taught in its schools and universities and corrupts the discourse of its public rhetors and news outlets.

As the consumer of the products, services, and ideas that it calls “culture,” the subject is also the conjuror of that whatever it can imagine, whatever it desires, whatever it can be *made* to want, all of which magically appears as if conjured out of nothing but that, on the so-called back end, has cost the wellbeing and lives of countless individuals in other parts of the world who have no choice but to sacrifice their lives to satisfying the apex consumer’s lust for *More*, or perish.

These cheap goods, though, are manufactured by *real* people with *real* lives in far-off places the schizoid man has little knowledge of—nor does he care to know. If his conscience bothers him about the provenance of these goods, he is told that someday, “in the future,” they will be fabricated by AI “robots” who neither feel, think, desire, nor suffer. Furthermore, he believes that the economic enrichment of the slaves in these places has “liberated” them from the horrible fate of the agrarian *arator* who only produces enough for himself and his family.

He also believes that the consortium of hegemonies, in smashing the regime of the “dictator” that ruled over what was once a “rogue state” oppressing the manual fabricators of its cheap goods, has opened the door for a “middle class” future where even those without electricity will enjoy the same level of apex consumerism “in the future” that the abdicated subject believes he enjoys now.

In the meantime, protected by *depersonalization* from having any empathy for those he makes suffer by proxy, he is comforted by his government’s crusade against vague threats in far-off places populated by atavistic, fanatical Believers he is conditioned to despise and fear through

the selective presentation in the media of horrific images of their “atrocities” and unverified anecdotes about their barbaric actions trumpeted in the online media as click bait.

That he must also sacrifice his “privacy” (the abdicated subject’s word for “freedom”) to his digital gadget to make the world safe for consumerism is seen as being the price of homeostasis in an entropic world that systematically excites his chronic, clinical paranoia with reports of impending doom and invasion. While *derealization* alienates him from his abdicated fellows and the natural environment, it also makes death seem like an unlikely possibility that only befalls “others” too stupid or poor to avoid it. He is comforted by the thought of what he considers to be the *knowledge* that death will soon be “cured” by the Big Magic of the priesthood of Scientism—something he will enjoy if, and only if, he manages to keep up the monthly payments.

The great danger to the apparatus of abdication is a categorical shift in the nature and structure of language from the invalid to the valid synthetic proposition, heralding a collateral shift in the ontological orientation from simulacra class *b* to realia class *a* through the Second Negation. One becomes *dangerous* by abandoning the ethical aesthetic of the apex consumer along with the comfort and convenience it disingenuously purports. Accepting one’s mortality as a natural and necessary gift to future generations goes a long way in dispelling the hubris of the narcissistic Master of the Universe.

An ethical aesthetic that values Truth (T) requires a cultivated preference for valid logic and unbiased verification without turning it into the religion of Positive Scientism. It is necessary to practice objective analysis, disinterested inquiry, and meaningful human relationship over an obsession with the acquisition of *more* consumer goods. Acknowledging that, statistically, we know perhaps infinitely *less* than there is to know about the universe and its mysteries restores the sense of wonder and, at the same time, the desire to live without the fear of death and therefore without the hope “in the future” of medical immortality.

It also requires freedom from the *haram* of *riba* and the banking organizations and governments that manipulate citizens and even nations into debt and poverty by deception as well as exploiting weaknesses that we all must live with and overcome. But we must keep in mind that it is the *subject itself* that brings this state of affairs into being by its voluntary act of abdication, and by propitiating the officers of the hegemony with the burnt offering of its unconditional acquiescence. The tragedy is that in the processes the subject drags along millions of innocents who did not ask to be part of its fatal capitulation.

The only possibility for freedom (and even privacy) is the *negation of abdication* in the form of what Hegel describes as the Second Negation. This heretical act is accomplished through the conscious, deliberate, voluntary, and willful *enforcement* in one's own speech and behavior of the valid synthetic proposition and serious regard for the significance and ascendancy of *verifiable verifiability* and the *apophantic*.

One's ideas, as well as the ideas one is asked to accept, must be analyzed for their logical integrity. Mediums of communication must be assessed for what is lost when we use them. And knowledge must be pursued as an independent process of perpetual inquiry without fear that it may lead us into uncomfortable, inconvenient, and even treacherous territory.

Finally, death must be embraced as the only inevitable event in our lives and a natural and necessary part of our contribution to the prosperity and wellbeing of future generations. Otherwise, we are engulfed by simulacra's sphere of influence, becoming obliged to uphold and defend its imaginary and symbolic order at any cost and with no regard for the rights and even lives of others.

The apparatus of the hegemony is armed with brigades of digital surveillance antibodies and taxpayer-funded defensive and offensive weaponry the goal of which is to unite its resources in a seamless web of total control. It does this at the subject's explicit request—even as that same subject chides it for overstepping its bounds. Still, despite the subject's disingenuous complaints, it continues with its agenda of control because it knows that if it does not, it will be accused of not going far enough. What, then, is it supposed to do?

Without thought, intention, impulse, or command, the apparatuses of education and the media initiate swarm attacks on the rogue pathogens of language that *dare* defy the prevailing Discourse of universal abdication and debt servitude. Threats, real or imagined, to the structural integrity of the topological realm of simulacra are identified and neutralized with an animus far out of proportion to any verifiable danger as it is almost always based on *potential* danger.

However, the gravest error, and the most fundamental illusion, is to imagine that there is some coordinated, institutionalized cabal behind this operation, all-powerful and hellbent on enslaving humanity for its evil purposes. *This is the hallucination that is the quintessential delusion of the paranoid schizophrenic*, and the basis of any power the hegemony may have over the citizen. This idea hands power over to the various interested parties (who all hate and distrust each other) that have a stake in perpetuating this bogeyman. Paranoia turns their pitiful Cult of Mediocrity, which contains the seeds of its own entropic collapse, into a juggernaut of seamless power.

Such an error is the product of the symptomology of DDD: *depersonalization*, *derealization*, and *detachment from reality*, not its cause. Its paranoia is paralyzing and effective, doing by itself what the hegemony could only dream of doing with its swarms of paranoiac memes and expensive, taxpayer-funded apparatuses, programs, and weapons.

Prophets, Cassandras, whistleblowers, and the antifa are necessary if we are to be reminded of the history and stakes of metastatic power marching toward Empire, even if they do sometimes use the same tactics as the targets of their ire or exposé. But they are not a substitute for the subject's own act of negation of the negation of its personal sovereignty, which must occur before anything further is to be done that might be effective.

Meantime, small, lightweight criminal groups nip at the heels of the hegemonic Gargantua which, in turn, requisitions enormous taxpayer treasure and debt to catch the rascals who still manage to elude it at every turn no matter how many civilians are killed, how many drones are up in the air at a given time, and how many civil liberties are violated.

What is behind *all* of the hegemony's power is not even conscious. Rather, it is unconscious, autonomic, nondenominational, supranational, a-geographical, impossible to find and destroy, waves no flag, and gives no quarter. It is *ubiquitous*, decentralized, and dispersed because it *is* the sleeping citizen of the empires of modern civilization, staring into the black mirror of its digital gadget, desperate for immortality and a life of infinite comfort, convenience, and security.

In order to carry out its narcissistic, egotistical scheme for medical immortality, unrestricted access to consumer goods and services, and total security and comfort at all times in the utopian fortress of its nation-state, the apex consumer is willing to surrender its self-determination and to direct its government to seize the sovereignty and property of any other less willing subjects at home and abroad.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century schizoid man is addicted to the infinite possibility of the production of simulacra and the institutionalization of categorical contradiction in the form of the invalid synthetic proposition. The indications of his illness are derealization, depersonalization, and detachment from reality. But before he can enjoy, or suffer, as the case may be, the fruits of his actions, he must propitiate the gods he has conjured up from the Abyss to do his bidding in his quest for immortality, absolute power, and Empire.

To do so he must first permit the hegemony and its corporate overlords to dwell in a permanent state of exception from the laws of the *nomos* so that they may be free to act at will and autonomously on his behalf without the restrictions he would impose on his fellows. At the same time, he must

abdicate his personal sovereignty by throwing himself into a pit of insurmountable debt borrowed from the hegemony's banking apparatus.

He takes comfort in the idea that the mass of his fellow subjects in the NID comprises the core of a ruthless machine that will do anything to achieve homeostasis through *total control* while pursuing its metastatic agenda of Empire at any cost to itself and others, even extinction. The infantile ego, as the progenitor and architect of this ambitious project, believes itself to be all-powerful, all-knowing, all-consuming, and indestructibly immortal. It is precisely this delusional belief, arrived at without the benefit or force of valid logic, that is the subject's fatal strategy.

Cat's foot, iron claw  
 Neuro-surgeons scream for more  
 At paranoia's poison door  
 Twenty-first century schizoid man

Blood rack, barbed wire  
 Politician's funeral pyre  
 Innocents raped with napalm fire  
 Twenty-first century schizoid man

Death seed, blind man's greed  
 Poets starving, children bleed  
 Nothing he's got he really needs  
 Twenty-first century schizoid man<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Pete Sinfield, Lyric, "21<sup>st</sup> Century Schizoid Man," *In the Court of the Crimson King* (Island Records, 1969).

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