

**A SPECULATIVE THEORY OF POLITICS
LOGIC OF THE PARTY-FORM**

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Introduction

The US presidential elections of 2016 proved for some the limited possibilities of a two-party oligarchic system and the imperative need to represent more diverse political voices in the electorate. However, the crisis of the party system in America is not to be confused as the cause of the decay of the Republic but rather it is the increasing inequality that has been creeping into our political economy since the Reagan Administration that made possible the fatal choice in 2016 between the neoliberal globalism of the Clintons and the fascist populism of the Trumps.

Political theory understands parties as professional machines isolated from society. In many senses, party politics takes place independently of social and economic phenomena. This work aims to show how partisanship is a phenomenon already embedded in the dynamic forces and struggles in society, even before the existence of formal parties, and shows the need for another philosophical understanding of partisanship than the dominant framework used thus far.

In doing so, I retrace contemporary and ancient philosophical prejudices against parties and partisanship, and demonstrate through a new reading of Hegel and Marx, how a reframing of the philosophical can be compatible with partisan views, surpassing the moralism and idealism that characterize the dominant philosophical view of parties and politics. I call this re-framing speculative while the dominant paradigm I name it antinomian. In the speculative outlook, opposites are framed in a single political unity and at the same time they maintain their excluding differences. In the antinomian view, political opposition is a problem that must be resolved outside politics, in the realm of ethics or theology.

I show that the speculative perspective allows us to comprehend politics in its own terms without abandoning the conceptual rigor and metaphysical pitch of philosophy. The antinomian perspective on the other hand attempts to discipline politics with the jurisprudence of the concept and in this manner leaves politics unknown. One vision belongs to the realist tradition defending something like an autonomy of politics; the other perspective violates such independence and it reduces itself paradoxically to condemnations or praise of the political without adding or subtracting substance.

The work of Marx and the revolutionary tradition that originates with Lenin reframed the notion of the partisan and demonstrated that first, partisanship operates still in the depths of the private sphere, in the imperative transactions that capitalism demands from us, and also, that this phenomena is one of the highest philosophical order, to be understood from the most advanced philosophical system produced by modernity - German idealism- and to be practiced not in the halls of universities but in the councils and meetings of political parties. In other words, speculative consciousness is fulfilled in practice, a timeless philosophical ideal if there ever was one that disappeared with the professionalization of philosophy and the privatization of public life.

CHAPTER 1

PARTISANSHIP AND POLITICAL REASON

“Whoever has reflected little on the nature of an Assembly cannot fail to see that without an opposition, such Assembly is without inner and outer life. It is precisely this antagonism within it that forms its essence and justification. Without it, it has the appearance of only one party or just a clump.” –Hegel

“One of the most widespread and unhealthy symptoms of public life is the contempt (if not open hostility) that is displayed towards adherence to a party. It is characteristic of political free lances, and political adventurers to repudiate party affiliations and to talk pompously about party ‘bigotry’, ‘dogmatism’, intolerance, and so on, and so forth. Serious politics can only be promoted by the masses; non-party masses that do not follow the lead of a strong party are, however, disunited, ignorant masses, without staying power, prone to become a plaything in the hands of adroit politicians, who always emerge ‘opportunely’ from the ranks of the ruling classes to take advantage of ‘favorable’ circumstances.” –Lenin

“Parties live in a house of power.” –Weber

Introduction: The Will to Party

2012 was a momentous year. The people of the world took the streets to demand political freedoms and economic justice. From ousting dictators to checking the banks, democratic energy burst in ways unseen in 30 years.

The Reaction was swift. One *raï's* replaced another in Cairo with customary American backing. Civil war exploded in Libya and Syria on French bidding and Washington “leading from behind.” From Athens to Budapest, even as far north as Helsinki, far-right populism is now experiencing a new golden age. Obama’s imperial humanitarianism funded suspicious pro-democracy movements in Venezuela and Ukraine. As William Robinson writes, “The purpose of [US] ‘democracy promotion’ is not to suppress but to penetrate and conquer civil society in intervened countries, that is, the complex of ‘private’ organization such as political parties, trade unions, the media, and so forth, and from *therein*, integrate subordinate classes and national groups into a hegemonic transnational social order.”¹

There is one crucial difference between both popular movements. In Cairo and Madrid, protests targeted the political and economic elite; in Kiev and Caracas, pro-

¹ William I. Robinson, 1996, *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, Intervention, and US Hegemony*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.29

Western oligarchies organized demonstrations to topple democratically elected leaders. These are two forms of partisanship with two opposite concepts of democracy, one of participation, the other to cement class power. Turning the tide to 40 years of neoliberal depoliticization, these developments show that not only rich elites, but the ordinary citizenry attach great importance to parties and political agitation.

Political change is practically impossible in the absence of durable parties. Parties provide leadership and organization to embryonic movements and an invaluable economy of energy to the people. The Left is not the only one that is aware of needing a party organization, even if such awareness is brought by its current defeat. Two recent examples in US politics suffice. Without broad popular support, the Tea Party's consistent leadership and deep pockets have penetrated the Republican Party becoming a third force in US politics. Occupy Wall Street was finished in its first New York winter. Having no specific program, ideology, leadership and organization, Occupy was seen more as a public nuisance that the Wall Street-funded NYPD quickly scattered. In its lack of ideological articulation, Occupy wasted a precious opportunity to appeal to the working class. The only tangible result, however, was to install the idea of the "99%" in ordinary speech. The Tea Party in contrast commands three State executives (Indiana, Kansas, and Wisconsin) and controls over 20 elected officials in federal legislature².

Parties are the most important organizations of today's 'competitive' regimes. They have been key agents of political development, of revolutions and counterrevolutions in the modern era. Parties mediate civil society and the State; their history draws an arc from being civil associations to the monopoly of the State, of forming party-States (*Parteienstaat*), as Gerhard Leibholz called it in the 1920s. Leibholz believed that parties activated the masses and bound them to the State. Thus, parties had a foundational role in modern politics. Without "the interposition of these organizations,

² "A political organization capable of handling such colossal tasks cannot arise spontaneously or haphazardly; *it has to be continuously, consistently and consciously built*. It is not only foolish but fatal to take a lackadaisical attitude toward party-building or its problems. The bitter experiences of so many revolutionary opportunities aborted, mismanaged, and ruined over the past half century by inadequate or treacherous leaderships has incontestably demonstrated that nonchalance in this vital area is a sure formula for disorientation and defeat." James P. Cannon, "The Revolutionary Party and Its Role in the Struggle for Socialism", *International Socialist Review*, Vol.28 No.5, September-October 1967.

the people would today be an amorphous mass, politically powerless and helplessly vegetating to and fro”³.

Yet the rapports of parties with the masses are always shifting, forming cycles of demobilization and mobilization, from elitism to populism and back. At the beginning of the democratic era, parties were elite organizations concerned with managing class power in a world of restricted participation. This type of elite party in Western Europe was not fully integrated into the nascent State bureaucracy of old aristocrats and clergy⁴. Later, by populating parliaments and with their newly acquired political functions, they progressively assimilated to the emerging liberal State.

The opposite of the elite party, the mass party, was born with universal suffrage and the political enfranchisement of labor. With the workers’ entrance into party politics, political energies shifted to matters of equality and wealth redistribution⁵. Parties at this stage were popular social movements rather than private clubs or bureaucratic structures and they often entered into conflict with existing semi-liberal and liberal States. Mass parties were ruled by the logic of opposition, not only to other parties, but to existing [autocratic or semi-democratic] States –the Bolsheviks being this type of party *par excellence*. At these early stages of competition and ideological struggle, parties functioned also as political schools for the classes and the groups they represented⁶. Thus socialist parties provided political literacy for the working class; conservative religious parties concentrated in rural regions to secure peasant loyalty through patronage with landed gentry; liberal parties mobilized the interests of urban middle classes and the petty

³ See Anna-Bettina Kaiser (ed), 2013, *Der Parteienstaat. Zum Staatsverständnis von Gerhard Leibholz*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft

⁴ See Arno Mayer, 2010, *The Persistence of the Old Regime*, London: Verso, for bourgeois compliance and cooperation with the old aristocracy.

⁵ These events were decried by a conservative Carl Schmitt, insofar old relations of property were at risk with advances in democratization. For Schmitt, politicization and depoliticization corresponded to shifting the arenas of debate from politics to technology. Thus, religious controversies were neutralized in the Age of Enlightenment with a deistic God. The controversies shifted to politics and to the moral education of men. In the 19th century, enlightened pedagogy was substituted by political economy where technical distribution of goods and resources became the central problem and site of controversy. In the modern era, parties mobilized the masses through economic empowerment, then economics became depoliticized in technical politics, and parties now seek to mobilize the masses according to new cleavages and lines of division, such as identity politics or nationalism. See Carl Schmitt, 2007, *The Concept of the Political*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

⁶ See Danilo Zolo, 1992, *Democracy and Complexity*, University Park: Penn State University Press, pp.118-121

bourgeoisie. In sum, mass parties oriented the people, which in the words of Schumpeter, “are incapable of action other than a stampede.” The evolution of parties from private associations to mass organizations corresponded to the increasing social differentiation brought by industrial and economic modernization⁷.

After the 1960s, de-politicization in the West swept in to counter mass power. Party members lost their influence; partisans from specific groups and classes were ignored in order to attract voters with the so-called “catch-all parties”. This last phase is the party, especially the American party-type, as a striking electoral machine more concerned with securing funds rather than partisans, with seeking office rather than seeking policies. This transmutation explains why American parties since the 1970s declined in mass membership and soared in influence and power. According to Schlesinger,

“Political parties do not control their nominations, yet win elections; whose support among the electorate has declined while their electoral record improves; parties whose organizations have supposedly decomposed, yet whose personnel and payrolls have blossomed; parties that have no control over their members, yet present clear partisan choices to the electorate”⁸.

To wit, post-partisan parties prevented social change, turning people skeptical of the political process⁹. In the United States, while parties are at an all-time low in their legitimacy among voters, they are also at their peak as agents of enormous influence¹⁰. Parties with real possibility of winning office are divorced from their mass membership

⁷ Writing against pluralists, E.E. Schattschneider and Joseph Schumpeter soon recognized the bureaucratization and professionalization of parties of every hue. Ironically, both American party theorists characterized Western democratic parties in much the same way liberals disparage Leninist organizations -undemocratic, top-down, elite structures composed of professional partisans. See Joseph Schumpeter, 2003, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, London: Routledge, p.283. See also E.E. Schattschneider, 1942. *Party Government: American Government in Action*. Transaction, p. 58.

⁸ Joseph Schlesinger, 1994. *Political Parties and the Winning of Office*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, p.10

⁹ Many scholars contest the assumption of a generalized apathy in the American electorate, arguing that the increased polarization between Democrats and Republicans cause a rise in partisanship and party identity. See Morris P. Fiorina and Samuel J. Abrams, 2008, “Political Polarization in the American Public”, *Annual Review of Political Science*, pp.563-588; Marc J. Hetherington, 2001, “Resurgent Mass Partisanship: The Role of Elite Polarization”, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 95, No. 3, pp. 619-631; Mark Brewer, 2005, “The Rise of Partisanship and the Expansion of Partisan Conflict within the American Electorate”, *Political Research Quarterly* 2005 58: 219.

¹⁰ See Russell Dalton and Martin Wattenberg, 2000. *Parties without Partisans*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. v

and with the social movements they were once linked. Parties participate in elections but are not themselves democratic organizations. In Schattschneider's famous sentence, "democracy takes place *between* parties, not *within* parties". Giovanni Sartori, the dean of party scholars, also thinks that "democracy on a large scale is not the sum of many little [party] democracies"¹¹. Such absence of internal democracy is crucial in the anti-democratic character of contemporary parties'. Leaders within the party rise in power and in absence of democratic controls and procedures, they're prominent if their nomination pays off in national elections¹².

Parties became post-partisan with time only appealing and organizing voters as consumers. This shift from partisan to voter marked the privatization of political action in late-capitalist party democracies. Partisans, main figures in earlier stages of party evolution, mobilized collectively to pressure for policies and to attain power in or outside elections; voters, the main targets of current parties, are private consumers simply registering a preference in the ballot¹³.

The Anti-Partisanship of Political Theory

In this discouraging atmosphere, political philosophers bitterly disdain parties. Party hacks destroy presumed time-honored rules of democratic negotiation, deliberation, and compromise. Parties divide the People; the General Will is manipulated into private interests. After all, philosophical truth must be one, not many. Not necessarily showing much political wisdom, political philosophers favor reasonable deliberation as an attitude more pertinent to 'independent' spirits. It is not hard to notice in regards to mass politics the unshakeable elitism of philosophy.

¹¹ Giovanni Sartori, 1965, *Democratic Theory*, New York: Praeger, p. 124

¹² See William Cross and Richard Katz, 2013, *The Challenges of Intra-Party Democracy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.11-28

¹³ As Wang Hui remarks in respect to China and the Western party system, "As the party, through the process of exercising power, became the subject of the state order, it increasingly changed into a depoliticized apparatus, a bureaucratic machine, and no longer functioned as a stimulant for ideas and practice. For this reason, I would characterize the dominant contemporary form as having undergone a transformation from a party-state to a state-party or 'state-multiparty' system. This implies that the party no longer conforms to its past political role, but becomes a component of the state apparatus. What I want to emphasize here is the change in the party's identity: no longer possessing its own distinctive evaluative standpoint or social goals, it can only have a structural-functionalist relationship to the state apparatus." Wang Hui, 2009, *The End of Democracy: China and the Limits of Modernity*, London: Verso, p.9

Empirical scholars of politics on the other hand are not too anxious over the downfalls of partisanship. “Party-phobia” is philosophical. There is always the more urgent and interesting matters of institutional design and representation, the mysteries of the partisan brain, or how a party system in a certain country produces like the states of matter “centripetal” or “centrifugal” dynamics, fragmentation, condensation, sublimation, and so on. Yet in this minimalist, value-free universe of positivism, there is no pondering of the consequences of partisanship for democracy and politics. Empiricists commend parties and dismiss participation. Parties represent the flesh and blood of democracies, yet it is much more important for many empirical scientists to preserve the State by checking the mob¹⁴.

Political theory has a long anti-partisan tradition. Sigmund Neumann said that, “Political parties are the lifeline of modern politics and yet they have been the stepchildren of political theory.” Nancy Rosenblum restated the same metaphor in a recent book, “Parties are truly the orphans of political philosophy but they are the darlings of political science.”¹⁵ Anti-partisans echo the view of the Greeks, the Saints, and the Moderns. But this wasn’t always the way of philosophy; many classical theorists very much admired partisanship. Montesquieu and the German idealists appreciated the English for their party spirit. Hegel pictured partisanship even working beyond usual politics. Hegel thought that opposition rules human history, that to challenge other people’s views was to progress in politics, science, and culture. These thinkers however endorsed a disciplined and institutional partisanship. Advocates for revolutionary partisanship like Machiavelli, Marx, and Engels were prominent exceptions. Parties must

¹⁴ I think current visions of parties separated by morality and science neglects the specific morality of politics, which Machiavelli pictured as Chiron the Centaur, half-man, half-beast, law and norm achieved through persuasion as well as force, “to know how to make use of both natures, and that one without the other is not durable.” Ideology and the physics of power and government inform all partisan perspectives. If these two aspects may be separate in theory, they are joined in practice. See also Antonio Gramsci, 2007, *The Modern Prince and other writings*, New York: International Publishers, p.140 “They are the levels of force and consent, authority and hegemony, violence and civilization, of the individual moment and the universal moment, of agitation and propaganda, of tactics and of strategy, etc.” For Gramsci, such perspective must be the approach of the revolutionary party since the other party already makes use of this political truth. See also, Friedrich Engels, 1978, *Collected Works*, vol. 10, p.284 See also Lenin, 1976, “State and Revolution (1918)”, *Selected Works*, Progress Publishers, p.294. See August Nimtz Jr. 2014., *Lenin and the Revolutionary Use of Elections and Parliamentary Politics*, London: Palgrave-MacMillan.

¹⁵ Nancy Rosenblum, 2010, *On the Side of Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.41

not only debate but take arms. If the situation demands it, struggles must take the streets rather than the floor of parliaments. Breaking the law often expands democratic liberties.

Ignoring what one enthusiast saw as the “inapprehensible and indestructible nature of the political party,”¹⁶ current condemnations or praise of parties should be qualified. Parties indeed disturb; they thrive in the negative, in struggle and strife, coalitions and betrayals. When parties are praised, the type of participation fostered by them is dismissed as the ever present danger of populism in democracy. But this partisan ‘perversity’ existed in state bureaucracies, churches, armies, and associations even before formal parties existed. Modern democracies just provided institutions which accommodated for party competition¹⁷.

Parties do not merit the homage accorded by some or the sourness granted by others. Parties sometimes require a cold approach as their self-interest, but they always require a conception as dialectical as their nature. One must account for the democratic mass element parties navigate and how parties operate according to the logic of opposition. Parties require internal and external opposition, revealing that antagonism, not authoritarian *imposition* or anarchic *deposition*, define partisan politics. As Rosenblum states “Parties are defined only in relation to one another and make sense only in regard with one another.”

I consider that the anti-partisanship of current political theory is both a sign of compliance with State power and defeatism in regards to popular power. Moral philosophies dismiss partisanship in favor of idealized constitutional values that are constantly violated by contemporary power. Similarly, other political theories that renounce partisanship from a position of ethical escapism and subjectivism have nothing to say about actual politics other than parties are all part of State power. This second type is just content with denouncing the cruel march of the world¹⁸.

¹⁶ “See Friedrich Rohmer, 1844, “Lehre von den politischen Parteien: Die vier Parteien” in Kurt Lenk, 1974, *Theorie und soziologie der politischen Parteien*, Luchterland, p.80

¹⁷ “No democracy in the world can eliminate the class struggle and the omnipotence of money. It is not this that makes democracy important and useful. The importance of democracy is that it makes the class struggle broad, open and conscious [through parties].” Vladimir I. Lenin, 1975, “The Successes of the American Workers”, *Collected Works*, vol.18, pp.336

¹⁸ Few authors express this ethicist view of Hegelian “beautiful souls” more forcefully than Simone Weil: “Political parties are organizations that are publicly and officially designed for the purpose of killing in all souls the sense of truth and of justice... The institution of political parties seems to be

Present views of partisanship misrecognize partisan operations and formations resulting in post-political rhetoric and prescriptions. Such misrecognition is not only contingent upon political conjunctures, especially those after 1968 and 1989; they also depend on specific ontological presumption of identity and difference. Liberal politics advance an outlook of absolute identity by educating and molding the multiplicity and complexity of politics into a universal narrative of global norms and rules. Views on radical difference that are distinctive of post-structuralism largely prevent thinking such multiplicity in terms of political representation, parties, and party organization. In opposition to these two forms of political reason, I propose a third way called the speculative which envisions an "identity-in-difference" (Hegel), a "unity of the diverse" (Marx) in which the partisan opponent is the other, the adversary, and at the same time, someone that stands in a common symbolic and political universe.

In what follows, I map this anti-party spirit in contemporary political theory through the leading spokesmen of constitutional democracy from the Right to the Left of political liberalism. On the one hand, Hayek, Rawls, and Habermas allow me to trace the anti-partisan slips of liberal politics. I then address the strong refusal of parties by post-structuralists such as Levinas, Derrida, Lyotard, Foucault, and Deleuze. Although these two groups of theorists profess opposite philosophies and conceptions of reason, they equally reject partisanship. I contend that liberal and post-structural schools of political thought are anti-partisan for their disjunctive approach. They focus either on politics as an ideal identity and unity of State and society, or conceive the political as an equal ideal difference between state and society, and refuse real existing politics. Both bodies of political theory exclude the possibility of a third option that constitute the moment of mediation between State and society, politics and ethics. Partisans and parties are precisely these figures of mediation. These are political beings that are defined in relation-to other parties, to society, and to the State.

The view of an "identity-in-difference" represents a third type of political epistemology more fitting to partisanship and equally committed to political organization

an almost evil in pure state. They are evil in their principle and evil are their practical effects. The suppression of political parties would be an almost pure good almost pure, obviously legitimate in principle and practically could not but produce positive effects." Simone Weil, 2014, *Senza Partito, Obbligo e diritto per una nuova pratica politica*, Milano, Apogeo, pp.36-7

and ethical emancipatory practice. Hegel, Marx, and some critical theorists submit to this speculative vision of *identity-in-difference*, which frames recognition and co-dependence as key social actions, more adequate to understand the partisan mind and the logic of political opposition.

1989 - The antinomies of liberalism

Liberal pluralism conceives the State economically as a site of competition; social groups contest to influence institutions and the State accommodates them without regard to ideology, class, or sector interests. Since civil society is the source of moral legitimacy, liberal states represent civil society as a whole soaring over particular interests through legal and ethical neutrality. Liberal sociality thus is the sum of individuals, the simple sum of its parts, and all parts have an equal claim to see their interests as legitimate. Everybody is formally equal with the same rights and endowed with the same universal rationality, but emptied of content and determination such as class, race, or gender or any other subset of concrete and historical difference. This flight from particularity is a central characteristic of the liberal *Rechtstaat* and its citizens. But the liberal notion of society is individualistic and abstract. Liberal totalities are outcomes of individual conflicting interests. Hegel described the liberal society, the commercial society as a spiritual animal kingdom, “in which individuals, amid confusion and mutual violence, cheat and struggle over the essence of the actual world.”¹⁹

Liberalism today needs serious philosophical justifications. Pragmatism and utilitarianism are not acceptable as in earlier times. These philosophies lack universal foundations which are required for a political theory with global designs. Consequentialism makes truth too vulnerable to the contingencies of politics or for a cynical *Machtspolitik*. Liberal practical philosophy is not concerned with phenomena but with foundations, so formal prescriptions are expedient to ignore political needs and contexts. Foundationalism is very adequate to current liberal hegemony after the fall of historical socialism.²⁰

¹⁹ Georg W.F. Hegel, 1998, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, London: Oxford, §537, p.327

²⁰ Gerald Gaus writes, “As a political ideology [liberalism] has been immensely successful; it has found room for individualism and communitarianism, for planners and free marketeers, for value skeptics and perfectionists.” The heart is in classical liberalism, skeptical about sweeping values, individualistic, and rebellious to grand designs. Hitherto such theory is severe and unattractive. “The antinomies of liberalism”, Gaus explains, “makes sense of both the success and failure of

Liberal practical philosophy depends on the ideal separation between pure prescription and empirical fact, understanding the person in two as private desire and public reason, faculties that stand opposed to each other. This is a distinctly analytical approach, understood in a Kantian sense. Analysis dissects and separates, treating each unit of the system or faculty as the mind as separate. Hegel called it the view of the Intellect or Understanding (*Vernunft*). For the analytical approach, the mind is like a machine. The mind merges the manifold of experience, sense-data, and facts under a category. The analytical categories give legal validity to experience after our sensations have joined them. But these two faculties, the ability to perceive (Kant called it aesthetics) and the ability to reason (analysis), are separated.²¹ Intuitions to perceive time and space, and the concepts that synthesize experience have nothing in common. Radical newness is impossible because a finite set of categories are already given to order all possible experience.²²

Unlike Kant's moral theory, desire has a normative nature in liberalism as an inheritance of utilitarianism. Among the "first" human desires is the need for self-preservation and security, and these desires are viewed as private and natural, free from social determinations.²³ But this excesses of desire must be checked by an alien, rational political power. Thus political and moral reason and desire are in a *mutual* subjection, manifested in the polar opposite of liberal individualist ethics, deontology and utilitarianism, Kant and Bentham. Either reason attempts to ward off destructive desire, or sees desire as the lawgiver.

In this ethical and political dualism, liberal practical philosophy sees the political subject as one ideal rational agent, whose sole end is the pursuit of infinite different

liberalism in the last century... But this success as an ideology is the root of the failure of liberalism as a political theory to resolve its antinomies; the very scope of its appeal ensures that no fully consistent liberal theory will emerge vindicated over its rivals." See Michael Freedman (ed.), 2004, *Reassessing Political Ideologies: The Durability of Dissent*, London: Routledge, p.30

²¹ This is contrary to the mind that unites things in their diversity and opposition. The first type of mind is what Hegel and the dialectical tradition conceives as the Understanding, or the Intellect. The second type of mind is Reason, which is dialectics and speculation having a critical and reconstructive aspect. These three modes of reason will be the subject of the next chapter.

²² As Habermas states in an orthodox Kantian turn of phrase, "The task of universal pragmatics is to identify and reconstruct universal conditions of possible mutual understanding." Jürgen Habermas, 2000, *On the Pragmatics of Communication*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p.21.

²³ See the excellent analysis of the dichotomies of liberalism in Roberto M. Unger, 1977, *Knowledge and Politics*, New York: Simon & Schuster

desires in the “non-political” private sphere. The separation between 1) *reason* and *desire*, develops into another separation between 2) *facts* and *values*, as well as yet another moral distinction between 3) *ought* and *being*. The liberal principle of desire interacts well with analytical reason. For analysis, society is the sum, an aggregate of all individuals. The system is the total sum of simple parts, and the market is the total sum of individual, unconnected decisions based on desire. For analysis, simplicity is valued above complexity producing still a further antinomy between 4) *values* and *rules*. Liberal analytical totalities are agnostic on the driving values and intentions of individuals as long as these values are channeled through impersonal and neutral mechanisms such as procedural rules. The individual is driven by values and the aggregation of all individuals by rules, which are indifferent to each and everyone’s ideas of values. Since for most of contract theorists, men are isolated and hostile to each other, freedom is only possible by an impersonal order rising above interpersonal relations. Law thus is ethically neutral and individual values are subjective based on free arbitrary choices. Rules are objective because they balance private interests. This distinction between objective rules and subjective values reflect yet another liberal opposition between 5) *substantive* and *procedural* justice. According to rules, justice is conceived as fair procedure, a due process independent of the outcome. According to values, justice is substantive and meaningful only to private individuals. Since the concept of a public, communal being is denied in liberal theory, social justice in terms of substantive values or public conceptions of the good is denied.²⁴

This cursory description of the different antinomies of liberalism shows that individuals are intrinsically private beings but also individualism is the main justification for liberalism to be a public philosophy. But the liberal privatized individual rejects from the beginning the possibility of an intrinsic public being. The public sphere is invalidated not on the grounds that a subject decides to become public and social a posteriori, or in

²⁴ Needless to say, the technical, if invisible, correlate of this unilateral conception of analytical totality (that supports and expresses through “correct rules” a tolerant pluralism of values since we are all disconnected individuals) is capital’s structural intolerance. See Istvan Mészáros, 2010, *Social Structures and Forms of Consciousness*, New York: Monthly Review Press, p.153: “What decides in the end is the practical intolerance of the one and only set of operational rules with which capital’s mode of social control is actually compatible, notwithstanding the broadly diffused ideology of pluralism.”

the sense of belonging to a particular community; the public sphere is rejected in that a public communal being is not necessary. The public being is a supplement, a nuisance to the individual, necessary only to safeguard his individual property freedom. But “public beings” –either as citizens, the State or any other political form- *as such* are necessary for political philosophy. After all, liberalism is a public philosophy. I think liberalism just cannot solve the basic tension to be a public philosophy and at the same time to keep private foundations.

Liberalism as the ideology of individual freedom reveals from the standpoint of publicity to be a philosophy of alienated individuals. Liberalism presupposes an already freed society that does not recognize its own alienation (alienation is an alien concept to liberalism) in isolated, atomized individuals in competition. Liberalism stabilizes such non-recognition through *de facto* “neutral” and impersonal mechanisms, especially the technical imperatives of the market, and legal timeless justifications, partaking of an uncritical modernity. If the loss of community is a sign of modernity and modernization, the liberal denial of community and the affirmation of private agency is a re-statement of this a-critical ethos towards modernization.²⁵

Liberal dualism is evident in how it treats individuals according to their class position in the economic sphere. If political liberalism has an optimistic view of human nature, it is because the individual is sufficiently abstracted as to speak of the general rights of man. It is in the economic sphere, however, where liberalism deploys a dual and darker vision. In relations of commerce, liberalism sees the individual as a virtuous example of calculation, rationality, and sobriety. But in relations at the workplace or the factory, things turn off-putting. Every worker is a potential vagrant. Workers need to be surrounded by insecurity and instability in order to become more productive and

²⁵ Two outspoken American critics of liberalism’s incapability to articulate itself as public philosophy were Walter Lippmann and Leo Strauss. Yet, the solution for them was not participative democracy, but a return to civic republicanism, an elitist project that left untouched social relations of property, a neo-Roman republicanism with all its unsavory traits, sharing with liberalism the uncoupling of economic and political power. The “pre-modern core” of American republicanism is divorced from the corresponding pre-modern nature of the social relations that gave rise to such a regime; the diremption between power and property is thus maintained and given an organic twist. See Walter Lippmann, 1965, *The Good Society*, New York: Transaction Publishers, and Leo Strauss, 1995, *Liberalism: Ancient and Modern*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

disciplined. They are driven by passion and vice.²⁶ Here, productive man does not possess the attributes of rationality and industriousness. In circulation, man is rational; in production, irrational. In this sense, liberalism applies different principles depending on the human activity and the class position. Pessimism and unreason in the factory; optimism and virtue in the market where commodities need to be sold. Human nature is again split in two as workers and tradesmen with opposite human natures. Hence, tradesman (reason) must command the worker (desire); reason must command laziness. The same dual standard amounts to party politics. Political parties are essential for liberal democracies, but political parties become dangerous if they question and attempt to reorganize the ‘irrational’ sphere of capitalist production. Lenin saw it clearly, “Liberals are prepared to recognize the class struggle in the sphere of politics [organized as political parties] but on one condition—that the organization of state power should *not* enter into that sphere.”²⁷

Obviously, liberal ideologists would distrust partisanship since partisans advocate for a particularistic vision of the polity. Partisans threaten the formal rationality of liberal logic by projecting their particularity as generality. The liberal critique of partisanship assumes therefore universalistic and rationalist premises, useful to cast individuals beyond political fault lines. Partisans should only be “partisans for democracy” or “partisans for reason”, advocates for general principles like the responsible use of reason and universal tolerance. These moral principles however limit the kind of political engagement acceptable for liberal democracies. There should only be one conception of good, which is private permissiveness (right), and only one conception of politics, which is the pluralism of private wills, equally legitimate. Thus, under the umbrella term of ‘militant’, self-defending democracy, parties critical of the liberal order are actively cleansed of the political landscape for national security, tolerance, or multicultural reasons. For proponents of this idea of “militant democracy” —echoing Habermas’s principle of constitutional patriotism—, “a party ban does not target at a specific political idea, but at their possible impact on the democratic system; it is not an ‘interdiction of

²⁶ See Domenico Losurdo, 2012, *Liberalism: A Counterhistory*, Verso: London, pp. 77-100, for an account of wage slavery and indentured serfdom in liberal societies on the basis of vagrant laws.

²⁷ Lenin, 1977 [1913], “Liberal and Marxist Conceptions of Class Struggle”, *Collected Works*, vol. 19, p. 120.

thought’, *but an ‘interdiction of organization’*. Therefore, it would be starry-eyed to expect that dissolution could eliminate anti-democratic thought among the dissolved parties’ followers. But their political influence and their access to the voters are weakened.”²⁸ Liberal universalism accepts political differences in theory, but the programmatic objective is to assimilate, integrate, and smooth these differences in a cosmopolitan order to educate dissenting subjects, parties, and nations on liberal norms. To carry out its particular brand of internationalism, liberal political morality marshals a philosophy of absolute identity in two ways: neoliberalism, the convergence of economic systems under one vision of the market, and multiculturalism, or the diffusion of difference through cultural politics. All political regimes must converge in a community of neoliberal democracies defined by universal principles of deregulated competition, passive citizenship, and most of all the transformation of market *economies* into market *societies* in which abstract exchangeability regulates even non-economic relations. Liberalism also deploys its philosophy of absolute identity paradoxically through multicultural infinite differences. Regimes enter liberalism if they commit to a fundamental deference for different opinions, races, groups, and lifestyles because the *endless* diversity of human life can only realize and fulfill itself in *one* liberal order. The “Lockean proviso” is that as long as these groups are loyal to the fundamental imperatives of liberalism (freedom through property and life as property), they may practice their identities with no harm. Multiculturalism provides the domestic version of neoliberal globalism. In multiculturalism, identity is projected as the multiplication of inherent differences possible only within one order; in neoliberalism, the diversity of economic and political arrangements are excluded under one market. In both classes ‘disappear’ from the public vision through gender and race and police repression.

Liberal anti-partisanship from Right to Left

Partisanship undergoes a similar experience. Between parties that are loyal to the system (the ones that have taken office), parties that are reluctant to electoral democracies (minority fringe ‘parties of principle’), and other parties that are anti-system (“extremists”), and still others that oscillate between reluctance and rejection, liberal

²⁸ Markus Thiel, 2009, *The “Militant Democracy” Principle in Modern Democracies*, London: Ashgate, p.406. Italics mine.

regimes discipline such broad scope with the law of loyal opposition formulated sometimes around the economy, or around institutions. Thus, the paradox of political tolerance is restricted to those who share the same general worldview, cancelling it. Bernard Williams points out that thinking of tolerance as a political rather than a moral issue allows to see “a liberal state and its typical patterns of legitimation, in the cases that toleration is thought appropriate, toleration will be supported by a variety of attitudes, and none of them is very specifically directed towards the value of toleration as such.”²⁹ Liberal rejections of partisanship are perplexing since the core political identity and moral authority of liberal democracies depend on political opposition and political competition. Parties cut through democratic rationality by organizing passions and particular interests; they, unlike any other social organization, symbolize the Hegelian idea of liberalism as a ‘spiritual animal kingdom’. Yet Friedrich von Hayek, John Rawls, and Jurgen Habermas, the three foremost philosophers of liberalism of the last 50 years are solid cases from the Right to the Left of the political spectrum of the unmitigated liberal rejection of partisanship.

Although moral apprehensions for the dirty game of politics and prescriptions for well-ordered societies are legitimate, Hayek, Rawls, and Habermas, along many other theorists of Right and Left liberalism tend to regard conflict (not necessarily competition) as harmful to politics. Engaging in what Hegel would call the attitude of “beautiful souls”, their prescriptions do not consider that rational, disinterested action outside organizations (Rawls and Habermas), or pure individual self-interest, also independent of organization and conducive to undistorted competition in the case of Hayek, seldom takes place in actual politics. Given the glaring ethical flavor of their theories, there is also no account for the harmful traits of deliberation (or individualism in Hayek’s universe) as if good procedures invariably produce good outcomes.³⁰ Instead of comprehending

²⁹ Bernard Williams, 1996, “Toleration: A Moral or Political Question” in Paul Ricoeur (ed), *Tolerance Between Intolerance and the Intolerable*, London: Berghann Books, p.47.

³⁰ “Public communication –deliberation- may induce people to hold causal beliefs that are both inaccurate and promote the interest of the sender of the message [...] the manipulation of causal beliefs and hence of induced preferences is a potential pathology of the democratic process that must be considered in discussions of deliberation.” Susan C. Stokes, 1998, “Pathologies of Deliberation” in Jon Elster (ed.), *Deliberative Democracy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.123

actuality, their market or Kantian moralism retreats from politics identifying one-sidedly philosophical ideals with political practices.

In liberal theory, norms and intentions rule over facts and practices; ethics overrules politics leaving facticity inadvertently at the mercy of positivism and technology, that is, as a set of brute facts to be manipulated and managed. Despite frequent moral remonstrations against the cynical position of positive theories of democracy, an excessive emphasis on democratic norms complements political positivism and pragmatism in that the longing for an ideal *demos* has no real import for ‘empirical’ politics. Conversely, the lack of applicability of deontology in the political realm (as opposed to a political ethics of a more consequential nature) makes the ethical turn irrelevant for the orthodoxy of self-interest and instrumental reason. In their critique to economic theories of democracy, normative theorists view party dynamics in inverse proportion to their notion of popular participation. “Ethical democrats” think indirect representative party democracy is insufficient. “Representative party democrats” think direct participatory democracy is impossible. The two competing economic and ethical theories of democracy oscillate from the pole of self-interest and aggregation to the other of obligation and deliberation.

Common to both theories however is an identitarian and exclusive conception of subject. In economic theories of democracy, the citizen is Benthamite following private utility; in ethical theories, the citizen is Kantian, obeying duties. This diremption between ethics and economics, between pure self-interest and pure obligation is typical of a neo-Kantian framework. Individuals are torn between the antithesis of impure empirical desire and pure transcendental reason. Moreover, liberal reductions of politics to philosophical ideals are as old as political philosophy. *The Republic*, which inaugurates Western political philosophy, longs for eternal ideas to discipline the chaos of politics. Kant seconded by quelling political possibilities with a priori concepts. Hayek, Rawls, and Habermas are neo-Kantians. For Rawls and Habermas, the Kantian separation between public reason and private interest inform their universal principles of reason. Moral reason is an unconditioned cause that makes possible critique and evaluation of existing political practices. Hayek follows a very different, evolutionary route, using the Kantian dualism between desire and reason, but inverting the terms. In this sense, Hayek

is Kantian in method, but not in substance. Rawls and Habermas believe that moral consciousness determines right action, for Hayek, consciousness is the product of nature, spontaneously emerged from the natural order, but with no specific moral end in sight.

Hayek's evolutionary approach excludes teleology, other than complex self-organizations. Such self-organization is, of course, the market as the ideal sphere of voluntary exchanges determined by universal laws. These laws and moral values for action are "part of a process of unconscious self-organization of a structure or pattern." Thus, instead of moral ideas to act as critical arbiters of the existing order, moral ideas are functions for the preservation of existing market societies. Thus, public law does not represent nor is directed towards a regulative principle. Moral or economic regulation is the fatal error of what Hayek calls 'constructivism' or "the propensity of primitive thought to interpret all regularity to be found in phenomena anthropomorphically, as the result of the design of the thinking mind."³¹ Public law represents just public order; it is a result, not a regulation, which must be interpreted by organs of the existing order, not by private individuals. Thus, public law is emptied of any moral regulation outside order. Hayek sees moral individuals as products of an evolutionary order that has constituted their social nature and this nature, which is really market relations, is there to promote efficient individual relations in terms of their economy. This efficiency is not of course the utilitarian redistribution of resources but the Pareto optimality: resources are efficiently allocated if one is able to pay (want and willingness to pay are the same here) while the worse off may potentially be compensated for such 'efficient' allocation. Such compensation needless to say never happens. Hayek collapses the Kantian distinction between a regulative ought and the existing order. The present is morally right: facts are values and market societies are ideal organization devoid of critical capability.

Advocacy for redistribution through parties or collective organizations does not have a place in Hayek's universe. Political parties embody interest groups that distort prices, misallocate resources, and consequently provoke more state intervention in the economy. Political lobbyism and political parties impose unreasonable costs on the public sphere. Parties and organized political action destroy the spontaneous order, the *catallaxy* of the market. As Hayek writes, "Organizable groups further distort the distribution of

³¹ Friedrich A. von Hayek, 2013, *Law Legislation, and Liberty*, London: Polity, p.10

benefits and make it increasingly unrelated to the requirements of efficiency or any conceivable principle of equity. The result is a distribution of incomes chiefly determined by political power... [Parties] are all driven, even if it is not their agreed aim, to use their power to impose some particular structure upon society, i.e. some form of socialism, rather than create the conditions in which society can gradually evolve improved formations.”³²

Moving to the Center of the liberal spectrum, Rawls laments, for example, that “much political debate betrays the marks of warfare. It consists in rallying the troops and intimidating the other side, which must now increase its efforts or back down... To be is to confront.”³³ In many instances, Rawls skips political analysis for a series of recommendations under the marker of ‘public use of reason’. In *A Theory of Justice*, parties should act and formulate policy according to the common good (which is fine except that the common good formulated in detail as policy can be many things for many people.) Parties, for example, are “to be made independent from private economic interests” and should not gerrymander. Voters, on the other hand, should decide on moral grounds instead of economic necessity; constitutional ideas instead of levels of unemployment or rates of inequality and distribution should take priority when casting votes. In neo-Kantian style, Rawls strictly separates pure constitutional principles of justice from empirical institutional dynamics and interested behaviors.³⁴ In *A Theory of Justice*, parties serve a very limited role. Similar to Locke’s conception of parliamentary opposition, Rawls confines majority rule and opposition to means rather than ends, how to realize politically the already given transcendental principles of justice. Constitutional design, the realm of philosophy, restricts the partisan scope of action so the ‘base’ self-interest of all classes does not distort the limits established by the original position.³⁵

³² *Ibid.*, pp.356-357

³³ John Rawls, 2001, *Justice as Fairness*, Harvard University Press, p.118. See also Nancy Rosenblum, 2006, “Political Liberalism vs. The Great Game of Politics”, *Perspectives on Politics*, 01, pp.99-108

³⁴ Bernard Williams call this the view of political moralism, which “tends to have the consequence that [political actors] should think, not only in moral terms, but in the moral terms that belong to the political theory itself.” Bernard Williams, 2009, *In the Beginning Was the Deed*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.3

³⁵ “For example, consider the case of a citizen deciding how to vote between political parties, or the case of a legislator wondering whether to favor a certain statute. The assumption is that these individuals are members of a well-ordered society that has adopted the two principles of justice for institutions and the principle of utility for individuals. How are they to act? As a rational citizen or

Rawls lessens the juridical restriction on partisanship in *Political Liberalism*. In these lectures, Rawls sees his conception of justice as fairness just as an alternative among many. Different principles of justice can be contested and deliberated, because the principles themselves may be not too clear or are too general. Since the political conception of justice has “little to say about many economic and social issues that legislative bodies must regularly consider”³⁶, there is unquestionably the need for independent-minded citizens educated in public reason and moral virtue. Thus, civic education enables the citizenry to address the essentials of public rights and constitutional principles as well as all “highly divisive matters” freed from partisan squabbles. Like many political philosophers of the past like Plato and Rousseau, Rawls’s solution to the convolutions of party politics is more moral education.

Coming from the Marxist tradition to finally reconcile with European social-democracy, Habermas wishes for an ethical democracy alien to parties. Positive theories of democracy, which reel around parties, seek to “evaporate the idealistic content of normative theories under the sun of social science”; they provide “a cynical view of the political process.” These theorists consider the citizenry uneducated and impressionable, used by “illegitimate” forces seeking to subvert constitutionalism. Habermas responds by theorizing an ethical citizenship based on a set of norms and values that preexists politics. To this end, Habermas reformulates the phenomenological concept of life-world a social remnant of non-instrumental reason to show how norms exist here and now, and not in Utopia.³⁷ Social life-worlds for Habermas are regions rich with expressive meaning; they are opposed to the rationalized and bureaucratic world of politics. “The public sphere” writes Habermas, “has a complementary relation to this private sphere, from which the

legislator, a person should, it seems, support that party or favor that statute which best conforms to the two principles of justice.”

John Rawls, 1999, *A Theory of Justice*, Belknap Press, p.176

³⁶ John Rawls, 2013, *Political Liberalism*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.230

³⁷ Husserl introduced the concept of life-world in his last work *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*. Husserl, a lifelong admirer of Kantian, concluded in this nostalgic work that the dualist model of Kantian philosophy and ethics was one of the cultural factors that brought about the crisis of European humanity. Keeping with his old maxim “to the things themselves”, Husserl conceived the life-world as “a realm of original self-evidences” in order to transcend the thing and its scientific representation keeping at the same time rationality and life together. See Edmund Husserl, 1970, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 121-132.

public, as the bearers of the public sphere, is recruited. The life-world forms, as a whole, a network composed of communicative actions.”³⁸ Private life-worlds have the potential to correct the public sphere; they are charged with a utopian content made concrete in the pre-political world. Following also a neo-Kantian style, the life-world for Habermas is a pre-political or non-political realm of emancipation that acts as lawgiver as well as judge of politics. Thus Habermas thinks parties should be responsive to that expressive sphere in civil society because their normative origins are found there. . “Political parties”, writes Habermas, “would have to participate in the opinion- and will-formation from *the public's own perspective*, rather than patronizing the public and extracting mass loyalty from the public sphere for the purposes of maintaining their own power.”³⁹ Yet what party would survive with this strategy? How would parties know the ‘public’s own perspective’? And where does the public make its perspective known?⁴⁰ The end result is pure and simple anti-partisanship. Habermas grieves the entry of political parties in democracies. Ideal speakers, who follow communicative norms, are informed private citizens devoid of party loyalty. Habermas provides no mechanisms on how an informed citizenry retaining the immaculate values of a privatized life-world can effectively exercise or check governmental power.⁴¹ The aim of his buoyant political sociology is to bring these communicative ideals into actual politics, of communicative norms actualized in the life-world, to re-connect them to politics, and to transform real politics into a politics of principle. But as Hegel observes, practical *hommes des affaires* (not *les hommes des principes*) develop partisan consciousness. Principles quickly die away with

³⁸ Ibid., p.354

³⁹Jurgen Habermas, 1996. *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*. MIT Press: Cambridge, p.379. Italics mine.

⁴⁰ Political sociologists and elite theorists since the interwar period find that public opinion is the effect and not the cause of consent from parties that dominate the public discussion. See Pierre Bourdieu, “Public Opinion does not Exist” in Armand Mattelart and Seth Sieglab, 1979, *Communication and Class Struggle*, International General, pp.124-137; Joseph Schumpeter, 1942, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, London: Routledge, and Gaetano Mosca, 1939, *The Ruling Class*, New York: McGraw-Hill

⁴¹ “If Habermas’s account of law and democracy is taxed with a fundamental abstraction from the empirical realities of a political order in which the formation of a popular will is at best fitful or vestigial, it can refer to its counterfactual vocation. If it is taxed with a complete lack of any specification of a desirable alternative, it can refer to the value of what already exists, in a bedrock of communication that only need to be fulfilled. The result is a theory that answers to the responsibility neither of an accurate description of the real world, nor of critical proposals for a better one.” Perry Anderson, 2005, *Spectrum*, London: Verso, p.127

the generalities of the rights of man and citizen.⁴² Habermas is all for a citizenry of Independents that do not participate in institutional politics, but deliberate in a public sphere devoid of political organizations.⁴³

1968 - Post-Structural Refusals

Liberalism seeks timeless foundations and justifications; post-structuralism looks for groundlessness instead seeing time as a constitutive element of reality. Post-structuralism distrusts hegemonies and systems, so absent are the liberal worries for a plural society in order to gain global legitimacy. Post-structuralism is not about accommodating different perspectives under a big-tent ideology, but to wage total critique to existing normative projects. These theories suspect grand narratives of emancipation, in the name of a rare, yet-to-come community, an antinomian mystique that can truly house differences.⁴⁴

Post-structural anti-foundational theories separate the political subject elsewhere in the aesthetic and phenomenological realm in order to ‘unsettle’ the political and detach it from moral and juridical arguments. Pre-rational sensibility, the pure forms of intuition of time and space, are cut off from analysis and dialectics, in order to legitimize a lived experience prior to the positive ethics and politics. Thus, the antinomies of theory and fact, values and rules, legality and morality are justified pre-rationally in terms of will and one’s existential position in the world. Political beings are “justified” in their absolute difference with being and law; values and rules come from poetry and art,

⁴² Georg W. F. Hegel, quoted in Nancy Rosenblum, 2008. *On the side of the angels: an appreciation of parties and partisanship*. Princeton University Press, p.129

⁴³ See Geert Munnichs, 2002, “Rational Politics? An Exploration of the Fruitfulness of the Discursive Concept of Democracy” in Rene Schomberg and Kenneth Baynes, *Discourse and Democracy: Essays on Habermas’s Between Facts and Norms*, Albany: SUNY Press,

⁴⁴ In such way, postmodern theories are more elitist than liberal theory. If liberalism as ideology turns eclectic, postmodernism in contrast becomes skeptic. Key between both strands is the common institutional, imperial background of the first instantiations of skepticism and eclecticism in Late Antiquity as a retreat of the political due to a re-articulation of power from a distant center. The Hellenistic and Roman constellations oscillated between the Neoplatonic mysticism of Alexandria and the privatizing tendencies of all strands of post-Aristotelian ethics in the Italian peninsula. Yet, Hegel valued immensely ancient skepticism as a form of critical theory, which he contrasted to modern skepticism, really a philosophy that sought to eliminate philosophy for theology, to replace the ‘broken middle’ for a ‘holy middle’ in the words of Rose, a *deus ex machina* to the philosophical ‘drama’ of the concept, for example in the case of Schulze and Jacobi or in our times Heidegger. See Christopher Rickey’s provocative conclusions though from a conservative perspective in 2002, *Revolutionary Saints: Heidegger, National Socialism, and Antinomian Politics*, Philadelphia, Penn State Press, pp.269-280

morality beyond law and positive norms.⁴⁵ Yet these anti-foundational theories are still Kantian. They are not speculative in negotiating the conflict between the ideas of pure reason and the categories of understanding. Rather, the destruction of metaphysics is enacted in pre-rational states. Antinomies are framed before the conflict between understanding and dialectics from the vantage point of Kant's transcendental aesthetics, the doctrine of pure intuitions of space, and especially time. If in liberalism, the antinomy of law was produced in terms of reason and desire, in post-structuralism, the antinomy is re-produced in disposing of reason through aesthetics.

Post-structuralists formulated various political theories favoring multiple modes of ethical and political engagement. From a morality centered on hospitality to an ethics of a freed desire as values of a new and unedited democracy, there is present a common core of anarchism, focusing more on tactics and short-term interventions rather than lasting programs and principles. Consequent with an anti-foundational and post-metaphysical philosophy, post-structuralists were at the same time open to other forms of acting politics and to collectives wary of parties. Such healthy skepticism to hierarchies however soon led to an overall suspicion of revolutionary political organizations due in no small measure to the Stalinist nature of Eastern European regimes and Western Communist parties. Many post-structuralists interpreted the Stalinist counterrevolution as the inevitable product of a Western metaphysics and teleology of history. Unlike liberalism, post-structural conceptions of partisanship were a direct result of the Marxist experience as the dominant form of radical politics for most of the 20th century. Therefore, after the defeat of the revolts in the 60s and socialism, most post-structuralists conceived the political more and more in moral and ethical terms.

According to Todd May, what separates post-structuralism from 'traditional political philosophy', torn between strategy (what is to be done in the long term) and

⁴⁵ See Martin Heidegger, 1997, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, pp.35-36. Thus, Heidegger comments in relation to Kant's theory of pure intuitions, "The universal ontological function that Kant assigns to time at the beginning of the ground-laying can hence only be sufficiently justified because it is precisely time itself, and indeed time in its ontological function (i.e., as essential bit of pure ontological knowledge), which forces us to determine the essence of subjectivity in a more original way. The "Transcendental Aesthetic" has as its task to set forth the ontological aesthesis (sensibility), which makes it possible "to disclose a priori", the Being of beings. To the extent that intuition retains the leading role in all knowledge, "one of the pieces required for the solution of the general problem of transcendental philosophy" (ontology) has been attained."

formalism (metaphysical principles of justice) is that political post-structuralism is thoroughly tactical. In the tradition of the Greek Sophists, performance, gestures, and acts matter more than prescriptions. Such supremacy of tactics is also present in anarchism, for which the political centralization of power is not only rejected, but also any concept of centralized power discarded. Practices of power are irreducible to each other and they happen in heterogeneous instances. In May's Foucauldian formulation, "Power for the strategic political philosopher emanates (at least primarily) from a center. For tactical political philosophy, there is no center within which power can be located. There are many sites from which it arises, and there is interplay between these various sites in the creation of the social world."⁴⁶ May concludes that the tactical nature of post-structuralism and anarchism rejects notion of vanguardism and political representation. Vanguardism is rejected since power cannot have a privileged point of entry, unless one claims metaphysical authority and wields it as a thing. The rejection of representation derives from the rejection of vanguardism; there is no party that can claim special authority or power from the people.

The poststructuralist collapse of metaphysical representation and political representation glosses over two very different things. Philosophical representation deals with concepts of the understanding; political representation addresses acts of will. Political representation seeks to make a type of will, private or public, known and exercised. However, the collapse between the two notions is grounded on a perspectivist, Nietzschean attitude that will and knowledge are the same. All sorts of representation are based on some type of will, especially the will that makes concepts appear as forms of thought, a reactive will to Nietzsche. Therefore, Nietzschean post-structuralists, left-wing Nietzscheans wage an across-the-board critique of representation, even if the philosophical and political types of representation are different, ending in philosophical and political anarchism, an anti-partisan ideology if there ever was one⁴⁷.

Contrary to liberalism's commitment to absolute identity, post-structuralists commits to absolute differences, to the margins and remains of social power structures. These are external, undetermined sites loaded with vital intensity and force, filled with an

⁴⁶ Todd May, 1994, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, Philadelphia: Penn State University Press, p.11

⁴⁷ See Mikhail Bakunin, 1950 *Marxism. Freedom and the State*. London: Freedom Press.

impersonal will, a will of power that is a structure rather than an agent, in which subjects and knowledge are effects of will. A lack of conscious subjectivity complements this intensity of the Will; it posits a greatness of an impersonal substance. If liberalism emphasizes an absolute Subject or agent, lacking context, history, an objective Substance; post-structuralism affirms a Substance without a Subject.⁴⁸ Paradoxically, post-structuralism favors postures resistant to assimilation and compromise, radical modes of being in the world, prescribing a notion of Subject whose imagery is evasion and escape, outside social bounds. The Substance is never identified with existing political institutions, as in Hegel's notion of ethical life, but the Life [of the Subject as Substance] takes place elsewhere than actuality, leading into what Perry Anderson criticizes as Super-Subject. Examples of this conception of subject beyond or outside ethical life abound in post-structural theory: Butler's performative subject as an instance of a special being of a future law to come, Agamben's concept of potentiality as an indeterminate utopia, Lyotard's return to the Kantian sublime as a way to disown political rationality and advance a radical aesthetic individualism, Derrida's spectrality, and so on. However, these figures are dependent on the ethical and political realm they resist.⁴⁹ The success of post-structuralism quickly evolved into a totalizing logic in spite of appearances.

Key political concepts in politics such as the people, representation, sovereignty, law, power, and authority became in their totalizing critique self-cancelling paradoxes, fixed in constant interplay, without resolution, obtaining a politics of deep skepticism toward actual politics complemented by a strangely utopian, almost fideist project of emancipation. Poststructuralists imagined a more ethical, a future law or a special being that cannot be thought with our current system of categories. Ethics displaces politics in the form of a non-representable subject outside, prior, or after history and society.⁵⁰ Yet

⁴⁸ "In one major aspect, the hallmark of the postmodern aesthetic is that what was experienced as a source of anguish in the Modernist aesthetic is now staged in the register of infinite gratification." Aijaz Ahmad, 1997, "Post-Colonial Theory and the Post Condition", *Socialist Register*, p.355

⁴⁹ A dialectical critique, however, would see that this radical exteriority is an illusion engendered by the very systemic coordinates these concepts are trying to escape. For a dialectical perspective, the post-structural image of a radical autonomy and fluidity in the subject mirrors the ceaseless circulation and fluidity of capital, and the reified autonomy -fetishism- of the commodity. What is conceived as ideal ethical life is rather the actual movement of the object, or conversely, what the subject conceives as an absolute ethical life is in reality an idealized non-dirempted ethical life.

⁵⁰ Walter Benjamin's antinomian text *Critique of Violence* inspires this postmodern conception of law. Derrida and De Man repeat Benjamin's position but they dispense of Benjamin's utopian

post-structuralism's rebellious spirit is steadfast against prescribing or analyzing actual politics.. Taking sides for this or that party participates in the overwhelming repression of metaphysical politics, a politics of truth. For all their endless deconstruction of categories, there is in post-structuralism wrong and right ways of thinking.

Anti-partyism from Levinas to Lyotard

All major post-structuralists who are in large part authors of the ongoing ethical turn in political theory, exhibit an anti-partisan element. This prejudice makes hard to conciliate their philosophies with questions of political organization. Levinas is the philosophical father of this post-structuralist aversion, the grandfather of the topic of otherness in post-structuralist ethics. For Levinas, a commitment to the other defines ethics. The other is not conceived in the political terms of competition, confrontation, and cooperation, but in the moral terms of opening, generosity, and hospitality. Heidegger as many philosophers before him considered ontology as the highest type of philosophy, a knowledge of immediacy which revolves around, the question of Being. For Levinas, ethics is even higher, even more fundamental and primordial coming before ontology; our first experience is the experience of others and with others. We are already living with others, instead of the lonely *Dasein* (the being-there) of Heidegger thrown into this world and abandoned. Levinas offers a communitarian *Mitsein*, a being-with the other in life and suffering. But between the Buberian relation of I and Thou, there must be for Levinas a third party witnessing this relation, so friendship and mutuality do not become all-consuming, exclusive and selfish. This figure of the third figure is the rest of humanity; the "Big Other", so to speak, witnessing but also limiting this relation in order for the realm responsibility to be extended to those outside, to become universal.⁵¹

Levinas applies this phenomenology to politics. Unlike ethics, politics is the struggle between two camps and knows no 'neutral' thirds. For Levinas, politics is dialectical. . In dialectics, actors see and recognize each other as mirrors of the other. They are only concerned with self-recognition and for acting on equality (of forces), but

imagination; the promise of (Messianic) emancipation is eliminated, practically reducing law to its other of unending violence. For a dialectical critique, see Gillian Rose, 1991, *Dialectics of Nihilism*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp.20-38.

⁵¹ "The presence of the face, the infinity of the other, is destituteness, a presence of the third party (that is, of the whole of humanity that looks at us)." Emmanuel Levinas, 1979, *Totality and Infinity*, Amsterdam: Springer, p. 213

they do not engage each other as others, with all the dignity and charity that generous recognition entails. Politics thus ignores individuality making everything abstract, turning differences into equalities, exchangeabilities, and *indifference*. By destroying true diversity Hegel is the ideologist of abstraction; his phenomenology –unlike Levinas’s- is only possible when the two parties mirror each other and do exactly as the other, in the absence of a general third. One subject is the same as the other, “each being” writes Levinas, “is posited apart from all the others, but the will of each from the start consists in willing the universal or the rational, that is, in negating its very particularity.”⁵² This idealization of individuality results in a realist conception of politics. The end is the denial of alterity, the imposition of one individuality over the other, totalization, and war. Like Hegel’s philosophy, politics leaves nothing out, everything is consumed by a voracious World Spirit,⁵³ “War establishes an order from which no one can keep his distance; nothing henceforth is exterior. War does not manifest exteriority and the other as other.” Furthermore, “The art of foreseeing war” Levinas maintains, “and winning it by every means –politics- is henceforth enjoined as the very exercise of reason. Politics is opposed to morality, as philosophy to naïveté.”⁵⁴

Levinas’s “third party” is post-political embodying ethical justice, beyond the ‘idealist’ dialectics of ‘two-party’ politics. The third party “desires” the other, and since the Other cannot be known or represented, t what is required to match such indecipherable nature is unconditional sacrifice and generosity. In an antinomian way, Levinas sees no possible contact between ethics and politics. Ethics is positive, salvific, and human, and its injunctions of embracing the Other are axiomatic, not justified by reason, or subject to proof or debate. On the other hand, politics is reason; politics is hell.

Derrida also disavows partisanship for a melancholic Messianism. Already Walter Benjamin, like Levinas, found expression for a similar anti-political spirit in the wake of totalitarianism. In Benjamin’s *Critique of Violence*, politics is mythical violence, an

⁵² *Ibid.*, p.217

⁵³ But as Caygill says, even Levinas’s ethicism has a strong political realist component, “Reading Levinas’s texts within the horizon of political horror require the reversal of many of the interpretative protocols that are associated with his work. Instead of extending what might be imagined to be a secured understanding of the ethical into the political, the ethical emerges as a fragile response to political horror.” Howard Caygill, 2002, *Levinas and the Political*, London: Routledge, p.2

⁵⁴ Emmanuel Levinas, 1979, *Totality and Infinity*, Amsterdam: Springer, p.27

instrument of violence used by the law-imposing moment (the Party of Revolution) or the law-preserving Party of Order. Divine violence is beyond this politico-mythical antinomy it is bloodless and transcendental, not imposing but deposing.⁵⁵ But the conflict of politics in Benjamin is ‘solved’ in a higher ethical antinomy. Existing political systems cannot ground justice; this mystical justice founds secular authority making mythical law possible and at the same time destroys it. In Benjamin, this Messianism appears in a fairly orthodox way. , God gives and takes and everything is a disaster. Derrida secularizes the Messianic by extracting from Benjamin’s eschatology its transcendent, destructive elements but by preserving the idea of a Messianic wipe-out as infinite *differance*, a “Messianicity without Messiah” that shakes the grounds of our legal-political ideology in the name of a justice and democracy yet to come. Justice makes possible laws, but it is irreducible, even contrary to the laws themselves.⁵⁶ This negative promise of justice is betrayed when fulfilled by the law.

Partisanship, on the contrary, sides with actuality by taking sides, but its “narrow-mindedness” does not make justice to Derrida’s conception of justice. Justice like its more empirical manifestations of hospitality and friendship are inimical to membership, belonging or loyalty to a group. Justice is radical and unconditional openness. Parties, either give up their partisanship and practice unqualified hospitality, or become intolerant, inhospitable, and particularistic. It follows from Derrida’s vision that democratic parties should be like democracy, “autoimmune”, to be able to include political enemies, antibodies and become infected.⁵⁷ Parties would do justice to this

⁵⁵ “Just as in all spheres God opposes myth; mythic violence is confronted by the divine. And the latter constitutes its antithesis in all respects. If mythic violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythic violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood... by the expiating moment that strikes without bloodshed, and, finally, by the absence of all lawmaking.” Walter Benjamin, 1996, “Critique of Violence”, *Selected Writings I*, Harvard University Press, pp.249-250

⁵⁶ “To address oneself to the other in the language of the other is both the condition of all possible justice, it seems, but in all rigor, it appears not only impossible (since I cannot speak the language of the other except to the extent that I appropriate it and assimilate it according to the law of an implicit third) but even excluded by justice as law, inasmuch as justice as law seems to imply an element of universality, the appeal to a third party who suspends the unilaterality or singularity of the idioms.” Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, New York: Routledge, p.125

⁵⁷ Jacques Derrida, 1977, *Limited Inc.* TriQuarterly, p.116.

notion of justice if they destroy themselves in an unconditional ethic of love and inclusiveness.

Curiously, Derrida's anti-partisan declarations come from his late engagement with Marx. For Derrida, the fall of socialism left the world with Marxism's "ghosts", the unresolved questions of exploitation and imperialism. But Derrida is not worried with Marxist diagnoses of modernity, analysis of colonialism, uneven development, late capitalism, and not even Marxist parties. Derrida invokes instead a 'certain spirit of Marxism', not determined by class struggle, but by more universal ideals such as human rights. This ghostly spirit requires a New International "without status, without title, and without name, without party, without country, without national community."⁵⁸ But the ideal of human rights in this New International, this party of Justice is un-decidable. The meaning of human rights is contended from all sides, and at the same time, human rights must deal with the idea of the other's 'rights', on how to make [impossible] justice to the other.

Like Levinas and Benjamin, Derrida cloaks his political reflections with mysticism. Justice is full of "spectral beings" that are inaccessible to reason. To speak affirmatively of just institutions and justice in a substantial sense is self-defeating. This vaporous, infinite other, embodying infinite and future justice as promise must never be actual. The other robs all meaning to affirmative language. The outcome is mourning and quietism in the name of an "interminable self-critique."

Foucault detests confrontations. As Levinas and Derrida, Foucault's idea of debate is to trace and compare the unsaid assumptions of a discourse, rather than taking sides, a genealogical, rather than a critical project. Foucault prefers cool analysis and recommends not engaging in polemics. Taking sides subscribes to potential negative practices avowed by this theory or that party.⁵⁹ Partisans are polemicists. They do not

⁵⁸ Jacques Derrida, 1994, *Specters of Marx*, London: Routledge, p.107. Terry Eagleton acidly remarks "It is the ultimate post-structuralist fantasy: an opposition without "anything distastefully 'orthodox'" such an opposition, a dissent beyond a formulable discourse" in Michael Sprinker (ed.), 1999, *Ghostly Demarcations*, London: Verso, p.87

⁵⁹ "In any case, what we have here is not on the order of a shared investigation; the polemicist tells the truth in the form of his judgment and by virtue of the authority he has conferred on himself. But it is the political model that is the most powerful today. Polemics defines alliances, recruits partisans, unites interests or opinions, represents a party; it establishes the other as an enemy, an upholder of opposed interests against which one must fight until the moment this enemy is

seek interlocutors, but rather treat adversaries like “processing a suspect.” Partisans follow truth and power according to the “repressive hypothesis” as things, hard currencies to manipulate and exchange. Political parties embody that modern form of power Foucault calls the pastorate, as forms of revolt specific to secret societies with “a different governmentality with its chefs, its rules, and its principles of obedience.”⁶⁰

Moreover, for Foucault, to take sides is not only questionable but also simplistic. Partisanship belongs to a world of representation and prescriptions. . Intellectuals and parties should stop representing or taking part for the oppressed, although they can side on something like justice. Foucault’s conception of the political person is elitist. Partisans and intellectuals cannot just live the same life or feel the same as the masses. Moreover, to emancipate the masses may be illusory since masses may well desire repression. Foucault (along Deleuze) collapses political representation (*Vertretung*) with general representation (*Darstellung*). The critique of representation as a philosophical idea in general becomes also a critique of partisanship and political representation. Since representation itself is oppressive, political representation is also oppressive even if it works in the interests, or takes sides with the dominated.⁶¹

Lyotard takes the critique of representation and partisanship further. A true revolutionary politics takes place outside representation through channels of ‘libidinal energy’ and sublimity.⁶² Representation constitutes the State’s ideology; it seeks to make things present again, known, but now under the State’s purported categorical and totalitarian coordinates. Through a reading of the Kantian theory of the sublime, Lyotard builds a spontaneist, ultra-left view of politics.. The sublime is unrestricted energy and enthusiasm, enacted in revolutions, the New, and the Event. The sublime in Kant

defeated and either surrenders or disappears.... It is really dangerous to make anyone believe that he can gain access to the truth by such paths and thus to validate, even if in a merely symbolic form, the real political practices that could be warranted by it.” Michel Foucault, 2000, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, vol. 1, New York: The New Press, p.112

⁶⁰ Michel Foucault, 2007, *Security, Territory, Population*, Picador: New York, p. 199. Foucault sees in partisan power, especially when one party takes over the state like the Soviet Union, a contemporary pastoralization of power.

⁶¹ See Michel Foucault, 1980, “Intellectuals and Power”, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, pp.207-8

⁶²“There is a different revolution in each libidinal event, different to all others, incomparable; and no permanence at all... Our politics is of flight, primarily, like our style.” Jean-Francois Lyotard, 2004, *Libidinal Economy*, London: Continuum, p.19

amounts to an overwhelming feeling due to the contemplation of all-powerful objects, Kant deduced such feeling of overwhelming power as alien to reason, but still within the subject. But the sublime for Lyotard stands for a pure subject, beyond reason but full of power, “there is no sublime *sensus communis* because the sublime [would] need the mediation of moral feeling and the latter is a concept of reason.”⁶³ The sublime is pure expenditure devoid of morality.⁶⁴

The result is radical-bourgeois individualism, a kind of artistic sensibility, distrustful of political commitments and alliances. Lyotard justifies such distrust for organization through his theory of language and discourse, which for all post-structuralists is the special locus of struggle. An anti-referentialist philosophy of language makes the sublime anti-partisan view possible, seeing language as an archipelago of disparate practices unable to clarify the meaning of general concepts;⁶⁵ concepts and language rather inhabit as strange entities within the subject, as the medium of endless dissent. In opposing reason to aesthetics and the figural, Lyotard opposes deliberation for a politics of performativity. “It is clear”, writes Lyotard ‘that language games are heteromorphous, subject to heterogeneous sets of pragmatic rules’. He takes a view of politics as *differend*, infinite dispersal of games, meanings, and discourses without a unifying social universe. Yet his model shares with deliberative democrats distrust for political parties and organized opposition. On the one hand, deliberative democrats dislike parties for their divisive, non-rational nature; on the other, Lyotard dislike parties for being prescriptive, to attempt a moral-political organization of a collectivity. Politics should be spontaneous (disorganized) radical dissent.

⁶³ Jean Francois Lyotard, 1994, *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, p.228

⁶⁴ Unlike Adorno, for whom the sublime is central to rebellion but “cannot be the mere capacity to escape the existing by positing the non-existing as if it existed.” For Adorno dialectical understanding of this figure, “is unassuaged negativity, as stark and illusionless as was once promised by the semblance of the sublime.” See Theodor Adorno, 2004, *Aesthetic Theory*, London: Continuum, p.227, p.260

⁶⁵ “There are no procedures, defined by a protocol unanimously approved and renewable on demand, for establishing in general the reality of the object of an idea... As a general rule, the object which is thought under the category of the whole (or of the absolute) is not an object of cognition. The principle affirming the contrary could be called totalitarianism.” Jean Francois Lyotard, 1988, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press

Like Foucault's rejection of partisan politics of truth, Lyotard spurns the 'gladiatorial paradigm' proper to political parties and collective organizations. Parties competing among themselves over truth claims belong to a realist metaphysical world that treats thought and ideas as instruments. This extreme contextualism of isolated language games in the manner of the second Wittgenstein –the anti-philosopher of *Philosophical Investigations*- has no room for partisan practice. Parties presuppose a political society where others must be engaged in a common language and struggle. But since the ethical responsibility in the *differend* is to respect the other's play or language, Lyotard uses such epistemology to deride organization, strategy, and the social... and political philosophy *tout court*.

Conclusions

Liberals often reduce politics to procedure, establishing legitimacy in established legality. Politics and partisanship corrupt the institutional process that makes possible legitimate, unhindered deliberations. Post-structuralists think of true politics happening in exceptional situations, with grand events and mystical evocations. Laws can never be legitimate. Institutions and parties are already corrupt for belonging to the State. True politics is always to come as a promise of emancipation turning away from actuality to make room for a more open, more ethical kind of being.

Poststructuralist theories stress a politics of difference relinquishing the 'liberal' moment of universalism and rationalism. Post-structuralism sanctions a political actor who occupies a special place outside reason and political representation. And parties negate and reduce the endless complexity of political life, a complexity conceived in terms of vitalism and affects. Yet, in resisting universalism and hegemony in profit of particularity and diffusion, post-structural narratives fail to differentiate between different universalisms and run the danger of reifying difference at the risk of overlooking underlying and totalizing social relations. To wit, critical post-structural accounts offer a powerful critique of liberal moral rationalism, but the trade-off is to privilege the particular instead of the universal, fragment over totality, and so on.⁶⁶ Just as liberals,

⁶⁶ Parties are also absent in seemingly more radical theories that read democracy as a creative conflict. The struggle and competition, proper to party democracies according to old performative theories of democracy, are acted out in these more recent accounts through dispersed social movements without leadership and parties. There are no accounts of political leadership and party

post-structural theory censures partisanship. Post-structuralists are skeptical of parties and manifestoes, framing politics as micro-politics and singularities, at the ‘molecular’ level of civil society. Just like liberal theorists praise non-partisanship with ideas of consensus and deliberation, postmodernists discredit partisanship on the opposite grounds of infinite dissent, particularism, and the metaphysical impossibility of [political] representation. Liberalism and postmodernism evenly stifle partisanship as a result of their understanding politics from either ontological commitment to absolute identity or absolute difference.

Both accounts proceed from grand but closed theories of the political. Post-structural and liberal conceptions have strenuous requirements for ‘true’ politics. Liberals imagine a world of rational deliberation between excellent citizens outside institutions like parties or Congress. Poststructuralists use similar exceptionalist arguments. Real politics are rare and extraordinary, miraculous, brought by unforeseen events. And politics disappoint if independent, selfless citizens do not deliberate or if radical individuals do not demand the impossible, nothing less than immediate, spontaneous revolution.⁶⁷ For these reasons, postmodernism and liberalism engage repeatedly in a moral perfectionism. Both theories stress on the extraordinary and do not consider the repeated failure and equivocation of politics, due to necessity, constrain, and negotiations. Politics for both ethical theories bear demanding standards, consequence of

organization. They instead highlight social movements and activists at the expense of parties and partisans; however on the key and complex relation between social movements and political parties are not mentioned and social movements do not confront each other as parties do. Accounts, such as Laclau and Mouffe’s, see leftist political parties as “Leninists” saffected by the supposed authoritarian, substitutionist relation between masses and vanguards, anachronistic to the broader character of democratic revolutions, which includes other sectors beside the ‘working class’. Lefort’s theory of democracy sees power as empty place with temporary tenants (groups that successfully installed their own signified version of hegemony). See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, 2001. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a radical democratic politics*. London: Verso, pp.56-7; Claude Lefort, 1998. *Democracy and political theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 17-20

⁶⁷ Carl Schmitt discerned this heroism as the narrative of political romanticism, a longing to be in ‘the middle of important events’, to ‘be there’ when radical change happens, either in a revolutionary (France) or reactionary (Germany) sense. See Carl Schmitt, 1986, *Political Romanticism*, Cambridge, MIT Press, p.5-20. In this sense, Badiou is the most representative contemporary figure of this position, celebrating a kind of left militarism seeing in armed revolutionaries the only legitimate actors. See Alain Badiou, 2001, *Ethics*, London: Continuum, pp. 76-79. For a caustic assessment of Badiou’s idealization of revolutionary violence, see Richard Wolin, 2012, *The Wind from the East: French Intellectuals, the Cultural Revolution, and the Legacy of 1960s*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp.155-178.

conceiving politics from outside, from jurisprudence and metaphysics.⁶⁸

Both political theories, persistently fail to deal with the double-sided actuality of parties and institutions. Parties make normative claims for the whole community and at the same time they divide the community. Parties are political unities that divide the polity, and their existence shows that every polity is a divided unity. Yet post-structuralism and liberal/deliberative theories seek a holistic unity, either through moral consensus or a future community of special beings. Post-structural exceptionalism is the exact obverse of liberal proceduralism. Exceptional events depend on business as usual; the site of the Event does not make sense without the ordinary.⁶⁹ These are all consequences of a politico-philosophical dualism and antinomianism that I will explore in the next chapters. Eventually, post-structuralism and liberalism depend on similar logics of exclusion. Liberalism operates under a excluding reason, the other must be disciplined through moral coercion and learning. Post-structuralism employs an exclusive otherness. To be truly ‘political’ is to place oneself outside institutions and the law through different routes of escape, through ethics, aesthetics, or religion.

⁶⁸ Contrast both accounts to Marx and Engels. All kinds of resistances, including those not leading to revolutions should be supported ceaselessly. There is no abstract model to which political action must be measured against: “The Communists do not form a separate party opposed to the other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own, by which to shape and mould the proletarian movement.” Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 2012, *The Communist Manifesto*, London: Verso, p.50

⁶⁹ “While irreducible to liberalism, the ethical turn that emerged out of 1968 had an elective affinity to it in its depoliticizing impulses. Accordingly, the slide from one pole to becoming folded into the other was just a short step: Derrida was always at pains to resist liberalism; Foucault’s retreat into Hellenistic practices of the self was a tacit acknowledgment of political exhaustion; and the communism of desire in *Anti-Oedipus* was radical at the level of theory, metaphor and trope, while politically very abstract and elusive, sometimes even rather timid about the mainstay of the political field, even if not entirely acquiescent to its political situation.” Antonio Vázquez-Arroyo, “Historicizing the Ethical Turn” from *Scenes of Responsibility* (forthcoming), p.48

CHAPTER TWO

CRUSHING THE PARTY

ANTI-PARTISANSHIP IN THE HISTORY OF THOUGHT

“Another infirmity of the Commonwealth [are] the great number of corporations; which are as it were many lesser commonwealths in the bowels of a greater, like worms in the entrails of a natural man.” -Hobbes

“More respect to the man of knowledge; down with all parties!” –Nietzsche

“When one imagines two powers in mutual opposition but unable to come to grips with each other because the one constantly evades the other, a set-up like that would certainly not lack a comical effect.” –Kierkegaard

The Canon: No Parties

Parties and partisan minds did not fit with perennial ideals of harmony and concord, ever since the Platonic contempt for democracy.⁷⁰ Democracy gives every part equal power. Aristotle accepted the contentious nature of politics, but prescribed formal equality with elections to protect material inequality. By sharing political power, Aristotle inoculated property power.⁷¹ Monotheism followed with a more extreme verve. Augustine saw factions as an attribute of the pagan mind -many gods, many parties.⁷² Heretics had to reconcile with orthodoxy or be expelled from the Church. Religious parties destroyed the highest values of charity and peace for Aquinas.⁷³ In the Islamic world from Spain to Egypt, Maimonides urged minorities to recognize no other authority than the Rabbinic majority or risk losing their rights. More than 300 sects flourished after the rise Shia Islam continuing pre-Islamic feuds in religious guise. Sunni philosophers

⁷⁰ “Democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder, and dispensing a sort of equality to equal and unequals alike.” Plato, 1998, *The Republic*, 558c. London: Hackett Publishing House.

⁷¹ See Aristotle, 1996, *The Politics and the Constitution of Athens*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.107. “The oligarchic principle of election by voting instead of the democratic use of the lot for choosing magistrates may be combined with the democratic qualifications of property qualifications for office [...] As with the polity proper, the best democracy is obviously not a popular regime but an agrarian polis dominated by the larger propertied interests. No wonder that Aristotle takes great pains to point out that the notables should have no reason to complain about such a system.” Ellen M. Wood, 1978, *Class, Ideology and Ancient Political Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp.244-45

⁷² See St. Augustine, 2010, *De Ordine*, South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, p, 110.

⁷³ Thomas Aquinas, 2002, *Political Writings*, “On Kingship”, I, 2, 17-18

such as Alfarabi, Avicenna, Averroes, and Ibn-Khaldun considered these splits more dangerous to the *Ummah* than infidels. Later, many parties burst with the Lutheran Reformation. Sects claiming divine inspiration competed throughout Central Europe. Peasant movements frequently advocated an antinomian politics and religiosity in disregard for civil and religious laws. Luther sided with the Counterrevolution despite his rebellion against Rome; absolute submission to secular authorities required no parties; the true and free life of the faithful recognizes no factions or “outward distinctions”.

Modern contract theorists inherited the ancient antipathy for parties, but modified the means to crush them. Modern theory sundered the corporatist view of necessity and continuity between nature and polis, and political divisions as well as political freedoms and mobilization became systematic with the rise of centralized States, national parliaments, and legal parties. Imperatives became technical managing security, self-preservation, and power; gravity shifted to the individual and politics became directorial radically realigning the poles of power and legitimacy. If the corporatist bond of the ancients never posed as harsh a diremption between individual and community despite their general lack of freedoms, formal modern egalitarianism brought into the open a vision of politics as struggle. The image of the polity lost the old organic and harmonic ‘balance’ between similitudes and analogies, since the scientific revolution in politics polarized individual and community through free consent, form and content through State sovereignty, and actuality and ideality through dividing politics and ethics.⁷⁴ Individuals now were opposed to each other and to the State. If principles of identity and continuity ruled ancient thought, modern theorists used the principle of difference and estrangement. The scientific revolution produced a set of political antinomies that would govern Western political imagination to our days.

The scientific-technical outlook, again, never ceased hostilities toward parties despite the rise of constitutional party governments. Almost all contractualists and non-

⁷⁴ Reinhardt Kosselleck sees this separation between morality and politics in modernity proper to secret political parties, the Masonry especially, in the age of the absolutist State. Freemasons, as it is known, went on to found the American Republic and party system. See Reinhart Kosselleck, 2000, *Critique and Crisis*, Cambridge: MIT Press, pp.82-85. In another vein, Foucault also described this historical shift from resemblances to relations of identity and difference proper to post-XVII century modernity. Yet Plato’s most enigmatic dialogue, the Parmenides, revolves under this issue as well. See Michel Foucault, 2005, *The Order of Things*, London: Routledge, pp.50-51.

contractualists such as Smith, Hume, and Nietzsche snubbed parties. If something is common for philosophies of every political sign is their antipathy to parties, perhaps for the philosophical belief that overrides every politics that Truth is one. Parties had to be eliminated, or their capability restricted and neutralized. Parties also had to become provisional, or to have them as many as possible to turn them useless. With modern contract theory, the pair of civil society and the state, state of nature and political nature, articulated a kind of duality soon to be transformed into a dualism, not far from medieval theology, in which the lower order of politics ought to mirror a superior and depoliticized natural law. Natural law and contract as the normative origin of politics emptied politics of history. Thus, contractualists executed an opposite move than the utopians and historicists of the Renaissance. Unlike utopians, which also used natural law to criticize existing societies, contractualists idealized existing societies. Existing regimes became the Utopia, especially around the individual's assertion of property power.⁷⁵ Unlike Machiavelli who like Hegel placed great importance to how institutions shaped political life, contractualists preferred the moment of foundation or constitution, in order to fix politics with first reasons in a political metaphysic.

Ancients never viewed politics as a positive science. Modern theorists instead wanted to secure an exact knowledge of politics to, as Habermas writes, “disregard the categories of ethical social intercourse and confine themselves to the construction of conditions under which human beings, *just like objects within nature*, will necessarily behave in a calculable manner.”⁷⁶ Hegel described this modern moment as trying to grasp the opposites of ideal and content “in the most abstract extremes”. “The judge is the thinking Understanding”, the scientific faculty that dissects, separates, inspects, and fragments objects in order to know them and master them. Contractualism produced a politics marked by this extreme ‘inorganic’ diremption between ideal and content, this

⁷⁵ See especially Mannheim's insightful analysis of the utopia of “the liberal humanitarian idea” on gradual non-radical progress and emphasis on the “Idea.” Karl Mannheim, 2013, *Ideology and Utopia*, London: Routledge, p.200-210. Ellen Wood maintains that at this time the stark opposition of the ‘natural’ individual and the ‘political’ state obeyed to the very practical concern of imposing a new and revolutionary form of exclusive ownership over customary overlapping use-rights of land. Enclosures, justified as private freedoms, were the social manifestation of this new politico-philosophical dualism. See Ellen M. Wood, 1998, *A Trumpet of Sedition: Political Theory and the Rise of Capitalism 1509-1688*, New York: NYU Press, p. 133

⁷⁶ Jürgen Habermas, 1973, *Theory and Praxis*, Boston: Beacon Press, p.43

tearing apart between subject and political power.⁷⁷ Between both extremes, nothing must take place. The excluded third meant the disappearance or to regards as secondary intermediary bodies between State and individual, Substance and Subject.

The Modern Politics of Understanding

Medieval nominalism provided the antinomian framework for Hobbes, the first modern contractualist. The nominalist conception of language rested on a strong separation between form and content. Language was seen as an arbitrary institution; words were void of substance and universal meaning. Without universal and rational essences, ideas of good and morality depended on divine and sovereign will as holders of absolute power. Hobbes's view was one of an absolute conventionalism, where both terms absolute and convention carry equal weight. Orders are conventional because they are products of human deliberation and agreement. Orders are also absolute because there is nothing outside convention. Form (convention) over-determines social and political life (content). The absolute nature of convention is settled by not reflection or philosophy, but through sovereign will.⁷⁸ Hobbes's contract is built on this dual nature of absolute and relative (convention). On the one hand, the relative convention lies in the subject entering freely into a deliberate and contingent contract with others to designate a power outside the contract. On the other, absolute convention is total obedience to this third power. Power is reified in the sovereign, as well as language is reified in conventions and customs.

Nominalism provided Hobbes with key concepts to build his artificial notion of the State. Hobbes produced an absolutist state without the aid of tradition, deduced from the powers of understanding and observation of 'human nature'. Like most moderns,

⁷⁷ Georg W.F. Hegel, 1995, *Lectures in the History of Philosophy*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, pp.61-65. Yet Hegel manifests this diremption more clearly in his aesthetics through the relation between form and content. The historical ages of art, -symbolic, classical, and romantic-poses three different relations of form and content. The modern age inherited the Christian-Romantic relation where content is infinite and supersedes form, with music and painting as champions of unhappy consciousness. Inwardness becomes absolute and the external world is reduced to a series of mechanical relations. This has important political consequences. The political world is administered through rules and techniques, while the privatized individual turns absolute, yet politically powerless.

⁷⁸ Hans Blumenberg shows that voluntaristic, absolutist notions of God and political power go hand in hand with a nominalistic understanding of language and reason. See Hans Blumenberg, 1985, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, MIT Press, pp.181

Hobbes separated the realms of nature and politics, severing the evolutionary link from nature to polis proper to corporatism. Yet the outcome is theological even to Hobbes's own mechanicism. Hobbes conceived nature as mere repetition, an endless state of war, and human nature as a blind mechanism of passions. Politics and order are almost miracles. The sovereign is the Creator of politics, intruding into natural existence. In Hobbes, the absolute mechanicism of a secularized nature coexists with a supernatural decisionism. Although Hobbes, the "Galileo of politics", did not believe in miracles for being threats to the political order, the myth of the Leviathan, half-men and half-God has a miraculous flavor. Hobbes's theological exegeses at the end of Leviathan ground the modern State on Biblical revelation, the paradigmatic 'miracle' of all.⁷⁹

In order to keep sovereign power complete, Hobbes cast out parties from the Leviathan drawing on psychological and sociological reasons.⁸⁰ Party leaders appeal to the vanity of its members, and partisans quickly become fanatical and dangerous for the Commonwealth. Parties are in advantage over the State in securing loyalties from the people. Cohesion is easier to achieve among the people, instead of the allegiance to a remote central power. The fervor of group identity overcomes the fear of isolated individuals. Political parties are among the "Diseases of the Commonwealth". They are "many lesser Commonwealths in the bowels of a greater; like worms in the body of the natural man"⁸¹, corporations, those insidious entities from the middle Ages that denied members independence. But authority requires no intermediary bodies between subject and State, atomization and individualism enhance political stability and order.

Locke showed greater acceptance to parties, but restricted partisanship to a legalistic conception of politics. First, Locke treated divisive issues such as beliefs and

⁷⁹ But the Scriptures were to be interpreted and enforced not by the Pope (the Catholic 'global' position), nor by the individual, (the Lutheran 'anarchist' position) but by the Sovereign itself (the nationalist Anglican posture). See Thomas Hobbes, 1997, *Leviathan*, London: Norton, p. 200. See also Carl Schmitt, 2008, *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, p.92: "Who is this god who brings peace and security to people tormented by anguish, who transforms wolves into citizens and through this miracle proves himself to be a god, obviously only a mortal god, a deus mortalis?" Also see Stephen J. Finn, 2004, *Thomas Hobbes and the Politics of Natural Philosophy*, London: Continuum, pp. 150-165, and Aloysius Martinich, 1992, *The Two Gods of Leviathan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 242-44

⁸⁰ See Richard Boyd, 2001, "Thomas Hobbes and the Perils of Pluralism", *The Journal of Politics*, v.63, n.2, p.40

⁸¹ Thomas Hobbes, 1997, *Leviathan*, London: Norton, pp. 241

religion as non-political issues, private matters. Second, Locke only allowed public opposition in his model when civil functionaries, ministers and magistrates neglect right and procedure, endangering the correct functioning of the State. Locke's juridical-procedural concept of opposition comes from his understanding of the state of nature. Unlike Hobbes, Locke seems more medieval in his notion of nature; nature is goodness and should model political society.⁸² The legislature and the executive reflect two fundamental laws of nature, the right to life and property and the right of punishment. The challenge of living in a state of nature lies primarily in hardship and scarcity, not violence. If Hobbes harshly separated nature and politics in order to assert political authority, Locke weakened such partition, but created a depoliticized conception of politics that secured 'natural' social relations instead of asserting political authority. The Lockean State allowed individuals to behave within a political order as if they were in the state of nature, especially in their quest for wealth. Parties are given a place in the political order, but they are greatly constricted to enforce and legislate according to the laws of nature. Locke reduces a bit the philosophical hostility to parties, but parties are only guarantors of pre-existing laws, not creators of new orders. Partisan opposition is juridical or procedural, not political, appearing only in an approving or judgmental role.

More than any other contract theorist, Rousseau asserts a radically creative politics due to his concept of will. Yet more than any other contractualist, Rousseau considered parties as the main hindrance for the General will. Parties embody private interests, desire and selfishness; they are not conducive to that work of art which is political society. More than Hobbes and Locke, the antinomies characteristic of this period appear throughout Rousseau's political theory in order to bind (but not resolve) the extreme differences between ancients and moderns concerning good government. Rousseau for example wished for a republic with modern direct institutions based on the ancient idea of virtue. Rousseau also believed that perfect freedom is only possible in the

⁸² At this point, Locke seems more medieval than Hobbes. Continuity and discontinuity between medieval law and early constitutionalism is a major debate among medievalists and early modern historians, Brian Tierney notices this connection of continuity of Locke and medieval natural rights, more present than in Hobbes. See Brian Tierney, 2011, "Corporatism, Individualism, and Consent: Locke and Premodern Thought" in Kenneth Pennington (ed.) *Law as Profession and Practice in Medieval Europe*, London: Ashgate, pp. 49, and Brian Tierney, 2005, "Historical Roots of Modern Rights: Before Locke and After", *Ave Maria Law Review* 3, pp. 23-38.

State of nature, but political freedoms are creations of the radical will, completely outside nature. There is no trace of natural law once popular sovereignty is constituted. Rousseau understands politics as a radical convention, thus his stark antinomy between natural man and civilization is not solved easily in going back to nature. Rousseau's political philosophy is anything but a regression to nature. By eliminating natural law, Rousseau saw no need to preserve ethical and political individualism, the political personalism of the Sovereign, or to retain the inequality of Locke's contract. Individuals fulfill themselves in virtue through education (as in Plato) in a political form in which all public differences collapse (against Plato). This transition from nature to artifice is epochal and marks the passage from European romanticism to modernism. Rousseau's vision of politics, on the contrary, far surpasses Hobbes's in alienation.⁸³ But Rousseau's General Will is built as an absolute identity without differences.⁸⁴ There should be no private wills in the public sphere, no parties in the republic of virtue, and if these were inevitable, then there should be as many as possible for them to become ineffective.⁸⁵ If Locke allowed for parties in parliaments and opposition, it is because Locke has a restricted, juridical conception of politics. Rousseau does not allow parties for the opposite reason. The danger of politics lies in its own nature, in unrestricted will, for which parties do not have a natural law to obey, follow, or consult.

For a thinker that is often seen as crucial to liberal constitutionalism, the one who thought contractualism in systematic terms, the question of political parties in Kant's philosophy is absent. However, one can easily deduce from his practical philosophy Kant's position on the question of partisanship. Kant never theorized concerted political

⁸³ See Maurizio Viroli, 2003, *Jean Jacques Rousseau and the Well-Ordered Society*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 46-52. Hans-Robert Jauss also sees Rousseau as the foundational figure of a post-romantic aesthetics of artifice, starting with Baudelaire, who replaces naturalism with the supernatural. See Hans-Robert Jauss, 1982, *Towards and Aesthetic of Reception*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

⁸⁴ Hegel sees, however, that Rousseau did not solve the antinomies between private and general wills, since the general will is a sum of all private, arbitrary wills: "[Rousseau] regards the universal will ... only as a 'general will' which proceeds out of this individual will as out of a conscious will. The result is that he reduces the union of individuals in the state to a contract, and therefore to something based on their arbitrary wills, their opinion, and their capriciously given consent." See Georg W.F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §157

⁸⁵ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, 1996 *The Social Contract*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.48: "if there are partial societies, it is best to have as many as possible and to prevent them from being unequal as was done by Solon, Numa, and Servius."

action or political opposition, yet Kant's conception of public reason constitutes the cornerstone for our deliberative, non-partisan conception of political reason. To this end, Kant reversed the relation between public and private. A citizen uses her reason in a private, heteronomous way when she speaks as partisan for an organization. The private use of reason means to advance the interests of a political organization or group. The public use of reason appears only when a citizen speaks as an Independent, using only the convictions of her moral conscience. Kant's reversal of this question of public and private was revolutionary, akin to Luther's emphasis on conscience. Kant defined the public sphere as the realm to apply moral judgment in excess of political constraints from specific states or organization, a transnational freedom of conscience, so to speak. Yet Kant starkly separated the moral from the political and, therefore, practical reason quickly became anti-political. Kant invested reason with supreme legislative powers above partisan interests, but such reason speaks for an abstract concept of humanity and from no specific place, without time and without space.

Anti-contractualists had also deep anti-partisan prejudices. Hume thought no government was founded on contract.⁸⁶ The original contract is a speculative fiction produced precisely by parties. Partisan politics is metaphysical politics; parties believe in these invisible principles as if they were real. Modern parties for Hume are speculative parties of principle, founded on abstract notions. This is the source of their evil. Speculation demands no contradiction between principle and action [Hume thought that contradiction allowed each person to do as she wishes privately supporting a plural political life.]. Fanaticism follows when action and principle, theory and practice are not in contradiction. Parties of principle possess irreconcilable views. But since man is a stubborn creature of habits and since it is impossible to provide an ultimate reason for a right knowledge or right politics, the only solution is to moderate party strife, not to end

⁸⁶“Almost all the governments which exist at present, or of which there remains any record in story, have been founded originally, either on usurpation or conquest, or both, without any presence of a fair consent or voluntary subjection of the people”, David Hume, 1994, *Political Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.191. The same position is found in Adam Smith who says, “Ask a day porter or day-labourer –writes Smith- why he obeys the civil magistrate, he will tell you that it is right to do so, that he sees other do it, that he would be punished if he refused to do it, or perhaps that it is a sin against God not to do it. But you will never hear him mention a contract as the foundation of his obedience.” Adam Smith, 1978, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, pp.66-67.

it. Hume as well as Burke regarded speculation as the trait of the revolutionary mind. For both men, revolutions are products of false philosophies, which elevate metaphysical concepts as ultimate authorities. Parties, for Hume, cannot “well support [themselves], without a philosophical or speculative system of principles annexed to its political or practical one. People are commonly very rude builders, especially in this speculative way, and more especially when actuated by party-zeal”.⁸⁷

Criticizing the state of nature, contract, and partisanship was a logical outcome of Hume’s skepticism.⁸⁸ Hume’s skepticism towards speculation and parties was coherent with his philosophy of knowledge, organized around the opposites of reason and sensations. The antinomian nature of Hume’s thought regards senses destroying claims of reason, such as the mental idea of cause when causes are nowhere seen. At the same time, ideas from perceptions associated with the senses are only ideas of the mind. Mental representations of sensations are not the same as sensations themselves. An unbridgeable gulf exists between reason and perception and consequently the mind falls into unavoidable contradictions. Senses struggle with reason, and reasons provide inconsistent, fictional arguments to explain experience and sensuousness. Smith and Hume radicalized British empiricism to conclude that causation is not real, just a mental operation. Likewise, in politics, the notion of contract is metaphysical when it is regarded as an actual first cause to justify political responsibility, and parties are to blame for introducing these fanatical first causes into politics.

Nietzsche’s critique of contract disposed of the abstract equality of contract theorists, but he preserved and sharpened their anti-partisan antinomianism.⁸⁹ The type of

⁸⁷ At the time, Hume was more famous than Burke for his enmity against the Directorate. See Steven Wulf, 2000, “The Skeptical Life in Hume’s Political Thought”, *Polity* 33,1; John Christian Laursen, 1992, *The Politics of Skepticism in the Ancients, Montaigne, Hume, and Kant*. Amsterdam: Brill; Laurence Bongie, 2000, *David Hume, Prophet of Counterrevolution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press

⁸⁸ Aversions towards natural law had specific theological reasons in Scotland. Natural law tradition was weak in Scotland, unlike England, and Scottish reformers considered a problem that virtue and morality depended on a state of nature. They adhered to a stern Calvinist conviction that nature is damaged beyond repair.

⁸⁹ “When [philosophers] see to their horror how logic coils up to these boundaries and finally bites its own tail –suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, tragic insight which, merely to be endured, needs art as protection and remedy.” Friedrich Nietzsche, 1996, *The Birth of Tragedy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.97-98. See also Michael Allen Gillespie, 1996, *Nihilism before Nietzsche*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p.35. “Nietzsche sees the antinomies as the

justice for contractualists is only possible among equals; modern violence originates in the illusion that this type of justice, that this contract can be universal. One archetype for Nietzsche is the Rousseauian man, creator of commotions- responding “to the most naïve of moral canons, like objectivity, good will of Christianity.” Hegel understood also modern Christian morality as this diremption of absolute inwardness and external legislation, which took the fullest and most consummate form in Protestantism. But for Nietzsche, Christianity is instead this equalization of *external* relations that does not do justice to the unequal inner vitalities of different spirits. Contract is a democratic fiction born out of a Christian and dialectical bad conscience. Nietzsche’s antinomian anti-contractualism extends logically to political parties and political representation. There is no mutual recognition between nobles and slaves.⁹⁰ The mob clouded by hatred and resentment would not recognize their ‘natural’ superiors.⁹¹ Political parties belong to the vulgar democratic era; parties are “all compelled to transform their principles into great al fresco stupidities.”⁹² Modern democracies must “prevent the organization of parties”, because the rich and the miserable depend on wealth and parties organize and manipulate this dependency for political power.

decisive turning point in European history, but he sees them not as a tremendous problem but as a great opportunity –the long tyranny of reason is coming to an end and a radically new creation may soon be possible... to raise humanity to new and glorious heights in the wings of his musical philosophy.”

⁹⁰ ““The right of possession relates immediately to things, not to a third party. Man has a right to take into possession as much as he can as an individual. He has this right; it is implied in the concept of being himself: through this he asserts himself over all things. But his taking into possession implies also that he excludes a third. What is it which from this point of view binds the other? What may I take into my possession without doing injury to a third party?”, Hegel, *Realphilosophie* I, p.250

⁹¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, 2006, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp.58-59: “I think that sentimentalism which would have it begin with a "contract" has been disposed of. He who can command, he who is by nature "master," he who is violent in act and bearing—what has he to do with contracts! One does not reckon with such natures; they come like fate, without reason, consideration, or pretext; they appear as lightning appears, too terrible, too sudden, too convincing, and too "different" even to be hated. Their work is an instinctive creation and imposition of forms; they are the most involuntary, unconscious artists there are wherever they appear something new soon arises, a ruling structure that lives, in which parts and functions are delimited and coordinated, in which nothing whatever finds a place that has not first been assigned a "meaning" in relation to the whole/”

⁹² Friedrich Nietzsche, 1996, *Human, All Too Human*, Cambridge University Press, p. 438

Anti-partisanship and the antinomy of law

From contractualists to Nietzsche, politics was framed through the opposites of civil society and the State, and with the mild exception of Locke, there is no philosophical conceptualization of political opposition as practice. In all the revisited theories, political opposition is unethical. When parties and partisans are considered, there is only proscription and the separation between ethics and politics made blunter. Gillian Rose calls this partition of ethics and politics *the antinomy of law*. For Rose this antinomy has a specific beginning in a historical institution. Rose writes,

“Unaddressable oppositions between morality and legality, autonomy and heteronomy, the good will and natural desire, force and generality, can be traced to an historically specific legal structure which establishes and protects absolute property by means of the juridical fictions of persons, things, and obligations. Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* shows how the confrontation between master and slave becomes internalized in the ‘person’ as the struggle between the good will and inclination. Opening up a historical perspective on the development of the idea of ‘persons’ as the bearers of equal rights and the hypertrophy of their inner life, Hegel expounds the antinomy of law as the characteristic compound of modern states of individual freedom with individual depoliticization.”⁹³

According to Rose, in modern philosophy, Kant and Kantianism extrapolated Roman property law into universal law by separating the laws of things from laws of persons, means and ends, subjects and objects. The famous Kantian maxim of not treating persons as things is an intelligible ideal, a regulative principle, yet this distinction is inherently private, and while the distinctions between things and people are idealized, they still stem from a juridical opposition at the heart of Roman property law. The antinomy of law asserts individual freedoms against power, but also, and less evidently, it naturalizes property relations (such as the system produced by Rome) as ethics. The antinomy also purifies politics of political opposition, and subordinates conflicts to moral philosophy, reproducing the dualism of *imperium et dominium* of Western tradition. *Kantianism presupposes an idealization of Roman relative ethical life, but dirempting the opposites of persons and things, but by still preserving such distinction in the realm of the unconditioned.*

In his critical theory of knowledge, Kant viewed antinomies as tools to show the limits of cognition. At the same time, his model justified the empirical world through

⁹³ Gillian Rose, 1984, *Dialectics of Nihilism*, London: Basil & Blackwell, pp.3-4

extemporal norms of reason, and as result, politics as practice was transformed into a metaphysics of law. The normative nature of Kant's conception of politics summarized the attitude of most classical contractualists, especially Locke, as well as modern liberals and post-structuralists. Politics must be understood transcendentally in light of foundational principles beyond partisan propensities, and also by criticizing actual politics in metaphysical language, independently of institutions and political struggles. This approach, whether critical or not, imposes a strict separation of ideal and actuality.

Contractualism justifies politics in terms of abstract right, as a system of property relations. "Our ancient society", as Rose would say, relies on the antinomies of persons and things; it treats persons as things and things as persons. The core of the modern state and modern political philosophy is recognition and selfhood, even if it is under a system of property. As property becomes the foundation for personal freedoms, it becomes also misrecognition of personhood, in a double sense: the possession of personality, and *personae*, bearers and masks of the property system. For example, when a person's [labor] is rented or hired, the person takes on the legal role of a thing. But this personhood or legal selfhood is already a product of the legal system. It does not bring into existence a natural self-hood prior to law as contract theorists imagined. This illusion of natural law is proper to natural consciousness, according to Hegel, effective as long as we recognize the substance, objective spirit, and institutions as natural and in opposition to spirit. The apparent naturalness of second nature is a product of human freedom itself.⁹⁴ For Hegel, the dichotomies between civil society and the State come from taking something a posteriori, the existence of an atomized society with the advent of modernity and capitalism as the condition for all political societies independent of social reason. Yet dichotomies are outcomes and not causes of social orders. The fragmentation of bourgeois social relations which is an effect is misrecognized as isolated individuals as cause.

⁹⁴ See Nigel Tubbs, 2006, *Philosophy's Higher Education*, Amsterdam: Springer, p.27: "Relation is always a relation to an other and, within modern social relations, relation to an other is defined through ownership. Property is itself a misrecognition of freedom by freedom. Even though universal private property is the current form of this misrecognition, nevertheless the relation to the object has always defined freedom's own misrecognition of itself. As such, property in one form or another is always both the cause and the effect of our lack or freedom. The non-property based relation is part of our higher education regarding freedom but even this notion of freedom is substantial only within the property relation whose truth it is."

The tradition of political Kantianism deploys the antinomy of law to produce transcendental political subjects, purified from concrete desires and social relations, and to produce a jurisprudence of duty, in which rights and obligations are universal and transcendental, independent of regimes and political forms. The problem is to reconcile the theoretical determinism of transcendental philosophy with practical-political freedom. In other words, how to make philosophy politically possible, and how to make politics philosophical, to unite both extremes of thought and action. Yet in this diremption philosophy always kept the upper hand.

Kant used antinomian analysis as a powerful critical tool, but Kantian criticism resulted in skepticism and Kant's theories had to be reworked to avoid nihilism in his practical philosophy. The result was a dogmatic morality formulated through axioms and maxims. The history of post-Kantianism shows how the skeptical implications of Kant's system risked degenerating into faith or religion. Since first reasons are not rationally justifiable, commandments come to fill the non-observable universe of political morality, ethics, aesthetics, and religion.⁹⁵ Hegel argued that antinomies results in incoherence, but they are also necessary.⁹⁶ Yet, Hegel's treatment of antinomies has been ignored by liberal and post-structural traditions of thought. These two traditions, for the most part, have been stuck in an endless dilemma between freedom and necessity, legality and legitimacy resulting in many consolations about the 'paradox' of politics. The result of these two neo-Kantian ways of thinking is a political anthropology inimical to partisanship.

⁹⁵ Heidegger, as a neo-Kantian, sees in Kant not a theory of knowledge, but a ripe ontology of finitude and disclosure. See Martin Heidegger, 1997, *Phenomenological Interpretation of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, p.127: "Transcendental knowledge is a knowledge which investigates the possibility of an understanding of being, a pre-ontological understanding of being. And such an investigation is the task of ontology. Transcendental knowledge is ontological knowledge, i.e. a priori knowledge of the ontological constitution of beings."

⁹⁶ See Charles Taylor, 1977, *Hegel*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.230. See also Georg W. F. Hegel, 2010, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, #18. #34. "It is the greatest inconsistency to admit, on the one hand, that the understanding knows only appearances, and to claim on the other hand, that this knowledge is absolute, by such statements as 'Cognition can go no further'; 'Here is the natural and absolute limit of human knowledge.' For any limit is only recognized through comparison with the idea of the whole and the complete."

Two Traditions of Partisanship

The history of political parties thus produced two philosophical approaches to partisanship. One is neo-Kantian stemming from Weber that understands the party as a machine competing for State power, separate from society, and using ideology only for material interests and self-advancement. It is neo-Kantian in the sense that it separates starkly political reality from political ideal, more of which will be said later in regards to Weber's view of the party. This isolated view of the party from society belongs to the liberal tradition that informs the vast majority of party theory in the 20th century.

The other tradition began with Hegel and German idealism on the Left and Right in the 19th century. Party theorists in this tradition included Rosenkranz, Bauer, Gans, Ruge, and Marx and Engels on the Left, and also F.J. Stahl, F. Rohmer, and von Treitschke on the Right. This second tradition of political parties and partisans accounts for both the objective integration of partisanship into the electoral system, and for partisanship's oppositional dimensions in the broader political, economic, and social arenas. This tradition has a dialectical conception between theory and practice, organization and tactics, party and society that rejected perspectives that see parties as autonomous entities. They saw the political party as essential to the universal life of a modern nation. As Gramsci explains,

“The history of a party must be the history of a particular social group. But this group is not isolated; it has friends, allies, opponents and enemies. Only from the complex picture of social and State life (often even with international ramifications) will emerge the history of a certain party. It can therefore be said that to write the history of a party means *to write the general history of a country from a monographic point of view.*”⁹⁷

Heinrich von Treitschke, another Hegelian and Bismarckian nationalist, at the opposite side of revolution, writes that,

“An unprejudiced study of history shows that the Party is a political necessity for a free people. It draws the countless opinions of individuals together into one average, and crystallizes the confused judgment of each into definite form. Although it is a wholesome incentive to certain natures to be compelled to range themselves under some banner, there is no doubt that the terrorism of Party may also do harm. For it is clear that every party must be one-sided... Every party is of necessity prejudiced and short-lived when compared with the breadth of vision and allotted span of the State. It is a chimera to try to construct parties to endure forever. Their best fate is to disappear with the attainment of

⁹⁷ Antonio Gramsci, 1987, *The Modern Prince and Other Essays*, p. 149

their object, their most shameful end to perish because the facts of history have proved the vanity of the ends for which they strove.”⁹⁸

The entrance of the working class into national politics gave parties a vast significance. Parties were now mass parties. All popular politics considered now parties or party-like organizations essential for working class interests and political theory.⁹⁹ But the extension of the suffrage celebrated by the newcomers posed a challenge to traditional political theorists. To different degrees, theorists like Burckhardt, Hegel, Mill, or Tocqueville supported universal suffrage only in theory and as an ideal, but they suspected its immediate realization. Around 1830s, as Kahan states, “no liberal can support the *immediate* establishment of universal suffrage, but *all* foresee sometime in the distant future when it would be a good thing.”¹⁰⁰ Voting for them was not a right, but a privilege. Mill and Tocqueville considered at different times in restricting suffrage or suspending it outright. Mill’s famous distinction between parties of order and parties of reform as requirements for healthy democracies is one of the best statements of the dialectical principle of partisanship. Mill however restricted partisanship to Whigs and Tories, and gave a very qualified defense of partisanship. Moreover, parties of progress and parties of reform were abstractions, not real political parties. Mill believed that antagonism was only useful if it corrected the deficiencies of the political system, yet actual political parties failed precisely to do so.¹⁰¹ Mill therefore advocated for anti-partisan antagonism in the form of independent discussion, deliberation, and experimentation. Although being the first politician to call for women’s right to vote in the British Parliament, Mill’s advocacy was strictly limited to consideration of class and education, not to mention despotism for the British colonies.

⁹⁸ Heinrich von Treitschke, 1916, *Politics*, vol. 1, New York: MacMillan, pp.143-144.

⁹⁹ Yet in Europe, universal suffrage quickly gave to mass unrest and its corresponding reaction; in Latin America, liberalism was conducted under military dictatorships. Only Jacksonian democracy was ‘successful’ in incorporating a working-class white electorate within the major parties due to the dominance of racial instead of class divisions in American society.

¹⁰⁰ “Burckhardt [for example] saw no alternative for the world between “complete democracy” or absolute despotism and an era of frightful wars. He foresaw a world ruled by “absolute brutality” as the final result of the “present competition for the participation of the masses in all party disputes.” Alan Kahan, 1992, *Aristocratic Liberalism: The Social and Political Thought of Jacob Burckhardt, John Stuart Mill, and Alexis de Tocqueville*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.140

¹⁰¹ See John Stuart Mill, 1989 *On Liberty*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.48

Parties embodied for Hegel the selfishness of civil society. Unlike mere civil associations, parties were not just content with civil particularism; they struggled for universality by being involved with the State. However, for Hegel, a multiparty system posed the danger that the government may itself become a party. “The government – writes Hegel- is not a party opposed to another party in such a way that both have to fight for major concessions from each other, and if a State does get into a predicament of this kind, this cannot be described as health, but only as misfortune.” Hegel therefore had in mind an intra-institutional party system. He did not advocate for parties to the whole of the Prussian electorate for two reasons. Mass electorates did not exist in any of the German states and principalities in the 1820s, and Hegel worried that irresponsible and selfish voters would hinder the communal (*sittlich*) ends of the ethical state. In this sense, Hegel was a theorist of a selectorate, not an electorate. Yet partisanship as a politico-theoretical notion occupies a central place in Hegel’s system. For Hegel, the role of the ethical State and the role of philosophy in society are the same. The tasks of the State must be significantly supported by philosophy, which is only concerned with the public sphere. Philosophy, like politics, always takes place in the struggle of contradictions, as the constant confrontation between opposed views, philosophy as partisanship.

Yet one hardly finds explicit statements for political opposition in Hegel’s political philosophy. Such a paradox can be explained through context rather than philosophy. The Carlsbad decrees in 1820s Prussia made it very difficult for the progressives to advocate for political dissent. Yet closer to the text, Hegel speaks of opposition and parties in subtle, cunning ways. The *Philosophy of Right* is full of references to political opposition, but using the less polemic term *Gegenstand* instead of *Opposition* or *Konkurrenz*, competition.¹⁰² And the Estates, remnants of medieval Germanic law still present in Hegel’s model, have like modern parties a “mediating function that display their organic function, i.e their incorporation into a [political] totality.”¹⁰³ Thus, in a key paragraph, Hegel states,

¹⁰² See Norbert Waszek, “Hegelianism and the Theory of Political Opposition” in Douglas Moggach, 2011, *Politics, Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 147-163

¹⁰³ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2003. *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §302, p. 342.

“The attitude of the executive toward the Estates should not be essentially hostile and a belief in the necessity of such hostility is a sad mistake. The executive is not a party standing over against another party in such a way that each has continually steal a march on the other and wrest something from the other. If such a situation arises in the state, that is a misfortune, but it cannot be called health.”¹⁰⁴

The importance of the Estates for Hegel, the only available party-like organism in Prussia, is useful to understand how partisanship is not only contingent to his political evaluations of the time, but a necessary feature of his speculative political imagination,

“An estates assembly cannot be regarded as having actually engaged in activity until it included an opposition. If on the other hand the assembly were unanimously in favor of the government, it would not be fulfilling its vocation or attaining its goal. *Of necessity* there must be an opposition within the assembly itself; the cabinet must have the majority in an assembly, but the opposition must *necessarily* be there as well. The estates assembly is the main council of the State.”¹⁰⁵

Hegel, of course, has in mind first the preservation of the State and while recognizing the necessity of partisanship and opposition between two main blocks, he introduces a third supposedly non-partisan element in order to favor the government which is to be preserved at all costs. As with von Treitschke, Hegel’s approach can be explained as his way to salvage the State, especially the relatively new Prussian state from political breakdown: “There must be three parties in the assembly, two that are directly opposed to each other, the party of the people and the party [that] is absolutely always on the side of the government, and then a sizable third party, which usually takes the side of the cabinet but on the whole is nonpartisan in its approach.”

It is not the Kantian and positivistic tradition, now dominant, but the Hegelian tradition that first recognized the importance of partisanship. Eduard Gans, a leading Hegelian philosopher of his time, theorized partisanship not as an isolated exception but as a necessary and universal feature for all modern states. He went further than Hegel defending the need for legal opposition parties and for active social welfare policy in the Prussian State. Gans, a liberal, greatly influenced Marx, Gans thought that partisan opposition, which assumes the task of negation in philosophy is indestructible and that governments must allow room for antagonism unless it degenerates into cabals and anarchy: “Where the State” Gans writes, “does not have to deal with an opposition, the

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, §301, Addition, p.341

¹⁰⁵ Hegel,

State will rot. The opposition has to be systematic as the negation must not be contingent.”¹⁰⁶ Opposition for Gans is universal starting from the family, civil society, to the State. The family originates in two separate and autonomous personalities, a unity of differences that is ruled by love; however, competition, the type of opposition ruling civil society, affects also the family. Once members of the family enter civil society and acts like self-interested units in the public economy, this new development affects family life (spouses, sons) introducing new richer elements in the family. Likewise the State needs to accept the opposition ‘naturally’ emerging in civil society (the struggle between different classes) to arrive at the ‘truth’ in politics.¹⁰⁷

Like the Hegelians, Marx and Engels placed partisanship at the center of politics. Most of their political writings developed around parties from the Orleanists to the Commune, from the Communist League to the US Republican Party, and most importantly, both men were not only party theorists, but partisans. This unity of theory and practice accounts for their dialectical approach to parties. Marx and Engels did not only give an objective account of how parties work, that is, as representatives of class interests, but they also provided a subjective dimension of that special organization, the revolutionary party, and how it can compete with other parties in parliaments and streets. Yet Marx and Engels did not celebrate parties as darlings of modern democracy. Mass parties unquestionably represented progress to other political forms, insofar they bring the class struggle to the open. Parties are valuable only because they carry social conflicts into the political arena, and partisanship is the political manifestation of social conflict.¹⁰⁸ Marxist party theory always stressed the relationship between parties and classes, distinct from mainstream party theory in debt with Weber to whom parties are self-interested organizations separate from classes. For Marx and Engels, parties were channels in which “individuals form a class only insofar as they are engaged in a common struggle with

¹⁰⁶ Eduardo Gans, quoted by Norbert Waszek, *ibid.*, p.156

¹⁰⁷ Mainly a philosopher of law, Gans explained the emergence of Roman law from a speculative perspective of two parties as two moments in conflict, one infinite of natural law and universality, and the other finite, of personality and freedom. Thus Roman patricians and plebeians are cast in a speculative light, in addition to their sociological dimension as groups and forces. See Corrado Bertani, 2004, *Eduardo Gans e la cultura del suo tempo*. Napoli: Guida Editore, p.269

¹⁰⁸ Vladimir I. Lenin, 1975, “The Successes of the American Workers”, *Collected Works*, vol.18, pp.336: As “No democracy in the world can eliminate the class struggle and the omnipotence of money. It is not this that makes democracy important and useful. The importance of democracy is that it makes the class struggle broad, open and conscious.”

another class.” Marx and Engels rebuked the idealist view that parties transcended classes and social forces to express universal human values and interests. For Marxists, this is a form of political ‘holism’, proper to capitalist parties, in order to deny objective class differences and affirm abstract equality.

The importance of the revolutionary party remained after the long 19th century and its significance accounted for the great importance accorded to political parties in general by interwar theories of politics, in the age of ideological extremes. Theorists like Lenin, Gramsci, Weber, and Schmitt appreciated political parties to different degrees, but politics for them was unimaginable without partisan struggles, impossible without ‘lines of enmity’. For Lenin, partisanship is inevitable in class society. Capitalism already splits society in opposed blocs. For this reason, Lenin again and again recommended studying the adversary.¹⁰⁹ Partisans always learn from their enemies. Conflicting interests are doggedly rooted in social relations and forces of production, and just as commodity exchange is mandatory under capitalism, the idea of being politically neutral is unrealistic. It is like imagining oneself outside capital relations. Lenin writes,

“In a society based upon class divisions, the struggle between the hostile classes is bound, at a certain stage of its development, to become a political struggle. The most purposeful, most comprehensive and specific expression of the political struggle of classes is the struggle of parties. The non-party principle means indifference to the struggle of parties. But this indifference is not equivalent to neutrality, to abstention from the struggle, for in the class struggle there can be no neutrals; in capitalist society, it is impossible to “abstain” from taking part in the exchange of commodities or labor-power. And exchange inevitably gives rise to economic and then to political struggle.”¹¹⁰

For Lenin, capitalism is already objectively partisan for the capitalists, yet to wish for non-partisan politics is in all a capitalist idea. The idea that the liberal bourgeoisie represents all people against the old aristocratic order, independent of class is the ideological root of non-partisanship. Since liberal politics effaces class content, the abstract nature of the ‘rights of man’ leads to non-party politics, to a widespread political morality beyond parties.¹¹¹ Non-partisanship is also strategic. Before liberal revolutions,

¹⁰⁹ Vladimir I. Lenin, 1965, “Learn from the Enemy, *Collected Works*, vol.10, p.60: “Nothing facilitate an understanding of the political essence of developments as greatly as their evaluation by one’s adversaries.”

¹¹⁰ Lenin, 1976, “The Socialist Party and Non-Party Revolutionism”, *Collected Works*, vol. 10, pp.75-82

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 82: “[But] the whole movement, therefore, on the surface inevitably acquires a non-party stamp, a non-party appearance—but only on the surface, of course. The urge for a “human”,

there were no parties in existence, and the new dominant class kept the old monarchic precautions. Non-bourgeois parties had to be prevented from taking shape. But from a purely social perspective, there is no escape from taking sides, partisanship is a necessity, birthed by the very system that disowns it.

Mass parties were for Lenin a great advancement provided by representative democracies, because parties were schools of politics. Parties made people politically literate. Yet Lenin's party manifesto *What is to be Done* is a document of non-ideal theory. Lenin had no illusions about representative democracy but how to work with the party system for revolution. Theory emerged as analytical tool to learn how to anticipate the adversary; it was not a dogmatic morality for action.¹¹² Following Lenin, Gramsci also celebrated partisanship as the embodiment of "an historical act that can only be performed by the 'collective man', nothing less than a modern Prince."¹¹³ But modern parties only exist as long as there is class struggle. Revolutionary parties seek to end class divisions, and such party-form would cease to exist once class power is gone. This anti-partyism 'for the future' plays however a subsidiary role in the critique of class societies. Anti-partyism in capitalism rejects class mobilization while keeping class inequality. Partisanship seeks to eliminate class violence and party politics dialectically through matchless class struggle and party mobilization. Again Gramsci states that,

"One may say that a party is never complete and fully-formed, in the sense that every development creates new tasks and functions, and in the sense that for certain parties the paradox is true that they are complete and fully-formed *only when they no longer exist* – i.e., when their existence has become *historically redundant*. Thus, since every party is

civilised life, the urge to organize in defense of human dignity, for one's rights as man and citizen, takes hold of everyone, unites all classes, vastly outgrows all party bounds and shakes up people who as yet are very very far from being able to rise to party allegiance. Everything seems to be "non-party"; everything seems to fuse into a single movement for "liberation" (actually, a movement liberating the whole of bourgeois society)."

¹¹² Lenin's critique of spontaneism has been taken as sign of his dogmatism. But a closer reading of *What is to Be Done* reveals that spontaneity is far from being spontaneous. The 'spontaneous' ideology of working classes is trade unionism "and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie", the ideology learnt in the capitalist factory (nothing spontaneous about it). Lenin's critique is therefore more of a pragmatic warning for socialists than theoretical dogma. See Lenin, 1907, "What is to be Done", Collected Works, vol. 5, Progress Publishers, p. 350

¹¹³ Antonio Gramsci, 2011, *Prison Notebooks*, vol. 3, New York: Columbia University Press, p.247: "The modern prince can only be an organism, a complex element in society in which a collective will begins to take a concrete form. History has already provided this organism, and it is the political party –the first cell in which there come together germs of a collective will tending to become universal and total."

only the nomenclature for a class, it is obvious that the party which proposes to put an end to class divisions will only achieve complete self-fulfillment when it ceases to exist because classes, and therefore their expressions, no longer exist”¹¹⁴

The neo-Kantian school did not grasp this necessary relation between classes and parties, and hence parties and politics were circumscribed to the field of appearances, of politicians and government. This dominant tradition in political science is one of political formalism, in which parties are outside to classes, and they attempt instead to mold passive social forces. But the October Revolution realized Marx and Engels’s achievements of an openly partisan philosophy, in which classes and party were part of the whole. Weber and his student Schmitt responded by accepting the seriousness of parties to political theory and practice, but by rejecting the notion of mass party to counter Bolshevism -and in Schmitt’s case, to counter also liberalism’s purported weakness to confront the Soviets.

Weber represented the liberal response to Marxism. Parties were indeed effective components of social structures of domination. Like Marx, Weber stated “By virtue of these structural differences of domination it is impossible to say anything about the structures of the parties without discussing the structural forms of domination per se.”¹¹⁵ Weber dissected social domination in ideal types that can be applied to different societies, but for his methodological individualism, these structures were unconnected. Classes belonged to the economic sphere, status pertained to the social sphere, and parties were of the political sphere with the goal to control the State’s resources. Weber distinguished parties as material organizations but also as ideal communities of meaning with rational values. These ‘rational’ values prevented parties, ideally, to take over the State at any cost without risking their ‘ethics of conviction’. Thus, Weber did not consider parties representative of classes. Parties also had a commitment, a responsibility to the State. In addition, Weber saw in the notion of class an un-clarified collective concept with no explanatory value. Parties were elite organizations formed by individuals. Parties managed politics pragmatically within the existing system; they moved towards integrating, not challenging the electoral system. Weber welcomed party centralization

¹¹⁴ Antonio Gramsci, loc.cit.

¹¹⁵ Max Weber, 1991, *Essays in Sociology*. London: Routledge, p.195

and bureaucracy, despite his gloomy diagnosis of general bureaucratic domination.¹¹⁶ On the contrary, Lenin complained until the end of the growing centralization of the Soviets. Bureaucracies opportunely robbed working class parties of their revolutionary projects.

Weber's neo-Kantian dualism of ideal types and methodological individualism could not conceive of classes embodying philosophical principles, and less of course of the key principle of partisanship as the standpoint of a class. The result was an elite and pessimistic power theory that removed the idea of mass political education and predicted that domination would become more pervasive and capacious in developed representative democracies. Weber was pessimistic about the bureaucratization of modern societies, but was glad a bureaucratic system could control radical social demands. His views on Russia were an example of how a poorly managed bureaucracy could not pact a transition to liberal democracy, unless "fatally wounding itself".¹¹⁷ Popular mobilization was high due to Tsarism's low state capacity. For this reason, Weber had to assign the masses a passive role. Classes had to be demobilized to change into power groups: "More and more the material fate of the masses depends upon the steady and correct functioning of the increasingly bureaucratic organizations of private capitalism. The idea of eliminating these organizations becomes more and more utopian." Weber's positive sociology conceived ideal types as impermanent; yet they reinforced present practices of power by forcing out collective agency. Masses were objects, impossible to intervene in political developments.¹¹⁸ Compare to Lukács's formulation of the revolutionary party, in which, the masses becomes classes for itself, and the individual through its membership and participation becomes a political subject; "for the first time in history the active and practical side of class consciousness directly influences the specific actions of every individual." For Lukács, the Weberian conception, our conception, sees parties as "not active in the objective historical sense of the word, as their ostensible activity is only a

¹¹⁶ On Weber's positive evaluation of party bureaucracies contrary to Ostrogorskii and Michels, see Max Weber, 1994, "Parliament and Government in Germany", *Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 145 *et passim*

¹¹⁷ Max Weber, 1995, *The Russian Revolutions*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, p.111

¹¹⁸ Max Weber, 1995, *The Russian Revolutions*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, p.229, See also Fritz Ringer, 2009, *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*, Harvard University Press, p.112-114; John Torrance, 1995, *Karl Marx's Theory of Ideas*, Cambridge University Press, p.59 *et passim*,. See also Sheldon Wolin, 1981, "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory", *Political Theory*, vol. 9, 3.

reflex of the way in which they are borne along fatalistically along historical forces they do not comprehend.”¹¹⁹ The way our parties respond to the diktats of the IMF is proof of Lukács’s accusation of the ‘contemplative’ nature of our “catch-all parties.”

Weber’s student, Carl Schmitt is famous for conceiving politics in terms of friends and enemies, for developing a theory of the partisan, and for having an epistemology in which struggle was premier. Political ideas and concepts are partisan weapons. They are only clear in line with specific contexts and interests. Yet, Schmitt’s specific texts show an intense hostility to parties. Parties are undemocratic, mercenaries of liberal parliaments. “Parties -Schmitt upholds- do not face each other today discussing opinions, but as social or economic-power groups calculating their mutual interests and opportunities for power.”¹²⁰ Parties briskly trade power by manipulating the masses in this “government by [superfluous] discussion”. According to Schmitt, parliaments represent an extraordinary reversal of democracy. In *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, Schmitt understands democracy in a classical civic sense, conservatively as a homogeneous community. Politics only endure through speedy decisions to expel danger. Survival depends on a realization of equality adverse to liberalism. For Schmitt, liberal equality exists abstractly, without the contrary of inequality. For this reason, it does not exist anywhere, only in the liberal imagination. Liberal equality is hot air; “one cannot abstract out what is political leaving only universal human equality” which then “be equally understood only in terms of itself and without risk”. Equality is meaningful only when equals are treated as equals and unequals as unequals. Concrete equality is only ‘distributed’, not granted to all evenly. In order to ensure durable regimes, democracy should expel difference within the polity, “a democracy demonstrates its political power by knowing how to refuse or keep at bay something foreign and unequal that threatens its homogeneity.”¹²¹ Schmitt observes that ignoring inequality is sound with liberal anti-politics. Schmitt argues that with equality becoming an “indifferent concept” without opposites, inequality returns with a vengeance. The repressed inequality reappears in

¹¹⁹ Georg Lukács, 1986, “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization” in *History and Class Consciousness*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 318

¹²⁰ Carl Schmitt, 1988, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, MIT Press, p. 6

¹²¹ Carl Schmitt, 1988, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, MIT Press, p.9

economics and ethics, “inequality then comes into play with ruthless power... under conditions of superficial political equality”.¹²²

In sum, from the revolutionary left, Lenin and Gramsci considered that partisanship was inexorable in class societies and that non-partisanship was a noxious ideology hiding conflict under false layers of class benevolence. For Weber, parties did reflect structures of dominations, but to convert class interests into partisan politics was implausible. Weber’s party bureaucracies control classes for their benefit. Once domination becomes opportunity, parties become averse to political change. Finally, Schmitt sees parties as parasitical liberals, which in turn is an ideology aloof to conflict and communal survival. Parties are un-political, “opposition belongs to the essence of parliament”, and dialectics is the “metaphysic of the two party systems” at the expense of the State’s unity.

¹²² Carl Schmitt, 1988, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, MIT Press, p.13. Balakrishnan sees in Schmitt’s book not a critique of classical liberalism, as it is commonly accepted, but an indictment of a post-liberal universe where institutionalized discussion was ‘evaporating’, and “extra-parliamentary zones of conflict and negotiation between parties representing social groups with antagonistic interests had suddenly emerged, tenuously institutionalized in an uncoordinated corporatism.” Gopal Balakrishnan, 2002, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt*, London: Verso, p.68

CHAPTER THREE
THE SPECULATIVE EXPERIENCE
HEGELIANISM RE-LOADED

“Hegel’s philosophy has no social import if the Absolute cannot be thought.”
-Gillian Rose

“Hegel’s is a spirit that finds its appropriate dwelling in a body with numerous protruding members and with deep fissures and sections.”
-Ludwig Feuerbach

“There is no way out of entanglement.” –Theodor Adorno

The Speculative Middle Way: Partisanship and Recognition

Liberal and post-structural political theories oscillate between the State and civil society never valuing the mediating function of parties and partisans. Although parties are key political actors, they are considered negative for the majority of political theorists to the present. Parties present a paradox to dualist thinking. As intermediary bodies, are parties of the State or do they belong to civil society? The party is indeed an anomaly, external to the canonical pair of state and society, sovereign and subjects. Yet dialectically, what is considered external to the opposition between State and Society, an excluded third, becomes internal and essential to that relation, as many Hegelian philosophers saw in the rise of political parties and organized opposition throughout Europe.¹²³ Parties embody the dialectical principle of opposition and mediation in politics.

The speculative perspective does not favor absolute identity like liberalism or absolute difference as in post-structuralism. The speculative proposes a third moment; it erects a third instance where identity and difference come into contact through a structure of recognition, a triadic model that at once involves a) the unity of opposites (ideal identity), b) the difference of opposites (ideal difference), and c) the unity in difference of

¹²³ See Norbert Waszek, 2011, “Hegelianism and the Theory of Political Opposition” in Douglas Moggach (ed.), *Politics: Religion, and Art: Hegelian Debates*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p.159.

opposites (actuality). I propose this speculative mode of political reason from Gillian Rose's innovative interpretation of Hegel. According to Rose, the speculative does not mean an absolute identity or unity of opposites as traditional interpretations of Hegel have said, but the speculative is also a lack of identity:

“To read a proposition ‘speculatively’ means that the identity which is affirmed between subject and predicate is seen equally to affirm a lack of identity between subject and predicate... From this perspective, the subject is not ‘fixed’, nor is the predicates accidental: they acquire their meaning in a series of relations to each other. Only when the lack of identity between subject and object has been experienced can their identity be grasped...”¹²⁴

Rose thinks that speculation takes place in the act of recognition. What is known, i.e. through a formal identification between concept and experience, must be re-known and re-recognized (again) in order to see the difference between the idea and its actuality. Difference or non-identity appears in the second moment of *re*-cognition. But the speculative is a triune structure since attention is given to both identity (moment 1) and non-identity (moment 2) where coincident recognition of these two moments becomes the third moment. Thus recognition is also and at the same time misrecognition or lack of identity. Partisans recognize each other as partisans of opposed parties. The recognition of the enemy is also misrecognition, or ‘de-specification’ as enemy through ethico-political or naturalistic categories (“reactionaries”, “barbarians”, “savages”, etc.)

“True” recognition or reconciliation in an absolute sense is impossible. But recognition in a relative sense is misrecognition as a product of historical or temporal situations. Absolute recognition is only ideal, proper to absolute ethical life. This ideal is nonetheless at work in history as demands for freedom, but freedom only becomes concrete with a determinate content, through the different degrees of freedoms in societies that are all necessarily constituted by recognition of the other as human, even if she is the enemy or competitor. In Hegel's political philosophy, recognition transpires in both the sphere of abstract right, a society of owners, and in ethical life, a society of citizens. In abstract right, recognition is granted by others abstractly as owners, as individuals' formal rights of property and thus each individual is interchangeable with any other. In ethical life, recognition takes place in each individual's worth as a human being. Hence, *Sittlichkeit* is a more concrete form of recognition. Yet both social

¹²⁴ Gillian Rose, 2009, *Hegel contra Sociology*, London: Verso, p.4

formations are products of freedom understood simultaneously *as and not as* alienation. The act of recognition occurs when one and others determine each other, remaining independent and different, and at the same time identical through recognition. In an early text, Hegel thinks love is the highest form of recognition and shows how the speculative works more in life than intellect: “Love completely destroys objectivity”, writes Hegel, “and thereby annuls and transcends reflection, deprives man's opposite of all foreign character, and discovers life itself without any further defect. In love the separate does still remain, but as something united and no longer as something separate; life [in the subject] senses life [in the object].”¹²⁵ Both lovers see each other as free different persons and also as identical in the relation. For Hegel, the truth of the different moments of consciousness is speculative, *the recognition that recognition is taking place*, “that the other consciousness sets aside its own being-for-self, and in so doing itself does what the first does to it.”¹²⁶ Recognition of allies and adversaries constitute the first operation in politics, as well as the recognition of others as free or unfree. In this sense, I read the speculative as trying to make sense of the partisan reality of politics through this structure of recognition rather than framing politics from the view of universal norms or absolute desire.

Despite philosophy's rejection of partisanship, philosophy has always taken sides (for the “Truth”, for the “Spirit”, for “Man”). For Aristotle, practical philosophy was the highest form of life, and it could only be concrete in the best attainable regime, for regimes are formative of citizens. Hegel believed that one always had to take sides in philosophy. Neutrality and third parties are anti-political, belonging to a realm of ‘pure culture’. For Hegel, pure culture is ‘pure insight’, a ‘peaceful consciousness’ with no partisan insight... it is a *third* in the dialogue in that it puts the whole story together and tells it to us all.” And this position is anti-intellectual. Pure description, neglecting the conflict inherent in history and ideas is of those “who understands nothing about the subject, has no system but simple historical knowledge, [and] will obviously take a nonpartisan stance.” Philosophy differs from natural consciousness in that the former considers the long duration of history, and for the study of history we need a system of

¹²⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1948, *Early Theological Writings*, New York: Harper, p. 305

¹²⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1979, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 116

reason that takes sides. In his language, Hegel states that “if the clear idea of reason is not already developed in our minds, in beginning the study of universal history, we should at least have the firm, unconquerable faith that *reason does exist there*, and that intelligence and volition is not [just] abandoned to [the] mere chance of [facts].”¹²⁷

Reading the speculative as a simultaneous identity and lack of identity between opposites conflicts with traditional interpretations of Hegel. Gillian Rose opened this reading in her groundbreaking *Hegel contra Sociology* and revived the almost forgotten notion of the speculative for social criticism. Rose argued that speculation, arguably the most metaphysical of Hegel’s ideas, was a real impulse to open thought, to keep notions moving, instead of the final closure speculation was known for. Speculation does not close thinking; speculation is also a non-correlation, a moment of non-identity between being and thought, subject and object. Rose rejected the identitarian interpretation of the speculative. Hegel’s Idea does not finally ‘meet’ itself in a moment of final self-recognition with nothing left ‘outside’ to probe, know, and discover. For Rose, “Hegel called his discourse ‘speculative’, which means that it defers itself, or, it is never finished.”¹²⁸

Reflection and Speculation

Classical German philosophy came relatively late to the European Enlightenment, given Germany’s backwardness to the western half of the continent. Yet German thinkers after Kant built an original synthesis of prior systems of thought, which they called reflective in opposition to their new, more modern speculative orientation. The speculative comprehends the workings of reflection, which idealists placed in the intellect or the understanding, but philosophies of understanding could not give account for the speculative because they lacked the notion of totality and its resulting unity of opposites.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Georg W.F. Hegel, 1990, *Philosophy of History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

¹²⁸ Gillian Rose, 1984, *Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and the Law*, Basil-Blackwell, p.139. Gowan Williams remarks that speculation stands for a “renunciation of the self-possession that is content with never failing... such putative self-possession, invulnerable to the judgment of the other and the prior, issues in the contradictions from which speculative thinking is meant to free us.” Rowan Williams, 2007. *Wrestling With Angels: Conversations in Modern Theology*, London: Eerdmans Publishing

¹²⁹ For most of its history, analytical philosophers thought of speculation as a sham. More recent research is bridging analysis, not so much with the speculative, but at least with other aspects of

The reflective aims to solve problems by dissecting and analyzing. The main faculty working here is the understanding or the intellect. The intellect treats problems as puzzles for the individual mind to solve, not as real appearances of objective contradictions. The intellect casts problems in a negative light. Solutions take priority; problems occupy an inferior role in the life of the mind. To put it in the language of the early critical theory, solutions confirm the mastery, the lordship of the subject over the object. The priority of solutions over problems reveals the supremacy of the subject. Another reason is the intellect's fondness for natural science. Reflective reason is observing reason "whose truth of law is found in experience" of immediate sensuous beings. In natural philosophy, systems are treated as sum of individual parts. Totality is understood as an interaction between individual elements.¹³⁰ Reflective reason is not self-reflective; it does not have reason as its own object of study, as an objective reason working in social relations and in understanding the universe.¹³¹ Consequently, the reflective favors mechanical views of the social and natural universe. Physics is the model science.

Yet Kant, a reflective thinker, entered into speculative territory in his late works. In the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant recognized the limitations of the mechanistic worldview to understand complexity and purpose, "no finite Reason can hope to understand the production of even a blade of grass by mere mechanical causes."¹³² In the *Opus Postumum* Kant criticized the "formal idealist" opposition of mind versus experience of the physical sciences. Kant attempted to unite both opposites in his "self-positing doctrine" (*Selbstsetzungslehre*). Here the subject posits and becomes

Hegelian thought. See Tom Rockmore, 2005, *Hegel, Idealism, and Analytic Philosophy*, New Haven: Yale University Press; Paul Redding (ed.), 2010, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; and Robert Brandom, 2002, *Tales of the Mighty Dead: Historical Essays on the Metaphysics of Intentionality*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

¹³⁰ Capitalist economics, especially after the marginalist revolution, treat markets as natural systems, the container of self-interested operations, constant in history. In a similar manner, liberalism treats norms as mechanical procedures while neglecting the constitutive ends of a social totality.

¹³¹ For example, Johann Georg Hamann, an important figure in German classical philosophy, was the first to notice the neglect for language in Kant's critique. See Johann G. Hamann, 2007, *Writings of Philosophy and Language* ("Metacritique on the Purism of Reason"). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 211.

¹³² Immanuel Kant, 2000, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §192

itself an object of experience, but the doctrine still gave primacy to the subjective, even if the subject becomes object.¹³³

Early German romantics, Novalis, Schelegel, and especially Fichte regarded Kant's posthumous doctrine of 'subject-as-object' as the most immediate, intuitive, and therefore, true form of cognition.¹³⁴ However, these attempts, despite their speculative appearance, were still reflective. On the one hand, the subject became the object, the subject settling in the other pole of thought; on the other, the object was conceived negatively as the non-ego to be 'colonized', so to speak, by the ego's operation of 'positing'. For Fichte, positive became positing, positivity, to fix and arrest movement while the negative became resistance, movement, restlessness.

Fichte and the early romantics opposed subject and object, despite their intention for totality. For moral action to be possible, freedom for Fichte and Kant must be placed in the subject as a regulative idea and at the same time denied in the phenomenal world. The inwardly free subject lives in an unfree world. Objects can never be free including other subjects that appear as phenomena, as objects. Fichte reasoned that moral action exists only in thought, in 'striving' as the core activity giving existence to objects. "In relation to a possible object" Fichte writes, "the pure self-reverting activity of the self is a striving; and as shown earlier, an infinite striving at that. This boundless striving, carried to infinity, is the condition of the possibility of any object whatsoever: no striving, no object."¹³⁵ Like Kant's theory of duty, Fichte justified moral agency as a never-ending striving without achieving actual freedom. If striving is rooted duty, freedom is present as subjection.

But these dichotomies between subject and object, freedom and unfreedom, in Hegel words, represented "the *unfree and given* aspect of the whole [social and ethical]

¹³³ Immanuel Kant, 1993. *Opus Postumum*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.170-200

¹³⁴ "The relation that thinking has to itself in reflection is seen as the relation that stands to the closest to thinking in general." Walter Benjamin, 2004, "The Concept of Art Criticism in German Romanticism" in *Selected Writings I*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, p.120

¹³⁵ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, 1991, *The Science of Knowledge*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, I. 261-262, p. 231. This may account philosophically for the extreme political divergences in the early Romantic movement. Abstract freedom conceived as endless duty made Fichte embrace an 'ultra-left' view of the French revolution while at the same time, advocating for nationalism and a police-State of virtue. Friedrich Schlegel went to Austria to be at home with the Restoration.

configuration.”¹³⁶ Hegel considered this disjunctive logic of subject and object belonging to a misconception of infinity and the absolute. It is the self-enclosed infinity of the intellect, an infinity that opposes itself to finitude. In Kant, the opposition appears between a subject ruled by a finite number of categories that make phenomena possible and the infinite world of invisible noumena, of essences that can only appear to the subject as moral commandments. In Fichte, the relation was reversed under the same opposition. Now, the subject is infinite in its endless striving for freedom, but by the same reason, the subject is also finite, her limitations is the reason for striving. Positing points to the infinite but by the same act of positing, it also limits.¹³⁷

Bad infinity also works quantitatively, as mathematics, going on forever on a straight line, producing inconsistencies in theoretical and practical philosophy. In theory, linear infinity depends on causality, looking to the past. Causation needs to posit a first cause to avoid infinite regress. But by postulating a first cause, the cause then becomes its first effect, which is a contradiction. In practical philosophy, infinity depends on causality, this time looking to the future. To be free, men must act as if they were first causes or self-causes, based on an idea of freedom that is regulative, but never actual. But here there is also a contradiction. To become free, freedom (or democracy, or sense) must be denied in actuality and affirmed in a far future, forever differed. Both accounts of theoretical (causality) and practical rationality (autonomy, self-causality) depend on the understanding’s linear concept of infinity that cannot help but to involve contradictions.

True infinity, by contrast, is built upon a bounded model of totality. Rationality and freedom are realized not in reference to a beginning or end of time, but comparatively and historically in reference to other societies and epochs. Theoretically, true infinity works on how causes and the human intellect determine each other. Causality is anything but natural; it is the product of a working consciousness, which is the effect of a long process of natural and cultural evolution. Here, the model of

¹³⁶ Georg. W. F. Hegel, 1993, *The Difference between Fichte and Schelling’s System of Philosophy*, SUNY Press, p.89

¹³⁷ “Every reality that we grasp is only finite, and it becomes finite only because we grasp it. Everything that is something for us is so only insofar as it is not something else; all positing is only possible through negation; this is why the word to determine means nothing other than to limit.” Johann G. Fichte, 2012, “Juridical Defense”, in *J.G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute*, London: Ashgate Publishing, p.178

rationality is social, not natural. In practical philosophy, true infinity appears in the idea of absolute right as the very right to have rights. Absolute right is infinite right, belonging to all humanity, expressed in history as the materialization of finite, different rights. That is, freedom is a real, existing condition of humanity and not only a moral ideal.

Hegel's speculation was a critical response to the naturalism of modern philosophy. Natural philosophy projected the 'intangible' questions of the absolute into the inward life of faith for reason only showed the *scientific* limits of belief, but then the Absolute became identical to belief inaccessible to positive knowledge. Kantian philosophy demolished claims of knowing beyond phenomena and called pure reason the phony faculty of speculative dialectics. Yet for Hegel, Kant's critique was the seed for modern speculation. Kant made possible to address question regarding metaphysics without the aid of religion and theology. But philosophy, for Hegel, needed to go beyond the boundaries of representation offered by natural sciences and transcendental philosophy. Freedom of thought, as well as political freedoms, had to be grounded in the idea of infinity, an idea that, by its own essence, limits only itself. For this reason, infinity in thought meant to overcome representational thinking (a thought grounded in sensations, intuitions, and concepts of the understanding), to access a sphere of pure conceptual mediation, or what Hegel called "concepts of Reason".¹³⁸ Kant's distinction between a formal, lawgiving subject and a passive object depends on representational concepts. Here, the subject uses concepts to identify objects. The concepts of understanding are discrete and separate from each other and distinct from the subject. Kant's philosophical name for the subject – "the transcendental unity of apperception" – is not a concept, but the first mover of concepts. For Hegel, however, the subject is already a concept and at the same time produces concepts. Concepts are not really separated from objects as representations. First, there can be no concepts without objects, and there are no objects that are completely indeterminate.¹³⁹ Second, contrasting concepts and objects is already a conceptual distinction. Third, there is no immediacy, a non-conceptual access to reality; intuition and sensation are already conceptually mediated. And fourth,

¹³⁸ "Indeed, the cognitive procedure in philosophy is actually opposed to representation, and the faculty of representation should be brought beyond itself through philosophy." Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Bloomsbury Academic, #2

¹³⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, Bloomsbury Academic §139

concepts are also internal to the object: a thing becomes what it is also by virtue of its own concept, and not solely by the impact of external forces.¹⁴⁰

Three Sides to Every Story

Hegel provides a theory of mental activity and reality based on three aspects of reason. These are the understanding or the intellect (*Verstand*), negative reason (*Vernunft*) or dialectics, and positive reason or speculation. These three sides of the mind are equally necessary and form a system. They work together or consecutively from abstraction to determination.¹⁴¹ The notion of the absolute as process and as the most comprehensive category, cannot begin immediately as a principle, definition, or axiom “as if shot from a pistol”; “[the Absolute] must travel a long way and works its passage.”¹⁴²

The understanding (or intellect) analyzes, separates the numerous elements of the whole to “grasp them in full precision so that nothing should remain vague or indeterminate”. Without the understanding, theory and practice are imprecise.¹⁴³ The understanding transforms observational findings into universal laws. Yet the understanding “stops short at the fixed determination and its distinctness vis-à-vis other determinations” as its exactness becomes dogmatic. The understanding formulates scientific laws, elevating them, putting these laws in opposition to experience. The dogmatic stage of understanding behaves towards objects “in a way that separates and abstracts from them”, in what Hegel calls abstract universality that subsumes and dominates objects but does not comprehend them. The understanding operates by fixing meaning, so it grasps oppositions between the universal and the particular as dichotomies; it “assumes that of two opposed assertions *one must be true and the other*

¹⁴⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2004, *The Philosophy of Nature*, Kessinger Publishing, §337A/3: 10–11. See Terry Pinkard, 2012. *Hegel's Naturalism: Mind, Nature, and the Final Ends of Life*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. And especially Allyson Stone, 2012, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press

¹⁴¹ For example, Understanding in Hegel's Logic is the main faculty at work in the analysis of being and essence, but the movement from one category to the next also involves a dialectical and a speculative moment. The understanding in the Phenomenology works primarily in the consciousness of sense-objects, especially in the elaboration of physical laws. Dialectics and speculation appear after, in the different forms of self-consciousness and religion. See Hegel, 2010, *Science of Logic*, Oxford University Press, 12.20, p. 517

¹⁴² Georg W. F. Hegel, 2010, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.21.

¹⁴³ See Max Horkheimer, 1972, *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, London: Continuum, pp.106-107

false, adhering to one-sided determinations of the understanding whilst excluding their opposites.”¹⁴⁴ As result, the understanding does not achieve true universality; by opposing general universality to particularity, such laws become also particular as the particulars these laws aim to master.¹⁴⁵ The understanding operates as a particular when it excludes particulars. Particular phenomena in turn acquire a universal nature precisely by being grasped by the universal categories of the understanding.

Dialectics or negative reason mitigates the understanding by revealing how opposite terms involve each other. “Reason is negative and dialectical,” writes Hegel, “since it dissolves the determinations of the understanding into nothing.” Dialectics works through chiasmus in which the order of words in one sentence is inverted in a second sentence, when “the two sides [of the opposition] contaminate each other by means of exchange”, introducing movement and confusion into dichotomies in order to open them into a new set of oppositions.¹⁴⁶

However, if understanding leads to dogmatism by being inflexible with oppositions, dialectics may lead to skepticism by confusing and without showing a way forward out of the confusion of opposites. For Hegel, ancient dialectics ended in this way, yet unlike modern skepticism like Jacobi’s, which destroyed positive claims to knowledge leaving only blind faith, ancient skepticism had a reconstructive impulse, a kind of pre-modern critical theory. Plato, for example, still preserved the thought of the

¹⁴⁴ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Encyclopedia Logic*, London: Hackett Publishing, p. 70

¹⁴⁵ Adorno and Horkheimer condense, “Enlightenment mythic terror springs from a horror to myth”, appeals to the same operation of violence that Hegel sees in understanding or Freud in psychic repression. By trying to violently abandon the narrow nature of the particular by controlling it with scientific laws, the understanding becomes as provincial as common-sense. Enlightenment repeats myth by expelling myth.

¹⁴⁶ “We could even say that this ‘chiasmic exchange of properties’ defines the very status of subject in Hegel’s philosophy” ‘substance becomes subject’ by means of such an exchange of their respective ‘properties’ –the subject which is at first caught in its substantial propositions, ‘embedded’ in them – which is their passive attribute- retroactively posits them, subordinates them to its form, makes them its own passive subject”, Slavoj Žižek, 1991, *For They Know Not What They Do*, London: Verso, p.42. Also see Andrzej Warminsky, 1987. *Readings in Interpretation: Hölderlin, Hegel, Heidegger*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.110, and Gillian Rose, 1978. *The Melancholy Science*. New York: Columbia University Press, p.80. Theodor Adorno was a master in this technique. Through parataxis and ellipses, Adorno presented the two sides of the question in one sentence revealing different dimensions of the same problem (Myth is enlightenment; enlightenment is mythical), or through seeing a term with an attribute of the opposite (as the above ‘Enlightenment has a mythical horror to myth’), etc.

absolute, even by negation.¹⁴⁷ Following Kant and Hume's critiques, modern skepticism, by contrast, banned to think the absolute, making it a matter of religion.¹⁴⁸ Hegel's version of dialectics was propaedeutic, a preparation providing "the soul for further development." Like all philosophers, Hegel disliked the use of dialectics as a tool to trick. Dialectics was not something "rooted in mere conceit", "with an obsession for subverting and bringing to naught everything true and firm."¹⁴⁹ More than a powerful critique, Hegel conceived dialectics constructively and real. Although Kant demonstrated the contradictions of dialectics in the antinomies of pure reason from a subjective angle, for Hegel, these contradictions were objective and actual. Contradictions are rooted in being, not only in thought. Grasping the objective, ontological nature of contradictions opens the "positive aspect" of speculative reason. For Hegel, "It in this dialectic, understood here, and hence, in grasping the opposites in their unity, or the positive in the negative, that the

¹⁴⁷ "What more perfect and self-contained document and system of genuine skepticism could we find than in the Platonic philosophy than the Parmenides, which encompasses the whole field of [finite] knowing through concepts of Understanding and destroys it? This Platonic skepticism does not aim at a doubting of these truths of the Understanding, which knows things as diverse, as wholes which consists of parts, as a coming to be and passing away, a multiplicity, similarity, etc., and makes objective claims of that kind, but a complete negation of all truth of such knowledge. This skepticism does not constitute a particular thing in a system, but it is itself the negative side of the cognition of the Absolute, and directly presupposes Reason as the positive side." Georg W. F. Hegel, "On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy, Exposition of its Different Modifications and Comparison of the Latest Form with the Ancient One", in di Giovanni and Harris (eds.), 2000, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, London: Hackett Publishing, p.323

¹⁴⁸ "Because the antithesis [between the infinite and the finite] is absolute, the sphere of the eternal is the incalculable, the empty -an incognizable God beyond the boundary stakes of Reason", and "The world as thing is transformed into the system of phenomena or of affections of the subject, and actualities believed in, whereas the Absolute as proper matter and absolute object of Reason is transformed into something that is absolutely beyond rational cognition." Georg W. F. Hegel, 1977, *Faith and Knowledge*, Albany: SUNY Press, p. 60, 189. See also Paul Franks's excellent essay "Ancient Skepticism, Modern Naturalism and Nihilism in Hegel's early Jena writings" in Frederick Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel and XIX century Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008

¹⁴⁹ In the Critique of Pure Reason, although dialectics is the logic of illusion, Kant conceived ideas of pure reason as a necessary operation of reason. The problem was the dialectical use, not the rational nature of ideas: "Thus pure reason, which initially seemed to promise us nothing less than an extension of our knowledge beyond all the boundaries of experience, if we understand it rightly contains nothing but regulative principles, which certainly command greater unity than the empirical use of understanding...; but if one misunderstands them and takes them to be constitutive principles of transcendent cognition, then they produce a dazzling but deceptive illusion." Kant, 1997, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, A702/B730

speculative consists. It is the most important aspect of the dialectic, but for the still unpracticed, unfree faculty of thought, the most difficult.”¹⁵⁰

An Alchemy of Sense

Speculation in Hegel’s philosophy is a process that binds opposed ideas and things. Benjamin’s notion of ‘constellations’ or Adorno’s idea of ‘force fields’ present similar formations to the speculative, flowing through tensions, crystallizing in notions and embodying opposite forces, “a dynamic interplay of attractions and aversions, without a generative first principle, common denominator, or inherent essence.”¹⁵¹ For this reason, speculation can be a powerful tool to think the conflict proper to politics in unison with philosophy’s insistence in concepts.¹⁵²

Hegel defines speculation as “the unity of [conceptual] determinations in their opposition”.¹⁵³ If the understanding stresses the non-identity between opposites, and dialectics stresses the identity of opposites, the speculative is the concurrent identity and lack of identity of opposites, “the identity of identity and non-identity”. Oppositions are stationary for the understanding; dialectics transforms them in mutually determined contradictions, and speculation turns these contradictions into one speculative identity, concept of reason in which contradiction is at its highest. A speculative identity shows that difference is what opposites have in common. Partisans, for example, are identical in their mutual opposition for each other.

Hegel’s most famous speculative proposition appears in the oft-quoted “double sentence” (*Doppelsatz*) in the preface to the philosophy of right, “What is rational is actual; and what is actual is rational.” As a speculative proposition, the sentence affirms and denies the actuality of reason and the rationality of the actual, Hegel attempts to “distance [himself] as far as possible from the obligation to construct a state as it ought to be... rather it is to show how the State, as the ethical universe, should be recognized.” Yet, Hegel’s *Doppelsatz* was misunderstood in opposite ways. The identity between

¹⁵⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2010, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.135.

¹⁵¹ Martin Jay, 1993, *Force Fields*, Routledge: London, p.2

¹⁵² Carlo Galli ventures a speculative-like definition of politics along realist lines. Politics “is the continuous establishing of oppositions, lines of exclusion, and internal, external borders, which have to be constantly negotiated according to a common political space and time”, Carlo Galli, 2010, *Political Spaces and Global War*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 7

¹⁵³ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *The Encyclopedia Logic*, London: Hackett, p.82.

reason and reality justified both revolution and absolutism. For Right Hegelians, the *Doppelsatz* justified Prussian nationalism. For the Left, the *Doppelsatz* was a manifesto; the present is irrational and revolutions put things right according to reason. Yet both interpretations were one-sided; they read the *Doppelsatz* as an ordinary proposition: reason is either real or unreal, but must be real. But the speculative points at the impossible untangling of being and ought, that reality is rational and irrational at once. Either the ideal or the real meaning takes over because, for Hegel, both ideal and real are “a union [that is] an unrest of simultaneous incompatibles, a movement.”¹⁵⁴ Hegel calls it actuality.

Ordinary propositions cannot express speculative relations. Ordinary propositions assert *either* an identity *or* non-identity since subject and predicate are two separate entities.¹⁵⁵ Predicates provide contingent contents upon the subject and the subject is a formal and necessary but empty figure, bearing whatever attributes from the predicate. Hegel also calls ordinary propositions judgments of existence. They affirm or deny what is. According to the rules of Hegelian logic, ordinary propositions develop further into speculative regions. One of these expansions is the odd figure of *infinite judgment*. An infinite judgment is “supposed to be a judgment, and consequently to contain a relation of subject and predicate; yet at the same time such relation is supposed not to be in it”; it is a logical construction that lacks sense in reality. For example, instead of saying, “Socrates is *not* a man” which would be a negative judgment of existence, a *negative infinite judgment* would state, “Socrates is a *non*-man.” The particular subject, Socrates, affirms a universal concept, mankind, as negative and empty. For Hegel, this is an abstract (logical) possibility but a concrete (living) impossibility. A *positive infinite judgment*, on the other hand, would have a grammatically correct identity that is not supposed to be there, i.e. “the rose *is* an elephant.”

¹⁵⁴ Georg W.F Hegel, 2011, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 21.78

¹⁵⁵ Either/or antinomian logic has far-reaching consequences in theory. Disjunctive logic is present in positivism, in so-called value-free judgments separated from the sphere of validity. Antinomian reasoning is also present in existentialist “leaps of faith” from an inauthentic to an authentic existence, or in “born-again” narratives of the Event as exceptions to the usual business of being. Antinomianism inspires dualistic philosophies that praise noble ideals, inward virtues against the ways of the world. The consequence of this type of consciousness is depicted in a well-known passage of the *Phenomenology*. The consciousness produced by this logic is of “an insane self-conceit”, passing into “a fury to preserve itself from destruction... expelling from itself the perversion which it is itself... speaking of the universal order as a perversion of the law of the heart.”

Infinite judgments do not make sense in real life, even when they are correctly formulated.¹⁵⁶ Still, they point to the internal form of judgments themselves. The *Science of Logic* regards infinite judgments as transitional figures from judgments of existence to *judgments of reflection*. For the latter, predicates are concrete realizations of the subject. Socrates, the individual is really mortal, and not just an empty name for mortality. The abstract content of the predicate (mortality) is made real by being embodied in the subject. “Socrates” embodies mortality. That “Socrates is non-mortal” is non-sense for judgments of reflection since nothing that is living embodies a negative notion. Life is the proof of logic.¹⁵⁷

Judgments of reflection prepare the last stage for speculative propositions. In these judgments, subjects and predicates go back and forth, revealing that concepts are the real central characters. Concepts whirl persistently between subjects and objects, making them moments of it.¹⁵⁸ Ordinary propositions cannot express speculative propositions because ordinary language cannot state contradictions and cannot violate linguistic conventions, but the speculative presents itself in ordinary language. Hegel observes that “the most trivial of examples – ‘above and under’, ‘right and left’, ‘father and son’, and so on *ad infinitum* – all contain opposition within one and the same

¹⁵⁶ Hegel further explains these judgments in the *Logic* with legal examples. Litigations over property use ordinary negative judgments. The right to property is denied to the other party (“This property is not yours”), but the right of property itself is recognized. Crimes against life, on the other hand, are infinite negative judgments. Not only this type of crime denies the individual’s right to life, but this crime without possible restitution contradicts right as right. While absolute Right is the right to have rights, crimes against life are the absolute Wrong, an infinite negation of right as “right is non-right”. Hegel used such examples to express his distaste for theories like Locke’s for which crimes against property were absolute wrongs and crimes against life were just and justified. For Locke, nothing can justify violating the right to property, but as Hegel says, “Abstract intellect is prone to consider any legal violation as absolute, but a starving man only violates the particular, he does not violate right per se.” For Hegel, the right to life supersedes the right to property in situations of extreme need; it is a legitimate right of necessity, a state of [particular] exception for the sake of life (*Notrecht*).

¹⁵⁷ The *Science of Logic* ends reflecting on natural and organic processes. Logic culminated in life, but Hegel was careful in differentiating life from the standpoint of logic, and life from the standpoint of nature. The idea that logic was embedded in matter itself impressed Lenin in his polemic against neo-Kantians that considered logic as an idealist mental property exporting sense into reality.

¹⁵⁸ Like commodities and money, the Concept is in restless motion and development. Marx considered speculation as “the money of the mind”; speculation mirrored capitalist laws, and also capitalism expressed human powers in determinate historical forms. I will treat Marx’s relation to speculation in detail in the next chapter.

term.”¹⁵⁹ Hegel uses musical (rhythms, meters, and accents) and artistic (plasticity, severe style) metaphors to explain it.

The speculative perspective is easier to grasp in the practical sciences such as politics. Natural sciences rely on intrinsic qualities, instead of relations. Practical sciences, like politics, are embedded in living relations. “Practical sciences –Hegel argues- bear by their nature on some real universal or on a unity which is a *unity of differences*, the feelings too must comprise in practical empiricism not pure qualities but relations, be they negative like the urge to self-preservation, or positive like love and hate, sociability, and the like.”¹⁶⁰ The speculative appears in relations and while it recognizes and “brings forth the truth that between the two extremes, there is difference”, it also sees that difference is a relation and a unity; it is again what opposites have in common.

The dynamism of the Hegelian speculative opens one’s position to the “false” positions of others for there is also a moment of truth. The other’s ‘incorrectness’ reveals the truth of our own position, and conversely, their moment of truth reveals our falsity.¹⁶¹ Thus, the speculative insists on continuous self-criticism and self-adjustment, representing the opposite of closure. The speculative affirms impermanence between opposites: subject and substance, passivity and action, and so forth.¹⁶² Politics thus is speculative and self-correcting. Sensitive to the speculative moment in Hegel, and

¹⁵⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2011, *Science of Logic*, 21.78: “Judgment joins subject and object in a connection of identity; abstraction is therefore made from the fact that the subject has yet more determinacies than the predicate has, just as that the predicate is wider than the subject. Now, if the content is speculative, the non-identity of subject and predicate is also an essential moment; but this is not expressed in judgment. The paradoxical and even bizarre light in which much of recent philosophy is cast for those not intimate with speculative thought is due in many ways to the form of the simple judgment when used to convey speculative results.”

¹⁶⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1975, *Natural Law*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 58

¹⁶¹ G.W.F Hegel, 1977, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p.22, §38.

¹⁶² However, Hegel in the *Phenomenology* (p.39, §64) warns against confusing the speculative with mixing the opposite moments indiscriminately neglecting their specific difference. Plasticity means maintaining a separation between the speculative and the ratiocinative (analytical) thinking so the mutuality of opposites does not become a confusion of the essential and the accidental since these terms have different degrees of determination. Catherine Malabou rightly asserts that plasticity is not collaging but purifying the form of everything arbitrary, “Things that are plastic preserve their shape, as does the marble in a statue: once given a configuration, it is unable to recover its initial form. ‘Plastic’, thus, designates those things that lend themselves to being formed while resisting deformation. ‘Plasticity’ does not mean ‘polymorphous’.” Catherine Malabou, 2005, *The Future of Hegel*, Routledge: London, p.10

considering antagonism as the essential element in politics, Lenin wrote, “Nothing facilitates an understanding of the political essence of developments as greatly as their evaluation by one’s adversaries.”¹⁶³

A final trait of speculation is its communal dimension. Speculative philosophy does not understand individuals in a state of private immediacy. Hegel opposes the liberal narrative that individuals join society deliberately. The person is “not exclusive individuality, but explicitly universality and cognition.” Individuals are in the speculative relation of “being impenetrable and at the same time identical with one another, hence not independent and not impenetrable, but, as it were, fused with another.” Thinking takes place through universal and social categories, on situated contexts, cognitive domains, frameworks, and moments in history. The very recognition that we are all capable of reason, and that we cannot escape universal thinking is the recognition of individual universality. Hegel understands education thus: “Thinking as consciousness of the individual in the form of universality, that I am apprehended as a *universal* person, in which respect all are identical.”¹⁶⁴

Speculative Politics

How significant is speculation for political theory? Consider the relation between freedom and power, two concepts apparently opposed and implicit in Hegel’s *Doppelsatz*. If reality is rational, then freedom is realized; if reality is not rational, there is only power, repression, and violence. Power represses freedom and freedom speaks truth to power. Yet, this is a trans-historical view of both concepts.

The speculative sees politics as fragmented unities loaded with ‘irrational’ power and ‘rational’ recognition. In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel shows ethical life as a divided unity. Ethical life is the outcome of a painful process of coercion (*Right*) and compliance (*Morality*), both forms of violent constructions of the individual as a legal

¹⁶³ Vladimir Ilych Lenin, 1975, *Collected Works*, v. 18, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p.297. Also see Kevin Anderson, 1995, *Lenin, Hegel, and Western Marxism*, University of Illinois Press, p.87-8

¹⁶⁴ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §209. Or as Žižek put it with more melancholy, “Hegel was right to point out again and again that, when one talks, one always dwells in the Universal – which means that, with its entry into language, the subject loses its roots in the concrete life world.” Slavoj Žižek, 2012, *Less than Nothing: Hegel and the Shadow of Dialectical Materialism*, London: Verso, p.197.

person and moral subject.¹⁶⁵ A speculative reading shows ethical life as a totality that involves laws and customs, and not only as the final outcome of a political teleology. Right did not appear first as coercive property law to yield to morality as inner life of the individual, to finally develop into ethical life, the life of communities and nations. *Right and morality are by themselves abstract*. There is no pure coercive system or a pure moral, ideological system.¹⁶⁶ History is the realm of systems of ethical life to which right and morality are their abstract objective and subjective aspects. All polities in history are systems of ethical life standing as unities of opposites; they emerge through the contradiction between society and individual. Speculatively, individuals are social and asocial; societies make individuals possible and societies represent the individuals' most powerful negations. Freedom and alienation go hand in hand. The positive aspect of this negation resides in what Hegel calls the individual's duty to society when she is liberated from immediate drives and becomes an ethical entity (i.e. citizen). Society's negation of the 'individual' constitutes her liberation, "duty is not a limitation of freedom, but only of freedom in the abstract, that is, of un-freedom (necessity)". The negative aspect lies in that society guarantees individual freedom and at the same time denies freedom, in practice and content, in the individual. Such a conflicted notion of individual accounts for Hegel's struggle to conciliate corporatist and contractual traditions in his treatment of ethical life. As Adorno put it, "Freedom, which would arise only in the organization of free society, is sought precisely where it is denied by the organization of existing society."¹⁶⁷ Against reading ethical life as the end of history or the ideal State, the speculative is not equal to reconciliation as a final state. The speculative expresses conflict and restlessness as the real movement of history and thought. Political temperaments should be at home here. Alliances and reconciliations are made and unmade. Shifts in the situation demand multidimensional awareness, flexibility, and

¹⁶⁵ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §40, §106-107.

¹⁶⁶ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1977, *Vorlesungen über Rechtsphilosophie*, Frommann-Holzboog Verlag, 17, 89: "Morality is the reflected, but ethics is the [speculative] interpenetration of the subjective and the objective... Right and morality are only ideal moments; their existence is only in ethical life." See also Louis Althusser, 2006, *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, London: Verso, p.145.

¹⁶⁷ Theodor Adorno, 1983, *Negative Dialectics*, London: Continuum, p. 276

imagination. Enemies become friends; friends turn into foes. Subjects of power become objects of power; defeat and victory are both temporary, and so on.

Freedom and power form a speculative identity. While freedom as idea does not admit un-freedom, the ideal is still one-sided since it fails to conceive actual practices of freedom that are crusted in power relations, as slavery and the corresponding 'free' political institutions that justified it. Freedom is also a form of unfreedom, as the freedom of contract or the freedom to labor 12 to 16 hours a day, or to wage just wars to free weak countries. However, this is not to say that freedom is equal to wholesale violence. Such idea would be as one-sided as it is to conceive freedom solely as moral idea. The concept need further determinations.¹⁶⁸ Types of domination are types of freedom and freedoms are concealed and grounded in forms of violence. Greek slavery was essential to Greek conceptions of freedom. Christian serfdom belonged to Christian personalism. In modern society, when slavery is not transparent, conceived as an outdated aberration, modern subjectivity is represented as universally free but freedom is hardly politically realized for all. Slavery is condemned through a pre-political and pre-social concept of human rights, but freedom is only realized formally as legal subjectivity. Yet the actual and material lack of freedom is not known because we fail to conceive new forms of slavery such as debt, wage-labor, human trafficking, and so on. Current conceptions of formal freedom do not contain these practices and do not comprehend them. For Hegel, to contain and comprehend is to give content to a notion, a content that is a unity of opposites. Thus, to comprehend modern freedom and power speculatively means that in the presence of universal human rights, civil and political freedoms, debasement and economic slavery

¹⁶⁸ "This idea does not arise from difference, and the ideal does not attain reality, for although the ideal and the real are identical in this practical reason, the real remains flatly opposed to the ideal." Georg W. F. Hegel, 2011, *Natural Law*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 72. Conversely, Hegel argues again and again that rejection is one form of recognition, but also an unequivocal sign of violence. To be sure, violence is part of sociopolitical life but violence does not drain or exhausts existing collectivities. The classical text of the idea is the *Phenomenology's* account of the master and servant, "for recognition proper the moment is lacking, that 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." In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel argues that the concept of humanity was impossible in Antiquity because recognition is lacking in slavery, "in Roman law, no definition of human being would be possible, for the slave could not be subsumed under it; indeed the status of the slave does violence to that concept." Georg W.F. Hegel, 1977, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Oxford: Oxford University Press p.116, §191; *Philosophy of Right*, §2

are equally massive and out of sight. As Adorno and Horkheimer opened their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a highly speculative text, “The wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity.”¹⁶⁹ In modernity, destruction and reason, labor and capital, universal freedoms and global exploitation go hand in hand. Thus, universal freedom is also universal un-freedom.

Speculatively conceived, liberal ethical life conceive freedom as negative right, depending on wrongs to become actual. The concept of rights do not embody freedom completely. They are only a particular concept of freedom as property (my body, my things). Rights activate when wrongs visit these two bodies; rights become visible when they are taken away. As Hegel points out, in abstract Right, the wrong actualize the notion of right.¹⁷⁰ Rights are necessary moments in the conception of freedom, but it is a crass reduction to understand freedom solely as right. Such definition of freedom would depends on its limitation, violation, and absolute negation, contradicting its own form as idea. Thus, universal human *rights* depend on massive violations to individual and collective rights to achieve actuality. Without these violations, human rights become only an ideal that is invisibly enacted in society and without people being aware of their enjoyment and possession.

Hegel conceived freedom in a dual form. First, freedom is the form of a subjective will represented in legal codes. But freedom for Hegel is also actual and practical, contrary to Kantian and Fichteian notions of freedom. Existing societies are really free, not partially free according to an ideal. Slavery is a product of society’s freedom. Hegel thought this way for the fundamental reason that men had to provide a free account of their actions, that institutions were decisions out of liberty and that we bear responsibility for their rights and wrongs.¹⁷¹ Slavery represent the free will of one class to dominate,

¹⁶⁹ Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, 2002, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, p.1

¹⁷⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, 1991, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §82.

¹⁷¹ “The idealism of German idealism has little to do with ideas or representations in the rationalist or empiricist sense. The ideal is human freedom, understood as being a law wholly unto oneself... In cognitive terms, the claim is a denial of the view that we can successfully explain the mind’s intentional content, its holding possibly true or false knowledge claims, by appeals to the mind’s being-determined by some independent content. In the simplest terms, in being aware that something is (or even could be) so-and-so, I am holding that it is; taking it to be so-and-so; making up my mind; taking a stand.” Robert Pippin, 1996, “Heideggerian Postmodernism and Metaphysical

enslave, and annihilate others. In the *Phenomenology's* account of the Jacobins, in the freedom of the abstract will, Hegel provides an example of a formal freedom made actual through destruction. A political form dies once formal freedom loses actuality, hegemony, when the legal codes become openly reactionary for the new historical consciousness that is developing. Lenin, basing his views on this Hegelian distinction, thought that even if the system is in-actual, nonetheless it must be dealt with, and not wait for history to destroy it. Lenin called “tactical actuality” interventions that speed up the decay of inactual institutions.¹⁷²

Hegelian Actuality

The Hegelian speculative has received a relative positive attention recently, despite post-structuralist attempts to see speculation as philosophical tyranny. In France, Jean-Luc Nancy and Catherine Malabou have focused on the linguistic aspects of speculation. Although Hegel always emphasized that concepts are not only linguistic and subjective categories, Nancy and Malabou see in speculative language an instrument to subvert ordinary language “from within” according to deconstructive canons of deconstruction. Speculative propositions become modes of transformative reading. Žižek and Badiou interpret the Hegelian speculative from a dialectical perspective for radical revolutionary purposes. They stress the non-identity moment of the speculative which is operative in revolutionary subjectivity. Badiou interprets the dialectic along the Maoist lines of one becoming in two, the speculative unity of opposites must open scission. The rightist interpretation of dialectics is to recall the ‘old One’ as a holistic synthesis of two opposed parties.¹⁷³ Žižek, on his part, read the speculative (lack of) identities psychoanalytically. He stresses the moment of lack of identity in identity, arguing that the speculative is not a pacifying medium that “unite diverging particularities, but the

Politics”, *European Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 4, n. 1, p.24. See also Robert Pippin, 1997, *Idealism as Modernism: Hegelian Variations*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.397-410.

¹⁷² See Domenico Losurdo, 2004, *Hegel and the Freedom of the Moderns*, Durham: Duke University Press, p.35. Lenin’s conception of ‘dual power’ (dvoevlastie) can also be read as a political and empirical Doppelsatz. A revolutionary situation has two powers and rationalities, both actual and incompatible.

¹⁷³ “Truth is what has no identity other than from a difference; hence the being of all things is the process of its division into two... this identity (in terms of political practice and Maoist organization) always exists as a differential destroyer of another. This is what it means for an identity to change itself in difference.” Alain Badiou, 2011, *The Rational Kernel of Hegelian Dialectics*, Melbourne: re.press, p.60

unfathomable limit that prevents the particular from achieving identity within itself.”¹⁷⁴ The non-identity of opposites is internal to a split reality. Thus, the speculative emerges in the suspension of the gap between opposites. This suspension shows the speculative’s relation with existential narratives. The speculative does not form a new relation of unity between subject and object, but rather, this suspension is subjectivity (and objectivity) itself.¹⁷⁵ Thus, in contemporary accounts of the speculative, one sees ontological claims linked to the possibility of political practice. I would like to formulate how the speculative is open to this possibility from an ontological perspective.¹⁷⁶

The speculative allows for a simultaneous identity and difference between opposites, between thought and existence. That is to say, the speculative allows for a simultaneous synchronic correlation and a diachronic non-correlation between thought and reality. Correlationism have marked all sorts of ‘absolute’ idealisms in the history of philosophy. In this idealism of unity of thought and reality, dualism was also present. Reality had to conform to the laws of thought in order to become one. Skeptics and some

¹⁷⁴ Slavoj Žižek, 1991, *For they do not know what they do*. London: Verso, p.60

¹⁷⁵ Žižek is right in stressing the lack of identity in the speculative. Speculation keeps things moving between Subject and Substance, but the speculative has to ‘revert’ towards dialectics and even understanding which for Žižek is a form of dialectics, ‘dialectics in a productive form’. Žižek reads the speculative from dialectics. One pole of the dialectical contradiction already contains the speculative identity, the unity of opposites, and the other term represents the ideological principle, the term that stands for the abstract universal of understanding, the ‘source’ of the problem. Thus, for Žižek, the struggle between liberalism and fundamentalism really represents that they are already a unity. Islamic and market fundamentalism are the same in their politics as ‘mortal enemies’. They represent one pole, the appearance, while the other pole, Capital is the abstract essence, which must be eliminated in order to eliminate the symptom. Following Hegel’s reading of Jacobinism, Žižek advocates for an abstract subjectivity in charge for unleashing Revolutionary Terror. One has to make the wrong choice first in order for the right choice to come; history progresses by its bad side. Only by choosing Red Terror can the ‘modern rational State’ arrive. What Hegel presents as a dialectical insight, Žižek transforms it into an injunction, ‘a leftist’ suspension of the ethical for the sake of political universality.

¹⁷⁶ Derrida, in an early essay “The Pit and the Pyramid: An Introduction to Hegel’s Semiology” tried to show how Hegel’s Absolute unity of opposites always leaves a remainder despite Hegel’s desire for closure. Derrida is however recapitulating Hegel’s own theory by showing that the speculative is by its own structure non-totalizable. As Catherine Kellogg writes, “The absolute identity of speculative knowledge is shown to be impossible because while the system relies on a process of differentiation or negation, it also leaves behind a remainder whose unsublatability undoes that very absolutism.” See Jacques Derrida, 1982, *Margins of Philosophy*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 69-80, and Catherine Kellogg, 2012, “The Three Hegels” in Jean Surber, 2012, *Hegel and Language*, Albany: SUNY Press. See also Catherine Malabou, 2010, *The Future of Hegel*, London: Psychology Press, p.157. See also Jean-Luc Nancy, 2002, *The Speculative Remark*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, p.97. See Kevin Thompson, “Hegelian Dialectic and the Quasi-Transcendental in Glas” in Stuart Barnett et al. 2002, *Hegel After Derrida*. London: Routl

materialists advanced a diachronicity and non-correlation (or non-identity) between reality and thought. The result was irrationality. The world cannot be known for matter is absolutely other than thought. In one, we have the law of absolute identity, and in the other, the law of absolute difference. The ways to predicate thought qua being appears in many forms, by *analogy* (being is predicated by analogy with Beings), *univocism* (Being and beings are of the same substance, absolute identity), or finally *equivocism* (Being can be predicated in many ways, through multiple difference). All these forms of ontological predication depended on the unshakeable identity between thought and reality proper to the metaphysical Absolute. The absolute has been the province of idealism, either in its dogmatic or skeptic versions.

Is the notion of the absolute possible for non-idealist approaches? Can the absolute be thought without the law of identity, of the correspondence of thought and being? Can a materialist absolute that respects the otherness of materiality still maintain a relation with thought and concept? I think the Hegelian notion of the speculative can provide such notion. Hegel's speculative allows one to eliminate the domination of thought over reality while retaining the possibility of apprehending reality through concept. The Hegelian speculative affirms an ontological non-identity that can be grasped by the identities of conceptual thought. The double nature of the speculative also allows to divorce necessity from ontological determinism and to affirm the necessity of contingency in reality. The speculative denies necessity in reality affirming necessity in thought. Contingency is affirmed in reality and simultaneously denied in thought. Instead of contingent events being construed as part of a hidden structural chain, the test is to accept the "primacy of facticity", as Adorno would put it. To accept the primacy of the non-identical without giving up conceptual thought. Epistemological necessity, the necessity of concepts and reason, grasp its opposite of ontological contingency and the openness of history. To extrapolate explanatory, epistemological necessity to the ontological plane is to trade on ambiguity using a term (necessity) with the same meaning in two equivocal planes (ontological claims on reality and epistemological claims of reason).¹⁷⁷ Hegel provides the ground for the necessity of contingency, as a contingency that can be rationally and systematically apprehended. To rationally apprehend

¹⁷⁷ Immanuel Kant, 1998, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Oxford University Press, p. 220.

retrospectively historical contingency is to see contingency as necessity; conversely, to see history as a realm of open and contradictory possibilities is to affirm the necessity of contingency. History forms thus a speculative identity between contingency and necessity. Engels pointed correctly to this idea in Hegel:

“In contrast to both conceptions (absolute contingency and absolute necessity), Hegel came forward with the hitherto quite unheard-of proposition that the accidental has a cause because it is accidental, and just as much also has no cause because it is accidental; that the accidental is necessary, that, on the one hand, necessity determines itself as chance, and on the other hand, this chance is rather absolute necessity.”¹⁷⁸

For speculative idealism, the in-itself can be thought because it is the concept as such, the correlation/non-correlation, identity-in-difference as such. Speculative idealism, or the traditional idealist readings of Hegel of speculation as unity of contraries, takes the relation between those contraries as absolute. The concept becomes the final word. A materialist reading of the speculative, on the other hand, affirms the contingency of the correspondence between thought and being, the contingency of such correlation. Contingency must be necessary, not because necessity is unknowable but because contingency necessarily exists.¹⁷⁹ However, this is not an absolutization of contingency in the sense that everything must change, or that Being (Subject) is now absolute Becoming (Substance). This post-modern reversal will just elevate contingency to yet another metaphysical necessity as it is found in Nietzsche or Deleuze. Absolute contingency implies that permanent fixity (“subject”) and eternal flux (“predicate”) are both contingent. There are no guarantees on both sides. In this sense, it is a non-metaphysical speculative perspective. Yet, absolute necessity, iron law teleology has been one of Hegel’s false legends.

Since his early production, Hegel thought the relation between contingency and necessity.¹⁸⁰ These texts show that Hegel is not a philosopher of absolute necessity. In the

¹⁷⁸ Friedrich Engels, 2012, *Dialectics of Nature*, London: Wellread Publications, pp.220.

¹⁷⁹ “What is absolute is the fact that everything is necessarily contingent or ‘without [prior] reason’” Ray Brassier, 2009. *Nihil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction*. London: Palgrave-Macmillan. Also, see Quentin Meillasoux, 2009. *After Finitude: An Essay on the Necessity of Contingency*. London: Continuum, “the absolute is the absolute impossibility of a necessary being.”

¹⁸⁰ Georg W. F. Hegel, “How the Ordinary Understanding Takes Philosophy”, in di Giovanni and Harris, eds., 2012, *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.292-310

Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences and the *Science of Logic*, Hegel develops the opposition between actuality and possibility in a series of tightly argued propositions. In all its generality and abstraction, actuality is only what exists as pure Being. Possibility, also formally thought, is the opposite of actuality. Possibility includes actuality as its ground and at the same time possibility lacks actuality. Possibility is positive in that it recognizes actuality as containing many possibilities, and at the same time, possibility is negative because it lacks actuality. The Understanding separates actuality from possibility by seeing possibility as completely lacking actuality. But according to Hegel possibility also points towards an *ought* of actuality, a fulfilled actuality pointing out the negative aspect of real actuality. Real actuality lacks self-actualization according to possibility. Thus, the possible is rooted in the ‘demands of the actual’. Yet, speaking of possibility in general does not take far the contradictory character of possibility. It is in thinking multiple specific possibilities that contradictory possibilities appear out of the actual. Given a determinate situation, A and non-A are equally possible and coexist together. When we say that something is possible, we are also saying that its opposite is also possible. Yet, how can we relate contradictory possibilities back to the identity of the actual, if the actual is already the source of this contradiction? Hegel sees, on the one hand, that the actual is a kind of possibility, not possibility in general, but as one possible world among many possibles. On the other hand, all these other ‘possible’ worlds are also actual in the sense that they are thought. This unity of actuality as one among many ‘possibles’ and the many possibilities as actual thoughts is what Hegel identifies as contingency.¹⁸¹ *Contingency is the unity of actuality and possibility.*

The mutual determination of contingency and necessity allows us now to view the ontological, historical chain of events as contingent (since they can be perfectly otherwise), and its retrospective reading as constituting the rational necessity of these events. That is why the owl of Minerva is not an oracle, a foreign speech to actuality; it always flies too late after actuality. This afterwordness or ‘secondness’ plays a crucial role in knowledge. The rationality read into history in terms of Spirit being ‘at war-with-itself’, or as unsustainable contradictions of a system are forms of post-hoc rational

¹⁸¹ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2010, *Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences*, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, #92-#108. See also John W. Burbidge, 2007, *Hegel’s Systematic Contingency*. London: Palgrave-McMillan.

necessity read into ontological contingency. Necessity arises out of contingency, yet contingency is a form of necessity when it breaks down into yet another new form. It is necessary that things change in their permanent impermanence, or self-destruction, what is not necessary is the direction they take. What is contingent about necessity is the afterward rational consistency that accounts for the ‘real moment’.

In this sense, diachrony (the temporal non-correlation between thought and being) does not only arise out of a historical sense; it also constitutes the nature of logic and historical critique. This does not mean to reduce necessitarian structures to purely historical and diachronic narratives, to give up a rational account of history for the ‘random’ emergence of isolated *epistemes* and *dispositifs*. Capitalist categories are historical, but not as ‘things of history’, but as proper to a specific mode of production in history. History is part of the structural account, but it does not constitute the full structural account. Structural necessity, in Hegel as well as Marx, is construed by grasping diachronically the contingent event of history. As Alfred Schmidt puts it, “Contrary to superficial critique, the ‘standpoint of reason in world history’ does not exhaust itself in a priori constructions which do violence to their material. Hegel stresses how little ‘the wish for rational insight, and for knowledge, not merely to be a heap of facts’, can be satisfied by fabricated concepts. Rather ‘in history thought is subordinated to the given and the existent.’ He insists that we must respect the material before us and ‘must proceed historically.’”¹⁸²

The Hegelian speculative accounts for the constant failure of knowledge to ascertain absolute necessity in the face of history’s stubborn facts. Sense-consciousness cannot endure as concrete knowledge if it sees consciousness as immediate; the master and slave consciousness cannot endure as the definite form of consciousness once the slave is freed from bondage. Every change in the situation requires a new kind of consciousness with a new kind of object. Thus, the speculative relation of reality and thought destroys ‘firstness’. These constant collapses and breakdowns are the medium of speculative Truth. This is when, I think, the speculative truly overcomes metaphysics. If metaphysics represents the idealist hope to establish an eternal, rational structure beyond matter, the speculative is material in that our reason and ‘natural’ representations are

¹⁸² Alfred Schmidt, 1984, *History and Structure*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p. 101

already the effects of a consciousness laboring silently. Marx's view of exchange *qua* value illustrate this process. Capitalist societies create value from labor and realize it through exchange, but workers and capitalists don't know why they exchange and this is proven because exchanges happen no matter what we think. For this reason, Capital is an "automatic Subject". Thus, absolutely speaking, any type of 'enlightenment' is a figure of false consciousness, unaware of its own working capabilities, which can only be manifested through 'delusions' and breakdowns, transitioning from one 'false' consciousness of one relative ethical life slipping yet into another form of 'false' consciousness of another ethical life. Hence, absolute knowledge is not omniscient. This is the theological and mythical version of the absolute. Thought is absolute and infinite because reality is always unsurpassable, of a spaciousness thought cannot fully grasp.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE SPECULATIVE VALUE-FORM
THE SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF PARTISANSHIP

“Thinking and being are thus certainly *distinct*, but at the same time they are in unity with each other.” – Marx

“A thinker such as Marx, who was after all at the opposite extreme of idealism, was nevertheless a speculative thinker. A philosophy that is non-idealist in principle can nevertheless not dispense with the element of speculation.”

–Theodor Adorno

“The really concrete unity of two or more interacting individuals, particular things (phenomena, processes, men, etc) always appears as the unity of mutually exclusive opposites. Between them, between aspects of this concrete interaction there is nothing abstractly identical or abstractly general and neither can there be. In this case, the common as concretely general is exactly that very mutual bond between the elements of interaction as polar, mutually complementary, and mutually presupposing opposites. Each of the concretely interacting sides is what it is, that is, what it is in the context of a given concrete link, only through its relation to its own opposite.” –Evald Ilyenkov

The Money of the Mind

In 2008, the Federal Reserve published a booklet named “Modern Money Mechanics” to “describe the basic process of money creation in a fractional reserve banking system.” Banks keep a fraction of deposits made by the Fed as reserves. Some reserves are then lent out to other banks. In turn, these other banks lend money at the lowest interest and so forth. All this financial speculation takes place independently of gold and industry. Following the fetishism of money, the Federal Reserve concludes, “Just how this happens all too often remains a mystery”.¹⁸³

Likewise, two hundred years ago, German philosophers considered speculation as a ‘higher’ perspective able to see the hidden interconnections and transformations in physical and social life. German philosophers claimed to discover for the first time a vision of totality by casting opposites into a single field of vision bridging the empirical and the intelligible, the finite and the infinite. But for radical critics like Marx and Sorel, speculation was cheap mysticism, a hogwash philosophy lending autonomy to ideas,

¹⁸³ Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 2009, *Modern Money Mechanics*, p. 17

instead of action, just like Wall Street sees money –money begets money; ideas beget ideas.

There is some truth to Marx's assertion that speculation is "the money of the mind". Speculative philosophy conceives reality as a 'unity of opposites'. Hegel calls speculation the perspective of infinity, and Capital's creation of value and accumulation of wealth can also be considered speculative. Capital points towards infinity through limitless accumulation. Capital's self-expansion quantifies, colonizes, and exploits disparate, non-identical realms of life through the totalizing law of value. As a speculative structure, labor and capital stand as a unity of opposites in capitalism. There is no labor without Capital, no proletariat without the bourgeoisie since capitalist labor is always-already reified labor, an offspring of Capital.¹⁸⁴ Ideologically speaking, since exploiters and exploited are free agents, the exploited must think like the exploiters and the exploiters see themselves exploited. The poor must think like capitalists; "the capitalist is a rational miser".

But the speculative also represents the lack of identity between opposites. Labor and capital are engaged in mortal struggle, as CLR James says. The system of universal private property denies private property to the immense majority. Use-value and exchange-value are also opposites. Speculation also points to a beyond Capital, about which more later. Capital's speculative structure is not given by analytical tools but by a critique of political economy that sees Capital as a system of polar unities, unities of extreme opposites.

Capital's breathtaking creativity and adaptability are traits of the Understanding, "the mightiest of all powers," a terrifying power that dissolves everything and stirs an endless fragmentation of social life. But capitalism as a global system makes the concept of totality possible; Capital makes speculative philosophy possible. Capital produces an effective totality, but at the same time, again, totality disappears through the

¹⁸⁴ "Labor in capitalism becomes [Capital's] own social ground", instead of being a trans-historical force to be emancipated from surplus value. Moishe Postone, 1993, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx's Critical Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.151. See also Jean Baudrillard, 1975, *The Mirror of Production*, New York: Telos Press, p.94: "The free worker (of historical socialism) finds his identity in the mirror of his labor power. His property and his "liberation" as a worker signified his accession to privatized individuality, that is, to alienation".

fragmentation of instrumental reason: the individual becomes isolated, and society loses its sense of collectivity.¹⁸⁵ Capital produces unities of opposites, but also conceals the unity of opposites between capital and labor through endless subset of dichotomies like (mental) theory and (manual) practice, categories and experience, freedom and necessity, ethics and politics, etc. Dichotomies as traits of understanding have social roots in Capital's imperative to divide labor and extract value from it.¹⁸⁶

Capital indeed has a speculative structure, and the speculative can be an immanent critique of Capital. On the one hand, the speculative represents the identity of Capital; the speculative is the ideological affirmation, 'the standpoint of political economy' as Marx claimed. But also the speculative can claim a lack of identity with Capital, as criticism of Capital's reification.¹⁸⁷ Therefore, as a complement to Marx's sentence, the speculative *is and is not* "the standpoint of political economy." This last claim is in consequence with Hegel's recommendation, "The genuine refutation must penetrate the opponent's stronghold and meet him on his own ground; no advantage is gained by attacking him somewhere else and defeating where he is not."¹⁸⁸

Capital is absolute and the absolute is the field of speculative theory. Capital is the most rational and the most expansive system ever emerged; it systematically secularizes the social world. And also Capital is absolute because it is the most irrational and the most ruthless system ever devised. It relentlessly destroys the social and natural world. Speculative critique unveils Capital as a speculative structure, as a historical totality of opposites, and also criticizes the absolutism of Capital, as a false and final absolute.

This chapter historicizes Hegel's philosophical claims on the speculative by conceiving the speculative as the thinking in and of capitalism through Marx's interpretations. I read -following Marx re Hegel- that the speculative is the specific

¹⁸⁵ Gyorgy Lukács, 1988, *Theory of the Novel*. New York: Merlin Press, p.45. Novel, as the narrative of modernity, is characterized by "loneliness, [as the] torment of a creature condemned to solitude and devoured by a longing for community."

¹⁸⁶ "In enforcing the separation from use, or, more precisely, from the actions of use, the activities of exchange presuppose the market as a time- and space-bound vacuum." Alfred Sohn-Rethel, 1983, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: Critique of Epistemology*. New York: Humanities Press, p.29

¹⁸⁷ "It is high time to encounter Hegel on his own ground -the Absolute method- which is supposed to be in constant motion and so adamant to bow to any Absolute Substance." See Raya Dunayevskaya, 2003, *Philosophy and Revolution*, New York: Lexington Books, p.7

¹⁸⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2010, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, §1278

structure of Capital, but also -against Marx- that the speculative is a mode of theorizing that points beyond Capital immanently, from Capital's own categories. Mainstream political economy ignores speculative and dialectical modes of analysis. It is focused on isolated antithesis when conceiving capitalism, such as producers v consumers, income v spending, buyers v sellers, money v commodities, taking these oppositions and figures as given. Marx shows that these antitheses are appearances of deeper, self-contradictory unities. Capitalist consumption, being the opposite of production, is also a form of production¹⁸⁹; buying and selling constitute in reality one single act, "but the apparent retardation of the currency [exchange] reflects the separation of these two processes into isolated antithetical phases"¹⁹⁰.

This chapter also traces Marx's ambivalence towards Hegelian speculation. I argue that Marx was critical and a radical inheritor of the speculative tradition of German idealism. Although the complete work of *Capital* is unsystematic, I believe Marx employed a speculative perspective to his theory of value, commodities, and the commodities' "most glaring form – money." But instead of seeing speculation as the pinnacle of high theory, Marx discovers that Capital is the real-historical unity of contraries, dwelling in the infernal, 'hellish structure of the commodity', as Walter Benjamin would call it, a restless movement, eternal return, and twofold development between several poles in the production, circulation, and culmination of Capital. The commodity's speculative metamorphoses towards the money-form make possible boundless, limitless, infinite accumulation, and become an inverted mirror of the ideal of speculation of Marx's 'idealist' predecessor. Uncannily, Marx relates the ideal of infinite reason in philosophical speculation with the infinite accumulation of capitalist speculation. Marx reveals that the speculative is not the highest form of reason, a fulfillment of Humanity's powers, but its material realization in the money-form is also the lowest, most brutal and irrational expression of human relations. Yet speculation, the structure of Capital in Marx's relentless pursuit for the production and realization of value, becomes a partisan weapon for the critique of Capital.

¹⁸⁹ Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin Books, p. 90

¹⁹⁰ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p. 127

Marx and the Speculative

Marx's engagement with the Hegelian speculative appears since his earliest works. His doctoral thesis was a study of the ancient materialism of Epicurus and Democritus'. Marx's interest in atomism aimed at formulating a materialist account of freedom. The central concept of German classical philosophy was freedom, yet Marx opposed to this tradition a concept of freedom rooted in the body and matter, not just the mind and ideas. Marx argued that the unity of opposites was fundamental to ancient materialism in creating a monistic ontology instead of the dualism of body and mind that characterized idealist systems.¹⁹¹

For ancient atomists, matter originated from a radical contingent event. Democritus and Epicurus thought that before the material world, atoms were falling in a straight line. However, one atom for whatever reason deviated from this fall and crashed with other atoms, creating a chain reaction that formed small bodies, then larger ones, until the whole universe was created. This atomic swerve or 'clinamen' did not have a cause. The world originated by complete accident.

The resemblance between both philosophers ended here. Epicurus and Democritus disagreed on their account of the material world. Democritus thought that time, space, and matter were only appearances without importance.¹⁹² Material existence and human liberty did not matter. Epicurus on the contrary gave equal importance to material appearances and atomic essences with the conclusions that human freedom is all-important because it is grounded in nature. To Marx, Epicurus's radical contingency of the swerve was the source of radical freedom. The notion of time was another source

¹⁹¹ Karl Marx, 1966, "The Difference between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophies of Nature", *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 1, Moscow: Progress Publishers. Hegel also praised this key insight from atomism: "We must recognize in materialism the enthusiastic effort to transcend the dualism which postulates two different worlds as equally substantial and true, to nullify this tearing asunder of what is originally One". See Georg W. F. Hegel, *The Philosophy of the Mind*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.33)

¹⁹² As Marx writes on Democritus, "Sensuous appearance, on the one hand, does not belong to the atoms themselves. It is not objective appearance, but subjective semblance [Schein] ... the true principles are the atoms and the void, everything else is opinion, semblance." See also, John Stanley, "The Marxism of Marx's Doctoral Dissertation", *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, p.147: "What is important to Epicurus is that the side of the atom that represents pure form is the side which represents the freedom of the subject, which rises above necessity so that we may "snap the bonds of fate, the everlasting sequence of cause and effect." Motion, which for Democritus is blind necessity, for Epicurus can be explained as a form of freedom, that is, as the basis of self-determining matter."

of contention. For Democritus, time was eternal and indifferent to existence. For Epicurus, time is the supreme appearance; the supreme reality in the world of appearances. Human sensuousness is “embodied time”, the ability to have different sensations in the spacious world of matter.

Applying Hegelian concepts, Marx thought that Epicurus allowed for an “inner determination” of atoms, while Democritus was only fixed with “external determinations”. Epicurus saw essence and appearance, atomic necessity and the world’s material contingency, speculatively. They were two different realms, equally important in the constitution of the universe. Freedom was possible to Epicurus’s materialism because appearances were as important as essences. For Democritus, contingency and necessity were completely separated. The world’s contingency was a false appearance of true atomic necessity. For this reason, Democritus’ cosmos was completely deterministic.¹⁹³

Marx became hostile to Hegelian philosophy with his turn towards communism around 1843. At this time, Marx thought that speculation represented bourgeois philosophy at its highest powers, an ideology to be taken seriously. Speculation was secularized religion, falsely substituting revealed religion for a “consummate religion”, a religion where secular reason becomes divine. In the *Contribution to the Critique to Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, the speculative was a negation of theology in the realm of theology. “Speculative philosophy –Marx writes- is the thought of alienation, not only of religious objectification but as an objectification of historical change with its own mysterious laws beyond man’s control.”¹⁹⁴ Marx criticized the speculative from the Left, but assuming the identity between real and rational like a conservative Hegelian. If for left Hegelians, the speculative was considered a veiled call for Revolution, Marx thought that speculative philosophy legitimated existing relations of domination. The speculative denied particular and concrete reality, taking the Idea as true Subject, an inversion of things, a “topsy-turvy” world. The *Holy Family* opens with a lapidary statement: “Real

¹⁹³ Georg W. F. Hegel, 2007, *The Philosophy of the Mind*, §389, Oxford: Clarendon Press, p.33. Karl Marx, 1970, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts” in *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, p.180. Engels would also refer to this idea, commenting on Hegel, of the contingency of necessity. The young Marx recognized modern materialism as the unification of materialist content and idealist methods, as well as Lenin after 1914.

¹⁹⁴ Karl Marx, 1973, “Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, *Marx-Engels Collected Works*, vol. 3, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p. 7

humanism has no more dangerous enemy in Germany than spiritualism or speculative idealism, which substitutes “self-consciousness” or the “spirit” for the real individual man.”¹⁹⁵

Marx famously wrote in 1844 that the Hegelian speculative embodied the political economy of his time. Speculation is the philosophy of Capital. Hegel’s *Logic* is “the *money* of the mind, the speculative *thought-value* of man and of nature, their essence indifferent to any real determinate character and thus unreal; *thought* which is *alienated* and abstract and ignores real nature and man.” Hegel founds “only the abstract, logical, speculative expression of the movement in history, not the actual history of man as a given subject.”¹⁹⁶ These are extraordinary passages in suggesting that speculation, not only as a subjective ideological thought-process, but also as the deep objective structure of capitalism.

Before the revolutions of 1848, Marx and Engels presented a negative treatment of the speculative. Yet, Marx’s initial engagement with political economy was empirical and historical, especially in the *Poverty of Philosophy*. Marx’s approach prior to the *Grundrisse* and *Capital* is humanist and materialist, based on universal human needs and a concept of human nature. According to Henri Lefebvre, however, there were still no proper concepts to think relations of domination. Marx sees exploitation “being given practically and verified empirically.”¹⁹⁷ Marx and Engels were then only historical materialists without a coherent philosophy. Hegel’s philosophy returns to Marx and Engels after the experience of defeat of the 1848 revolutions, just like Lenin engaged with Hegel after the catastrophe of 1914. Marx used Hegelian methodology throughout the *Grundrisse*. Hegelian logic is everywhere in *Capital* yet concealed in the presentation since Marx’s works were destined for political activism; flaunting Hegelian philosophy was not particular useful for agitation. In the *Grundrisse* and *Capital*, the critique of the speculative disappears, yet the term appears nowhere. Instead Marx uses the term ‘polar unities’, or ‘unity of excluding opposites’

¹⁹⁵ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 1976, *The Holy Family*, New York: International Publishers, p.7

¹⁹⁶ Karl Marx, 1977, *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, p.329

¹⁹⁷ Henri Lefebvre, 1968, *Dialectical Materialism*, London: Cape Editions, p. 192

The Speculative Identities of Capital¹⁹⁸

Marx begins his critique of Capital focusing on a special object, the commodity, as the “economic cell-form” of our societies. Unlike other thinkers who begin with subjects, Marx attempts to speak for an object that attempts to escape reason and produce mystified human relations. Adorno describes this paradox within commodity society as “an object [being only] conceived by a subject but always remaining something other than the subject, whereas a subject by its very nature an object from the outset.”¹⁹⁹ A lack of identity between Subject and Substance may mean openness in some cases and alienation in others. Subjects in capitalism are objects from the outset, reserves and sources of living labor, and as subsidiary agents and delegates of Capital. From an external perspective, Capital proceeds dialectically through oppositions in the capital relation and the circuits of circulation between capitalists and workers. But Capital is speculative internally in the crystallization of opposites within one entity. The commodity embodies opposite forms of value and action in an extreme dense form as a constellation.

Marx sees the commodity as a polar unity of two extreme opposites. Commodities develop opposite values in a single unity, the qualitative character of use value also called the substance of value, and the quantitative magnitude of exchange values. There are some exceptions as air or soil, things with use-value without having or embodying value for there is no labor involved. Also a thing can be useful without being a commodity like the products of one’s labor. But a commodity must always embody a use-value expressed as exchange value. Marx uses the terms ‘useful labor’ and ‘labor power’ as necessary

¹⁹⁸ I use here “speculative identity” instead of the more Marxist “unity of [excluding] opposites” or the Maoist “unity and struggle of opposites” for while both terms may designate the same [sort of] principle as the speculative without the so-called Hegel’s idealistic tinges, Hegel did not like the substitution of identity for unity because unity connoted an external determination between two seemingly opposed concepts, while the speculative is made of internal determinations really within the Notion itself. See Georg W. F. Hegel, 2011, *Science of Logic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 21.79: “Attention must also be drawn at this point to, so to speak, the unfortunate word “unity.” “Unity,” even more so than identity, designates a subjective reflection. It is normally taken as a connection that arises from comparison, from external reflection. Inasmuch as this reflection finds the same thing in two different subject matters, a unity is there with respect to which complete indifference is presupposed on the part of the subject matters compared, so that the comparing and the unity do not touch these subject matters themselves but are rather a doing and a determining external to them. Unity thus expresses a totally abstract sameness.” Yet when Marx speaks of polar unities, he is expressing an internal determination in the law of value within the commodity, rather than the external determination of the capital relation in the class struggle.

¹⁹⁹ Theodor Adorno, 1973, *Negative Dialectics*, London: Continuum, p.183

conditions for the existence of humanity. I think the significance of these two terms is ‘naturalistic’, not trans-historical. Useful labor is metabolic, emerging from ‘an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and Nature, and therefore no [social] life.’²⁰⁰ Yet useful labor treated thus is abstract since ‘labor’ as concrete labor belongs to specific social formations. On the other hand, labor-power is the universal capacity of humanity to survive. Labor-power is physiological, muscles and blood and energy, and takes the historical form of alienated labor under capitalism.²⁰¹ Labor is abstract but in a different way than the abstraction of useful labor. Abstract labor marshals labor-power for the production of autonomous commodities. Useful labor is a general condition for the survival of the human species. Both types of labor create total social wealth, yet abstract labor produces it for private appropriation. Useful labor is an empty universal; abstract labor historicizes or determines this universal with a particular content and social relations. Abstract labor and the concreteness of useful labor, however, represent the first polar unity concrete to capitalism.²⁰²

The division of labor organizes useful labor, but this division is not necessarily capitalist. For Marx, it is true that Capital needs to specialize labor to produce commodities, but the existence of commodities does not necessarily emerge from the division of labor alone. This distinction between division of labor and capitalist division of labor is important because Marx is not making the classic evolutionary argument that the division of labor necessarily leads to capitalism as the most efficient mode of production. Rather, Marx sees capitalism as a specific historical organization of useful

²⁰⁰ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.50

²⁰¹ See John Bellamy Foster, 2000, *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, New York: NYU Press. Bellamy-Foster rescues this naturalist conception in Marx of labor and nature against a tradition in Western Marxism originating in Lukács that neglects it: “Nature, which contributed to the production of use-values, was just as much source of labor of wealth as labor –even though its contribution to wealth was neglected by the system. Indeed, labor itself was ultimately reduced to such natural properties- a proposition deeply embedded in the materialist tradition going as far back to Epicurus” (p. 168).

²⁰² This topic of abstract and concrete labor is at the core of what could be called a Marxian ontology of labor. The debate revolves around whether there is a universality in labor constant in all societies –the idealist thesis for the more historically minded- or whether labor as labor is coeval to capital, as time domination. A third position, anchored in a materialist naturalism (i.e. Sebastiano Timpanaro following Engels) would consider labor as an exchange with nature, seeing nature as a sphere also susceptible of dialectics.

labor, and there is nothing in the production of commodities that is essentially or necessarily capitalist. It is when the production of commodities becomes total and imperative that one can speak of capitalism. Commodities were traded since Antiquity. It is the mode of their production, as embodying value through labor, and their predominance as the central and imperative organization of society that makes production capitalist. To constitute a society of mass commodity consumption, production must also be commoditized and masses converted into armies and reserves of wage-labor power.²⁰³

The Speculative Structure of Production

The form of value [or value-form] represents a social relation of commodity and commodity. This social relation is expressed in the money form; commodities are bought with money and capitalists pay a money wage to laborers. Commodities are objects of utility and depositories of value, “not a single atom of matter enters into its composition.” But in order for commodities to become equivalent under money, a prior process must take place before money unites their qualitative difference in a quantitative identity. This prior process lies in the second polar unity we encounter in Marx’s theory of value between relative and equivalent form of value. In the formula 20 yards of linen equals 1 coat, linen is the active (subject, relative value) and coat is the is passive, predicated on the value of the former, an equivalent form. Relative value is the subject and equivalent value the predicate. In this case, then the coat is a use-value that expresses an exchange value. As Marx says, “The first peculiarity that strikes us is considering in the form of the equivalent value is this: use value becomes the form of manifestation of its opposite value.”²⁰⁴ There is difference in this unity of value, the exchange value depends on something outside commodification: “The relative value presupposes the presence of some other commodity under the form of an equivalent. That second commodity is not the one whose value is expressed.” Marx asserts that these two components of value stand in a relation of identity-in-difference: “The relative form and the equivalent form are two intimately connected, mutually dependent and inseparable elements of the

²⁰³ See Karl Marx, 1992, *Capital*, vol, 2, New York: Penguin Books, p.120: “All pursuit of commodity production becomes at the same making mode of exploitation, which in the course of its historical development revolutionizes the entire economic structure of society by its organization of the labor process and its gigantic extension of technique, and towers incomparably above all earlier epochs.”

²⁰⁴ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.65.

expression of value; but at the same time, are mutually exclusive, antagonistic extremes, i.e. poles of the same expression.”²⁰⁵

The equivalent form of value is important in expressing the speculative character of commodity. The relative value expresses the pure exchange aspect of the commodity, but it is one-sided. The equivalent form, on the other hand, expresses value and also expresses nature (concrete utility); it manifests a “materialization of human labor in the abstract and at the same time the product of some specifically concrete labor”. Moreover, the equivalent form is where concrete labor becomes the form under which the opposite of abstract labor manifests itself. The equivalent form of value manifests the unity of opposites hidden in the purely mercantile aspect of the relative form of value. “The opposition or contrast –writes Marx- existing internally in the commodity between use-value and value is therefore made evident externally by two commodities being placed in such relation to each other.” Yet it is only when commodities circulate in the marketplace, when money expresses the exchange value of commodities, when the opposition of use and exchange values within the commodities is manifested.²⁰⁶ Labor ‘invisibly’ creates value, but money realizes value for all to see.

This polarity of equals makes capitalism qualitatively different from other pre-capitalist formations that may look capitalist, such as late-medieval financial centers and early modern commercial societies. In these mercantile societies, ruling interests were focused in circulation, trade, and import of luxury and vital goods. In capitalist societies, dominant interests are focused in production, cost-effectiveness, and increased productivity, especially of food, the essential, irreducible need for life and consumption. That is why capitalism started in the expropriated countryside. Then capitalism moved to

²⁰⁵ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.30

²⁰⁶ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.117: “Commodities, first of all, enter into the process of exchange just as they are. The process then differentiates them into commodities and money, and thus produces an external opposition corresponding to the internal opposition inherent in them, as being at once use-value. Commodities as use-values now stand opposed to money as exchange values. On the other hand, both opposing sides are commodities, unities of use-value, and value. But this unity of differences manifests itself at two opposite poles, and at each pole in an opposite way. Being poles they are as necessarily opposite as they are connected. [On the one side] we have an ordinary commodity, which is in reality as use-value. Its value is expressed only ideally in price, by which it is equated to its opponent, the gold, as to the real embodiment of its value. On the other hand, the gold, in its metallic reality ranks as the embodiment of value, as money.”

the cities with industrialization, bringing an impoverished, expropriated mass that later would become the industrial proletariat. Production and consumption (circulation) are united in real capitalism, whereas in commercial societies or trade empires, consumption took predominance over production. Hence, original accumulation, the forced expropriation of peasants and indigenous peoples is necessary, but not sufficient, to explain the emergence of capitalism. Without increased competitiveness and pure economic coercion in the countryside, this primitive accumulation of enclosures would have led at best to a second type of serfdom.²⁰⁷

“The process of production, considered on the one hand, as the unity of the labor process and the process of *creating value*, is production of commodities; considered on the other hand as the unity of the labor process and the process of *producing surplus-value*, it is the capitalist process of production, *or capitalist production of commodities*.”²⁰⁸

So far I described the speculative structure of the process of valorization. But capitalist production is also the unity of two opposite processes: of valorization of value and exploitation of labor, the unity of an ideal self-valorization materially grounded in exploitation. In the labor process, Marx describes the expropriation of labor through the twin process of surplus-value and mechanization that does not produce value in itself since it is “dead labor” but helps to increase the rate of exploitation.

The exploitation of labor is conducted through another polar unity, the unity of relative and absolute surplus value. When there is absolute surplus value, the rate of exploitation is lower for the capitalist as when there is relative surplus-value. With low capital and high labor-intensity, the capitalist has to extend the working day to incredible lengths in order to extract surplus-value from workers. With high-capital, technological

²⁰⁷ Central to this discussion is the so-called “Brenner debate” in which one side assumed capitalism was the final liberated social form from the fetters of feudalism (or absolutism), the only thing needed being opportunity. This is what Brenner calls the commercialization thesis of “Neo-Smithian” Marxists. This thesis begs the question that to explain the emergence of capitalism, capitalism is assumed as a latent trans-historical form of all societies, centered in towns (burghers) and trade. Brenner opposes his thesis of ‘agrarian capitalism’: peasants and lords were acting as they normally were, exchanging crops for rent in England, but this traditional arrangement yielded with time a specific form of organization that focused on increased production and cost-effectiveness as imperatives. The Dutch Republic and Florence were great trade and financial centers and never focused on production. They were complex commercial societies, but not capitalist societies. As Marx says succinctly, “Commercial capital is only circulating capital, and circulating capital is the first form of capital; in which it has as yet by no means become the foundation for production.” Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin Books, p.253)

²⁰⁸ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.209

production, and labor legislation, productivity turns higher, but with a corresponding higher rate of exploitation; the worker now needs less and less hours for her social reproduction, but the capitalist keeps him busy as allowed by law in order to extract more surplus-value and paying him less real wages. In absolute surplus-value, exploitation is absolute but the rate of exploitation is not as high as in relative surplus-value, where the rate of exploitation takes on a more complex nature of time-labor domination, even with an increase in consumption, and ease of working hours for the laborer. Even if working conditions and salaries improve, the rate of exploitation remains the same or higher because what is important is time-domination. A process can become automatized, yet workers still remain working 8 to 10 hours.²⁰⁹

“From one standpoint the distinction between absolute and relative surplus-value appears to be illusory. Relative surplus-value is absolute, because it requires the absolute prolongation of the working day beyond the labor-time necessary to the existence of the worker himself. Absolute surplus-value is relative, because it requires a development of the productivity of labor which will allow the necessary labor-time to be restricted to a portion of the working day. But if we keep in mind the movement of surplus-value, this semblance of identity vanishes. Once the capitalist mode of production has become the established and universal mode of production, the difference between absolute and relative surplus-value makes itself felt whenever there is a question of raising the rate of surplus-value (i.e. exploitation)”

The Speculative Form of Circulation

Value for Marx embodies a unity of opposites manifested in the structure of the commodity (use value and value), and in commodities in regards to money. But if commodities are structured as a unity of opposites, money “the God of commodities” embodies the speculative structure in the highest form. Marx has a monetary theory of value and production. Money is not an added supplement to fetishized labor. The value of commodities is crystallized in money, and not only as ‘socially necessary labor time’. Rather, labor becomes socially necessary once it is recognized by society in the sphere of circulation. In order for the value of commodity to be manifested, commodities must enter into the sphere of relations (of exchange). Thus, money fulfills fetishism being itself

²⁰⁹ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.646. Also: “The more the productiveness of labor increases, the more can the working-day be shortened; and the more the working-day is shortened, the more can the intensity of labor increase.” There is nothing psychological in Marx’s account of Capital. Commodity-owners understand themselves as profit-makers. Capital appears as the necessary self-justifying structure, even though its emergence as the predominant mean of production in capitalism was a contingency.”

the supreme fetish. Factories produce value, but the marketplace *realizes* value. That value is a socially necessary means that it is recognized in society as such in the process of acquisition of commodities by buyers. Seeing the commodity as only substance (instead of relation) as a one-sided embodiment of labor and labor-time is a formal approach, relying on the commodity's so-called 'intrinsic' qualities. It is true that the sphere of circulation and exchange is the surface of capital, and 'the hidden abode of production' the 'essence' of capital, yet, the fetishization of exchange, at the level of appearance, is as necessary as commodities as embodied abstract labor.

Circulation has its own determinations. Circulation precedes capitalist production, yet it is qualitatively transformed under capitalism. Money and the circulation of commodities predate capitalism, but in capitalism, commodities are not substantialist embodiment of human labor, time, and skill. Like classes, commodities are not substances but positions and relations. They are commodities in face of other commodities, just like social classes are defined by their relation to other classes. This relational aspect is proper to the value-form. This speculative structure already contained in the value of the commodity is necessarily acted upon in the sphere of exchange and universal equivalency. Money is an essential category in the structure of the commodity and it does not stand just as a supplement for their general equivalency in terms of time-labor.

Marx's theory of money and circulation shows the same structure of polar unities, now in an extremely condensed form, standing alone as pure exchange value, as pure fetishism. Money, for Marx, as he develops his theory in the *Grundrisse* and the 2nd volume of *Capital*, is a polar unity of measure (coin as a "symbol of itself") and exchange (as the mediator between production and circulation, "one produces in order to exchange, one produces by exchanging"), and also as an instrument of production, as in money capital. Or to put it in more Hegelian terms: money is first a common measure among commodities, a universal equivalency or identity; second, money is a medium of exchange among qualitatively different commodities as use-values. But finally, third, money as money-capital is a complex unity, an identity-in-difference, "which arises as an independent unit when the same money commodity is used in both the function of measure of value and as medium of exchange, has the potential to function as capital and

therefore is linked to reproduction the unity of production and circulation.”²¹⁰ Therefore, money in pre-capitalist times acted as the first two (as measure and as exchange in terms of merchant capital). It is in capitalism, where money is an instrument of production completing this unity everywhere, where money is also advanced for production, beyond the simple sale-purchase circuit.²¹¹ When money becomes money for itself, as the commodity of commodities through hoard, it leaves the sphere of simple circulation to enter expanded reproduction to become then money-capital. Money breaks all barriers especially as international money, since it is both an exchange medium and a form of capital increasing the scale of production. But every moment of this process appears isolated from the other.²¹²

Commodities thus lead a double existence, as products of labor and objects of exchange. Once commodities become independent from producers, the gap between these two natures widens, and money enters the scene as a measure, medium of exchange, and representative of commodities: “Money has a dual character –writes Marx-: it is measure or element in which the commodity is realized as exchange value, and means of exchange, instrument of circulation, and in each of these aspects it acts in quite opposite directions”²¹³. On the one hand, commodities must express an exchange value ideally expressed as price. On the other, money as means of circulation also mean that as instrument is external to the commodities. Money is equally the same and not the same as other commodities.²¹⁴ Thus, exchange is determined by this double structure of use-value

²¹⁰ Karl Marx, 1992, *Capital*, vol. 2, New York: Penguin Books, p. 63

²¹¹ Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin, p. 197: “The purchaser becomes a seller again and the seller becomes a purchaser again. In this way, each is posited in the double and the antithetical aspect, and hence in the living unity of both aspects. It is entirely wrong, therefore, to do as the economists do, namely, as soon as the contradictions in the monetary systems emerge into view, to focus only on the end result without the process which mediates them; only on the unity without the distinction, the affirmation without the negation.”

²¹² Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.136: “In the velocity of the currency we have the fluent unity of the antithetical and complementary phases, the unity of the conversion of the useful aspects of commodities into their value aspect, and their reconversion from the latter aspect to the former, or the unity of the processes of sale and purchase.... But the apparent retardation of the currency reflects the separation of these two processes into isolated antithetical phases.”

²¹³ Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin Books, p. 187

²¹⁴ Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin Books, p. 188: “The commodity as pure exchange value, or, the commodity as pure exchange value is money. But at the same time, money now exists outside and alongside the commodity; its exchange value, the exchange value of all commodities, an existence based in an autonomous material of its own, in a particular commodity.”

and exchange-value. “All commodities –Marx writes- are non-use values for their owners and use-values for their non-owners. Consequently, they must all change hands.”²¹⁵ This alienated social form gives rise, as we know, to the fetishism of the commodities. Fetishist subjectivation embodies alienated objectivation. In the same process, the commodities-objects become subjects invested with magical powers and autonomy made possible by abstract labor, and the subject-producers of commodities become objects invested with a labor force to be sold and engaged in mercantile, objectified relations with other producers - on the one hand, object-subject; on the other, subject-object.²¹⁶

Marx will find yet another polar unity in the money-form, in the capitalist’s act of selling and buying. It constitutes a unity of opposites revealing the money’s self-circulation and self-development. As Marx states,

“The sale and the purchase constitute one identical act, an exchange between a commodity owner and an owner of money, between two persons as opposed to each other as the two poles of a magnet. *They form two distinct acts, of polar and opposite characters, when performed by one single person....* To say that these two independent and antithetical acts have an intrinsic unity, are essentially one, is the same as to say that this intrinsic oneness expresses itself in an external antithesis.”²¹⁷

Simple reproduction and expanded reproduction of capital possess the same structure of unity of opposites. At the material level, one begins and ends with money, and the other with the commodity. The merchant capitalist embodies this act: he buys in order to sell and sells in order to buy. The industrial capitalist does the same, but with labor, buying and selling the source of wealth itself. These polar unities are moments in the many metamorphoses the commodity, from the antithesis of use value and exchange value, to the contradiction between abstract labor and concrete labor, to the personification of objects and the objectification of persons, all the way to the money-form, “the riddle presented by commodities, only now in its most glaring form”.

For Marx, all these steps however contain the possibility of a crisis because of the

²¹⁵ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books p.97

²¹⁶ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.180. It is in the sphere of exchange that the commodity owners ‘natural consciousness’ emerges; this consciousness is of an automatic subject. As Marx, states “[in exchange, commodity owners] have already acted before thinking. The natural laws of the commodity have manifested themselves in the natural instinct of the owners of commodities.”

²¹⁷ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 1, New York: Penguin Books, p.127

intimate connection between these antitheses and of the split becoming “too pronounced” in its unity. What makes crisis inevitable in capitalism is the disproportionate unity between production and circulation. Equilibrium, balance in the process of capital accumulation requires that commodities are sold at their value at the time of production, that the *realization* of value in the market place through money be equal to the *production* of value in the factory. Money is a commodity, the only commodity that embodies pure exchange value, and commodities’ value are only realized in money, yet the identity in the commodity character between money and commodities becomes a disunity in the transition from production to circulation, what Marx calls in the second volume the “effects of turnover time”, i.e. the working period of production being greater, smaller, or equal to the circulation period. Turnovers are due to advancements in technology, the increase in labor productivity, competition, etc., all material factors that create a tendency for the value of each commodity to decline. In this sense, if the teleology of Capital is self-valorization, or the valorization of value, periodic crises, and contradictions between production and circulation induces de-valorizations of Capital, crisis of over-production (of unsold) commodities, and social polarization induced by market imperatives and exclusions of massive sectors from consumption (under-consumption). Overproduction to make up for the fall in the rate of profit shows the conflict between the forces of production and the relations of production. As Marx put it,

“Capital forces the workers beyond necessary labor to surplus labor. Only in this way, it realize itself, and create surplus value. But on the other hand, it posits necessary labor only to the extent and in so far as it is surplus labor and the latter is realizable as surplus value. As soon as it cannot posit value, it does not posit necessary labor... It therefore restricts labor and the creation of value by an artificial check, as the English express it... By its nature, therefore, [Capital] posits a barrier to labor and value-creation, in contradiction to its tendency to expand them boundlessly.”²¹⁸

The Speculative Dimension of Capitalism

In chapter 4 of *Capital*, volume 2, Marx strikingly parallels Hegel’s theory of the mind in his concept of ‘total social capital’, as the unity and interaction between the three different circuits of money capital, commodity capital, and productive capital. This short section shows the homologies of Marx’s critique of capitalism with the structure of Hegel’s speculative logic. Marx writes,

²¹⁸ Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin Books, p. 47

“If we take all three forms together, then all premises of the process appear as its result, as premises produced by the process itself. Each moment appears as a point of departure, of transit, and of return. The total process presents itself as the unity of the process of production and the process of circulation; the production process is the mediator of the circulation process and vice versa.”²¹⁹

Marx grasps the inner moments of capital, each circuit not in isolation but internally related to each other, just like in Hegel, the three faculties of the mind are necessary to each other. Without it, no system or conceptual depth to capitalism is possible. The metamorphosis of Capital described in volume 2 is an attempt to identify a more concrete universality to Capital beyond the abstractions of value-form and the capital relation. This more concrete universe is industrial capital which stands as the real unity of the three circuits. Marx’s criticized other theories of political economy in their inability to think these three circuits as a whole, focusing for example only on money-capital like the Mercantilists, or productive capital as the British classical political economists preferred, or in just commodity capital as the dominant form in Physiocracy. Just like Hegel and his critique of empiricism as philosophies of understanding, or rationalism as philosophies of pure reason, Marx puts into relief the philosophical one-sidedness of economic theories that did not address capital as a social form, and only as object and stock. The circuit of capital as a whole is Marx’s speculative attempt in volume 2 of conceiving Capital as the unity-in-difference of the three circuits and only to be “grasped as movement and not as a static thing” or as an arrested dialectic, like many post-Hegelian philosophers understood the speculative to mean. Thus,

“Money-capital, commodity-capital and productive capital, do not therefore designate independent kinds of capital whose functions form the content of likewise independent branches of industry separated from one another. They denote here only special functional forms of industrial capital, which assumes all three of them one after the other. Capital describes its circuit normally only so long as its various phases pass uninterruptedly into one another. If capital stops short in the first phase M — C, money-capital assumes the rigid form of a hoard; if it stops in the phase of production, the means of production lie without functioning on the one side, while labor-power remains unemployed on the other; and if capital stops short in the last phase C' — M', piles of unsold commodities accumulate and clog the flow of circulation.”²²⁰

²¹⁹ Karl Marx, 1977, *Capital*, vol. 2, New York: Penguin Books, p.180

²²⁰ Karl Marx, 1977, *Capital*, vol. 2, New York: Penguin Books, p. 182: “Since every one of these circuits is considered a special form of this movement in which various individual industrial capitals are engaged, this difference exists only as an individual one. But in reality every individual industrial capital is present simultaneously in all three circuits. These three circuits, the forms of

Further evidence for Marx's speculative method in the circulation of capital is found in the unity of fixed and circulating capital in volume 2, which further specifies the more general unity of constant (machinery, instruments of labor) and variable capital (living labor) found in the production of Capital of volume 1. For Marx, fixed capital never leaves the sphere of production; it creates value that circulates but its use value is solely productive, a machine wears out by producing commodity supply.

“The instruments of labor properly so called, the material vehicles of the fixed capital, are consumed only productively and cannot enter into individual consumption, because they do not enter into the product, or the use-value, which they held to create but retain their independent form with reference to it until they are completely worn out.”²²¹

By contrast, circulating capital goes through all metamorphoses of capital. The unity of both opposites constitute a further concretion in terms of machinery and labor power, metamorphosis and circulation that comes fully expressed in one of Marx's most original contributions to political economy: the unity of the two departments of social production, that of means of production (“commodities having a form in which they must, or at least may, pass into productive consumption.”) and articles of consumption (“commodities having a form in which they pass into the individual consumption of the capitalist and the working-class”). Money is all-essential in this dual schema since this is how capitalists pay workers, yet money stays in the workers' hands only temporarily. The cost of living and the workers' simple reproduction C-M-C makes sure that money soon returns to capitalists.

Marx's reproduction schemas conceptualize the turnover of capital and commodity production and consumption also as a dual schema of opposites, mirroring more concretely the abstraction of use and exchange value presented in Capital I. Department I must realize a flow of value in the process of production and Department II must fulfill such value in the process of circulation. What was presented in volume 1 as

reproduction assumed by the three forms of capital, are made continuously side by side. For instance, one part of the capital-value, which now performs the function of commodity-capital, is transformed into money-capital, but at the same time another part leaves the process of production and enters the circulation as a new commodity-capital. The circuit form C' ... C' is thus continuously described; and so are the other two forms. The reproduction of capital in each one of its forms and stages is just as continuous as the metamorphosis of these forms and the successive passage through the three stages. The entire circuit is thus a unity of its three forms.”

²²¹ Karl Marx, 1982, *Capital*, vol. 2, New York: Penguin Books, p.88

the unity of opposites between simple and expanded reproduction is now presented in volume 2 as a more concrete unity of opposites inherent in total social capital, as macroeconomics and sectoral analysis.

Volume 3 of *Capital* studies capitalism in its real concretion, as the unity in difference of diverse capitals that are the same in terms of Capital as general, according to the average rate of profit and disintegrated into many capitals in their fierce competition. In the first parts of volume 3, the different capitals are united under the identity of profit and the average rate of profit as necessary appearance of surplus-value. Later, the unity of capital explodes into different factions of industrial, commercial, and finance capital with their own apparent surplus-values. As Marx writes, “The fragmentation of the total social capital into many individual capitals, or the repulsion of its fractions from each other, is counteracted by their attraction.”²²² The polar unity represented in the third volume of *Capital* is one of Capital in general as a universal and many capitals as individuals. This polar unity between the universal and the particular makes capital ‘repelling itself from itself’, while at the same time, maintaining a unity of inner fragmentation. “Conceptually,” writes Marx, “competition is nothing other than the inner nature of capital, its essential character appearing in and realized as the reciprocal interaction of many capitals with one another, *the inner tendency as external necessity*.” This is what Hegel precisely understood as speculative actuality, ““Actuality is the unity, become immediate, of essence with existence, of inward with outward.” Capitalism achieves speculative actuality when its universality is riddled with conflict between the parts, of value and counter value.

Identity and Difference in the Capital Relation

Beside the internal unities of opposites in capital’s structure, Capital is also a relation between irreconcilable opposites, between the party of capitalists and the party of workers, Capital and Labor. The capital relation is speculative since both parties stand at the same time in unity at the level of structure and in antagonism at the level of appearances, both equally essential and important. At the level of essence, capital relation is an identity. Abstract labor derives from capital; capital extracts value from labor. It is the unity of capital’s valorization and exploitation of labor. The rate of exploitation points

²²² Karl Marx, 1990, *Capital*, vol. 3, New York: Penguin Books, p.195

to this structural paradox of the ever-growing and subsumption of capital over labor even under the betterment of labor conditions.²²³ At the level of appearance, class struggle manifests two different subjectivities and class consciousness. Yet for Marx, the goal is to eliminate the proletariat by eliminating capitalist exploitation, not to romanticize a proletarian subjectivity vis-à-vis capitalism.²²⁴ This twofold relation of essence and appearance, of unity-in-difference of the capital relation (Capital and Labor) has had a profound effect in interpretations of Marx's *Capital*.

Fredric Jameson argues that interpretation only takes place within political coordinates. Therefore, it is not possible to locate the historical meaning of a text outside the text's own polemical interventions. Interpretation includes the text itself and its succeeding interpretations. Jameson calls these derivations "meta-commentaries" which includes the original text's polemical interventions and the 'sedimented reading habits' from different interpretive lineages. For Jameson, meta-commentaries are "construed essentially as an allegorical act, which consists in rewriting a given text in terms of a particular interpretive master code."²²⁵ These different codes, for our purposes, revolve around narratives of identities and difference. Jameson's mention of the 'allegorical act' is central to interpretation. Allegories do not intend to reconstruct the true meaning of the text. Allegories actively and arbitrarily adjudicate meanings. If Hegel has been interpreted as a philosopher of closed totalities, that is, as a symbolic philosopher, it is

²²³ Michael Heinrich, 2012, *An Introduction to the Three Volumes of Karl Marx's Capital*, Monthly Review Press, New York: Monthly Review Press, p.120, "Increased exploitation (meaning that a greater portion of the day consists of surplus-value) and an increased standard of living for the working class are therefore not mutually exclusive...The rate of exploitation is not measured by the standard of living, but by the rate of surplus-value."

²²⁴ See Gaspar Tamas, 2006, "Telling the Truth About Class", *Socialist Register*, v.42. Tamas identifies in this regard two traditions in socialism. One initiated by Rousseau and the other by Marx. For Rousseau, and even Rousseauian Marxists, the aim is 'the triumphant survival of the proletariat', while for Marx is its abolition. Rousseauism may survive in transhistorical understandings of labor. Once labor is liberated from surplus-value, the proletariat is liberated as proletariat, a free proletariat, not its extinction. Tenets of a Rousseauian Marxism are (1) that the working class is a worthy cultural competitor of the ruling class; (2) that the Lebenswelt of the working class is socially and morally superior to that of its exploiters; (3) that regardless of the outcome of the class struggle, the autonomy and separateness of the working class is an intrinsic social value; (4) that the class itself is constituted by the autopoiesis of its rebellious political culture."

²²⁵ Fredric Jameson, 1971. "Metacommentary." *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, 9-18.; Fredric Jameson, 1981, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Ithaca: Cornell, 9-10

because the pinnacle of his theory, the speculative, has been understood as a system of absolute identities without outsides. This type of closure is the function of symbols, however. Symbols unite. They synthesize ideality and materiality. For symbols, things have a transcendent dimension. They embody ideas, as Kant's artworks, or they are metaphors of higher ideals and notions. In philosophies of history, symbols unite, reconcile the material and the ideal within history. Symbolic philosophy of history becomes a history of salvation, teleology, a cosmogony or theosophy, the journey of the Spirit or of Capital. In the case of Capital's ideology, the symbolic idealist reading is that Capital eventually will subsume everything without further contradiction. Capital's utopia is to completely conquer use-values: labor and land. Use-values will disappear completely in a purely capitalist society along with negativity.

According to German aesthetic tradition from Kant to Adorno, symbols have an ideological function of anticipating reconciliation. Allegories, on the other hand, establish the non-identity between the material and the ideal, conceiving history as an incomplete task, a never-ending process.²²⁶ That the speculative is a simultaneous unity of identity and difference, can also be read as a simultaneous activation of allegorical and symbolic interpretations. On the one hand, the speculative retains the symbolic aspect of thinking through totalities, but these totalities are also non-identical, 'torsos' as Benjamin calls them, a version of actuality and totality that can never 'coalesce with the ideal'. But in Hegel's philosophy, there is always something other, un-totalizable and irreducible which is unintelligible, that thought cannot penetrate yet. Contrary to tradition, Hegel does not reduce facticity to logical necessity.

Marx's Capital is speculative in this sense. Like the commodity, Capital is symbolic, mystical, and full of theological niceties. Money, Capital's medium, is also symbolic. It is a medium of exchange and also the "God of commodities." Commodities, as Marx famously says, are "a very queer thing abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties." But also, commodities are allegorical entities; they hide and conceal use-value in plain sight for exchange value. The meaning of the commodity does not lie in its concrete usefulness, nor in the labor invested upon it, but in the abstract universality of money, a universality that is imprinted arbitrarily through the system of prices. As

²²⁶ See Tony Smith, 1990, *The Logic of Marx's Capital*, Albany: SUNY Press, p.9-13.

Benjamin says, “the allegorist imprints her monogram in paintings and texts.” But use-values survive, however distorted by the real and effective imaginary of exchange values; these non-identities are the reason for exchange value; commodity’s value must be realized with the sphere of circulation for their use value. Nobody buys anything that is useless.

Positivism: absolute Labor and relative Capital

The supposed objectivity of use-value and appropriation of labor as use, concrete value versus the totalizing grip of Capital have determined historical readings and interpretations of Marx’s *Capital*. On the one hand, the logico-historical interpretation, from Engels to Mandel explains *Capital* as a history of successive stages. Capital’s phases of development are presented as historical phases of modes of production. The mode of presentation is historical. The logic of the commodity, hence, is not only a logical presentation of the inner structure of Capital’s commodity, but a figure of ‘simple commodity production’, preceding Capital proper. This view argued that ‘simple commodity production’ is a feature of all economic systems, proper to whenever trade happens. Exchange value is a feature common to all modes of production. Yet, Marx never uses the expression of simple commodity production. As Engels put it,

“Marx takes simple commodity production as his *historical presupposition*, only later, proceeding on this basis, to come on to capital’: the advantage of this was that he could proceed ‘from the simple commodity and not from a conceptually and *historically secondary form*, the commodity as already modified by capitalism.”²²⁷

The problem with Engels’s assertion is that it takes value outside Capital; it grounds labor as a source of value in a positive light. Capitalist alienation is a historical development of labor, and by implication, the possibility of non-alienated labor exists. The critique of Capital implies an opposite ontology of labor which sees Capital as producing a type of alienated, abstract labor from an unbroken labor-power. Here, the main ‘orthodox’ and brightest critical exponent is Lukács from his *History and Class Consciousness* to his late *Ontology of Social Being*. For Lukács, following a key passage in *Capital* on the end of labor processes, states that it is “Through labor, that a

²²⁷ Friedrich Engels, “Preface and Supplement to Capital Vol. III”

teleological positing is realized within material being, as the rise of a new objectivity. The first consequence of this is that labor becomes the model for *any* social practice.”²²⁸

This had important political consequences in the history of communist theory. Theorists of labor as pure use-value imagined socialism as labor without surplus value, just value. Yet this is impossible since the creation and appropriation of value necessarily presupposes surplus value. Or to put it in another way -that retroactively posits the presuppositions- that surplus value and the rate of exploitation exist unveils something called value within the commodity that is already appropriable and exchangeable. Value appears only when there is abstract labor, an objectified form embodying an abstract principle since its source to living work has been cut. Value can only come out of alienation of the worker from its product. As Marx strongly states in the *Grundrisse*, “It is just as pious as it is stupid to wish that exchange value would not develop into capital, nor labor which produces exchange value into wage labor.”²²⁹

“Wert-Theorie”: Capital as Subject

An influential school of interpretation that privileged the absolute identity between labor and capital is the ‘value-form theory’. Value-form theorists read *Capital* as an inner logic of value. For this school, influential in Germany and Japan, Marx develops Capital’s deep structure from core categories where history and class struggle only play a subsidiary role. Soviet economist Isaak Ilych Rubin advanced this reading. For Rubin,

“One of two things is possible: if abstract labor is an expenditure of human energy in physiological form, then value also has a reified material character. Or value is a social phenomenon, and then abstract labor must also be understood as a social phenomenon connected with a determined social form of production. It is not possible to reconcile a physiological concept of abstract labor with the historical character of value which it creates.”²³⁰

For Rubin, this antinomy between nature (physiology) and history (social forms of production) cannot be solved. Labor has a unique nature in capitalism; capitalism produces a form of labor that is abstracted from its product and a source of value. Labor as *creator of value* is a form unique in history, therefore, to understand labor is to understand the functioning of Capital’s valorization. Rubin’s insights were rediscovered

²²⁸ Gyorgy Lukács, 1980, *The Ontology of Social Being III: Labor*, New York: Merlin Press

²²⁹ Karl Marx, 2005, *Grundrisse*, New York: Penguin Books, p.249

²³⁰ Isaak I. Rubin, 2007, *Essays on Marx’s Theory of Value*, New Delhi: Aakar Books, p.34

by Postone and led to one of the most significant interventions in the recent theory and social history of labor. Postone argues that to treat labor as the standpoint of critique represents the position of traditional Marxism. According to traditional Marxism, labor is trans-historical, naturalized, and capital's subjugation of labor through surplus value constitutes alienation. The proletariat, once liberated from surplus-value and exploitation, can dispose of labor as it wishes. For Postone, however, this view fails to see the deeper structural logic because it concentrates in appearances, in class struggle as the motor of history. Following Rubin's critique, Postone argues that we must dispose of this 'natural' character of labor to avoid the pitfalls of traditional socialism of positing an idea of liberated or emancipated labor. Labor is the core form of capitalist domination.

Postone's main target is Lukács's speculative-idealist understanding of the proletariat as the subject-object history in "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat", the foundational text of Western Marxism. The trans-historical, Kantian conception of labor comes also with an understanding of capitalism as an antinomian, not a speculative system. The works of Lukács and Sohn-Rethel are representatives of this conception through different ways. In his classic essay "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat", Lukacs criticizes the antinomies of bourgeois-liberal thought arguing that they reflect capitalist structural antinomies. Lukacs sees these antinomies as a totality specific to bourgeois thought. Each class in a Leninist way has a perspective of totality formulated openly or latently. Yet Lukacs sees capitalism as antinomian and therefore he takes the proletariat as the class that solves these antinomies as the speculative subject of history. For Lukacs, the antinomies of bourgeois thought are reflections of the antinomy of Capital, which then produces alienation.

My view, however, is that Capital is not antinomian, but stands as a unity of opposites. Effectively bourgeois and liberal thinking are dominated by antinomies, and that rightly so the bourgeois view of totality -even though the concept of totality is absent in bourgeois ideology- is analytical, a fragmented sum of individuals in antagonism with each other, the perspective of civil society according to Hegel. Yet that Capital is antinomian is to see it only from the standpoint of its appearance, the class struggle between workers and capitalists, but from the standpoint of its essence, Capital is structured around the capital relation, labor is a function of Capital from which Capital

extracts value. They both stand as a unity of opposites. Lukacs, in this sense, understands Capital from a positivistic perspective, or rather from the perspective of the Understanding. Bourgeois reason is a reflection; the proletariat and socialism incarnate Reason. Lukacs does not argue in terms of political economy, but philosophically. Society in his presentation stands only as an indeterminate realm of productive forces; Lukacs makes only the most general statements about society along his impressive philosophical analysis.

“For the contradiction does not lie in the inability of the philosophers to give a definitive analysis of the available facts. It is rather the intellectual expression of the objective situation itself which it is their task to comprehend. That is to say, the contradiction that appears here between subjectivity and objectivity in modern rationalist formal systems, the entanglements and equivocations hidden in their concepts of subject and object, the conflict between their nature as systems created by ‘us’ and their fatalistic necessity distant from and alien to man is nothing but the logical and systematic formulation of the modern state of society.”²³¹

Lukacs concludes that capitalist reification is of course old wine in new bottles. Modern rationalization is as irrational as the first nature destroyed for a more rational society. Though distinct in nature, the *differentia specifica* between the alienation of raw necessity of first nature and the ‘free’ alienation of second nature is understated in his essay. This lack of more difference between first and second nature represents also a lack of engagement of Lukacs with the concrete capitalist law of value. Lukacs does not sufficiently delineate the social-scientific contours of antinomian bourgeois thinking, and like Sohn-Rethel (although Rethel engages more concretely with the laws of exchange as the origin of capitalist abstraction, yet again extrapolating them to Antiquity), traces this relation between capitalism and antinomian thinking vaguely beyond the emergence of capitalism as a historical mode of production. With Lukacs’ trans-historical understanding of labor, antinomies as product of capitalism also stretch beyond capitalist formations, though not in their more realized form.

In other passages, the essay presents this relation restricted only to capitalism, but the dialectic between concrete antinomies (which Lukacs definitely shows) and the laws of capital (which Lukacs ignores) are not there. Indeed, antinomies are also present in Greek philosophy, as Lukacs recognizes that ancient society had “some degree of

²³¹ Georg Lukács, 1971, *History and Class Consciousness*, Cambridge: MIT Press, p.128

reification.” One only needs to think of Plato and Aristotle and their oppositions or unities between ideas and matter. Yet, classical antinomies are not deployed as starkly as in a modern thought rooted in the subject. For classical realism and idealism, objects are measure of all things, including the subject. It is with modern philosophy and, of course, the rise of capitalism that the antinomy of law begins from the subject. Kant, for Lukacs, “only developed its implications more radically than his predecessors had done.”

Lukacs theorizes the totality of history as dialectical and labor as common to all modes of production. Liberal bourgeois antinomies belong to a specific reified stage in this history of labor and the dialectical labor of history, against which the final unfolding of history and the liberation of labor are synonymous. The proletariat organized under a Party can only bring the unity of opposites between subject and object. I think however that the subject-object of our history is Capital and that antinomies as they are presented in modern philosophy and liberal ideology are specific products of such history. That antinomies were also present in ancient thought is beyond the scope of this work. However, in order to make this claim, we need to find out if social practices before capitalism were deployed under a system that was effectively organized under a unity of opposites and initiated under wage-labor.

Like Lukács, the other example of capitalism understood as Kantian antinomies is found in Sohn-Rethel. For Sohn-Rethel, Kantian dualism is ‘a more faithful approach to the realities of capitalism’ than Hegel’s speculative approach. Lukács only suggested that antinomies were present in non-capitalist societies; in Sohn-Rethel, all philosophy since the pre-Socratics contain capitalist alienation *in nuce* for the presence of the concept of exchange value. Sohn-Rethel calls real abstraction to the market division of mental labor as logic and manual labor as value, making the social nature of labor undetectable. If abstraction in thought is possible is because there is also abstraction in social relations and in the organization of needs. Capitalist social abstraction represents the condition of possibility for philosophical mental abstraction. For Sohn-Rethel, mathematics is the exemplar science of abstraction. Apriorism manifests in mathematical axioms that separate its postulates from the concrete determinations present in social practices. For example, the identity principle makes possible exchange principles and cash-nexus but it is not the same as these. If mental labor is a product of social practices, this social

background is concealed by focusing only in the ideas themselves. The exchange principle in capitalist societies roots out labor as concrete, qualitative social practice and places all human activity in a single process of exchange. Thus, in material activity – labor- use-values are subsumed under exchange value; in ideal activity –logic- material phenomena are examples of universal categories. Exchange values and categories make all concrete products of manual and mental labor equivalent, abstract.

Yet, even if Sohn Rethel recognizes the historical production of subjects under capitalism, there are three differences that differentiate his approach from a speculative critique of antinomies. First, Sohn-Rethel applies a Kantian approach to the problem of reification. Second, his critique of reification extrapolates, like Lukacs, its scope to non-capitalist societies, since Sohn-Rethel does not differentiate money circulation and exchange from capitalist production and exchange. Here, there is an implicit assumption that circulation and exchange processes produce value instead of realizing it, what Brenner calls “Smithian Marxism”. What happens under capitalist therefore is a universalization of value and abstraction, already implicit and partial in pre-capitalist societies. And third, there is no explanation present of the apriori of capital abstraction, what is its structure. We know only the apriori by its effects (reification and ‘necessary false consciousness’). In this sense, Sohn-Rethel posits -like many Kantians in the Marxist tradition such as Colletti or the Austro-Marxists- a transcendental principle that is then ‘verified’ in historical social practices. This is contrary to a Marxist and Hegelian perspective for which social recognition and misrecognition constitute first social practices and then the organizing principle is ‘discovered’ afterward by positing the presupposition as product of such social practices. Thus, the awareness of exchange leads us to the hidden reality of production where value is extracted and produced. Value as the organizing principle of capital is visible in exchange but takes place in labor and production. It is not posited but read retroactively as product of concrete social practices.

A deeper logic sees that labor is actually produced by capitalism, that labor mediates social processes in capitalism, and that it is the main channel for capitalist alienated social forms. Capital uses labor to extract value; labor is the origin of value, and in order to abolish capitalism, value must be abolished, hence labor itself. Yet, Marx is very ambiguous when he discusses the nature of labor at the beginning of *Capital*. Marx,

as described above, asserts that labor implies a metabolic exchange with nature. Labor does not have a trans-historical character, but against Postone, Marx sees that labor definitely possess a physiological and natural character. While Postone recognizes that nature becomes the sort of object to be exploited in capitalism –a Heideggerian *Bestand*, “a standing reserve” of natural resources ready to be conquered²³²-, he does not sufficiently emphasize the material, ‘other’ character of nature, thus perhaps participating the quasi-idealist framework of society, however historical it may be, as a set of inter-subjective alienated social mediations without an ‘outside.’ Thus, I think that Postone substitutes Lukács’s idealism of trans-historical labor for an idealism of labor-as-capital. Since Capital produces alienated labor, it follows that labor is identical to capital. Abolish labor and capital is abolished. This presupposes a complete, absolute, formal and real subsumption of labor to Capital, a smooth space where there is no resistance, where use-values are completely eliminated. In the dialectical reading of Capital represented by “value-form theorists”. Capital’s inner logic is a totalizing and the problem is history. The dialectical approach to Capital is Capital-centric. With some variants, Capital’s core structure completes itself through a progression of logical categories, as a Hegelian world-spirit. Value-form theorists often treat Capital as ‘pure Capital’ where the historical and the logical are homological, fused in an identity of opposites. For Sekine, following Hegel’s logical development of being, essence, and concept,

“The dialectic of capital too consists of the three doctrines of circulation, production and distribution. The dialectical methods used in those doctrines are respectively, becoming, internalization, and unfolding. The guiding force of the dialectic of capital is the contradiction between value and use-values. Capital, *the dialectical subject*, reveals itself step by step by letting ‘value’, its most abstract specification, prevail over ‘use-values’ which represent everything ‘other’ than capital.”²³³

²³² Martin Heidegger, 1982, *The Question concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York: Harper Collins, p. 9-14

²³³ Tomohito Sekine, 2008, “The Dialectic of Capital: An Unoist Interpretation”, in Bertell Ollman & Tony Smith (eds.), 2008, *Dialectics for the New Century*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, p.207. Italics Mine

Communism means the abolition of this total subsumption, hence, of labor.²³⁴ Yet, do we have to wait for Capital's total subsumption of labor, for the disappearance of use-values and of opposites in order for Communism to make its entrance again, without the illusions of liberated labor?

Autonomism: The antinomy of Capital and Labor

The response is in a less analytical and more voluntaristic approach of Autonomism which, resembles orthodoxy with a twist. This school approaches Capital and Labor as a relation of absolute differences. Labor is a revolutionary subjectivity completely opposed to Capital not in objective terms for the capital relation is one of exploitation of labor, but in terms of subjective will, of a radical antagonism between workers' and capitalists' subjectivity despite Capital's total valorization of labor. The theory of surplus value is a weapon in the workers' struggle and class struggle knows no synthesis. Antagonisms cannot be negated and they will always reappear. This third differential approach is that of workerism. For instance, Negri dismisses *Capital's* 'objectivism' for the *Grundrisse*, its predecessor. The *Grundrisse* is a book of radical revolutionary subjectivity. Negri says,

“Certainly Marx developed a theory of profit, which is to say a theory of the subjectivity of capital, while –in spite of his intentions- he did not develop a theory of the subjectivity of the working class – in the figure of a wage, for instance... We must see in these two spaces the formation of *opposed subjectivities*, opposed wills and intellects, opposed processes of valorization... The *Grundrisse* aims at a theory of the subjectivity of the working class against the profitable theory of capitalist subjectivity.”²³⁵

Negri's original blending of Foucault with Marx in terms of production of subjects has many problems in terms of Marx's own theory of Capital, especially in Negri's theory of wages which is the polar opposite of Marx.²³⁶ Negri does not define labor's specific process of valorization. Also, Negri categorically dismisses Hegel and

²³⁴ Moishe Postone, 1975, *Time, Labor, and Social Domination*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. See also Robert Kurz's excellent "The lost honor of labor" for a critique of this ontology of labor. Robert Brenner, on the other hand, considers this value-form approach as 'fundamentalist Marxism'. As historian, Brenner addresses empirical history, not core logics, to induce laws of capitalist crisis concretely, and not deployed from immanent conceptual dynamics

²³⁵ Antonio Negri, 1987, *Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse*, Autonomedia, p.94.

²³⁶ For example, Negri thinks that wages are an independent variable in the process of capitalist accumulation, instead of a consequence of surplus-value appropriation. This understanding of wages leads Negri to posit Labor as an absolute subject, just like certain value-theorists posit Capital as an absolute Subject.

dialectics as reactionary when there is an almost unanimous consensus that the radical *Grundrisse* is Marx's most Hegelian text. Yet Negri's accent on the irreducible, non-identical difference of labor to Capital is important, since Capital produces labor as its mediation, but it is only through the activity of labor, and also of Capital's technology and automated production (which is outside the law of value as 'dead labor') that labor as creator of value can be abolished.²³⁷

The problem therefore is what to make of the fissure between the historical and the logical/systematic manner of presentation. This is where the speculative aspect of capital comes useful as an interpretive code. A speculative reading posits an identity and non-identity between Capital's inner totalizing logic and the contingency proper to history, the rocky materiality of class-struggle. It cannot be doubted that Capital is a totalizing force, but at the level of history, it never achieves a totality. I think that to privilege the identity of Capital's logics and history or Capital with society is still one-sided despite dialectical insight and second, that the non-identity within Capital's system has been largely overlooked. Use-value, nature and labor itself constitute limits inherent to Capital. Nature and labor as entities not capitalistically produced resist Capital in terms of workers' resistance to labor and time domination, and nature's resistance to Capital's destructive demands for production.²³⁸

²³⁷ The dual character of "dead labor" can be seen as, on the one hand, Capital as dead labor who dominates "vampire-like" the living labor of workers, but also, as technology as dead, automated labor, producer of no value. In capitalism, technology is a mean to dominate the source of value, living labor which itself is of no value (Capital, vol. 2). Workers are indispensable for automation, since automation produces a massive army of unemployed that drives downward wages and speeds-up the process of production where the workers have to inhumanely 'catch-up' with the machines in productivity. Marx referred to this process as extracting relative surplus-value. As Marx points out, "The ideal, towards which capitalism strives, is the domination of dead labor over living labor." On the other hand, technology can eliminate value, as time domination, so that people are free to do what they please, and work only for their social reproduction in a 'socialist' economy of use-values. In one, dead labor dominates living labor in the form of relative surplus-value, once legislation and technological process made absolute surplus-value (the lengthening of the workday to the physiological limits of the human body) outmoded in the metropolis. On the other hand, it is technology that can make also relative surplus-value obsolete -by the total automatization of labor- and hence, reduced surplus-appropriation in terms of time to zero.

²³⁸ As Adorno points out, "Determinism acts as if dehumanization, the totally unfolded commodity character of the working capacity were pure and simple. No thought is given to the fact that there is a limit to the commodity character: the working capacity that has just not only an exchange value, but a use-value." "Self-experience of freedom and unfreedom", and "In actuality the subjective aspect of use value conceals the objective (non-identical) utopia, while the objectivity of exchange value conceals subjectivism."

Capitalism and Ethical Life

Ethical life for Hegel is the speculative unity of the realms of morality and legality, which is to say, the unity or “interpenetration of the subjective and the objective aspects” of a particular society. In Hegel’s classic account, the state (as politics) and religion (as ethical life) form a speculative unity in that inner life corresponds to external political institutions. All forms of politics constitutes species of ethical life, and at the same time, political institutions and subjective dispositions are estranged, dirempted from one another forming a non-identity between religion (culture) and the state. Hegel calls the moment of unity, absolute ethical life, and the simultaneous moment of disunity, relative ethical life. Both coexist since freedom is an ideal and a practice altogether. Relative ethical life is such since it is the ethical life seen from the standpoint of social relations, “which make absolute ethical life invisible.” Hegel as a classicist sees absolute ethical life, the identity between religion and the state in Greece. Here, it makes no sense to speak of legitimation since customs and law already express each other; law is living law expressing the spirit of a people. Yet Hegel the *modernist* perceives that this mode of political existence is impossible in modern capitalist societies, in the “spiritual animal kingdom”, the monarchy of particularity. Even if Greece did not need religious representation because political institutions and the religious life were in harmony, Judaism, Roman religion, and Christianity relied on representation of private individuals external to its institutions. Unlike Greece where the few free individuals were ‘concrete’, that is, the particularity of their existence was represented in the specific universality of their institutions; in these other religions, we speak of subjects, not individuals, since universality and particularity are separated, in gap with each other. Therefore, the individual represents itself as universal, or posits an external entity (God) as an alien universality in relation to their particularity. This theology of subjectivity, not individuality, is thus transferred to the political realm in that institutions start to have a reified, remote character in relation to its citizens.²³⁹

²³⁹ See Gillian Rose, 1996: *Mourning Becomes the Law*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 34: “The name ‘Athena’ means immediately both the polis and the God. Athena is an individual, that is, the universal and particular are unified in her. Hence she is not a subject, for to be a subject means that the universal and the particular are not unified. A subject understands itself as infinite (universal) precisely by excluding the finite (determination, or the particular i.e. its social constitution -SV) and then misrepresents universality to itself in the form of religion. Athena is not

When Marx calls capitalism as the culmination of Christianity, he makes this claim from the above Hegelian standpoint of alienation in ethical life, secularized now in the commodities. The objective aspect of capitalist societies, that of identity of capital and labor in the capital relation coexists with the opposite ‘subjective’ aspect, the morality of bourgeois law and property relations that “make individuals isolated and ‘moral’ who can only relate to each other externally” as opposed classes. There is no possibility of unity, of what Hegel calls an ‘absolute’ ethical life in capitalism, because the legal institutions and the social sphere are at odds; bourgeois legal institutions conflict with any concept of society. Capitalist institutions of property rely on a fundamental inequality among people to institute equal but abstract property rights. Un-freedom is smuggled as freedom, and these institutions that are also products of freedom produce unjust practices. Freedom as un-freedom comes when a particular becomes an absolute, a ‘spurious absolute’ as Hegel would see in property and as Marx would see as Capital.

Yet absolute ethical life is not separated from relative ethical life in capitalism or in any other system. To separate them would lead to two opposite forms of neo-Kantian subjectivities, one liberal where relative ethical life, the norm of property and individualism is made absolute; the other post-structural, in which absolute ethical life is made relative, an a-historical injunction that merely extrapolates current social relations without their conflicts. In Hegel, relative and absolute ethical life have very particular meanings that are useful to think capitalism as a specific system of ethical life, of a meshing of freedom and un-freedom. The system of relative ethical life, as Rose restates it, is twofold. One, it is relative because the sphere of enjoyment, work, and property is only part of the whole. Two, it is also relative because capitalist relations are based on a lack of identity (relation); “they make people into competing, isolated, ‘moral’, individuals who can only relate externally to one another, and are thus subjected to a real lack of identity.”

Having described capitalism as relative ethical life, how does capitalism stands in relation to absolute ethical life beyond the Kantian negative ideal? For Rose following

a subject because in the Greek polis law and custom, legal forms and all other areas of social life, are not distinct from each other. This is a presentation of substantial not formal freedom in a society where subjectivity is not known. People are not determined by subjects, for subjects have to distinguish between, and relate to, separated aspects of themselves and of others.”

Hegel, “absolute ethical life must be understood in a way that is not itself abstract and negative as in Kant.” Since the relative system of ethical life understands itself to be absolute, any other opposed system of [absolute] ethical life must appear abstract and empty. Thus the ethical life of capitalism is the absolutization of relative ethical life, where absolute ethical life is represented as relations of private property. In this sense, the opposition between relative and absolute ethical life remains hidden for we take the relative world of property relations for the absolute. Where the absolute and the relative are in a differentiated unity, then real relations within relative ethical life become visible, and for Hegel, this visibility is brought by the recognition of the critical consciousness. Absolute ethical life in capitalism, which is the brutal identity of the capital relation remains hidden and suppressed in favor of the relative ethical life, the equality of abstract property bearers supporting the inequality of classes.

Alienation from a speculative perspective, beyond how Marx understands of alienation as total un-freedom, points to a reality that even under reified conditions, social practices are also products of freedom. Yet, philosophy and its privilege of representation privilege a one-sided reading of historical products as un-freedom, putting therefore free meaningful action only in a jurisprudence of duty, in *Sollen*, where rights are secondary. Yet, by thinking culture and politics through representation, political philosophy produces an estrangement of its object, which is mirror of estranged social relations. As Rose states, “philosophy has not been read speculatively, because the reality of un-freedom has determined its reading.” Following Adorno, it can be said that representation comes after a prehistory of subjectivity; representation occurs when mimetic social relations are repressed. This mimesis is crushed with the origin of a second subjectivity, a constitution of power that represses one’s social nature and external nature through representation. Representation presents that which is not anymore present; it is evidence of that estrangement, that absence of self-aware or self-justificatory [absolute] ethical life. Rose accuses this representation as estrangement as one target of Marxism, but as one which Marxism cannot escape. For Rose, the Marxist theory of revolution is not concrete but abstract for revolution involves always a subject who is in opposition to existing structures, a subject with historical consciousness but in an antinomian opposition to history as it is. She thinks that Marxism is only a culture because the ideas

of Marx have not been realized; they have not been made for it-self, materialized in society. It is a revolutionary, but abstract culture because Marxism does not have an idea of how its institutions might look like. In this sense, for Rose, Marxism, not Marx, is only a revolutionary theory, even though its object is Capital and its aim the liberation of the working class from bourgeois exploitation. But Marxism attempted to apply the same class analysis to bourgeois and non-bourgeois societies alike and losing hence the specificity of Hegel's analysis to non-bourgeois societies in his philosophy of history. According to Rose, "Revolutionary consciousness is subjective consciousness, just as natural consciousness is, that is, it is a determination or re-presentation of substance, ethical life, actuality, in the form of an abstract consciousness. An abstract consciousness is one which knows that it is not united with ethical life. It is determined by abstract law to know itself as formally free, identical, and empty. It is only such an abstract consciousness which can be potentially revolutionary..." The problem with these profound remarks is that Rose understands Marxism, along with many Western Marxists, only as consciousness, and moreover, as an abstract consciousness, which in the Hegelian framework of the *Philosophy of Right* means a voluntaristic consciousness, or consciousness understood as will. Rose ignores the other side of the relation Marx and Hegel, and that is, how can a speculative perspective be conciliated with historical materialism and revolutionary theory. For the same accusation can be thrown to Hegelian science of being completely theoretical, therefore, as equally abstract as the abstraction Rose accuses in Marxism's 'revolutionary' consciousness. Yet, in her retrieval of the speculative, Rose overlooks how the Understanding, the most abstract category, returns in the form of abstract denial through 'abstract' analysis of the present conditions, often in violent forms. If the speculative is the recognition of human freedom and agency even in the most reified conditions, it is the understanding, as it is shown in the *Phenomenology*, the faculty that wages a violent revolt against reality. In Hegel's passages, we see the dialectics of virtue and terror in respect to the Jacobins, but the key faculty at work in such dialectics is the will of the understanding. CLR James reminds us of this ever-presence of the understanding, which can be construed as the motor of history and as a permanent threat of reification as Jameson also reminds us. For CLR James, the understanding is necessary and dangerous; it is dialectical to the extent that it

negates and doubts the object, and by doing so, it formulates logical categories, a true revolution from common sense and everyday experience. Yet, the reification appears when the understanding assumes these categories as permanent. Reason comes to destroy this permanence, but then it becomes understanding and so on. Yet, what is unacknowledged is that the understanding also destroys reason turned into common sense.

Seeing Marx's use of speculation in the critique of Capital and his immediate preoccupation with political action, is speculation then only a form of consciousness, or could it be a form of praxis? Even if Marxism could be transformed into a speculative Hegelian science, a form of analysis of capitalism that deploys Hegelian speculation and it is historically specific only to capitalism, could Marxism also be a speculative praxis, not just an abstract consciousness from a speculative perspective? How can this praxis be conceived? Is it revolutionary praxis? Hegel always pointed to the practical character of speculation against Kant's formalism of duty and obedience.

Thus, speculation is not a purely theoretical task. In Hegel, completely concrete matters in *The Philosophy of Right* such as ethical life, family, sexual love, the interests of the ethical State, etc. are speculative. Hegel claims for example, "When it is supposed that the speculative is something remote and inconceivable, one has only to consider the content of these interpersonal relationships to convince oneself of the baselessness of this opinion". Hegel understood these speculative matters under an ethical State, but how can these matters relate to revolutionary consciousness? Is the ethical State in Hegel the "post-revolutionary State", or a "really existing State" like Marx thought in his *Critique to Hegel's Philosophy of Right*? Can speculation provide insight and justification to not just critical philosophy but to political organization, and can political organization and philosophy, theory and practice stand in a speculative relation for partisan purposes? The next chapter addresses, the external determinations of partisanship and the modalities of philosophy and political organization.

CHAPTER FIVE
**CRASHING THE PARTY:
ISSUES IN THE COMMUNIST PHILOSOPHY OF ORGANIZATION**

“One of the biggest and most dangerous mistakes made by Communists is the idea that a revolution can be made by revolutionaries alone.” – Lenin

“Speculative thought entails a recognition that the two parts of the unity are in violent opposition, contradiction, to each other. It is when Subject realizes that contradiction is a fundamental principle of all life, that it jams the opposites together and so unlooses inherent movement... Ultimately the new developing reality faces an opposition with which it must engage in mortal struggle. This stage the Logic describes as Actuality. It is the self-mobilization that the Labor movement has been seeking.” –CLR James

“Organization is a form of *mediation* between theory and practice.” -Lukács

Neo-Leninism and Partisanship Today

On the uneven moralism of contemporary political theory, Raymond Geuss recommends that “If political philosophy wishes to be at all connected with a serious understanding of politics, and thus *to become an effective source of orientation or a guide to action, it needs to return from the present reactionary forms of neo-Kantianism to something like the ‘realist’ view, or, to put it slightly differently, to neo-Leninism.*”²⁴⁰ Neo-Leninism in Geuss’s conception views politics organized around parties, and I might add on theories of partisanship, its organizational tactics and political strategies. But how is a return to Leninism understood in communist philosophy today?

This last chapter addresses the significance of the speculative conception for the current debates on partisanship and militancy, on what Badiou not long ago termed the “the communist hypothesis” a propos the election of Sarkozy in France.²⁴¹ Second, the chapter explores the relation between the different modes of militancy proposed with a

²⁴⁰ Raymond Geuss, 2008, *Philosophy and Real Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p.99. Italics mine.

²⁴¹ Alain Badiou 2009, “The communist hypothesis is that a different collective organization is practicable, one that will eliminate the inequality of wealth and even the division of labor. The private appropriation of massive fortunes and their transmission by inheritance will disappear. The existence of a coercive state, separate from civil society, will no longer appear a necessity: a long process of reorganization based on a free association of producers will see it withering away.” *New Left Review* 49.

corresponding comprehension of the capitalist crisis, how their understanding of the cyclical crises inform their model of partisanship. Finally, a speculative return to Leninism is proposed.

The isolation of the party-form from society and its neo-Kantian legitimation has carried a profound de-politicization. Yet this new type of anti-politics is presented as a positive democratic development since it makes management easier. Expert decisions, “independent bodies”, and executive authority replace political debate for fear and security.²⁴² De-politicization also responds efficiently to democratic challenges by making unassailable the basic rules of a country or organization. Yet the pragmatic, technical ideology of depoliticization is absolutely misleading. Politics does not go away: de-politicization simply shifts the arenas of debate.²⁴³

Also, as explained in the first chapter, the expansion of post-war capitalism coincided with the emergence of post-partisan parties in the West. The living standards of the masses rose; class parties lost their salience being replaced by catch-all parties, targeting an ever-growing middle class, where the majority of the active electorate resided. Yet with the rise of neoliberalism, due to the economic and fiscal crisis of the 1970s, capitalism made a comeback, producing an explosion of inequality in the United States and the world, matching perennial Latin American levels. This produced, of course, a corresponding political polarization. Depending on the institutional system, polarization either took a rise in partisanship in two-party systems such as England and the US, competing fiercely for private money to run their campaigns, or the rise to prominence of third parties in multi-party systems, from the far-right and left. This is the example offered by continental Western and Southern Europe and Latin America. The current return to a neo-Leninist version of party politics come from both backgrounds.

²⁴² See Sheldon Wolin, 2012, *Democracy Incorporated*, chapter 12, “Demotic Moments”, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

²⁴³ Pierre Bourdieu, 1972, “Les doxosophes”, *Minuit I*: Bourdieu writes, “Political-scientization’ is one of the most effective techniques of depoliticization... It is one of the weapons in the struggle between the forces of depoliticization and the forces of politicization, forces of subversion of the ordinary order and adhesion to this order –whether it be the unselfconscious adhesion that defines doxa or elective adhesion, which characterizes orthodoxy, opinion or right-thinking and, if you like, thinking of the right.”; see also Sheldon Wolin’s response to the ‘behavioral revolution’ in political science as an instrument of political passivity. Sheldon Wolin, 1969, “Political Theory as Vocation” *APSR*, vol. 63: 4, pp. 1062-1082

The transformation of politically active classes into masses due to the complex development of late capitalism, its patterns of consumption and global production, and the makeover of mass parties into state party bureaucracies made some sectors of the left to abandon forms of political organization overall, returning to an earlier economism centered in social movements and the workplace, or to focus on very specific demands proper to identity politics (minorities, immigrants, women). In any case, class lost political salience with rising consumption and the increasing deindustrialization of the economy into service economies –with its corresponding low wages, high inflation, high debt, but without the classical figure of the industrial worker.

The relation between masses and political organization is formulated in diverse ways now, as, ways however that reproduce many of the tensions that existed in the international communist movement in regards to the question of organization, whether the organization should lead, follow, or be in constant mediation with the masses. These changing aspects between organization and masses, seems to me, mirror those between capital and labor, their antagonistic unity proper to capitalist societies.

This first relation is ultra-leftist or spontaneist, at present formulated along the lines of Spinoza's ontology, an immanent worldview where there are no subjects, but one substance, the undifferentiated masses, the multitude, bursting as one agent in exceptional situations. Negri would approach the question of organization from this perspective, contrary to his political economy that posits otherwise an absolute difference between Capital and Labor, conceived as a theory of wages formulated as workers' subjectivity.²⁴⁴

The second relation is the antinomy between parties and masses. Although this worldview is proper to our modern parties and the neo-Kantian tradition, in the Left, this tendency historically took the form of authoritarian vanguardism, especially with the tradition of Jacobinism and Blanquism. Here the arrangement is a substance becoming an exceptional subject, the Immortal few in Badiou's term, those revolutionaries willing to do the unthinkable. What Alain Badiou ironically terms 'speculative leftism' is a varied

²⁴⁴ Although his main philosophical target is Deleuze, this position is for Badiou 'speculative leftism' at its best (or worst). It understand the masses univocal as the One for all situations, neglecting the generic situation in the name of immanent infinity. Alain Badiou, *loc. cit.*: "Speculative leftism is fascinated by the eventual ultra -one and it believes that in the latter's name it can reject any immanence to the structured regime of the count-as-one."

group of theorists that fall into some kind of voluntarism. This tradition however neglects political economy (Being) in the name of “pure politics (Event)”.

The third approach is the identity-in-difference between parties and masses. Here the party and leadership although separate from the undifferentiated masses, ‘listens’, ‘organizes’ the truth of the masses, stand in line, in identity with the people, for it is the people that will always surpass in truth to the party; they are the index as well as the force. The party lags behind the masses, especially in the very complex conditions of late capitalism, but the party formulates and interprets the situation to the masses, give the masses a sense of direction. In some sense, the organization reads the events and interprets them in order to formulate a line of action in consultation with the masses, not in terms of absolute knowledge, but as exchange and association of ideas and actions. This of course relates to the double nature of political representation, whether the party is a superfluous delegate or a trustee of the masses. The party is effectively a delegate of the masses, and at the same time, its trustee; it is a constant negotiation (that is given by the constant accountability of the ‘party’ to the masses) that makes this relation open-ended. The masses however are always in advance, so to speak, to its representation and this is the party’s ultimate referent; the masses, the social are always in excess of the political. The masses are the living movement, and the party is the mediator.

These three traditions, political Spinozism as absolute unity, political Kantianism as political difference, and Hegelian speculation conceive the party-form from the standpoint of philosophy. The relation between subject and substance, politics and the social, is solved in different ways. I would like to use the medieval logic of univocism, equivocism, and analogy to address these relations between organization and masses. These three terms will allow me to better grasp the logical form of the identitarian, differential, and speculative approaches to the question of leftist political organization.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁵ Although dialectics and analogy are different, and sometimes opposites, for dialectics conceives determination as negation of the universal in the concrete and analogy does not contemplate negation (from the universal to the particular, there is only matter of degrees or mental abstraction), the similarities between the dialectical and the analogical imagination consists in their complex continuity between both levels of reality, either as *differentia specifica* (Aristotle) and *mediation* (Hegel). This is different from other modes of predication such as equivocism where being and beings are absolutely distinct (each being is predicated differently from other beings) or univocism (in that the concept of being and beings are identical). Forms of univocism runs from Parmenides, Plato, Nietzsche (Being is becoming), Deleuze. Forms of equivocism are found in

What Party?

Negri belongs to a tradition of ‘autonomous workers’ movement’ that rejected party-building during the emergence of the New Left after 1968. For many autonomists, according to Wright, “The worst and oldest error is the constitution or reconstruction of the ‘group’ [is the] paleo-Leninist schemas of organization (democratic centralism, professionalization of leaders, organized division of labor).”²⁴⁶ Autonomists regarded Leninist organization as authoritarian and substitutionist.²⁴⁷

Negri does two things to recant Leninist models of organization and leadership for our time. The first thing is to provide a very specific contextualization of Lenin according to its Russian setting and to argue that Leninism does not work in other more advanced settings. The second move is to draw on Spinoza immanent philosophy to defend spontaneism and economism.²⁴⁸ Spinoza offers Negri a better framework to build a post-Leninist model that is better suited to late capitalism, based on immaterial labor, the global factory, information economy, and so on.

Negri contextualizes and restricts Leninism to its space time, a semi-feudal Russia relatively isolated from global capital. The relative isolation of Russia in the capitalist world system takes the domestic form of an isolated party of professional revolutionaries.²⁴⁹ Because capitalist relations and democracy did not fully penetrate

Heraclitus, Duns Scotus, the Nominalists, Heidegger. Analogical senses are provided by Aristotle, the Scholastics, Hegel. A good discussion and mapping of logical modes of predication re politics and theology is provided by William Desmond, 1995, *Being and the Between: Political Theory in American Academia*, Albany: SUNY Press

²⁴⁶ Steve Wright, “A Party of Autonomy” in *The Philosophy of Toni Negri*.

²⁴⁷ “Organized Autonomy, in particular the thought of Toni Negri, is a system of thought which in a certain sense has theorized ambiguity. Exactly on this point: the relationship between political elites, ideology and movement. This attempt to refuse Leninism, to say essentially that the political forms of today are dynamic political forms which open (and) close, which are not permanent. Obviously, it was a way of hiding, shall we say, the dialectic between political elite and movement.” Cuninghame, P. (2001) ‘For an Analysis of Autonomia: An Interview with Sergio Bologna’, *Left History* 7/2, Fall.

²⁴⁸ As Hardt and Negri say, “Today, a manifesto, a political discourse, should aspire to fulfill a Spinozist prophetic function, the function of an immanent desire that organizes the multitude, There is not finally here any determinism or utopia: this is rather a radical counterpower, ontologically grounded not on any ‘vide pour le futur’, but on the actual activity of the multitude...”. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 1999, *Empire*, Durham: Duke University Press, p. 66

²⁴⁹ Toni Negri, 2014, *Factory of Strategy: 33 Lessons on Lenin*, New York: Columbia University Press: “The possibilities of a revolutionary process directly depend on the possibilities to defend and develop mechanism of class reproduction. The primary task of the revolutionary party is thus to prevent pre-capitalist relations of production from carrying out a mass offensive on these

Russia by the time of revolution, Lenin could distinguish between economic and political struggles. In Lenin's time, capitalist discipline was discreet, confined to the factory allowing a similar discreet organization of revolutionaries.

But in contemporary capitalism, Negri renews the old Economist thesis. There is no distinction between the political and economic struggles. Contemporary capitalism offers a radical new picture of domination, a domination that is ever-expanding and pervasive, when the disciplinary methods of the factory extends to the whole social life.²⁵⁰ According to Negri, Lenin must be read according to his determinate social formation. The development of capitalism in Russia brought about a very advanced working-class consciousness because of the divergence between Russian late capitalist development and backwardness. A combative working class such as the Russian, with its persistent *refusal to work* (the autonomist locus of workers' subjectivity and self-valorization) was an index of one of the most radical development within world capitalism by the end of the 19th century. Russia had a highly politicized working class and this was a signal of its relative advanced position in capitalism, not in terms of industrialization, *but in terms of class struggle*, of the conflict between relations of production (not yet consolidated in Russia as in Western Europe) and forces of production. The Russian determinate social formation between 1895 and 1917 was a favored conjunction that brought sooner than other more advanced capitalist countries the inevitable clash between capitalists (albeit a small, relatively weak class in Russia) and the working class (nascent and combative):

“There was an extraordinarily backward economic situation that made a bourgeois revolution inevitable; on the other hand, as extraordinary a degree of political maturity and combativeness in the proletariat made its hegemonic function possible in the course of the revolution. Lenin's position on the revolution in Russia, and consequently on the

mechanisms. This is the meaning of Leninist strategy: to strengthen, materially and organizationally, a working class aware of its objective isolation, and to turn this isolation in the vanguard.”

²⁵⁰ Toni Negri, 2014, *Factory of Strategy: 33 Lessons on Lenin*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.44: “For Lenin the shift from economic to political struggle does not exclude the possibility that at some junctures the economic struggle is as valid as the political one; but the problem lies elsewhere: the problem is that for Lenin, beyond a certain limit, political struggle is no longer economic, and in general, political struggles are not only economic struggles. Conversely, today, in our situation, economic and political struggles are completely identical, and this assumption leads to crucial changes both in terms of the theory of organization and, as far as questions we will later analyze are concerned, from the theory of the revolution to the theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat.”

revolutionary organization of social democracy, is characterized by a constant confrontation between these two terms.”²⁵¹

Another reason for the intensity of the Russian class struggle was the Tsar’s industrial policy of creating massive production in the main urban centers of European Russia. This sharpened and accelerated the tendencies of capitalist crisis, the tendency of constant capital (industrialization) to grow faster than variable capital (labor costs), undermining wages and proletarianizing vast swaths of population.²⁵² These tendencies towards crisis took a specific social formation such as the Russian as a special emergence of spontaneous revolts.

According to Negri, Lenin’s refusal to submit to spontaneity is in fact *an affirmation that spontaneity is at its highest and needs organization*. And key to that was the Leninist idea of party organization as the essence of strategy and the internal unification of the proletariat. This organizational view, again according to Negri, was specific to Lenin and the Russian situation.

“Both historically and logically, in Lenin the need for an organization of this kind emerges from the analysis of the determinate social formation and of the determinate working-class movement in the particular phase to which he directs his practical reflections. Here theory does not wish to be a negation of the spontaneity of economic struggle. On the contrary, it is its internal critique and comes from within the formidable and spontaneous mass movement that determined itself.”²⁵³

Negri sees Lenin at this point as a spontaneist in questions of strategy while applying high centralization as a tactical need. For Negri, Lenin’s political analyses and intervention had three phases. The first phase around the 1890s witnesses the spontaneous rise of mass movements in Russia. In the second phase after the revolutions

²⁵¹ Toni Negri, 2014, *Factory of Strategy: 33 Lessons on Lenin*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.104

²⁵² If constant capital grows faster than variable capital (the relation is called the organic composition of capital) or in sum, industrialization and automatization of production, then relative surplus-value is born and with it many social problems such as unemployment (machines replacing workers), lower salaries (due to the “reserve army” of the unemployed) and the increase in the rate of exploitation (workers can work less due to automatization but their time remains constant as before, so the extraction of surplus-value increases re time.)

²⁵³ Toni Negri, 2014, *Factory of Strategy: 33 Lessons on Lenin*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.43. As Lenin says in *What is to be Done*, “The greater the spontaneous upsurge the masses and the more widespread the movement, the more rapid, incomparably so, the demands for the greater consciousness in the theoretical, political, and organization work of Social Democracy... Revolutionaries, however, lagged behind this upsurge, both in their ‘theories; and in their activity; they failed to establish a constant and continuous organization capable of leading the whole movement.”

of 1905, Lenin advocates a rigid external centralization to channel this energy. In the third phase after 1914, the pre-revolutionary phase, Lenin returns to the earlier spontaneity with a transfigured proletariat, which suffered a long process of painful *Bildung*. “From spontaneity to spontaneity”, writes Negri, “if this is Lenin, it is perfectly understandable that during the Second International, any possibility of expressing his thought was practically closed off to this Asian Marxist barbarian.” The initial proletarian energy is reconstituted from above, from a consciousness brought from without,²⁵⁴ which then, appropriated and in full maturity, the masses overthrow the capitalist state. The second phase is the stage of *mediation*, and the revolutionary takeover in the third stage is full *unmediated* power.²⁵⁵

Throughout his reading of Lenin, Negri repeatedly states that this evolution between masses and organization, and party and class composition is not dialectical. In rehabilitating Lenin from a supposed authoritarianism, the result however is a new

²⁵⁴ However, Lenin does not understand the constitution of working-class consciousness brought from without, as in from above or from another class. In *What is to be Done*, the without refers to the social totality, not bourgeois intellectuals, radicalized and professional, educating the ‘ignorant’ workers, as it is commonly understood. “Class political consciousness can be brought to the workers only from without, that is, only from outside the economic struggle, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and employers. The sphere from which alone it is possible to obtain this knowledge is the sphere of relationships of all classes and strata to the state and government, the sphere of interrelations between all classes.” Lenin’s specific use of this schema is against Economism, where economic struggle is primary and the political struggle come only as a supplement. Economism for Lenin is an extremely narrow view of emancipatory politics, complementary to terrorism. Both bow to spontaneity and really do not comprehend social totality which requires an organization that agitates all classes. Economism is narrow trade-unionism; terrorism is vague politics, concerned with ‘excitatory’ tactics to arouse the workers, as if the workers in Lenin’s eyes, were not already indignant by the miserable condition in autocracy. As to the concept of vanguard, the class composition does not come from without. As Nimtz states, “The history of the class struggle, [Lenin] argued, had demonstrated that within subjected classes some of its members are more “enlightened” than others— that is, they understand better the interests of the class and have the skills to organize the struggle to advance them. In other words, every class— dominant as well as subject ones— had a vanguard. What was missing in Russia, he went on to say, wasn’t [...] a lack of proletarian political struggles but rather a vanguard— those willing to organize and lead the numerous examples of local struggles to a successful conclusion: a political revolution.” August Nimtz, 2014, *Lenin’s Electoral Strategy*, vol. 1, London: Palgrave-McMillan, p. 69.

²⁵⁵ Toni Negri, 2014, *Factory of Strategy: 33 Lessons on Lenin*, New York: Columbia University Press p.161: “The theoretical objective of communist discourse [is] that which the organization mediates can be made unmediated in the working class’s comportment once the adversary class’s power is overthrown, once the working class and the proletariat, as such, take upon themselves entirely the duty and the weight of the construction of a revolutionary society.”

reading of ‘democratic’ Leninism, dismissed as an outdated model due to current objective conditions.

For Negri, Lenin really regarded the relation between masses and organization as expressive, *immediate*. It is here when Spinoza’s philosophy is suitable, seeing the Communist question of organization as a limitless expansion, “the infinite as organization”, as a progressive acquisition of power. Opposition play no role in the political constitution of the working class. Negri’s neo-Leninist partisanship is spontaneist, anti-dialectical, and expressive.

Negri like Althusser regards Lenin’s intense engagement with Hegel after the disintegration of the second International, as an “interregnum of the dialectic”, that ends up on “a positive note’ beyond the dialectics offered by Hegel.”²⁵⁶ For Negri, Hegel provides Lenin a way to think how to reverse the conditions or sequences that separate pre-revolutionary from post-revolutionary politics. The pre-revolutionary sequence is class composition, political organization, and military insurrection. For the purposes of the revolution and the construction of the revolutionary State, the sequence is reversed dialectically into revolutionary insurrection, party organization of the revolutionary State, and composition of the new revolutionary subject. While Hegel is useful for pre-revolutionary politics, Spinoza is the philosopher of revolution, of preparing for a new society and the end of negativity. When one compares the *April Theses* next to *What is to Be Done*, the reversal is visible, especially when Lenin declares in 1917,

“The specific feature of the present situation in Russia is that the country is *passing* from the first stage of the revolution—which, owing to the insufficient class-consciousness and organization of the proletariat, placed power in the hands of the bourgeoisie—to its *second stage*, which must place power in the hands of the proletariat and the poorest sections of the peasants.”²⁵⁷

Negri sees approvingly that this second sequence amounts to the “practical annihilation of the democratic phase.” Yet Lenin’s *Theses* meant a reinforcement of the democratic

²⁵⁶ Although as late as 1922, with the foundation of the Soviet Union, Lenin would call for a ‘materialist society for Friends of Hegel’, along with studying Plekhanov, a Hegelian who was immensely influential in the development of philosophy in Russia. Plekhanov and Lenin would break their relationship early on, but the gesture attests to Lenin’s generosity with former political enemies, as with Trotsky, a former Menshevik who became the head of the Red Army in October and the Civil War.

²⁵⁷ Vladimir I. Lenin, 1964, “The April Theses”, *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, Volume 24, pp. 19-26.

process in the form of Soviets rather than the Duma, not the indiscriminate annihilation of democracy.²⁵⁸ For Negri, “Lenin succeeded in making the dialectics into a real-history reading instrument, a scientific tool with the same precision of a microscope or a rifle.” But in order to do so, Hegelian dialectics has to be overcome by another ‘higher’ dialectics. Lenin’s materialist dialectic allows him to grasp the self-constitution of the masses, of productive praxis, in which dialectics “is no longer circular”, but an endless expansion of power.

The first set of problems of Leninist dialectics had to do with the unitary relation of ideas with reality, the second is that dialectics reduce reality to a set of [over-determined] connections by history and context, and the third problem is how to redefine dialectics as a tool of *productive movement* (of the New), not just *connective movement* (between already existing ideas). Negri turns Lenin’s Hegelianism into a Spinozism in his emphasis on production. Lenin saw dialectics as logic of essence and connections [of the different moments] in the overall and unifying process of the Concept. Negri calls this definition as one of ‘universal relationism’, yet this Hegelian version of dialectics does not provide any sense of novelty, nor a “new definition of matter”; it does not account for *leaps*, but rather everything existing is reconstituted in a higher order of concepts. Hegelianism thus is relational and comprehensive but it is not productive. Hence, for Negri, Lenin needed to transform “the series essence-connection-movement needed into essence-movement-production because only the latter could represent dialectics at a higher level and directly turn it into a tool not only of materialism but also of the proletariat.”

To complete the reversal from a party that organizes the existing forces of the proletariat as a transcendent organization to a party that is identical to the proletariat in the creation of a new State, Lenin turned to Hegel for this reversal, but to Negri, through a materialist (Spinozian) ontology, Lenin now saw the party as the agent of the New. *Connective dialectics* (Hegel) provided the *tactics* to organize the proletariat in relation to the whole, but *non-dialectical productive praxis* delivers the strategy of revolution, of a

²⁵⁸ “Lenin’s objection to “a parliamentary republic” did not in the least signify a retreat from his long-standing advocacy for representative democracy. To the contrary, he reaffirmed that stance by arguing that soviets, an increasing reality as a result of the February events, were a superior form of such democracy because of the way in which they were created and their *modus operandi*.” August Nimtz, 2014, *Lenin’s Electoral Strategy*, vol. 2, London: Palgrave-McMillan, p. 116.

new constitutive power. Yet Lenin does not go far enough in conceiving dialectics as production because he is stuck, so to speak, in the connectivity of concepts, on how the world of ideas and the world of facts are united in the concept. But Lenin's unification of ideas and facts rather than being conceived as a Hegelian idealist history, a history determined by the primacy of the Idea, has for Negri the quality of a "Spinozian compactness", a dual compactness where each world (of mind and facts, of philosophy and politics) retains its parallel or correspondent independence and autonomy, united in the overall process of human activity.²⁵⁹

The key word for Negri's criticism on Hegel's dialectics via Lenin is *production*. Hegel's dialectics is of connection and mediation, in short, a bourgeois dialectics of appropriation. Spinoza's model is of production and immediacy, a dual model that mirrors both the explosive power of nascent capitalism as a formidable human energy harnessing the Earth, and a philosophy of future liberation. Spinoza's philosophy is a product of a Dutch society with the Low Countries' "disproportion between the constructive and appropriative dimensions." "Here," Negri writes, "the capitalist order of profit and the savage adventures of accumulation on the seas, the constructive fantasy that commercial dealings produce and the amazement that leads to philosophy –all this is woven together."²⁶⁰ It seems here that enthusiasm for Empire equal philosophical amazement.

Deleuze's term *philosophical expressionism* is the term for this productive immediacy. Expression is the immediate relation between cause and effect, concept and its determinations, or in Spinoza's language, God as the immanent cause of what is. Expressionism is the *univocal* view that "on the one hand, is an explication, an unfolding of what expresses itself, the One manifesting itself in the Many. Its multiple expression, on the other hand, involves Unity. The One remains involved in what expresses it, imprinted in what unfolds it, immanent in whatever manifests it."²⁶¹

²⁵⁹ Needless to say, in Hegel's formulation of the speculative, the world of politics or history is not subordinated to the world of ideas, as explained above in chapter 3. Hegel's speculation has also the same trait of infinity as Spinoza's power with the addendum of negativity

²⁶⁰ Antonio Negri, 1991, *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.6

²⁶¹ Gilles Deleuze, 1992, *Expressionism in Philosophy: Spinoza*, New York: Zone Books, p. 28.

Negri translates Spinoza's productive immediacy into the Marxist language of "productive forces" of human creativity, labor-power in *Capital's* terms. What capitalism does is to mediate these productive, liberating forces through relations of production; capitalism mystifies and transforms forces of production with relations of production. But here we stand at a most trans-historical concept of production and labor, proper to traditional Marxism, now understood as a metaphysics of force. "[Spinoza's] metaphysics", writes Negri, "is the clear and explicit declaration of the *irreducibility* of the development of productive forces to *any* ordering."²⁶² By organizing and mediating productive forces under the law of value, capitalism restricts their creativity. Mediation is negative and the power (*potestas*) of the negative attempts against life and the power (*potential*) of creation. In other words, mediation is capitalist appropriation reflected in Hegelian philosophy.

If Spinoza provides a comprehensive ontology, an ontology that seeks power as unlimited affirmation, Negri's commitment to subsume economics to politics is an obstacle, I think, to stay faithful to Spinoza and Lenin, especially since Lenin saw economism as an extremely narrow view of organization, confined to factory demands and economic negotiation, leaving out of view general issues such as political repression, daily exploitation, war, etc. The other more theoretical problem about economism is that given advanced capitalism and the development of the proletariat, eventually the multitude appropriates the production of reproduction of social life without passing through politics, that somehow the forces of production will eventually overtake the fetters imposed by the relations of production. In the name of ontological expansion, the political result is sectarianism. Blending political and economic struggles in order to not limiting and negating each (or according to Lenin, 'to give the economic struggle a political character'), the political is reduced to narrow economic demands, on the one hand, and on the other, to an ultra-leftist model of guerrilla politics and insurgencies, outside institutions and lacking legitimacy among all classes.²⁶³ Lenin regarded economism and 'terrorism' complementing each other,

²⁶² Antonio Negri, *ibid.*, p.138

²⁶³ Lenin regards terrorism as the opposite complement to economism in their political impotence and bow to spontaneity. Economists confine their action to the factory and trade unions; terrorism to the streets with some vague demands to excite the people. The terrorist model has the

“The Economists and the terrorists merely bow to different poles of spontaneity; the Economists bow to the spontaneity of “the labor movement pure and simple”, while the terrorists bow to the spontaneity of the passionate indignation of intellectuals, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement into an integral whole.”²⁶⁴

Workerism tends to have a very narrow idea of working class concerns. It tends to think mainly of factory-based struggles over wages and working conditions, and tends to devalue the very important political struggle for state power, control over the police, army, courts, parliament and administration. Negri dismisses the State defining it as a counterrevolutionary project of the Enlightenment. The State was invented to contain the multitude in this philosophical history a la Hobbes. As Hardt and Negri state in *Empire*, “the liberation of modern humanity could only be a function of its domination, the immanent goal of the multitude is transformed into the necessary and transcendent power of the State.”²⁶⁵ A State had to be invented, especially in Hegel, who for Negri disciplines an amoral plurality of desire to an ethical unity.

In the absence of a theory of political articulation, how then partisanship is possible in this pantheistic expansive view? Negri speaks of the “Infinite as organization”, but where is the politics? Seems to me that Negri’s dismissal of Lenin does not presuppose an advance from Leninism, but a regression towards economism and even the ‘terrorism’ of his earlier years. Giving absolute importance to production and not relation, praising spontaneity, lacking political articulation, advancing pure direct action, self-organization of workers without a party, and fixating with extra-parliamentary activity are all themes of the old Economists. The result is a fascination with extreme particularity (or singularity), the worker’s empirical existence as a privileged agent of universal turmoil, bypassing politics and the middle term of political articulation and parties. Singularity and universality fuse without mediation. This view of politics can be called also univocism, politics is predicated the same in the small as in the

intellectuals as its class composition, “bowing to [their] passionate, who lack the ability or opportunity to connect the revolutionary struggle and the working-class movement to an integral whole.” Lenin adds, “It is difficult indeed for those who have lost their belief, that this is possible, to find some outlet for their indignation and revolutionary energy other than terror.” *What is to Be Done?*

²⁶⁴ Lenin, *What is to be Done?*

²⁶⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *ibid.*, p. 82

world scale, that is, politics can only have one meaning and the connection between meaning and its effects are the same. Each struggle is tantamount to any struggle. “The Spinozian mechanism”, writes Negri, “denies any possibility of a conception of the world *that is not represented as a singular flat*, and superficial emergence of being. God is the thing. God is multiplicity. The one and the multiple are equivalent and indistinguishable forces... Each is absolute in itself.”²⁶⁶

For political expressionism the separation between masses and parties is superfluous. The Party expresses the masses immediately; the Party stands as an attribute of the Masses, it follows the masses’ own energy. This ontological immediacy provides the model for spontaneism in that a prefigured identity, the Masses, is reproduced in the name of organization, the Party, without difference. “This is the method of spontaneism, of the *affirmation of the unique and substantial reality* by means of its theoretical doubling.”²⁶⁷

The (Non) Party As Axiom

The antithesis of Negri’s expressionism is Badiou’s politics of the Event. Badiou comprehends politics equivocally. Each situation is completely particular, and arranged of infinite elements that cannot be transferred to another circumstances. Each event constitutes a discreet infinite set. Badiou’s notion of universality is not quantitative, but qualitative, to announce the Truth of a particular “sequence”. Truth is not in the generality intersecting the political world, but it is condensed in a particular struggle. Another difference with Negri’s economism is Badiou’s defense of pure politics. Badiou’s partisanship is transcendent in the recognition and fidelity to a revolutionary Event), antinomian in that pure politics, the Event is an absolute negation of economics and Being, and individuated because the political subject is constituted by an outside, and politicist, pure politics is not concerned with mere animal survival, escaping pain and want, as in economics, but with following an ethical conviction to the end. The result of Badiou’s conception is a highly voluntarist and authoritarian conception of party, a Platonist (and also Kantian) form of politics.

²⁶⁶ Antonio Negri, 1991, *The Savage Anomaly*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p.212

²⁶⁷ Antonio Negri, *ibid.*, p. 53

Badiou's approach comprehends dialectics as a lack of identity of history and politics; it allows for a subjectivism and voluntarism proper to the Maoist tradition.²⁶⁸ Badiou formulates this version of dialectics in his many engagements with Hegel. More so than other political philosophers of the present, Badiou's engagement with Hegel is intense. For Badiou, Hegel is the philosopher of uniting Two into One privileging the moment of identity. Following a distinction made by the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Badiou thinks that this fusion of Two into One, the total unity of Spirit and the Party is reactionary. Badiou proposes the revolutionary formula arguing the opposite, that One divides into Two, defining politics as difference and struggle,

“Truth is what has *no identity other than from a difference*; hence the being of all things is the process of its division into two. For as much as we apprehend the qualitative identity of a force, it remains with respect to: 1. the place that it exceeds, 2. the structural system (system of distribution) that it destroys. Thus the actual revolutionary identity of the French proletariat is given in the excess of its place in union workerism [*l'ouvrierisme syndicalisant*] which has confined it in a long tradition and which constitutes itself as a political class driving for the destruction of the existing social system (French imperialism). However embryonic it might be, this identity (in terms of political practice and Maoist organization) always exists as a differential destroyer of another. *This is what it means for an identity to change itself in difference.*”²⁶⁹

Hegelian negation is an “improper name” for the dialectical operation of scission, of breaking into two. Negation is an idealistic category, maintaining an ideal unity or continuity to what in reality occurs as a process of dissolution and *disorganization*.

Badiou's critique of Hegel's identity in favor of absolute difference occurs in two levels, through the ontological critique of being (mathematics), and the

²⁶⁸ “The principal virtue that we need is courage. This is not always the case: in other circumstances, other virtues may have priority. For instance, during the revolutionary war in China, Mao promoted patience as the cardinal virtue. But today, it is undeniably courage. Courage is the virtue that manifests itself, *without regard for the laws of the world, by the endurance of the impossible*. It's a question of holding the impossible point without needing to account for the whole of the situation”

²⁶⁹ Alain Badiou, 2011, *The Rational Kernel of the Hegelian Dialectic*, Melbourne: Re.press, p.60. In the *Communist Hypothesis*, the idea is expressed as “Defined in this way, by invariants, identity is doubly related to difference: on the one hand, identity is that which is different from the rest; on the other, it is that which does not become different, which is invariant. The affirmation of identity has two further aspects. The first form is negative. It consists of desperately maintaining that I am not the other. This is often indispensable, in the face of authoritarian demands for integration, for example. The Moroccan worker will forcefully affirm that his traditions and customs are not those of the petty-bourgeois European; he will even reinforce the characteristics of his religious or customary identity. The second involves the immanent development of identity within a new situation—rather like Nietzsche's famous maxim, ‘become what you are.’”

phenomenological critique of 'appearing', (logics). Both critiques are addressed respectively in *Being and Event* and *Logic of the Worlds*. The politico-philosophical result is an equivocality of the situation. Unlike Hegel for whom logic is ontology and phenomenology, consciousness throughout history, for Badiou, however, consciousness (or subject-formation) is constituted in rupturing with history.

Badiou's ontological critique of Hegel revolves around the concept of (bad and good) infinity to attack the Hegelian idea of the One-Whole. He does so from the vantage point of the German mathematician Georg Cantor, the creator of transfinite set theory, born 15 years after Hegel's death. For Cantor, there were multiple infinities -ones larger others smaller- and not just one uncompleted and undefined infinity. Infinity is not potential, but actual, it must be decided among different set of numerical successions; thus, there is an infinity proper to cardinal numbers, other infinity proper to imaginary numbers, irrational numbers, etc. Each relative infinity is represented by the Hebrew aleph \aleph

Without going into the intricacies of Cantor's theory, Badiou addresses Hegel's conception of infinity as an intuitionist concept, like most of philosophers' notion of infinity. For Badiou, infinity in Hegel as well as in Kant, is undefined like Hegel's concept of absolute idea where everything is reconciled and gathered as process. But in Hegel, infinity is divided between good (historical, bounded by each situation) and bad infinity (the linear succession towards a never-ending goal). Bad infinity for Hegel is mathematics. There is an important element in Hegel's qualification of the mathematical infinity as bad. In pre-Cantorian times, infinity was indeed 'bad' in the sense that it was either forbidden to think of, in line with Aristotle to Descartes and Kant, or understood in mystical terms as emanation of God. What Cantor does, according to Badiou, is to make infinity rational by an active intervention of the human intellect in defining infinite and transfinite sets. Although Hegel had a low regard for mathematical infinity, he historicizes infinity in seeing it bounded to each figure of consciousness, that is, there is an absolute in each historical epoch. Badiou is not interested in this temporalization of infinity, which is phenomenological as appearing. He is interested in comprehending the

infinity from the standpoint of eternity, mathematics and number. In this regard, Badiou's Platonism is revealed.²⁷⁰

The central problem for Hegel, according to Badiou, is to put quality above quantity. Thus, Hegel sees quantity as a lower concept as quality and degrades mathematics, solely concerned with quantity and number to the 'lower' determinations of concept, i.e. being instead of essence. Quantitative infinity cannot grasp the totality within the Hegelian system; it does not comprehend the opposites but simply is indifferent to existence in the operation of counting, "what founds quantity, what discerns it, is literally the indifference of difference, the anonymous One." Qualitative infinity, on the other hand, recognizes difference in that in putting a limit, already has a consciousness of its finitude and goes beyond the boundary, though in negative terms, as something that is not itself. This is the well-known Hegelian difference between limit and boundary. In the limit, the negative is exterior, a limit not to be surpassed, the Kantian X. In the boundary, the negative becomes interior, the own production of consciousness that surpasses the boundary by thinking of the two sides of it. For Badiou, despite Hegel's dialectics of the opposites, his aim is truly to be a philosopher of the One, of absolute identity: "The profound root of this movement", writes Badiou, "is that the One if it marks being *in itself*, is surpassed by the being it marks... The One, inasmuch as it is, is the surpassing of its non-being. The being-of-the-one consists in *having* the frontier *to* be passed beyond. " Badiou's solution is to retain the divisive moment of the dialectic without recurring to a One through the scission, that is to retain the logic of opposites, without recognizing a common situation or ground. One dividing into Two means absolute scission, two universes and logics.²⁷¹ Thus, Badiou returns to the quantitative,

²⁷⁰ See Alain Badiou, 2006, *Theoretical Writings*, London: Continuum, p.24: "What is the crucial presupposition for the gesture whereby Hegel and his successors manage to effect this long-lasting disjunction between mathematics on the one hand and the philosophical discourse on the other? In my opinion, this presupposition is that of historicism, which is to say, the temporalization of the concept... Thus the ideal and atemporal character of mathematical thinking figured as the central argument in this deposition. Romantic speculation opposes time and life as temporal ecstasis to the abstract and empty eternity of mathematics. If time is 'the existence of the concept', then mathematics is unworthy of that concept."

²⁷¹ Alain Badiou, 2007, *The Century*, London: Polity: "The century is summoned as the century of the production, through war, of a definitive unity. Antagonism is to be overcome by the victory of one camp over the other. Thus one can also say that, in this sense, the century of the Two is animated by the radical desire of the One. What names the articulation of antagonism with the violence of the One is victory, as attestation of the real. Let us note that we are not dealing with a dialectical

numerical conception of a [Cantorian] infinity in order to establish, by axiom, two infinities, one ideological that *absorbs* everything to one, and the other revolutionary that *abstracts* from the one an irreducible opposition. The difference is that in one [the generative ontology where everything gathers in one] infinity is dominated by *law*, and the other operates by suspension of the law through axiomatic *decision*.²⁷²

How is this ontological law expressed in phenomenology, in the logic of appearing first, and in politics, the logic of the event, later? Badiou shares with Hegel the identity of thought and being, although he does not conceive it speculatively, but like the philosophers of his generation, Badiou shares the traditional view of Hegel as a philosopher of absolute identity. However, this idea of absolute identity is a ‘local occurrence’ for Badiou in a world of infinite situations, of the non-Whole. Hegel’s unity of reason is valid as a local logic of absolute identity in a world composed of different situations. Thus, contrary and parallel to Hegel’s dialectical triplicity of immediacy (being), mediacy (essence), and sublation (concept), Badiou’s schema run as follows: infinite multiplicities (transfinites) of Being, which unbinds Being from the whole into multiple ‘wholes’; different worlds of appearing (infinite situations with their own logical sequence), and truth-procedures (the world of ‘subjective eternity’). The Event is a “vanishing cause, which is the exact opposite of the Whole, an abolished flash.”²⁷³

Badiou understands very well however the idea of the speculative in Hegel. For Hegel, there can be neither an absolute identity nor an absolute difference between two things. Badiou correctly points out that “For [Hegel], opposition is in effect nothing less than the unity of identity and diversity”. “For example,” Badiou continues, “things only display their difference to the extent that each is One by differentiating itself from the other, and therefore, from this angle, is the same as the other.” His grasp of the Hegelian speculative only applies in a situation as a ‘singular universality’, that the whole can only be actualized locally, but Badiou rejects at the same time Hegel’s totality by re-

scheme. Nothing allows one to foresee a synthesis, an internal overcoming of contradiction. On the contrary, everything points to the suppression of one of the terms. The century is a figure of the non-dialectical juxtaposition of the Two and the One. The question here is to know what is the century’s assessment of dialectical thought. In the victorious result, is the motor antagonism itself or the desire of the One?”

²⁷² See Alain Badiou, 2007, *Being and Event*, London: Polity, p. 163. Just like Sartre, Badiou’s master in his own words, politics is made in a moment of decision and pure action.

²⁷³ Alain Badiou, 2011, *Logics of the Worlds*, London: Continuum, p.

introducing a radical dualism into his philosophy. Badiou shares with other post-modern philosophers of his generation (despite his attack against almost all post-modern ideas) the idea of an absolute difference, this time conceived not through an univocal “ultra-One” or Being, as he detects from Heidegger to Deleuze, but equivocally (there is no One, things and processes are irreducibly local building their own truths). “On this point”, Badiou writes, “Hegel’s doctrine is thus diametrically opposed to ours, which instead articulates the absolute intra-worldly difference between two beings into the nil measure of their identity”. As he concludes against Hegel, “There can be Twos without Ones.”²⁷⁴

Badiou also stands at the other extreme of Spinozian economism in a neo-Kantian world of political moralism through a positive adaptation of the transcendental to unveil a constitution common to all different worlds according to the axioms of set theory, as well as to provide space for a theory of the subject subtracted from phenomena, from the appearing. Yet, in materialist style, Badiou conceives the transcendental rooted in the object. It includes the subject insofar as the subject recognizes the objective structure in a situation of Event. Unlike Kant, for Badiou, the thing-in-itself is knowable, it is mathematics; however, this does not include the world of phenomena, only its transcendental structure. The noumena is the number, yet phenomena entails another way of organization, which is not mathematical, but transcendental, in order to do justice to the object,

“Every singular being is only manifested in its being locally: the appearing of being of beings is being-there. It is this necessity of the ‘there’ which, for a being thought in its multiple being entails a transcendental constitution (without subject)... something that the mathematical (ontological) theory of the pure multiple, despite conveying the *whole* being of the being, does not allow.”²⁷⁵

A good example Badiou’s neo-Kantian antinomy are his “pure politics”, the far-reaching disjunction between the economic world of needs (the figure of “the Animal”) and the ethical world of will (the figure of “the Man”, the Immortal). Any consideration of economics and the material turns the subject away from his ‘true’ desire; the Subject “gives in”, becomes depoliticized. As Badiou would state this idea in *Ethics*, “ethics

²⁷⁴ Alain Badiou, *loc. cit.*

²⁷⁵ Alain Badiou, 2009. *Logics of the Worlds*, London, Continuum, p.

[become] a servant of necessity”, in which the main figure is death and finitude as mere survival in the system of goods and needs. Opposite to this economic ethics, Badiou opposes an ethics of ‘pure politics’, to which instead of animals as biological organisms, man becomes Man, an Immortal in the service of an ethic of Truths. Thus, a proper ethics solves the typical problems of partisanship, whether such course of action is taken or not, with the typical doubts associated with material resources, organization and political work.

Ethics “dissipates the paradoxes of partisanship”, Badiou states in *Theory of the Subject*. Here, Badiou argues that ethics is superior to morality since ethics is incalculable, but morality belongs to the realm of reflection and calculation. Ethics is blindly decisionistic always demanded to act according to the situation and the knowledge available at the time; morality calculates according to obedience of the law or not. Morality turns the process of subjectivation “into a trace”; it erases the Subject. Because it is calculable, morality also is linked to the ‘service of goods’. The ethics of Marxism is one of confidence and faith which solve all doubt. The partisan becomes a believer:

“If the political subject is what the party as body is able to bear in terms of the undecidable, and if betrayal is the proper opposite of ethics, can we not equate ethics and partisanship? The recognizable figure of the one *who gives in* would then be the renegade... In this logic, in which the State latently defines the adequate form of that which no longer exists as party-subject except as its semblance, it is absolutely necessary that the political enemy, or even just the universal suspect, be violently kept in the unnameable and null place of the traitor and the spy.”²⁷⁶

The adversary, the *raison d’être* of the partisan, is nullified, an agent of the State (the ‘real’ enemy). Compare this assertion with Lenin that “Nothing facilitates an understanding of the political essence of developments as greatly as their evaluation by one’s adversaries.” The partisan is the one who is committed to this conception of politics as ethics and not so much to organization; the partisan embodies obedience and discipline, but also confidence and perseverance, in a pure subjective sense.

“In order truly to arrive at ethics, we must at least not give up on politics as a subjective process, on communist politics. This is impossible if one chooses the wrong party, in all the senses of the expression... The partisan mindset can certainly involve abnegation and

²⁷⁶ Alain Badiou, 2009, *Theory of the Subject*, London: Continuum, p.312

obedience or, as Stalin says, 'conscious submission' and 'unity of will'. Ethical courage amounts to the force to traverse anxiety, since this means nothing else but the capacity to consider oneself null. It is clear that here it is the very existence of the party itself that is at issue, since *by giving in, one would gain only its statist desubjectivization*, its counterrevolutionary termination. The ethics of Marxism consists in resolving the paradoxes of partisanship on the solid terrain of the theory of the subject.²⁷⁷

Badiou's process of subjectivation is of negation and subtraction. While Negri's politics of the One expands endlessly in affirmation and power as *potency*; Badiou's organizational model is radically dualistic in that the Two subtracts from the One, from the idea of unity and consensus, into irreconcilable antagonisms, where one side must win. There is no third, no middle. The Two represents two absolute opposite Truths, or truth-operations (although I don't think Badiou would call the operation of the opposite camp a truth-operation.) For Badiou, Mao goes further than Lenin in seeing dialectics as conducive to more difference. The unity of opposites becomes concrete by "rightly rebelling against the reactionaries" within the Party. "Mao Zedong's sentence", writes Badiou, "lends its precision to Lenin's enthusiasm. It is the general historical content of Hegel's dialectical statement. It is not just any practice that internally anchors theory; it is the rebellion against the reactionaries. Theory, in turn, does not externally legislate on practice, on rebellion: it incorporates itself in the rebellion by the mediating release of its reason."²⁷⁸ It is the contradiction made internal or essential to the truth itself. "Truth only exists in a process of scission." The Party is the instrument of class struggle almost in a metaphysical sense. In the unity of identity and difference, the unity is relative and the struggle is absolute; the identity is temporary and non-identity the essential engine of politics. Yet against Marx and Lenin's commitment to history, the One dividing into Two lacks history; it is for Badiou the Communist invariant. For Marx and Lenin, history provides the referent and lessons for the class struggle and the party; for Badiou, history and politics are completely cut off and the Party is the embodiment of this new type of 'historical' consciousness.

From a "new Party" unedited in history to a politics without a party is a short step. For the late Badiou, the Party and all parties independently of class content are figures of bad "non-singular" universality; they participate not in the 'pure presentation' of a local

²⁷⁷ Alain Badiou, 2009, *Theory of the Subject*, London: Continuum, p. 316

²⁷⁸ Alain Badiou, 1975, *Theory of Contradiction*, London: Continuum

situation but in the re-presentation of the “State of the situation”; they have become parties of the State. There is no distinction here between different possible uses of parliamentarism, between, for example, Lenin’s “revolutionary parliamentarism” and “parliamentary cretinism”. Who can blame Badiou? All of NATO’s parliaments behave in such way.

Badiou’s thoughts on the Party-form depicts an itinerary from an early, quasi-mystical exaltation of the Party as the *evental* embodiment of the Masses – no doubt an enthusiastic position from the French 68 and in reaction to French Stalinism, to the late “politics without a Party” in response to the defeat of the Left in Western Europe and with the rise and consolidation of the neoliberal reaction. Even though, this may seem as a break, Badiou’s ethical conception of politics is coherent with both stages. For the early Badiou, the Party is conceived as a metaphysical event, a purifier of the Masses as they become Subject. For the late Badiou, given that the Marxist project is weak or almost dead, there is no point in party-building, for such project takes part of the State and in “capitaloparliamentarism (curiously Badiou’s most vitriolic attacks are against the State and not capitalism).” In both stages runs a deep anti-institutionalism. In one, the Party is the channel for a permanent revolution, for “true” politics. In the other, this same ‘true politics’ happens at a “distance from the State”. Saving ideological distances, Badiou, like Arendt have a very narrow exceptionalist conception of politics. True politics and the fetishism of the (non)Party has a miraculous flavor. Hence, Badiou’s ultra-leftism of his earlier years coincides with his non-party politics of his later years. His formalism makes possible the total contradictory attitudes towards the party-form.

It seems to me that Badiou’s notion of Being as totalizing and inescapable, and an opposite quasi-transcendent or transcendent Event²⁷⁹ as a situation impossible to emerge from Being (in his words, the Event is void in respect to the state of the situation) has certain similarities with the understanding of capitalism of the value-form school of political economy. Deep into capitalist structures, labor and capital stand identical, so Communism and so-called “communization” can only be understood as the abolition of the value-form, the ‘shape’ of being in capitalism. In the preface of *Being and Event*,

²⁷⁹ See Peter Hallward, 2004, *Think Again: Alain Badiou and the Future of Philosophy*, London: Continuum, p.93

Badiou advances his four fundamental thesis: 1. That Being is in-different, consisting of situations, 2. The situation does not deliver truths; a truth-event ruptures being and it is “incalculable”, 4. A subject (as opposed to concrete individuals) is she who’s faithful to truth, 5. Truth does not express the situation to which it intervenes (it is “generic”, not specific). Being is ubiquitous to the situation, and the Event is the exception to which Man is subject to. In setting up such stark antinomy between being and rupture, alienation and freedom, situation and revolution, one is not sure where the possibility of revolutionary human action is located, other than a passive subject declaring, like an Apostle, . Similarly, in the account of capitalism by Postone and others, we have an all-embracing and pervasive dialectic of capital. No account is provided for the *outside* of capital, either as a theorization of use-values resisting to capital (yet use-values are already included in the dialectic of value) or class struggle across history, in penalty notwithstanding of subscribing a trans-historical conception of labor, which in Postone stands for the possibility of thinking labor outside capitalism. Especially in Postone’s account, capitalism is a product of labor. Exploitation relies not so much in the capitalist, who is as the worker a personification of capital, but in the abstract character of labor. In much of value-form theory, there is no account or possibility for revolution. Capital is the real subject, a (traditional) Hegelian Spirit that subsumes the whole thing into the absolute law of value. In this sense, value-form theory with its strict attachment to the “being” of capital and its lack of formulating the “event” of revolution transforms the Marxist *critique* of political economy into a Marxian *theory* of pure capital. But these are two different things. In the former, the critique of capital makes visible the class struggle between concrete individuals (the level of appearances to the value-form dialectic of capital) in which the value-form is an inverted or perverted form of human relations; in the latter, social action is embedded and over-determined by the structures of capital. Human praxis becomes invisible; the real actors are the categories. But as Marx states, “Theory is capable of gripping the masses as soon as it demonstrates *ad hominem*, and it demonstrates *ad hominem* as soon as it becomes radical. To be radical is to grasp the root of the matter. But for man the root is man himself.”²⁸⁰

²⁸⁰ Karl Marx, 1994, “A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right”, in *Early Political Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 64

So what is speculative about Badiou's critique of speculative leftism? Let's restate the speculative proposition, not only as Substance but also as Subject, that which is determined (predicate) becomes determining (the subject) and vice versa. The masses, objects of politics, become subjects in revolutions. The subjects, the living workers, become objects under the law of value. In a note from the Kreuznach Notebooks, Marx makes the following speculative statement, "In general we can note that the conversion of the subject into the predicate, and of the predicate into the subject, the exchange of that which determines for that which is determined, is always the most immediate revolution. Not only on the revolutionary side... The reactionaries as well". Marx accuses Hegel of political teleology by taking the State as the subject instead of the predicate of society, that is, Marx reads Hegel's speculative proposition as an ordinary proposition; "By means of [Hegel's political teleology] all forms of unreason become forms of reason. But essentially here in religion reason is made the determining factor, while in the state the idea of the state is made the determining factor. This metaphysics is the metaphysical expression of reaction, of the old world as the truth of the new world outlook."²⁸¹ Yet, the interesting question is how Marx connects here speculative identity with Restoration and Revolution. By including both possibilities (the revolutionary and the reactionary) Marx is closer to Hegel's speculative meaning that reality can also be irrational as well as rational, progressive as well as reactionary, despite his accusation that in Hegel reason becomes solely unreason.

Miguel Abensour thinks that this text more than establishing the sociological nature of the reaction and revolution is primarily political, "It is therefore at the heart of an essentially political perspective, in relation to the conceptual antithesis revolution/reaction, that Marx thinks and determines the possible permutations of the subject and the predicate... At the same time that the permutation of the subject and the predicate aims at designating the determining principle of politics, this permutation is also intended, beyond that goal and at a more fundamental level, as a response to the question of origins."²⁸² This question of origins for Abensour address the essential anti-

²⁸¹ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, 1975, "The Kreuznach Notebooks of 1843", *Collected Works*, v. 3, Moscow: International Publishers

²⁸² Miguel Abensour, 2011, *Democracy against the State: Marx and the Machiavellian Moment*. London: Polity, pp. 42-43

State character of Marx's political theory, the origin of politics is in society, not in the State. The "transformative method", for Abensour, of Marx's use of the speculative proposition reveals both the primacy of democracy as the figure of political emancipation, and also as the method "established in the realm of theory by the democratic principle." Marx's use of the speculative proposition, his transformative method aims both at democracy and it is democratic. It aims at democracy since the speculative proposition pushes beyond the identity of the State into its non-identity, "[the method] indicates instead that the State should be returned to the movement that overwhelms it and pushes it beyond itself, that is, to the over-signification of the State and its real subject, the active life of the demos." On the other, the [speculative] method is democratic because by going through the origin; it discovers that the effect or predicate of social relations in the State (family, civil society) is really the subject/cause of the State. For Abensour, "Marx's goal is to lead the political (in this case, the constitutional), cultural, or material realms of objectified life back to a source of originary spontaneity that would, as it were, be the nodal-point of the inversion, the base on which it would henceforth be legitimate to carry out this inversion, since here, finally, we would be grasping the foundation whereby modern history would be illuminated in its truth." Whatever right or wrong Marx gets Hegel's philosophy of Right (since the State in Hegel is an effect of society as well as its organizing principle)²⁸³, the important point of Abensour's reading of Marx's use of Hegel's speculative proposition is first, the connection to both revolutionary and reactionary politics (the question of politics and partisanship), second, the question of democracy, and third, the question of society, "the plural, massive, polymorphous life of the demos".

All of these democratic elements are absent in Badiou's critique of speculative leftism. Unlike Marx and Hegel, Badiou unfavorably regards the speculative from a Kantian position, which claims that the speculative mind claims no past experience, no history; in the Kantian sense, the speculative is that mirage of reason that can know outside any given experience. For Badiou, speculative leftism is

²⁸³ Civil society in Hegel is the determining genealogical principle of the modern State, yet the State also determines normatively society through ethical institutions. See Georg W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, §144-5

“Any thought of being which bases itself upon the theme of an absolute commencement. Speculative leftism imagines that intervention authorizes itself on the basis of itself alone; that it breaks with the situation without any other support than its own negative will... This thought is unaware that the event itself only exists insofar as it is submitted, by an intervention whose possibility requires recurrence-and thus non-commencement-to the ruled structure of the situation; as such, any novelty is relative, being legible solely after the fact as the hazard of an order... Being does not commence.”²⁸⁴

Badiou’s notion of speculation would be more Fichtean than Hegelian. The subject in its infinite subjectivity conquers the world anew, through mere will. But Badiou’s critique is not so much directed towards the absolute subjectivism of such position, but towards salvaging the ontological uniqueness of Revolution, of the Event, outside the Subject. That is, Badiou insists that the Revolution creates a world out of nothing (the Event), but this possibility exceeds the subject. The subject is to attest fidelity to that Event, not to posit itself as an absolute beginning.²⁸⁵ Badiou believes in absolute commencement, but this commencement is not Being but Event. The subject’s “negative will” immersed in the world of Being cannot be the origin of the New. A disciple of Badiou such as Bruno Bosteels even recognizes that “Badiou’s notion of the Communist hypothesis runs the risk of inactuality to the extent to which it would be only an Idea of Reason in the Kantian sense, never a concept of the Understanding for which there might be a corresponding intuition.” Moreover, Badiou thinks against Deleuze’s continuous, univocal being that himself “conceptualize absolute beginnings (which requires a theory of the void) and singularities of thought that are incomparable in their constitutive gestures (which requires a theory- Cantorian, to be precise –of the plurality of the types of infinity).” The subject’s task is to connect to past “sequences” (the French, Russian, Chinese revolutions) according to the structure of Being to the unforeseen Event. In this sense, Badiou would also partake of this speculative leftism.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Alain Badiou, 2007, *Being and Event*, London: Continuum, p. 210-11

²⁸⁵ Merleau-Ponty’s critique of Sartre’s revolutionary politics would also be valid for Badiou, “The militant believes in the revolution and the Party as Kant’s moral subject believes in God and immortality: not that the will attaches itself to an external being, but, on the contrary, because it is gratuitous, prior to any motive, and pure affirmation of value, the will additionally postulates in being what is necessary for its fulfillment [...] The militant is, in the philosophical sense, in ecstasy in the Party and is completely transformed in it, so that obedience to orders is his highest activity, making him in turn pure action.” See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1973, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, pp. 106, 110

²⁸⁶ See Bruno Bosteels, 2011, *The Actuality of Communism*, London: Verso, p.34., and Alain Badiou, 2000, *Deleuze: The Clamor of Being*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 90

The Party as Mediation

As chapter 4 showed, labor and capital stand in identity in the capital relation. At the level of pure productive forces both capital and labor depend on each other. There is no other character for labor in capitalism: it has become abstract in order to become a source of value. At this reified level, Capital is the real self-developing subject, but it lacks an opposite: the resistance of labor and the primacy of use-values. This resistance is provided by the political constitution of the producers in opposition to the appropriators. If at the level of the ‘essence’, or productive forces capital and labor are in unity, at the level of ‘appearances’ or social relations of production labor and capital stand into opposed camps. There is no other aim for labor in capitalism than to abolish itself along the private accumulation of capital. Both levels are not identical, but they are not absolutely different, and both are necessary, one for critique and the other for politics.²⁸⁷ The worker and the capitalist are in an antagonistic unity; the capitalist cannot be such without the worker, the wage-laborer cannot be such without the capitalist. As Hegel states, “Both are in essential relation to one another; and the one of the two *is*, only insofar as it excludes the other from it, and thus relates itself to.”²⁸⁸ The economic nature of productive forces is an entry point to the political aspect of social relations. Productive forces pressure social relations, pushing them further, making obsolete certain aspects like slave-labor before, or the law of value for socialism, in which the satisfaction of needs does not depend anymore on the social exploitation of labor.

Partisanship as a unity of opposites, between classes or between parties, is the political phenomena that articulates the essential social relation of dependence and mutual exclusion between adversaries. That is why speculative consciousness is not

²⁸⁷ Appearances (class struggle) are as necessary as the essence (law of value), one is not derivative of the other. In any case, what is going on is concrete human interaction, not categories being personified by people. For Hegel, “Appearance is in every way a very important grade of the logical idea. It may be said to be the distinction of philosophy from ordinary consciousness that it sees the merely phenomenal character of what the latter supposes to have a self-subsistent being. The significance of appearance however must be properly grasped, or mistakes will arise. To say that anything is *mere* appearance may be misinterpreted to mean that, as compared to what is merely phenomenal, there is greater truth in the immediate, in that which *is*. Now, in strict fact, the case is precisely the reverse. Appearance is higher than mere Being — a richer category because it holds in combination the two elements of reflection-into-self and reflection-into-other: whereas Being (or immediacy) is still mere relationlessness, and apparently rests upon itself alone.” See Hegel, *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*,

²⁸⁸ Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic*

rooted in the future as a utopian Platonic knowledge after the Revolution and the ethical State has been achieved. It is rather rooted now in actuality, in our relations of exclusionary unity. A speculative conception of the party as a unity of opposites belongs to capitalism, not socialism. It is from capitalist relations that the party as a unity of opposites emerges. Party politicism only focuses on the second conception of absolute difference, dismissing the structural constitution of capital for a political program for which there is no existing social theory, no social-economic foundation. It is a kind of moralism based on a simple categorical imperative to rebel. Party economism, on the other hand, focuses in the first conception; capital and labor are essential to each other, and political demands must aim to stabilizing and making economic their arrangements more just.

If politicism is too universal but abstract, economism is too narrow and local. To use the old language of historical communist parties, politicism is *left deviationism* and economism *right deviationism*. Both tendencies exclude, in the words of Boris Groys, the “total logic” of the Party, of an identity in difference. Being aware of the political and the economic, of politicism and economism, of idealism and materialism, power and norm, brings the whole political field into view. In this sense, speculative logic is completely different from liberal logic. If for the latter, politics means to choose A, excluding B; partisan logic is content with being paradoxical, contradictory and ‘self-defeating’ in the sense that it takes into account and gives account of both opposites. Good examples are the many watchwords of communist politics (that Mario Bunge dismissed as oxymoron): concrete universal, democratic centralism, revolutionary parliamentarism, etc.

In Lenin’s ‘revolutionary parliamentarism’: on the one hand, the ultra-left dismissed parliamentary work for being too political, too satisfied with existing institutions. Social revolutionaries at the time of Lenin wanted to take radical action in armed struggle as the only strategy (for Lenin, having an “infantile disorder”). On the other, Mensheviks and more conservative groups regarded illegal work and agitation as counterproductive as if real politics only happened within the Duma, (what Lenin called “parliamentary cretinism”). Both sides stood for false absolutes, that is, absolutes freed from contradiction. Why not do both? Why not contemplate both legal and illegal activity, parliamentary work and underground work? “Deviationists” stood for formal

logic (A and not B); Lenin stood for speculative or total logic (A and B). As Boris Groys says,

“The advantage of formulating a political programme as a paradox here becomes clear: the totality of the political field is brought into view, *and one is able to act not through exclusion but through inclusion...* The logic of internal Party debates of this period can therefore be summarized as follows: it was not what was asserted that led to a deviation being designated as such; the basis for this was instead the refusal to accept that the opposite of what had been asserted was an equally true assertion.”²⁸⁹

The same thing can be applied to mobilization in the workplace or the Army. Why not engage in union activity even if that means becoming exploited wage-labor? Why not engage in anti-war agitation while signing in the Army? I think the Hegelian notion of immanent critique is made concrete in Marx’s view that while the factory is a place of exploitation and alienation, it also provides the workers a level of organization and discipline necessary for revolutionary work. No other place can provide the same level of political education.

Political formalism is precisely to follow a logic of political exclusion, to sever the mediation between parties and social forces in their historical development. One can distinguish three approaches to the question of partisanship. These are univocalism, equivocalism, and analogy. Univocity represents a principle of unmediated identity; equivocalism corresponds to unmediated difference, and analogy stands for an identity of the abstract and the concrete through mediation.²⁹⁰

Badiou and Negri advance an unmediated equivocal or univocal conception of partisanship. In Badiou, each situation has its own conditions of predication, possessing nothing common with other struggle in equivocal fashion. The universality of such struggle is completely confined to its local conditions of production. In Negri, we witness an opposite form of predicating Communism: each struggle is universal. A middle way is provided by the theorization of the party-form in classical Marxists such as Lukács and Gramsci, and in existentialism by Merleau-Ponty. Here the idea is that every political struggle attends to its singular conditions of emergence and situation while connecting it

²⁸⁹ Boris Groys, 2012, *The Communist Postscript*, London: Verso, 38-40

²⁹⁰ I think in this sense that Hegel, despite his criticism of Catholicism, has more in common with Aquinas than with Protestant theology that stood for an absolute difference between this world and the divine, and of course with Spinoza, where the absolute is embedded in reality.

to the universal advance of democracy, “to push the identity of the State into is non-identity”, into is withering away. The speculative conception of party posits the identity-in-difference between the masses/social forces and the party (the organizational tensions between articulation and spontaneity), a concrete universality (or political *analogy*) in that partisans as a particular group actualize the universal essence of political man, and in that every local line of (race, class, gender) struggle is connected to the universal form of (abolishing) class power, and finally, the question of democratic centralism, party as a unity-in-difference, but that unfortunately in the history of communism, traditional emphasis has been placed in the moment of unity and centralization, not on the moment of democracy and difference.

Another way of putting it is the relation of political form with social content in regards to party organization. Which of the elements should take primacy, or would these elements coexist in a dialectical tension provided by the situation and by the internal life of the party? These philosophical problems of organization were common place in the history of the Communist movement. The Second International of Kautsky, the evolutionists and social democrats were the real *substitutionists*; they gave absolute primacy to the political organization and regarded the masses as backward and in need of Party guidance, possessors of the natural laws of dialectical materialism. For these “Enlightened” western Marxists, with the most advanced working classes in the West, form exceeded content, and the masses were like objects of nature, passive and inertial; hence their naturalistic understanding of dialectics in that history will solve itself according to its own hidden laws. The masses and the party were separate and their union was only symbolic, as their parliamentary representative. In this Right “naturalistic opportunism”, the social content becomes unknowable (for its extremely mechanical version of dialectics) and hence for the sake of unity, the party-form becomes a hodgepodge of theories that poses serious problems to organization. “The whole history of the Second International”, writes Lukacs, “is full of such attempts to synthesize the most disparate, the most sharply divergent and incompatible views in the ‘unity’ of a decision.”

Luxemburg represented the other extreme, in which the masses half-consciously are ahead of the party organization, where the content of social forces exceeds the party-

form. Luxembourgen recognized the need for political organization only too late. For this Left “utopian romanticism”, the party-form is insufficient to conduct the energies of the masses; their revolutionary consciousness will always exceed any practical attempt to organize them. The inadequacy of such approach is that it fails to deal with the actual world, with the sensuous and hard facts of politics, and prefers to direct the social energies in an intimistic manner as the inner life of the masses. In both accounts, there is an equal diremption between the life of the masses and the life of the Party. The spiritual elevation of the masses in the form of revolt is the fundamental principle of left utopianism.

The position of the Leninist party-form was, I think, a compromise between these two tendencies, but not as a “golden mean” of moderation, but as a way of transcending the formal objectivism of the social-democrat Right and the spontaneous subjectivism of Left communism. But most of the conceptions of party in current Left literature from Negri to Badiou, from Zizek to Laclau, are in a superficial sense, “neo-Leninist” because these readings are based on the myth of Leninism as a top-down, substitutionist philosophy of organization. In this myth lies buried two serious prejudices: one, that for better or worse, Leninist partisanship is totalitarian (someone like Zizek or Badiou would openly advocate for totalitarian solution to the “decadent” liberal democracy) and two, that Stalinism is coterminous with Marx and Lenin’s theory of the party. According to the myth, in Hal Draper’s punctual critique, Leninist partisanship

“1. sees the party as consisting mainly of “intellectuals,” on the basis of a theory according to which workers cannot themselves develop to socialist consciousness; rather, the socialist idea is always and inevitably imported into the movement by bourgeois intellectuals. 2. Posited that the party is simply a band of “professional revolutionaries” as distinct from a broad working-class party; 3. Repudiated any element of spontaneity or spontaneous movement, in favor of engineered revolution only; 4. Required that the party be organized not democratically but as a bureaucratic or semi-military hierarchy.”

Externality, elitism, central planification, and military bureaucratization are the so called central notions of Leninist strategy, even for Lenin’s friends. This misconception, which is really liberal, allows both leftist critics and apologists of Lenin to quickly attack or defend partisanship in their polemic with the current state of liberal politics. We see the repetition of this myth when Negri speaks of “the externality of the process of organization and the need to impose the recomposition of the proletariat *from above*

amounted to a need and desire for a theoretical isolation of the vanguard from the process of masses in conditions of emergency”, when Žižek declares that “‘*external' intellectuals are needed* because the working class cannot immediately perceive its own place within the social totality, which enables it to accomplish its 'mission'--this insight has to be mediated through an external element”, when Badiou defends the idea that “the Leninist party was at bottom a *military model* obsessed with one question: how to win the war?”, or when Laclau and Mouffe announce that in Leninism, “the military conception of politics dominates the whole range of strategic calculations. But since the real working class is, of course, far from fully identifying with its 'historical interests', *the dissociation becomes permanent* between the materiality of the class and the political instance representing its ' true identity ’” Other academic personalities repeat this myth through the more mysterious language of the ontology of Being, and in the absence of any historical and contextual reading. I argue instead the democratic centralism as an organizational concept embodies the speculative nature of Hegel’s open-ended and flexible tool instead of the opportunistic use of democratic centralism by Stalinist party democracies. This concept is essential to encounter oligarchic centralism, of our political parties, which Robert Michels correctly saw more than a century ago.²⁹¹

The Dual Mediation of Party and Masses

Organization cannot but stand in a tense and dialectical relation with spontaneity. Adorno calls this relation “negative dialectics”, I would call it speculative. On the one hand, organization is essential for mass politics, but it needs to keep up with the masses energy so the people achieve and realize concrete demands. In Lenin’s words, there is no revolutionary organization without revolutionary theory. On the other, organization is a danger for popular politics; it represents the perils of bureaucracy.²⁹² Also, the political party as envisioned by Marx and Lenin is the party within the bourgeois context. Their partisanship is focused within the context of capitalism, just as the conception of labor is the capitalist labor that must be abolished with the proletariat. Hence, if the end is the

²⁹¹ Robert Michels, 1966, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchic Tendencies of Modern Democracies*. New York: Free Press

²⁹² Adorno’s conception of the artwork and critique is in this sense speculative and Leninist. Language is the medium in which the artwork can be expressed and its utopian content brought to light, *and also*, language is the worst enemy of artistic creation. “By virtue of its double character, language is a constituent of art and its mortal enemy.” (*Aesthetic Theory*, p.112)

abolition of capitalism, then it means also the abolition of the proletariat and the Party that represents it and mobilizes it.

Georg Lukács in his last essay of *History and Class Consciousness* entitled “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization” provides a dialectical resolution between the tense relation between party and masses, and a critique of both bureaucratism/sectarism and spontaneism. For Lukács, the key mistake of spontaneism, formulated among others by Rosa Luxemburg, was the assumption that political class consciousness is the simple actualization of a latent social content, as if the workers were essentially revolutionary, without need for political education. True, the masses react psychologically to economic crisis, but their political mobilization in the forms of parties is not an automatic consequence of these crises. “However”, Lukács continues, “such outbreaks come to a halt no less spontaneously; they peter out when their immediate goals are achieved or seemed unattainable.”²⁹³ By underestimating the organizational dimension of politics, spontaneism places at the same level class consciousness and the empirical feelings of the masses, leveling the differentiated levels of political and philosophical consciousness to its most basic and elemental. Moreover, spontaneism forgets that the ideological offensive from the ruling class, sharpened in the presence of massive social and economic crises, still exerts pressure on some sections of the working class who remain politically backward.

Bureaucratism, sectarism, or substitutionism, on the contrary, emphasizes the organization one-sidedly, and privileges the party instead of the masses, acting for the proletariat. In this sense, it is sectarian because it posits a “correct” class consciousness (of the experts) vis-à-vis the more primitive life of the masses. Both orientations of sectarism and spontaneism see the masses really from a *reified* vantage point. For sectarism, masses are objects to be used in the ‘correct’ time decided by the organization; for spontaneism, masses are also an undifferentiated mass, an object failing to constitute a unified political subject. In one, the mass is an instrument used by the absolute discipline and unity of the party’s leaders; in the other, the mass is only an expression of

²⁹³ Georg Lukacs, “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization”, p.307

infinitely differentiated feelings and desires. Both approaches share the same one-sidedness:

“If, on the other hand, it attempts to merge entirely with the spontaneous instinctive movement of the masses, it is forced into making *a simple equation* between the class consciousness of the proletariat and the momentary thoughts and feelings, etc., of the masses. In consequence it sacrifices every criterion by which to judge correct action objectively. It succumbs to the bourgeois dilemma of voluntarism and fatalism. It adopts a vantage-point from which neither the objective nor the subjective stages of the course of history can be effectively judged. Hence it is led to the extravagant overestimation of organization, or else to the no less extravagant underestimation of it. It is forced to treat the problem of organization in isolation from the general questions of historical praxis and equally from the problems of strategy and tactics.”

Lukács thus distinguishes between the *psychological* consciousness of the working *masses* and the *historical* consciousness of the working *classes*. This historical consciousness is not the total sum of the workers’ consciousness but appears when a class—a corporate entity—reacts rationally according to its class position to the historical situation. Gramsci would speak in this sense of the Party as a “collective intellectual” as that “middling element” between party and masses. There is the widespread common partisan provided with discipline and faith, then the cohesive element of leadership with disciplinary power, and hegemony, which puts into contact the first two elements, “not only physically but intellectually.” This class consciousness is not one *apriori*, but for Lukács, is embodied in a revolutionary organization. Lukács sees the party as a living mediator of the unorganized masses, bypassing both the Jacobin aspect, represented today by Badiou and Žižek and the autonomy of the masses, celebrated by the authors of *Empire*.

The problem following Laclau, is how to constitute a Party, derivative of how is a People constituted? The organizational separation between party and masses signals both the great social diversity and *heterogeneity* of the class, and the partisan *unification* of that class to take power. Additionally, for Lukács, this dialectical interaction between mass and party permits both to keep a philosophical theoretical moment in the organization and the political effective consciousness of the average member or partisan, in a sense that allows to advance political education. The Party is a historical instrument that achieves both philosophy and politics through a dual mediation: first, the Party mediates between masses and history, seeing the objective situation from a theoretical

class position; second, the masses mediate the party and history, it is only through mass action that a party can intervene in history. Lukács then proposes a truly speculative understanding of the political party, as a unity-in-difference between class and party:

“The criterion for and the guide to the correct relationship between class and the party can be found nowhere but in the class consciousness of the proletariat. On the one hand, *the real, objective unity* of class consciousness forms the basis of a dialectical alliance despite the organizational separation of class from the party. On the other hand, *the prevailing disunity*, the differing degrees of clarity and depth to be found in the consciousness of the different individuals, groups and strata of the proletariat make the organizational separation of the party from the class inevitable.”²⁹⁴

The necessity for contemporary communist theories of organization is to reformulate the dual mediation of Lukács between popular parties and masses beyond the substitutionist, sectarian or the spontaneist understanding of the party-form, given the new conditions of late capitalism (the globalization and feminization of the proletariat, militarization of the capitalist State, the resurgence of far-right racism, etc.). At stake, it is not only a matter of politics, but philosophical understandings of society, social ontologies, and the incapacity of thinking mediations, which understand the party as “pure action” or the masses as constituting a unity by themselves, “through the collaboration of singular social subjects” (as Hardt and Negri’s conception of multitude).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty provides another model to argue for this dual mediation between masses and party. His debate against Sartre puts into relief the radical dualism of Sartre’s politics and philosophy for whom the masses were completely alienated, “practico-inert” in need of an iron discipline as example of alienation and future liberation. Merleau-Ponty provides a more positive assessment of the party in its relation with the masses. The ground for a politics of emancipation is the existence of a social and historical universe where different individuals can communicate similar experiences of exploitation. Merleau-Ponty advances a philosophical conception of party that recuperates an open speculative conception of a third element which links the simultaneous identity and difference of the partisan phenomenon. Merleau-Ponty reminds the reader that Lenin’s model of the Party is not elitist; his elaboration of dialectics (beyond Hegel) in relation to the Party resembles many of the speculative models

²⁹⁴ Georg Lukacs, “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization”, p.322

provided here. Merleau-Ponty seeks to propose a middle way between political bureaucratism that treats the masses as an object, and some sort of ‘neo-anarchism’. The party sees the masses as Subject, and not as a passive entity to be manipulated. In the words of Merleau-Ponty,

“This exchange, in which no one commands and no one obeys, is symbolized by the old custom which dictates that, in a meeting, speakers join in when the audience applauds. What they applaud is the fact that they do not intervene as persons, that in their relationship with those who listen to them a truth appears which does not come from them and which the speakers can and must applaud. In the communist sense, *the Party is this communication; and such a conception of the Party is not a corollary of Marxism-it is its very center.*”²⁹⁵

Value-Form and Party-Form as Concrete Universals

The second aspect of a speculative partisanship is how the Hegelian notion of concrete universal relates to political organization.²⁹⁶ In the analogical or speculative perspective, politics produces concrete universals. Social relations give rise either to abstract universals and concrete universals. Abstract universals are one-sided, as in *economic* man, or *democratic* man, or else. That is, human freedom is an abstract universal when it is reduced to a single course of action, a single dimension of humanity. Marx saw this in his *Manuscripts* when he stated that capitalism reduces human needs to one aspect: wage-dependence and immiserating on the part of the worker, and profit-dependence and greed for the capitalists. Ignored are other dimensions of human existence (creation, solidarity, dreaming, leisure, concrete labor) which makes us concrete beings. For Marx, freedom is the recognition of concrete [total] necessities

²⁹⁵ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 1973, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, p.51

²⁹⁶ I will use the dated term analogy that in pre-critical metaphysics signaled a progression in being from singular to universal, from existence to being. The analogical perspective supposes a continuity of different modes of existence from the particular to the general. Hegel, I think, adapts this continuity but by introducing the negative (absent in old accounts of analogy), and prefers then to speak of determinations from the abstract (pure ideality) to the concrete (the realization of an idea in history and society). Thus the difference between analogy and mediation is the presence of the negative; the more specific a concept becomes, the more it negates the universal that gives its existence. For example, the abstract concept of freedom becomes negated when it is used to concretely justify freedom of contract, producing insidious forms of “free” labor exploitation, and it is also negated when it is embodied concretely in the liberation of the oppressed. The abstraction does not contemplate concrete oppressions or emancipations. No such thing occurs in analogy. The world participates non-problematically in the ideas, from specificity to universality.

where multiple and contradictory elements are incarnated in one being. The more needs are recognized, the freer we become. This requires total logic instead of ordinary logic to recognize the manifold nature of human needs.²⁹⁷ For Hegel, education and the ethical state are examples of individuals as concrete universals, where freedom attains conceptual existence in the open recognition of the individual as universal being with infinite needs, not only as an abstract bearer of rights.²⁹⁸ In his political philosophy Hegel makes the following distinction between concrete and abstract universals concerning the nature of democracies, which is relevant to our current system. Voting is an example of abstract universality; it is registering a private, contingent preference instead of concretely taking power or being recognized concretely as a democratic citizen.

“As for popular suffrage, it may be further remarked that especially in large states it leads inevitably to electoral indifference, since the casting of a single vote is of no significance where there is a multitude of electors. Even if a voting qualification is highly valued and esteemed by those who are entitled to it, they still do not enter the polling booth. Thus the result of an institution of this kind is more likely to be the opposite of what was intended; election actually falls into the power of a few, of a caucus, and so of the particular and contingent interest which is precisely what was to have been neutralized.”²⁹⁹

In Hegel, political organizations constitute concrete universality in the form of a corporate body in the ethical state. For Hegel, the family or civil associations are concrete universal. Parties and political organizations can also be considered as examples of concrete universals:

“This atomistic and abstract point of view vanishes at the stage of the family, as well as that of civil society where the individual *is in evidence only as a member of a general group*. The state, however, is essentially an organization each of whose members is in itself a group of this kind, and hence no one of its moments should appear as an *unorganized aggregate*... The circles of association in civil society are already communities. To picture these communities as once more breaking up into a mere conglomeration of individuals *as soon as they enter the field of politics, i.e. the field of the highest concrete universality*, is *eo ipso* to hold civil and political life apart from one

²⁹⁷ Georg Lukács, “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization”, p.319: “Every human relationship that breaks with this pattern, with this abstraction from the total personality of man and with his subsumption beneath an abstract point of view, is a step in the direction of putting an end to the reification of human consciousness. Such a step, however, presupposes an *active engagement of the total personality*.”

²⁹⁸ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, p.249: “The process of formation [*Bildung*] begins with a content whose form is sensuous and immediate, and by means of a long and arduous work, arrives at the form of thought appropriate to this content and thereby gives it a simple and adequate expression.”

²⁹⁹ Georg W. F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, Remark to 311.

another and as it were to hang the latter in the air, because its basis could then only be the abstract individuality of caprice and opinion, and hence it would be grounded on chance and not on what is absolutely stable and justified.”³⁰⁰

Thus, in politics, the essence of humanity, which is freedom, is realized. It is made concrete in people. An abstract universal would consider economic man, as someone who reduces all her needs to the market, but economic *man* from the perspective of the concrete universal, would mean, the economy in the service of the satisfaction of needs.

But the concrete universal for Marx is not only normative categories of needs, but, according to Soviet philosopher Ewald Ilyenkov, concrete universals are also critical categories of alienation since capitalism, historical societies produce concrete universals. If ordinary logic (Aristotle) sees universals as genres of particulars, dialectical logic (Hegel) regards universals being embodied in special particulars, and particulars becoming universals in history and development. Thus, the category of value in Marx is an example of concrete universal because in its specificity embodies the total logic of capital, and it is not a transhistorical conception of value.³⁰¹

If the party-form embodies one type of concrete universal, it is both a mirror and a counter-power to the concrete universal of the value-form. The revolutionary party is not a miracle, another Church, a community of the faithful to an exceptional event irrupting into the world of capitalist being. The Party and the partisans reproduce this ‘alienated’ universe emerging from the form of value to attempt to transcend it. The party emerges from specific conditions of struggle, but in those local conditions, the partisan struggle express the universal struggle and domination inherent in the law of value. Partisanship

³⁰⁰ Georg W.F. Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 303

³⁰¹ Ewald Ilyenkov, 2008, *The dialectics of the abstract and the concrete in Marx's Capital*, New Delhi: Aakar Books, p.85: ““This concept [of concrete universal] is the result of an exhaustive analysis of one ‘most elementary economic concreteness’ of the capitalist world – direct exchange of one commodity for another involving no money. The specificity of this form consists in that it contains, like a ‘cell’ or embryo, the wealth of more complex, more developed forms of capitalist relations. That is why ‘in this very simple phenomenon (in this “cell” of bourgeois society) analysis reveals all the contradictions (or the germs of all the contradictions) of modern society.’ That is why the result and product of this analysis, expressed in definitions of the category of value, offers a key to a theoretical conception of the whole of the capitalist world.” One might find also examples of concrete universals, according to this critical dimension, in the aesthetic writings of Adorno and Benjamin at the level of culture. The fragment like the monad artwork is an extreme polarity contains the universal conflict between social forces and aesthetics in its configuration.

like value transverses different politics and different capitals; they are not diffuse without concreteness or subjected to one locality without universality. As Lukács states,

“Lenin stubbornly insists on rejecting every utopian view of the human material with which the revolution must be made and with which victory must be won: *it consists necessarily of men who have been brought up in and ruined by capitalist society...* The Communist Party after all has never claimed to be able to reform the inner nature of its member by means of a miracle... The inner life of the party is one unceasing struggle against this, its capitalist inheritance. The only decisive weapon it possesses is its ability to draw together all the party members and to involve them in activity on behalf of the party *with the whole of their personality.*”³⁰²

The concrete universal also establishes that every form of local struggle has its own particular conditions, yet nevertheless they all share the same constituting principle of class power. Thus, the structure of the capital relation is universal, but only abstractly, and it receives its content and determination locally in the form of anti-colonial, anti-patriarchal, or anti-capitalist struggles, depending on the level of concrete political and economic forces and relations. For the analogical or the speculative imagination, political struggles are different and nevertheless they participate of a same nature *by analogy*, in different qualitative proportions. In order for an immanent critique of Capital, proper to a speculative perspective, to be operative, one has to assume first the universal nature of Capital, but this nature is made concrete in multiple capitals, multiple regimes of accumulation and crisis, and forms of rebellion. The dispersal of Capital, which constitutes its spread and magnificence, must not be confused with many different capitals, as it is the same not to confuse all different concrete capitals with the One Capital. If everything revolved under the one law of value, Marx would have had no need to write the third volume of *Capital*.

Democratic centralism: the speculative unity of the party-form

For classical Marxists as Lukács and Gramsci, the organizational concept of democratic centralism embodies the Hegelian-Marxist logic of identity-in-difference. For Gramsci,

“Democratic centralism offers an elastic formula, which can be embodied in many diverse forms; it comes alive in so far as it is interpreted and continually adapted to necessity. *It consists in the critical pursuit of what is identical in seeming diversity of form and on the other hand of what is distinct and even opposed in apparent uniformity*, in order to organize and interconnect closely that which is similar, but in such a way that

³⁰² Georg Lukács, “Towards a Methodology of the Problem of Organization”, p.335

the organizing and the interconnecting appear to be a practical and "inductive" necessity, experimental, and not the result of a rationalistic, deductive, abstract process — i.e. one typical of pure intellectuals (or pure asses).”³⁰³

Parties must consist of both leadership and an active base. The “real movement” of the organization comes from its democratic element, but the centralist elements plans for the organization. When “democratic centralism” is possible, there is an active energy at the grassroots, strong “thrusts from below” energizing and directing the organization. This is critical, Gramsci argues, because when it is lacking, when people fail to govern the movement, it devolves into “bureaucratic or oligarchic centralism,” into an ossified oligarchy in which party leaders rule with impunity.

As a concept, democratic centralism is not without merit, especially with the authoritarian use of the principle throughout the history of Communist parties because of political necessity (as in war communism) or the open repression of Stalinism. Moreover, there have been efforts in many sectors of the left to rehabilitate the concept of democratic centralism by rescuing it from its authoritarian historical content and emphasizing the also historically undefined concept of democracy in the formula. Democratic centralism in this sense can be related at present to concepts with more political ‘prestige’ such as self-management, participatory democracy, or collective self-determination. I think it is possible to defend the concept of democratic centralism against its historical uses by Stalinists, by creating a new understanding of such central concept in political thought, and to re-position democratic centralism against, on the one hand, the increasing popularity of concepts and ideas of anarchist, ‘differential’ thinking that recants organization and any kind of central decision-making, or, on the other, of liberal ideas of ‘representative democracy’ without participation. The speculative principle can revise the concept of democratic centralism, by equally emphasizing democratic difference in the face of organizational unity. The rise of anti-globalist movements in the North has revitalized the Left after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but their lack of organization and concrete achievements has also objectively demonstrated the limitations of such political expressionism and the need for parties revolving around democratic centralism.

³⁰³ Antonio Gramsci, 2012, *Prison Notebooks*, 13, 1634

In democratic centralism, unity in the organization and difference of opinion are inseparable traits of partisan life. Contrary to the party possessing absolute truth, the difference of opinion (the democratic moment) aims precisely at the lack of truth, at the open-ended character of historical truth. The organizational moment centralizes the decision until the next discussion takes place on a different or similar imperative. Thus, for democratic centralism, the party is both destroyed if unity is maintained by sacrificing ideological principles (recall the split in the Russian Social-Democratic Party on this matter), and if struggle, difference, and factionalism is preferred destroying the party's unity, recanting of the party's decision when the moment of implementing action comes. Hence Lenin, "The principle of democratic centralism and autonomy for local Party organizations implies universal and full *freedom to criticize*, so long as this does not disturb the unity of *a definite action*; it rules out *all* criticism which disrupts or makes difficult the *unity* of an action decided on by the Party."³⁰⁴

To accept democratic centralism according to its concept is opposite to accepting the historical reality of historical socialism's rigid centralization of the Party into an intelligentsia or oligarchy. I think that in politics, the most pragmatic and philosophical attitude is to possess a speculative attitude and accept the constant unity and struggle between the moments of discussion and the moments of organization. Yet this struggle within the party or within politics cannot be closed with a *definitive* victory at the danger of party dictatorship or unorganized masses. Neither can the debate be solved in a purely intellectual fashion of ideas preceding reality since what is at stake is an objective problem of centrifugal and centripetal forces according to the situation. Centralization can increase or diminish according to national and international politics with the consent of the masses. In democratic centralism, "there must be", Gramsci writes, "a continual adaptation of the organization to the real movement [of the membership], a matching of thrusts from below with orders from above, a continuous insertion of elements thrown up from the depths of the rank and file into the solid framework of the leadership apparatus which ensures continuity and the regular accumulation of experience."³⁰⁵ The real

³⁰⁴ Lenin, 1965, "Freedom to Criticize and Unity of Action", *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, v. 10, pp. 442-443.

³⁰⁵ Antonio Gramsci, 1971, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, New York: International Publishers, p.188

movement in democratic centralism is not only the outcome of constant bilateral relations between the organization's leadership and its grassroots base; the real movement also means a permanent adaptation to the concrete situation, due to both its high structural flexibility of communication and also to its rigid structure once decisions are made.

The Gramscian "elasticity" of democratic centralism also means the ability to balance the political impulse of the bases and leadership with its *contrary*: the bases balance leadership and vice versa. This constant balancing, shifts to and fro the masses and the direction, educates *both* the masses and the leadership, avoiding the problems of personalist parties with their corresponding short institutional life, allowing for leadership renewal from the masses. In opposition, the bureaucratic centralism of both Stalinist and liberal parties have lost that organic dimension of the revolutionary parties and replaced it with an oligarchic and elitist nature where the charismatic leader holds the power. Also the social movements which lack a clear connection with organization also have lost that dimension, being relegated as they are to the level of civil society and marginalized from universal policy decision-making. In liberal and Stalinist parties, the relation between the party and the masses/constituents is absent; bureaucratic-oligarchic centralism transforms them in autonomous entities, only concerned with their own institutional survival. This has been possible for the regression in political literacy brought about by consumer society, and by the careerism of politicians (the apex of Schlesinger's "ambition" theory of politics) who do not represent anybody but themselves and their parties. I repeat bureaucratic centralism is not only the fiefdom of Stalinism. Western liberal parties are also based on a static and mechanistic vision of society as self-interest, good as right and procedure, and capitalism as a natural and objective *fait accompli*.

It remains to be asked, what is the nature of the State for democratic centralism? If political parties as mini-political communities practice whether oligarchic or democratic centralism, this could also affect the nature and government of the State. Madison stands here opposed to Lenin despite what Hardt and Negri say on the similarities of both. In Madison, the integrity of the State is assured by breaking up the masses. So far the nature of the State has evolved little from monarchic centralism to liberal pluralism. Still the State is centralized around classical imperative such as property and order. Here again Gramsci provides very useful insights. The State by itself

is not the *immediate* problem in a capitalist society, if it is a workers democratic state, and if the local and national States possess an organic relation in the lines of democratic centralism, then the State can be a very positive instrument. The merit I think of Marxist instrumentalism is to see a State as a tool of its dissolution, as the masses is the universal class in quantitative and qualitative terms. The masses are universal precisely because they seek its own negation and ending as masses. For Gramsci, liberalism and anarchism disavow the State because both ideologies lack an organic and *social* conception of human communities. These masses are singular or atomized individualities concerned only with their locality or self-interested individuality, lacking a universal notion of politics. In his polemic against anarchism, Gramsci soon links anarchist critique to liberalism,

“The entire liberal tradition is anti-State. The literature of liberalism is one long polemic against the State. The political history of capitalism is characterized by a furious and unending struggle between the citizen and the State. The Parliament is the organ of this struggle (of private interests), and precisely because of this, Parliament tends to absorb all of the functions of the State – in other words, to do away of the State, to deprive it of any effective power... Competition is the fiercest enemy of the State [but in liberalism] the national State is an organ of competition. It will disappear when competition will be eliminated and a new economic practice established...”³⁰⁶

Thus, in democratic centralism, democracy and democratism constitute the moment of discursive difference, and centralism represents the organizational unity, a mixture of consensus and dissent often forgotten in contemporary political theory, which sees democracy only as the permanent irruption of those who have no part, as in social movements, or democracy as an aggregation of legitimate speakers (Habermasian consensus). Democratic centralism unites and ruptures both. Boris Groys suggests that the democratic moment in communism occurs precisely in its discursive dimension, “The communist revolution is the transcription of society from the medium of money to the medium of language. It is a linguistic turn at the level of social praxis.” For Groys, the Soviet Union with all its problems was the historical-political embodiment of communism. It was an (ironic) “kingdom” of philosophy, in which language, not money, had real-practical meaning. Thus, freedom of speech and dissidence were concretely important, enough to be sent to a Gulag. On the other hand, Western societies are mute.

³⁰⁶ Antonio Gramsci, 1994, *Pre-Prison Writings*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 104

Money becomes logos. Freedom of speech is everywhere but without any political importance. It produces, in Wolfgang Streeck's formula, "a process of de-democratization of capitalism through the de-economization of democracy", a splitting of the two, sanctioned by the US Supreme Court of money finally becoming logos. Furthermore, Western societies are divided in such a way that the traditional idea of democratic consensus has become more and more impossible. Our societies have become managerial democracies because our institutions and capitalism are incapable of producing any democratic politics. Hence the economy, with all its *a priori* assumptions on greed, makes our decisions. This is where consensus lies: in the power and willingness to consume, in the consensus of desire, of market and consumers, instead of a political consensus/dissent between citizens. For democratic centralism and communism in general, money does not play a role, and does not govern its societies.³⁰⁷ The exchange of ideas with which Merleau-Ponty characterized the life of the party becomes a practice where no final consensus is reached, of a language beyond consensus, and when the decision to act as a unity is only temporary. This is precisely the linguistic dimension of the democratic difference that Stalinism ignored, and for which the moment of democracy was never defined and subjected and manipulated to short-term necessities and interests (including of course the Nazi colonial invasion). The democratic moment of democratic centralism shares with the speculative perspective that the notion of political Truth is of a constant 'failure', a permanent slippage into new forms of workers' consciousness in their historical situation. Hegel's speculative logic hopes to provide a new understanding of what politics should be from politics' own conditions.

³⁰⁷ One of the biggest blunders of the Soviets, according to Western economists, was not considering money and prices as *really* real, a real factor in production. Their choice therefore was to print more rubles, and inflation went out of control in the times of Gorbachev. Let's remember that for Marx, money is the fetishistic appearance par excellence. It is only a factor of production in capitalism. The Federal Reserve, as the Soviets, does the same thing, printing without regards for production but for the opposite reasons, to consider money as a real factor in production, which of course it is only an illusion i.e. when there is asset inflation (fake wealth) with no matching productivity.

CONCLUSION

In this document, I attempted to provide a defense of political partisanship from a philosophical perspective by arguing that classical and contemporary philosophy have been unable to understand such phenomenon due to its moral and metaphysical prejudices, that the Hegelian speculative tradition has been almost alone in defending something like a partisan conception of truth, and that Marx and the socialist and communist tradition that followed preserved this speculative conception of truth by tracing it to the social universe and applying it to the practical tasks of party building and organization. In tracing and reinterpreting that history, I hoped I provided a marker on how to connect abstract philosophical questions with practical matters of politics. I believe following Lenin that there is no revolution without revolutionary theory, no politics without philosophy, and conversely, that there is no political philosophy if it does not provide guidelines for political practice and exercise,

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