

strip. For us, this is tantamount to recognizing that in the logic of forces splace and the outplace are correlated in such a way that it is no longer possible to posit the second as the simple exterior-excluded of the first.

In the logic of forces, the unity of opposites is not an orientable correlation, and therein consists its historical essence, even though a subjacent (structural) orientation is precisely that with respect to which the non-orientable can be delimited.

Likewise, the proletariat as political class—as force—is linked to the bourgeoisie in a wholly historical unity-of-struggle, which cannot be distributed into the domains of the social whole and which structures the same being—the people—without prohibiting, but actually requiring, that we orient the class position in its *placed* groundedness, that is, in the social relations of production.

The fact that this topological unity of opposites, which under the rule of force brings about the correlation of interior and exterior, is for Hegel nothing less than ‘the unity of essence and existence’ (L 529), or what he calls ‘actuality’, which constitutes the pivotal transition in all of the Great Logic, is a telling sign of its importance.

For the materialist dialectic, when one is led astray in the labyrinth of force, inside and outside, shadows and fog, there where space provides for neither place nor lack of place, it is the Subject—this Minotaur bereft of any Theseus—that one comes across.

It is then that every subject surpasses its place by force, inasmuch as its essential virtue lies in being disoriented.¹³

Subjective and objective

April 15, 1975

Division of force—Spinoza and Malebranche—Stalin—The transmission of the new in the sciences and the nonsciences—Nonlove among politicians and psychoanalysts—May 1968—The bourgeoisie makes politics—Periodization—The Hegelian opera

I

Force is its own affirmative expansion, but placed within the overarching structural aspect of the other force: whether it rules over the unity of the splace (force in the position of the State, or of the symbolic) or reveals the outplace (force in the position of the revolution, or of the real).

This is our to and fro method. No sooner have we tracked down the historicity of the contradiction, the unalignable quality of its terms, their mutual strangeness to each other, than we must quickly ground all this in the ordered soil of the structures, unless we let ourselves evaporate into the metaphysics of desire, that is, the substantial and nomadic assumption of the outplace from which place itself comes to be inferred. This assumption marks the boundary of the dialecticity of the dialectic ‘to the left’ (lefty deviation, rather than leftist). Nothing new on this end ever since Spinoza.

The rightists, for their part, have never left the splace, whose description fills them with joy. The most generous watchmaker in the family is without contest Malebranche. Spinoza and Malebranche, at bottom, are the great purifiers of force. The Jew posits its unity, which is not the

whole—and one is supposed to make do with that. The Catholic pronounces its exhaustive mechanism, with its weight and counterweight, so that God may hear arising from his Creation—that outplace for which he made place—the morning bells of his Glory.

And so you have the significant austerity of the One versus the mirror-delights of the Whole.

Being Catholic *and* Jewish, force is impure. This is what put an end to metaphysics (not for nothing was there the procession in honour of pure Reason led by a few guillotines and lots of popular committees) at the dawn of the second conceptual modernity (the first one was consolidated with caravels, Greek texts, telescopes, and infinitesimal calculus).

Force is impure because it is always placed. The new of historicity is infected by the continuity of the structures. Something of the quality of force becomes homogenized with the splace, at least so as to figure therein its own abstraction and support the law.

There is the infinity of force and there is its finitude. This is not even, as in the case of Hegel, the experiential and circular inference from the one to the other.

Our take on this will be as follows: in any contradiction, force manifests its impurity by the aleatory process of its purification. The mode in which the subjected character of force unfolds itself, in its scission from its affirmative infinity, is itself a movement, in which force concentrates (or not) its qualitative identity, thus expansively tearing itself away from that which nonetheless persists in fixing its site.

There is no other definition of the political class party except to say that, in what can be a situation of extreme weakness and dilution, it must concentrate the historical project that is the force-of-class in person, namely, that which emerges out of place and smashes the imperialist splace.

This gives us some philosophical background adjusted to Stalin's declaration, the use of which is otherwise well known, that 'the party is strengthened by purging itself of opportunist elements.'¹⁴ To say 'strengthened' is an understatement. Invested in no operation other than that of splitting the force of the working class from its subjected figure, 'concentrating the correct ideas' (Mao), keeping itself maximally out of place, and destroying in itself all that is not the destruction of the splace, the party *is* purification.

This does not mean that it is pure, nor that it tends towards purity—any more than cutting off heads defines the essence of its action. On this bloody path, Stalin arrived at nothing but disaster. But the party operates at the juncture of itself and its impurifying dissipation, being as it is that

which gives direction, at the heart of the class, to the unstoppable battle between the two paths, without any claim to existence other than the manifest proof of a denser quality, a more compact heterogeneity, a newer destructive and recomposing power.

At this juncture, the internal expansion of force sketches out the history of a contradiction, whereas the impurity brings it into alignment by prescribing its place, so that the first speaks to the *hor-* of the *horlieu* ('outplace') and the *es-* of the *esplace* ('splace'), and the second, to the *-lieu* and the *-place*. Mao gave this juncture a name whose simplicity is bewildering: struggle of the old and the new—a struggle which, he assures us, especially when he is readying himself to endorse the second Chinese revolution (called 'Cultural'), will pursue its course, including violently so, up to and including the time of the fallacious communist pacification, beyond classes and the State.

2

Struggle of the old and the new. The purification of force amounts to the concentration of its newness. Those 'right ideas' of the masses, which the Marxist party must 'concentrate', are necessarily new ideas.

It is quite a step into the dialectic to understand, in a non-trivial sense, that every rightness and every justice are, in principle, novelties; and that everything that repeats itself is invariably unjust and inexact.¹⁵

And yet, it is pointless to try to live without repetition.

The best image for this turning point can be obtained by comparing taught mathematics to invented mathematics. While the first apparently is merely the ordered display of the second, from the point of view of the dialectic we must consider taught mathematics to be inexact, giving us no idea at all of what mathematics is as a subjective and historical process.

What is taught is not mathematics but only its locus. Pedagogy delimits a splace, it is up to you to be out of place with respect to it, that is, to produce were it only one decisive theorem, one that provokes a thorough reshuffling—which is the only title that can be claimed for the mathematician, who is not to be confused, as Lacan would say, with the university professor of mathematics.

In short, what is not transmitted is precisely the process of qualitative concentration of this bizarre force by which all splaced mathematics becomes shot through with holes.

It is, moreover, perfectly obvious that every great scientific discovery amounts to a purification. What ruled was the impure, chaos, trickery; in comes an order that cannot be brought in line with former customs.

Every science forms a party: just look at their congresses.¹⁶

Will you say that *nothing* is transmitted on this side of things? No, you only have to read those great correspondences of the seventeenth century between Descartes, Fermat, Pascal, and others, for which the valiant Father Mersenne all by himself served as the postal administrator, in order to see that some newness is caught in the act and transmitted therein. Nevertheless, very often this happens by the defiant slant of what is kept silent, in the margin of the text, by the purely particular appearance of a hidden general principle. God knows that these masters of thought carry mistrust and silence to an extreme. Here the lightning bolt of disruptive communication kindles the dry branch of evasion.

All by themselves, these letters demonstrate that if the splace propagates itself by zeal, confidence, and love (as 'modern' pedagogues are wont to say), as much as by coercion, contempt, and coldness (as is common practice among the whipping priest-pedagogues of old England), the concentration of force requires rather, for its singular transmission, the reliance on allusion, tension, and an oblique form of polite mistrust, whose art reaches its peak among the classics. Indeed, it is an understatement to say that Descartes and Fermat, or Pascal and the shadow of Descartes, did not like each other. It is through their essential nonlove that the force of truth circulated.

People do not like each other very much either in the great political parties, which is something that a few naive people take to be the despicable effect of 'power struggles', when it is actually the ontological axiom of purifying unity that is thus gaining ground.

People do not like each other at all in psychoanalytic societies, especially when one puts them to the question of 'How is psychoanalysis transmitted?' There is a profound logic to this nonlove. It is what conveys the process of force and is punctuated, as is only to be expected, by exclusions, scissions, and excommunications. In the case of the psychoanalysts, it is at every instant that one is strengthened or weakened by purifying oneself of the opportunistic or revolutionary elements in one's midst.

In Lacan's *Ecole Freudienne de Paris*, this nodal point of 'How does one here receive the title of psychoanalyst?' which is what this School with a perfectly chosen name calls the pass, currently produces ferocious battles whose outcome, beyond the unfortunately inevitable death of its gigantic

despot, one must expect to be the decline of this School into the mediocre anarchy of its im-passe.

The individual does not escape this fate. If it pleases you to come into being *qua* subject, you will be forced, as you well know, expressly and against all existing customs to found the party of yourself: harsh, concentrating force and the power of abnegation to an extreme point, and following its condition of existence which is not to love oneself too much. This is something that the classical moralists said once and for all, and first among them Pascal, one of our four truly great national dialecticians—the others being Rousseau, Mallarmé, and Lacan: 'The self is detestable' (*Le Moi est haïssable*). There is no need to go back over this.

At least, that is, if one wishes to coordinate within oneself the mass dimension (anger, indignation, frenzy, surprise, encounter, revolt, joy . . .), the dimension of the State (ways and customs, repetitions, sociability, familiarities, meals and sleepovers, cats and dogs . . .), and the dimension of the party (concentration of force, heroism, innovating continuity, purposeful work, scission from oneself, unity of a new type, courage).

This is demanded of nobody, and it is moreover impossible to decide. It happens, let us say, that '*it* makes a *subject*'.¹⁷

3

A definition: we will call *subjective* those processes relative to the qualitative concentration of force.

Let me emphasize that these are practices, real phenomena. The party is something subjective, taken in its historical emergence, the network of its actions, the novelty it concentrates. The institution is nothing but a husk.

Correlatively, we will call 'objective' the process whereby force is placed and is thus impure.

Inasmuch as it concentrates and purifies itself *qua* affirmative scission, every force is therefore a subjective force, and inasmuch as it is assigned to its place, structured, splaced, it is an objective force.

More exactly, we will say: the being of force is to divide itself according to the objective and the subjective.

If you take a bird's eye view of May '68, you will see in it a new and qualitatively irreducible breath or aspiration; you will see in it this exceptional and radically new point of concentration, which is the establishment of thousands of young intellectuals in the factories, together with the

minimal apparatus for this concentration (the Maoist organizations). You will also see in it the enormous weakness of this concentration and this apparatus, the insurmountable dilution of the revolt into peaceful, protesting, infrapolitical figures.¹⁸ You will see in it the defensive manoeuvre, for the sake of the fixity of the splace, comfortably agreed upon between representatives of the government and representatives of the unions, between Pompidou and Séguy. May '68 is really only a beginning, and continuing the combat is a directive for the long run.

You can thus observe, at one and the same time, the objective strength of force and its subjective weakness. Everyone in the strike and in the street for a precious, and in its own way, immortal commencement. But seven years later we are very few to hold up the subjective future and concentrated restricted action of all this, in the midst of the sepulchral atmosphere of the *programme commun* and the prayers of Mitterrand the undertaker.

This amounts to saying that the subjective aspect of our adversary's force is itself still in a fairly good state. This is something the revolutionaries never managed to understand. Most of them think they are the only subject and represent the antagonistic class to themselves as an objective mechanism of oppression led by a handful of profiteers.

The bourgeoisie is in no way reducible to the control of the State or to economic profit. On this point, too, the Cultural Revolution enlightens us, insofar as it designates the bourgeoisie in conditions wherein the industry has been entirely nationalized and the party of the proletariat dominates the State. The bourgeoisie makes politics, it leads the class struggle, and not only from the angle of exploitation, nor from that of coercion, whether it is legal or terrorist. The bourgeoisie makes a subject.¹⁹ Where then does it do this? Exactly as with the proletariat: in the midst of the people, working class included, and I would even say, since we are dealing with the new state-bureaucratic bourgeoisie, the working class *especially* included.

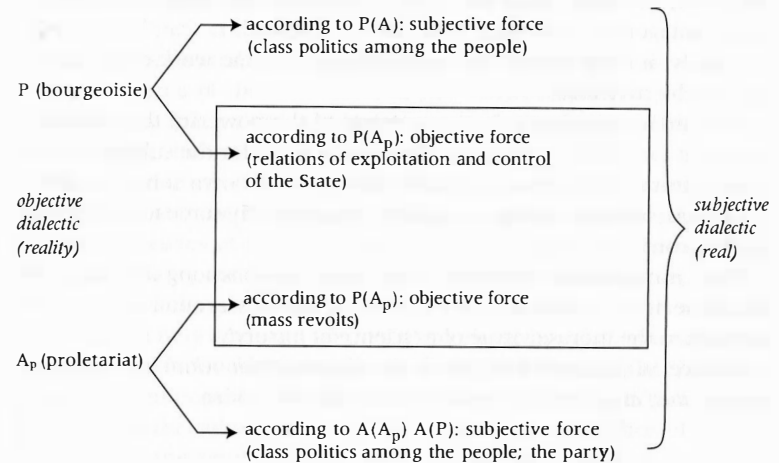
The bourgeois imperialists are a handful, of course, but the subjective effect of their force lies in the divided people. There is not just the law of Capital, or the cops. To miss this point is to stop seeing the unity of the splace, its consistency. It is to fall back into objectivism, whose inverted ransom, by the way, is to make the State into the only subject—whence the anti-repressive logorrhoea.

We must conceive of imperialist society not only as substance but also as subject.

Thus far, however, we have only dealt with the subjective, which is not the subject, but rather its element or its genre.

The objective and the subjective divide the dialectic. If you take the two antagonistic forces (without forgetting their underlying articulation into splace and outplace), you can delimit within them an objective dialectic and a subjective dialectic, which together constitute the dialectic of force.

See the schema below, applied to the canonical example of the contradiction bourgeoisie/proletariat:



The common objectivity subtends the life of the masses—oppressed and rebellious—in accordance with the axiom: 'Wherever there is oppression, there is rebellion.'²⁰ This is the objective dialectic, the way of the world, history—made by the masses, as we all know.

The subjective is politics, made by the classes in the masses.

Let it be said in passing: *to understand the distinction between history and politics, masses and classes, is exactly the same thing as understanding the distinction between the Whole and the One.* This is no trifling matter.

It is clear that the point of application of the bourgeois subjective force within the splace is intended to prevent the constitution out of place of the proletarian subjective force. The fundamental target of subjective activity is thereby to block the process of concentration (of purification) of the antagonistic force. It is a matter of maintaining the latter maximally diluted at all cost, even if this dilution is made up of innumerable revolts.

Here we must single out for condemnation the makeshift philosophy of the advocates of the 'convergence of struggles'. This geometric conception remains entirely within the objective assignation of force. You may 'coordinate' them as much as you like, but a sum of revolts does not make a subject. The geometric character of 'convergence' must be replaced with the qualitative character of concentration. A minimal and purified political heterogeneity is a hundred times more combative than a parliamentary armada of represented struggles. Convergence is the typical objectivist deviation, in which, once the work of subjective purification is spirited away, antagonism finds itself ill-advisedly dissolved.

Frankly, it must be said that convergence does the work of the adversary's subjective force.

At bottom, it is always in the interests of the powerful that history is mistaken for politics, that is, the objective is taken for the subjective. This is the natural element for the maintenance of their own subjective activity, which is applied so that no unaligned quality may come to concentrate itself to confront them.

There is no shortage of people under their thumb among the 'Marxists': All those who embroider their dispiriting niceties around a 'Marxism' reduced to the morose virtue of a 'science of history'.

Science of history? *Marxism is the discourse with which the proletariat sustains itself as subject.* We must never let go of this idea.

4

Let us return to this trait whereby the materialist dialectic sets itself apart from the Hegelian dialectic: it periodizes, while the other one makes circles.

We now have two tools in our possession to ground periodization, which is, after all, what defines the making of history—finding the right period could even be said to be history's exclusive task:

- a) The terms of the contradiction are doubly determined: as to their place (splace/outplace) and as to their force.
- b) Force is doubly determined: objective and subjective.

You will say to me: what does this have to do with periodization? Well, it does to the extent that we can formulate the twofold dialectical criterion of periodization:

- that splace be caught up in the destructive flagrancy of the outplace;
- that the subjective aspect of force attains a threshold in its qualitative concentration.

This is the double precondition for the advent of a subject-process.

Taking things from a distance, let us return to the Paris Commune, about which historians have always quarrelled to know whether it is the last of the 'archaic' workers' insurrections of the nineteenth century or the first of the 'modern' revolutions—which is prime evidence of the deficiency of their criteria.

As may be expected, given the existence of a double criterion, there are two assessments of the Commune in the Marxist tradition (aside from the possibility that a third is in preparation, via the Cultural Revolution: consequently, there will be four).

Marx's assessment (*The Civil War in France*) is in actual fact purely objective. It designates the Parisian action as the clarification of the immediate political objectives of the class *with regard to the State*. It is necessary to break the military and police machinery with their administrative appendix, without seeking to occupy them. It is necessary to put in place organs of power of a new type, and not merely to direct, by substitution, the old ones. In the Commune, Marx registers the heterogeneous quality of force as such, together with the limitation of a political dialectic articulated according to the sole logic of the dominant place, the place of power. Marx divides the expression 'taking power' according to place (one must dominate the adversary) and force (one must above all deploy the occupation of the dominant place in a different way and in accordance with a new quality). Thus we pass from the structural side of the dialectic to its historical side: the proletariat is not only the outplace of a place, it is the other force of a force.

Nevertheless, we still remain within the objectivity of force, or rather within the undivided unity of the objective and the subjective. Concerning the process of the concentration of force, whose weakness he evidently perceives (it is the weakness of the communard leadership, which is parliamentary and reactive), Marx does not propose any particular analysis susceptible of helping us move beyond such weakness. Marx goes no further than the first criterion of periodization (place and force).

It is Lenin's partisan activity, up to the victory of October, and even more so up to the crushing of the counter-revolution and its foreign support in the civil war, that brings about the second assessment. In this

activity, starting with *What Is To Be Done?*, the subjective question plays a central part. Concentrating force is the very essence of Leninist work, which bases itself on the weaknesses and failures of the Commune, while Marx instead armed himself with the Commune's victories in order to modify, on a crucial point, the *Manifesto*.

Lenin draws a fourfold lesson from the crushing of the Commune:

1. It is necessary to practise Marxist politics, and not some local romantic revolt, whether workerist or populist.²¹ The profound meaning of *What Is To Be Done?* is entirely contained in this difficult and original call: let us be absolutely and irrevocably political activists (meaning professionals, that goes without saying: who has ever seen amateur political leaders?).
2. It is necessary to have an overall view of things, in the national framework at least, and not be fragmented into the federalism of struggles.
3. It is necessary to forge an alliance with the rural masses.
4. It is necessary to break the counter-revolution through an uninterrupted, militarily offensive, centralized process.

And what of the party, the famous Leninist party, in the midst of all this? The party as the core of steel, an army moving with the rhythmic step of seasoned professionals? For Lenin, the party is nothing but the operator of concentration of these four requirements, the mandatory focal point for a politics. The party is the active purification of politics, the system of practical possibility for the assessment of the Commune. It is inferred from politics (from the subjective aspect of force). By no means does it come first. It is an aberration to read *What Is To Be Done?* as a theory of the party when it is a handbook of Marxist politics. With regard to the party as apparatus, what can be inferred is mixed and secondary. *What Is To Be Done?* is a theory of the subjective aspect of force, in the guise of a general call to political confidence.

It is not due to its institutional concerns but because of the demands of its Marxist political ambition that *What Is To Be Done?* entails a silent assessment of the Paris Commune.

Besides, it is curious to see that the explicit examination of the Commune carried out by Lenin in *The State and Revolution* follows an entirely different thread, which originates in Marx and is relative to the problem of the State: appearances notwithstanding, in that text we are dealing, through the return to objectivity, with a far less novel undertaking.

Every periodization must encompass its double dialectical time and thus—to stay with our example—contain October 1917 as the second and provisionally final scansion of the assessment. Whence the embarrassment of historians: according to the force/place relation, the Commune is new (Marx). According to the subjective/objective relation, it is October that is new and the Commune is that *edge of the old* whose practical perception, by purifying force, partakes in the engendering of its novelty.

It is highly probable that the Chinese Cultural Revolution has the same profile and that the question of the second time of its periodizing function is now open. The subjective question (how did the Cultural Revolution, mass uprising against the new bureaucratic state bourgeoisie, run into the problem of the reshaping of the party?) remains in suspense, as the key question for any Marxist politics today.

If Hegel makes a circle, it is because he always seeks a single time. As a matter of principle, he ignores the differed retroactions, even though he insidiously tolerates them in the details.

5

In Hegel's *Logic*, there is a chapter on objectivity. However, it is most instructive that this chapter should be located in the section titled 'Subjective Logic', where it follows the chapter on subjectivity and prepares for the one on the Idea. Objectivity, for Hegel, is the mediation between pure subjective formal interiority and knowledge. Here we see a flagrant idealist inversion, but that is not the essential point. The bottom line of the whole affair is that, in making objectivity arise from pure logical form, Hegel gives himself in advance the unity of the two criteria of periodization. Integrally referable to the formal subjective, which it dissolves and contains, objectivity all at once opens itself up to absolute knowledge. It is only the progressive filling of the exterior by the interior, the coming to light of the content of the form, according to the extenuation of form itself. The underlying conception remains that the subjective is the pure law of the space by which the void exceeds itself into the outspace so as finally to become equal to the reflected totality. From that moment onward, place passes over into force according to the same movement by which the subjective passes into the objective, and the *unique* reflection of this movement is none other than the dialectic itself. Whence a principle

of 'periodization' which, all in one piece, closes in on itself. It is the subject as circle who has the last word.

Thus the idealist dialectic fails to recognize the *discrepant double scission* that grounds any historical periodization.

Of course, Hegel is as always capable of locally forgetting his global forgetting. That the dialectical scansion implies the four terms of the double scission (place, force, subjective, objective), and not the three of alienation (position, negation, negation of the negation), is something he establishes in a famous passage from the chapter on the absolute Idea:

If one insists on *counting*, this *second* immediate is, in the course of the method as a whole, the *third* term to the first immediate and the mediated. It is also, however, the third term to the first or formal negative and to absolute negativity or the second negative; now as the first negative is already the second term, the term reckoned as *third* can also be reckoned as *fourth*, and instead of a *triplicity*, the abstract form may be taken as *quadruplicity*; in this way, the negative or the difference is counted as a *duality*. (L 836)

To count the negative (or difference), which is the very principle of contradiction, not as simple universal, but as Two, and thus to establish the period as quadruple: such is the materialist intuition at this supreme point of Hegel's *Logic*. What is covered under the distinction between 'formal negative' and 'absolute negativity' is nothing less than the distinction of the subjective and the objective, as is to be expected, in inverted positions.

This intuition is immediately rescinded by the obsessive theme of the circular return to the beginning:

It is in this manner that each step of the *advance* in the process of further determination, while getting further away from the indeterminate beginning is also *getting back nearer* to it, and that therefore, what at first sight may appear to be different, the retrogressive grounding of the beginning, and the *progressive further determining* of it, coincide and are the same. (L 841)

For the materialist, there is no beginning unless it is marked by a novelty that is undeducible from the periodizing closure. Progression and retroaction cannot be fused together. The position of the relation force/place does not permit one to deduce the scission of force according to the objective and the subjective: one must *wait* for the second time. But, precisely, Hegel

is in no condition to wait for October 1917 in order to fix the eternal historical essence of the Commune. He must from the start take up his position at the end of time, whereby the circle is traced, in order to know who is who in the unity of the progressive and the retroactive.

One remains dismayed by the fine arrogance to which Hegel thenceforth bears witness. The transition from the subjective to the objective is one of the most tortuous exercises of the entire *Logic*. Since the subjective is purely formal (what else can it be before the objective?), one can find Aristotle's logic in it. It is thus a matter of deducing the theory of the physical world from the figures of the syllogism. The immediate reality of the existing thing, grasped in its scientific concept, must arise from the supreme formal figure, which is here the unfortunate disjunctive syllogism—the schema: A is B or C or D, but A is neither C nor D, therefore A is B—promoted to the status of nothing less than the supporting base of Hegelian circularity. The thickness of the fumes recalls those operatic stagings whereby the technicians blow smoke through the floorboard in order to allow for the fusion, in the midst of cloudy poetry, of the delicate passage from a military reception with chorus and elephants to a love-duo in nightgowns perched on the balconies of Venice. For example:

The syllogism is *mediation*, the complete concept in its *positedness*. Its movement is the sublation of this mediation, in which nothing is in and for itself, but each term *is* only by means of an another. The result is therefore an *immediacy* which has issued from the *sublating of the mediation*, a *being* which is no less identical with the mediation, and which is the concept that has restored itself out of, and in, its otherness. This *being* is therefore a *fact* [*eine Sache*] that is *in and for itself—objectivity*. (L 704)

Subsequently, Hegel proposes his classification of the sciences, since objectivity, the suppression of the syllogism, quietly climbs the conceptual slope which goes from mechanics through chemistry to life as such.

Compared to this classification, Auguste Comte's is a miracle of materialist precision, especially if we consider that Hegel claims to deduce his without remainder from formal logic!

However, we will take comfort in this misfortune of the Hegelian circle, if we know how to draw our lesson from it with respect to the criteria for periodization and if we are able to think what is required in terms of divergence, between the opposition place/force and the opposition objective/subjective, for the clear arrangement of the paths of the subject.

And then, Hegel is certainly correct to write the following about the syllogism: 'If it is not thought a small matter to have discovered some sixty species of parrots, one hundred and thirty-seven species of veronica, etc., much less ought it to be thought a small matter to discover the forms of reason' (L 682).

In French 'Marxism', there is a plethora of people who, for lack of engagement with the syllogisms of action, insist on counting parrots. The result is that what they call 'ideological struggle' comes down to trying to take the place of those who count veronicas.

PART II

The Subject under the Signifiers of the Exception

The new *one* forbids the *new one*, and presupposes it

January 10, 1977

Lacan's amphibology—That of Marxism—Two sexes,
two classes

Let us enter, without further delay, into Lacan's ambiguity: '... when one makes two, there is never any return. It never amounts to making one anew, not even a new one. *Aufhebung* is one of those pretty little dreams of philosophy' (S XX, 90/79, trans. modified).

The settling of accounts with Hegel, coming from the one who for us French Marxists is today's Hegel—the only one whom it is our task to divide—in a single phrase gives voice to the distance that separates two centuries in the history of the dialectic.

Lacan is speaking about history—in this case, as behoves him, the history of love. It is a question of elucidating the absolute novelty of the event named 'courtly love' in the thirteenth century. His answer is that something gets split there—something whose vividness cannot be altered by any superior resorption.

Here we are in the midst of our dispute. Lacan, the theoretician of the true scission, of which the Maoist maxim 'One divides into two' sought to preserve the irreparable force, against those repairmen of flat tyres, the revisionists, to whom is suited the syrupy conviction that 'Two fuse into one'.

As for the strict dialectical logic, Lacan outperforms Mallarmé, who was fixated on the stars, in the precise extent to which he is made to recognize:

- the novelty of the real, attested to by the tearing apart of the discursive link;
- the precariousness of the One, obliterated by the new, whose essence is the division.

In so doing, the Hegelian reconciliation, wherein everything is devised so that the pangs of time are nothing more than the presence of the concept ('*Die Zeit ist der Begriff selbst, der da ist*', 'Time is the concept itself that *is there*', the *there* that sets the tone¹), is reduced to the imaginary alone—a 'pretty little dream of philosophy'.

However, the subtlety, in which the analyst's experience is an educator beyond reproach, lies in the syntactical amphibology that Lacan will use relentlessly—contrary to what I held to be Mallarmé's essential univocality—as an operator by which the sentence, having neither recto nor verso, holds together the two sides of one and the same reversible blade.

Which sides? Let us be clear: those of the dialectic, in its structural aspect and its historical aspect. The side of place (the symbolic, in the Lacanian terminology) and the side of force (the real).

Consider our opening line: 'It never amounts to making one anew, even a new one.' Does this cunning strategist of *lalangue*, as he puts it, mean that the division of the one makes for no novelty? The emphasis of the negative, in that case, would fall on the new: not even a *new* one. We are in the logic of iteration, wherein that which splits off is absolved without any return of its unified form—but we are unable to say that anything happens except the Law of this splitting.²

Or rather does he mean that from the division of the one there arises an affirmative novelty, which we would only have to consider outside the form of the one that previously could be assigned to it? The emphasis of the negative, in that case, would be on the one: not even a *new one*. Something new, therefore, beyond the signifying law from which any prior form of the one drew its evidence. And, consequently, an irreversible disaster of this very law, the symbolic ruined by the real, the one ungraspable except in the process of its destruction.

The entire genius of Lacan's elucidation on the subject hinges on the fact that in sentence after sentence, and in seminar after seminar, he says both things at the same time.

So do we. Because we had better admit that, insofar as it divides itself into proletariat and bourgeoisie, the field of politics only gives rise to its iterative law, from whose point of view its novelty is less clear than its

permanence throughout the eras. Especially if we follow Mao in admitting that this division remains intact under what is called 'socialism' and that it will last, in Mao's own terms, 'for a very long period of history'. But we equally admit that as the political inducer of nonpolitics (of communism), the proletariat causes the breakdown of the one that it divides to the point where it can no longer take on this form, not even by inscribing itself as *one* of the terms of the contradiction.

For Lacan, the analytical theory holds on to this equivocation as the lesson of desire from where the subject is apprehended.³ For us, Marxism holds on to it in the political practice whose subjective point is the party.

Lacan, an involuntary theoretician of the political party? Marxists, unenlightened practitioners of desire?

This is a false window. The truth is that there is only one theory of the subject. Lacan is ahead of the current state of Marxism and we must take advantage of this advance so as to improve our Marxist affairs.

Why do we draw this undivided and masked theory of the subject from Marx-Lenin-Mao and from Freud-Lacan? Should we climb the fool's bridge—the horror!—of Freud-Marxism?

No, because not even for a second is it a matter of reconciling doctrines. Everything depends on the real, but the real that is ours, in turn, depends only on the following:

- there are two sexes;
- there are two classes.

Make do with that, you subjects of all experience!

Every subject crosses a lack of being and a destruction

February 21, 1977

Lacan—Hegel—The subject of the chain—The communist effect—
Ontology—Lacan's four axioms—Destruction as mastery of loss

1

Lacan, I said earlier, is our Hegel, that is, he presents the (idealist) dialectic of our time. With our time comes the requirement that one pretends to oppose this dialectic to Hegel's machines, and Lacan does not shirk this duty.

Provoked by Jacques-Alain Miller, on May 27, 1964, into saying 'Lacan *against* Hegel', he approves with delight but also with the polite prudence of denying that it could—'at all'!—be a matter for a 'philosophical debate' (S XI, 215/240).

What happens is that ten years earlier—I invite anyone to look at the index of the *Écrits*: Hegel takes the lion's share, after Freud (who is not part of the competition and thus does not appear in the list) but before anyone else—it was a question of deciding 'if there is still something prophetic in Hegel's insistence, which reveals the extent of his genius, on the fundamental identity of the particular and the universal', that is, in the dialectical torsion itself, and to inscribe in it the retrospective label of psychoanalysis, which provides this torsion with 'its paradigm by revealing the structure in which this identity is realized as disjunctive of the subject, and without appealing to the future' (E 292/242, trans. modified). This is the operation, applied to Hegel, of the double stamp of dialectical modernity. Consequently, of the double jump.²⁵

Like Hegel for Marx, Lacan for us is essential and divisible. The primacy of the structure, which makes of the symbolic the general algebra of the subject, and of *lalangue*, its transcendental horizon, is countered ever more clearly with a topological obsession in which what moves and progresses pertains to the primacy of the real.

There are, broadly speaking, two successive Lacans, the one of the lack of being and the one of the ontology of the hole, of the nodal *topos*, and, consequently, of the being of lack.

From the primacy of the symbolic to the consistency of the real.

The rational matrix tied to the effect of lack, by which Lacan continues the Mallarméan effort, is concentrated in the articles in which Jacques-Alain Miller in a clear step-by-step manner sets out the logic of the signifier, and then the theory of *lalangue*. Miller's conclusions sum up the formalism of the structural dialectic, under the thematic heading of the vanishing entity, of the inconsistent totality:

It is only when the mark disappears that its place appears, and therefore the mark as such. Is this enough to justify our saying that it attains its being only in its disappearance—that it takes hold only on the border of its lack—in a flash? [. . .] the being of the mark, just like that of lack, 'exists' only in the in-between, incorporeal, ungraspable, or in the difference between the one and the other, in the movement, in the passage, and it is always either too early or too late. [. . .] This process—this entity—presents itself as untotalizable—or, as a contradictory totality, which is to say, a totality with its contradiction, or with its nonintegrable element, multiplicity irreducible to a unity. [. . .] The mark [. . .] doesn't *consist* (it is inconsistent), it persists, it insists, it is a process.²⁶

The subject here is revealed in the eclipse of the marking, caught in the pulsating movement, the flashing at the edge of that which articulates it.

Thus, the proletariat, trapped in the political law of the bourgeois world, is only—as Lacan says of the object of fantasy—an 'unspeakable vacillation' (E 550/656). Whoever wants to declare its substance is a swindler.

Of the proletariat, we never obtain anything except the body (the party), except the traces: popular historical facts whose nominal evidence strikes us with uncertainty.

Whence its subject-making.²⁷

Prescribed by the loss of its object—thus sutured onto the real by the lack of being—desire divides the subject, being inextensive to the 'nothing' from whence it proceeds. The only mode of existence of such a

division is the law of alternation on which, in Lacan's case, no star comes to put its stamp.

The subject follows throughout the fate of the vanishing term, having the status of an interval between two signifiers, S_1 and S_2 , which present it one to the other. Just as the proletariat is only that which a (named) revolution presents to another (nameable) revolution. Just as the wrecked ship (S_1) presents the subject of writing to the siren (S_2) while nothing consolidates this presentation, not even the Mallarméan dream of a cipher of the universe, confined in the Book in which this universe should logically culminate.

For Lacan, the subject leads to nothing,²⁸ which is not negligible, but it makes no sense in that it must slide over absence without any grip, for 'desire is the metonymy of the lack of being' (E 534/650, trans. modified).

In this way, Lacan gives himself an access road, which suits us, into ontology: the unconscious is that being which subverts the metaphysical opposition of being and nonbeing. For it is the effect of the lack of being (effect which has a name: transference).

To that extent, as we will see, the unconscious resembles the proletarian politics according to the Marxist, which is *its effect (its ef-fact) of not being* (ef-fact whose name is 'communism').²⁹

J.-A. Miller, still him, goes after Lacan with the question: 'What is your ontology? What is the unconscious?'

Oh, the ordeals to which one thinks that Marxists are subjected when one throws at them point-blank the burning question (this happens a thousand times over, so that we carry incombustible protective gear): 'Where is your proletariat? Is it not an imaginary signifier?'

Woe to those who believe that they must follow their loquacious tormentor onto the terrain of existence to which he has provoked them. Whether they search on the side of the workers and factory exploitation, or whether they bring up the existing States, the result will always be either too much, or too little. It is futile to want to hand out the certificate of existence of an empirical set (be it a social class) or the ideal nonbeing of a project for society (be it 'socialist') to that which gives a political subject the force of its name.

Neither the sexual drives nor the International Psychoanalytical Association have ever proven the existence of the unconscious. Let us not expect anything more, in terms of the proletariat, from the factory strike or from the Chinese State.

Lacan, when put to the question, immediately heeds the good advice of oblique cunning. Thus, he spreads out his answer, announcing first that 'of course, I have my ontology—why not?—like everyone else', but that as far as his discourse is concerned, it 'makes no claim to cover the entire field of experience' (S XI, 72/69).

On February 19, 1964, it would seem that he overdoes it in terms of modesty: No, 'Psychoanalysis is neither a *Weltanschauung*, nor a philosophy that claims to provide the key to the universe. It is governed by a particular aim, which is historically defined by the elaboration of the notion of the subject' (S XI, 77/73).

Yes, but this subject is precisely the ultimate secret weapon³⁰ (ours, which shows a similarly dubious modesty, is the political actualization), since its concept reshuffles nothing less than the idea of all possible science—just as ours, that of all practical apperception of the social bond. Until Freud, epistemology as founded on the trajectory which goes from perception to science wanders off in the wrong direction, because it 'avoids the abyss of castration' (S XI, 77/73). Let us understand this as saying that you have no access to the right idea of truth if you circumvent the effect of lack. This would amount to giving oneself the coherence without the torsion, which will push you repeatedly into the mirage of the whole.

Ontology or not, psychoanalysis according to Lacan imposes a general rectification on philosophy, which touches upon nothing less than the way in which truth leans up against the real.³¹

And so, two months later, despite his 'refusal to follow Miller's first question on the subject of an ontology of the unconscious', our trickster bustles about letting go of 'a little rope' (S XI, 134/122). What little piece of rope? That which dodges the opposition of being/nonbeing:

At this point, I should define unconscious cause, neither as an existent, nor as a $\delta\upsilon\kappa\ \delta\upsilon\nu$, a non-existent—as, I believe, Henri Ey does, a non-existent of possibility. It is a $\mu\eta\ \delta\upsilon\nu$ of the prohibition that brings to being an existent in spite of its non-advent, it is a function of the impossible on which a certainty is based. (S XI, 128–9/117)

This 'prohibition that brings to being an existent in spite of its non-advent' conveys the causal prematurity of the subject, the too-early/too-lateness of its fortune. Who is not familiar, in politics, with the futility of linear accumulation? Of exact prediction?

Neither being nor nonbeing, the political cause, which always fails to

show up if announced as just cause, is the real, at once abolished and dazzling, by which a hole is punctured in history so that the proletarian subject, its body divided, may fasten itself onto it.

Its name? 'The masses.' This is the real that the partisan subject retroactively encounters in any break in historicization.

The masses are not the substance of history but *the prohibition to repeat*, which brings to being the aleatory subject that Marxism puts into discourse.

2

The 'first Lacan', in terms of what matters to me and which does not concern psychoanalysis, boils down to four theses, the system of which covers the four names of truth (coherence, repetition, totality, torsion).

This axiomatic arrangement in my eyes gives structure to the essence of the *Ecrits*, as well as the *Seminars* until the end of the 1960s.

Beginning in the 1970s, which one can mark by the primacy of the knot over the chain, or of consistency over causality, it is the historical aspect that gains the upper hand over the structural one.

Psychoanalysis, in my view, suffers a shipwreck in the process, while ethics comes to rule, absolutely. But this is only the opinion of a distant amateur.

I would deduce the four constitutive theses of the first doctrine as follows:

1. *Thesis of the empty place, at the source of repetition*

... what is repeated is a product, not of nothing from the real (which people believe they have to presuppose in it), but precisely of *what was not* [*ce qui n'était pas*]. (E 32/43)

2. *Thesis of the vanishing term, at the source of torsion*

Where it was just now, where it was for a short while, between an extinction that is still glowing and an opening up that stumbles, *I* can come into being by disappearing from my statement [*dit*].

An enunciation that denounces itself, a statement that renounces itself, an ignorance that sweeps itself away, an opportunity that self-destructs—what remains here if not the trace of what really must be in order to fall away from being? (E 678/801)

3. *Thesis of the imaginary fixation, at the source of totality*

However, the notion of unconscious fantasy no longer presents any difficulty once it is defined as an image set to work in the signifying structure.

Let us say that, in its fundamental use, fantasy is the means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his object. (E 532/637)

4. *Thesis of the phallus, at the source of coherence*

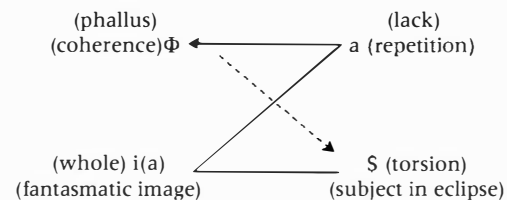
For the phallus is a signifier, a signifier whose function, in the intrasubjective economy of analysis, may lift the veil from the function it served in the mysteries. For it is the signifier that is destined to designate meaning effects as a whole, insofar as the signifier conditions them by its presence as signifier. (E 579/690)

This latter signifier is therefore the signifier to which all the other signifiers represent the subject—which means that if this signifier is missing, all the other signifiers represent nothing. For something is only represented to.

Now insofar as the battery of signifiers is, it is complete, and this signifier can only be a line that is drawn from its circle without being able to be counted in it. This can be symbolized by the inherence of a (-1) in the set of signifiers.

It is, as such, unpronounceable, but its operation is not, for the latter is what occurs whenever a proper name is pronounced. Its statement is equal to its signification. (E 694/819)

Thus, from the quadrangle of truth, Lacan extracts, as far as the algebraic doctrine of the subject is concerned, the following trajectory:



In this trajectory, the subject is governed by the ignorance of the loss that constitutes it. It follows that there is no truth which is not mutilated, and no subject which is not subjected.

The operations of the *space* are substitutions (metaphors and metonymies). It is therefore impossible to recognize the loss as such. The subject glides between the successive partial representations of that whose radical lack institutes it as articulated desire.

Needless to say that politics has only the very mediocre interest of a blindness that causes a racket about its false substitutive insights: 'What is social is always a sore' (Conférences 19).³² And better yet, in answer to the following question which reveals a good amount of frontal optimism: 'The political implications of your psychoanalytical investigations?', which is a truly American question, addressed to Lacan in the winter of 1975 at Yale University: 'In any case, there is no progress. What one gains on one side, one loses on the other. Not knowing what one has lost, one believes to have won. My "twisted brains" suppose that this is narrow-minded' (Conférences 37).³³

A balancing, in an unclarified half-saying, of gain and loss: such is the outcome of any structural concept of the political subject.

If it is possible to say anything more about it, it is only insofar as there is an effective *mastery of loss*.

The objection being that it cannot be question of a form of knowledge, much less a recollection.

So what is the mastery of loss? Marxism teaching us that it is destruction.

The destroyed real is not reducible to its disappearance in the hole of the lack. It surely drops in it, and sometimes without any leftover, but thenceforth it is divided between its causal effect of pure lack and what we will provisionally call the secondary effect, whose mainspring consists in delegating a virtuality of *excess* over the repetitive placement set in motion by the lack of being.

Destruction divides the effect of lack into its part of oblivion—of automatism—and its part of possible interruption—of excess over the place, of the overheating of the automatisms.

By this thin gap, another mastery can be said to come into being, together with an asymmetrical balancing of loss and gain.

Contrary to common opinion, which sees perseverance in being as the ground of all conservatism, it is in effect—as Lacan claims—from that which is lacking that conservation secures itself. But we must add that,

from what comes to be destroyed, at the very least the precariousness of conservation is secured, as well as that part, inherent in all repetition, which insists in interrupting it.

Every subject stands at the crossing between a lack of being and a destruction, a repetition and an interruption, a placement and an excess.

- the opposition between belonging and inclusion, I have translated *être d'un tout* as 'belonging to a whole'. Another translation for *un tout* could be 'a totality', and the reflexive *s'y inclut* could also be rendered as 'includes itself in it'.
- 5 The French expression *peu de réalité* ('scant reality') is often invoked by Badiou in ways similar to Lacan's usage. As Bruce Fink annotates in his Translator's Endnotes to Lacan's *Écrits*, it was André Breton who introduced the expression in his 1924 'Introduction au discours sur le peu de réalité', *Point du jour* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).
 - 6 In French: *Il faut tenir hors lieu*. Other translations could be 'We must stay out of place' or 'It is necessary to hold off place'.
 - 7 Spinoza, *Ethics*, ed. and trans. G. H. R. Parkinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Part I, Prop. 10, Schol.
 - 8 In French, *passer en force* is a strict homonym for *pas sans force*, 'not without force'. *Passer en force* refers to the violent movement of 'pushing through' a law or a decision, of 'opening a passage' or 'imposing one's way' by force. *Ce qui passe en force* could thus be translated as 'what pushes through by force' but this would have meant losing out on the wordplay between *impasse* and *passer* that Badiou is developing here as part of his attempt to go a step beyond Lacan.
 - 9 Lenin's phrase in actual fact states that 'politics is a concentrated expression of the economy', as Badiou correctly quotes below. The suggestion of expressivism, no doubt, makes this less palatable to the Althusserian in Badiou, insofar as Althusser in his canonical work adamantly opposes all such expressive links between the different instances of a social totality and this totality itself. See Vladimir I. Lenin, 'Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation, and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin', *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), vol. 32, 70–107: 'I said again in my speech that politics is a concentrated expression of economics, because I had earlier heard my "political" approach rebuked in a manner which is inconsistent and inadmissible for a Marxist. Politics must take precedence over economics. To argue otherwise is to forget the ABC of Marxism. Am I wrong in my political appraisal? If you think so, say it and prove it. But you forget the ABC of Marxism when you say (or imply) that the political approach is equivalent to the "economic", and that you can take "the one and the other".'
 - 10 Lacan introduced this expression in his 1971–2 Seminar XIX: . . . *ou pire*. See *Autres écrits* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2001), 547–52. Literally, the expression means 'There's one' or 'There's some one'. Bruce Fink, in his translation of Lacan's Seminar XX: *Encore* from the following year proposes 'There's such a thing as One' (S XX, 128).
 - 11 Hegel's *Tätigkeit*, translated as 'act' in English, is rendered as *le faire* in the French translation used by Badiou. For this reason, I have kept both expressions, 'act' and 'making', in translating Badiou's paraphrase of Hegel. *Faire* is an enormously flexible verb in French, and, as I will indicate for a number of instances below, this is all the more true in *Theory of the Subject*.
 - 12 For Faust's different readings of the line from the Gospel according to John, 'In the beginning was the Word', all the way to the conclusion 'In the beginning was the Deed', see Goethe, *Faust, Part One*, trans. David Luke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), verses 1224–1237. In German, *Im Anfang war der Tat* echoes the lines from Hegel's *Science of Logic* about *Tat* and *Tätigkeit* just quoted by Badiou.
 - 13 In French, the expression *passer en force*, commented upon above, is here applied to *sa place*, the place of the subject. Alternative translations might be 'pushes through (past) its place', 'passes its place as force' or even 'makes its place pass into force'.
 - 14 See Joseph Stalin, 'Foundations of Leninism (1924)', *Leninism*, trans. Eden & Cedar Paul (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1928), 173.
 - 15 In this paragraph and the previous one, Badiou is playing on *justesse*, 'rightness' or 'correctness', and *justice*, 'justice'. In English, 'right' or 'just' ideas translates *des idées justes*.
 - 16 In French, *fait parti* literally means 'makes (up) a party' or 'makes for a party', 'constitutes a party', but also 'plays or performs the role of party'.
 - 17 In French, *ça fasse je* picks up on the sentence commented upon above (note 2), with *ça* again having both a common meaning, as in any 'it' or 'something' whatsoever, and a technical meaning as the equivalent of the Freudian id. *Faire*, too, is notoriously flexible and involves both an active 'making' or 'doing' (as in the act or deed from Goethe's *Faust*) and an intransitive 'becoming' or 'coming into being' (as in Freud's dictum *Wo es war, soll Ich werden*, 'Where it was I shall come into being').
 - 18 The term translated as 'protesting' is *revendicatives* in French. This refers to the trade unionist figure of politics, based on 'demands', 'claims' or 'vindications' as protestations against injustice and exploitation, usually aimed at the State. For Badiou, the term for this reason is mostly pejorative.
 - 19 In this sentence and the previous one, the verb used in French is once again *faire*, 'making', 'practising', 'forming', 'constituting' and so on: *la bourgeoisie fait de la politique* and *la bourgeoisie fait sujet*.
 - 20 'Where there is oppression, there is resistance' is a phrase commonly attributed to Mao Zedong. Laura Balladur and Simon Krysl, in their careful translation of Badiou's 'The Party and the Flux', annotate this phrase as follows: 'For all its future resonance, the "origin" of the phrase is elusive: some Chinese sources suggest its source may not be in Mao's writings at all. Mao used the phrase in his interview with Edgar Snow (1/9, 1965): it continued to recur during the Cultural Revolution and was forced—of all places—into the Joint Communiqué from Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China.'
 - 21 *Practise Marxist politics* translates the French *faire de la politique marxiste*.

Other possible translations include 'make' or 'do' or 'put into practice' Marxist politics. The emphasis of *faire* is on the active, militant, organized nature of Marxism *qua* politics.

Part II. The Subject under the Signifiers of the Exception

- 1 In French, *la destruction d'une qualité de force* can be read as both an objective and a subjective genitive, that is, as 'the destruction of or by a certain quality of force'.
- 2 Another half-colloquial, half-gnomic sentence: *Du réel, à force de le tordre, ils nous donnent le jus*, in which 'force' by 'torsion' extracts all the 'juice' from the real.
- 3 The sentence plays on *pluie des astres*, 'rain of falling stars', and *désastre*, 'disaster'.
- 4 Mallarmé, 'Igitur', *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 441.
- 5 In French, *le passeur sur places de la force* evokes the figure of the *passeur* or 'passer' within the Lacanian procedure of *la passe*. For Badiou, the emphasis is on the act of passing an element of force onto a system of places in such a way that this element not only remains in the same spot but also makes the original force disappear.
- 6 Here, in a nutshell, we are given a logic of the mark, which will be more familiar to readers of Derrida. *Dé-marqué*, 'de-markated', can also mean 'marked down' or 'discounted', as with merchandise on sale.
- 7 The sentence is structured around the pun on the homonymous *point réel*, 'real point' or 'point of the real', and *point réelle*, 'not at all real'.
- 8 In French, the sentence plays on the internal rhyme between *font l'histoire*, 'make history', and *sont l'histoire*, 'are history'.
- 9 In French, this one-liner brings together the word play on *font/sont* and *disparaître/pour être*: *Elles font ce qu'elles sont, mais en disparaissant pour être*.
- 10 Badiou is alluding to Mallarmé's sonnets 'Victorieusement fui le suicide beau' ('The fine suicide fled victoriously' CP 69) and 'Tout Orgueil fume-t-il du soir' ('Does every Pride in the evening smoke' CP 73).
- 11 The expression 'produces movement' translates the French *fait mouvement*.
- 12 In French, *en personne* can also mean 'in no one' or 'in nobody', which is consistent with Mallarmé's idea (mentioned below) of logic as impersonified reason.
- 13 The reader may wish to turn to Mallarmé's poem in French, quoted from his *Œuvres complètes*:

A la nue accablante tu
 Basse de basalte et de laves
 A même les échos esclaves
 Par une trompe sans vertu

Quel sépulcral naufrage (tu
 Le sais, écume, mais y baves)
 Suprême une entre les épaves
 Abolit le mât dévêtu

Ou cela que furibond faute
 De quelque perdition haute
 Tout l'abîme vain éployé

Dans le si blanc cheveu qui traîne
 Avarement aura noyé
 Le flanc enfant d'une sirène

To avoid imprecision in the translation, a good strategy is to compare and combine the available English renderings. Thus, in what follows, I selectively rely on translations and paraphrases of Mallarmé's poetry from both Oxford University Press and the University of California Press. One error common to both editions is the failure to understand *à même* as meaning 'flush with' or 'right up to', referring to the proximity of the *basse de basalte et de laves* to *les échos esclaves*.

- 14 The expression 'the lack of being' in this case is a translation of *le défaut de l'être*, following the model of *le manque à être*. *Défaut* can also mean 'defect', 'shortcoming', 'failing' or 'fault'.
- 15 The expression 'to put at fault' here translates *mettre en défaut*. Another translation could be 'to cause to default', which in the present context would mean to reveal the place where society is shown to be wanting or lacking.
- 16 Mallarmé, *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, ed. and trans. Rosemary Lloyd (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), 77.
- 17 In addition to 'meaning', *sens* could also be translated as 'sense' or 'direction', which would be consistent with the leap provoked by the poetic operation of annulment in Mallarmé's case.
- 18 A play on *coup de force* and *coup de la force*.
- 19 Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 428.
- 20 Another translation for *fait théorie du sujet* would be 'makes a theory out of the subject'.
- 21 Badiou here is entertaining the option of adding another tercet (entirely of his own invention) to Mallarmé's poem:

Morte à l'excès qui fut son chant
 Sinon qu'annule de sa haine
 Le mât d'écume naufrageant

- 22 On the notion of the party as 'advanced detachment of the working people' (actually a quote from Lenin), see Joseph Stalin, 'Concerning Questions

- of Leninism (January 25, 1926)', *Works* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), vol. 8, 13–96.
- 23 On the party as 'leadership nucleus' and as 'powerful nucleus for the whole people', see among other places Mao Zedong, 'Preliminary Conclusions of the Land Investigation Campaign (August 29, 1933)', *Selected Works*, vol. 6; and 'The Role of the Chinese Communist Party in the National War (October 1938)', *Selected Works*, vol. 2. All quotations available online at <http://www.marxists.org>.
- 24 On the notion of 'open wide', see Mao Zedong, 'Speech at the Chinese Communist Party's National Conference on Propaganda Work (March 12, 1957)', *Selected Works*, vol. 5. This notion is also discussed at some length in the Circular from May 16, 1966 that heralds the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China.
- 25 A reference to the song 'The Internationale': 'C'est la lutte finale/ Groupons-nous, et demain/ L'Internationale/ Sera le genre humain' ('This is the final struggle/ Let us gather together, and tomorrow/ The Internationale/ Will be the human race').
- 26 Mao, 'Talk On Questions Of Philosophy (1964)', *Selected Works*, vol. 9.
- 27 Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 433. English translation by Mary Ann Caws available online at <http://www.studiocleo.com/librarie/mallarme/prose.html>.
- 28 Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 441.
- 29 Here Badiou, in an astounding if not scandalous feat, quotes a series of consecutive lines from *A Dice Throw*, all the while erasing the typographical differences and similarities between them in terms of font type and size. In French, this 'flat' rendition reads as follows: 'Rien de la mémorable crise où se fût l'événement accompli en vu de tout résultat nul humain n'aura eu lieu (une élévation ordinaire verse l'absence) que le lieu, inférieur clapotis quelconque comme pour disperser l'acte vide abruptement qui sinon par son mensonge eût fondé la perdition, dans ces parages, du vague en quoi toute réalité se dissout' (*Théorie du sujet*, 112; cf. *Œuvres complètes*, 474–5).
- 30 References, respectively, to 'Another Fan (Belonging to Mlle Mallarmé)' and 'Herodias (Scene)'.
31 This is from the sonnet 'Tout Orgueil fume-t-il du soir' ('Does every Pride in the evening smoke').
32 These three terms are taken from the consecutive sonnets 'Does every Pride . . .', 'Surgi de la croupe et du bond . . .' ('Arisen from the rump . . .'), and 'Une dentelle abolit . . .' ('A lace vanishes . . .').
33 In French, the sentence is somewhat ambiguous: *C'est manière de force que de jouer pour finir avec la fascinante et impersonnelle séduction des signifiants séparables*.
34 In French, *conscience* means both 'conscience' and 'consciousness'. Badiou

is exploiting this double meaning, as the subsequent allusion to class-consciousness makes abundantly clear.

- 35 In French, Mallarmé's sonnet reads as follows:

Ses purs ongles très haut dédiant leur onyx
L'Angoisse, ce minuit, soutient, lampadophore,
Maint rêve vespéral brûlé par le Phénix
Que ne recueille pas de cinéraire amphore

Sur les crédences, au salon vide: nul ptyx,
Abolit bibelot d'inanité sonore,
(Car le Maître est allé puiser des pleurs au Styx
Avec ce seul objet dont le Néant s'honore).

Mais proche la croisée a u nord vacante, un or
Agonise selon peut-être le décor
Des licornes ruant du feu contre une nixe,

Elle, défunte nue en le miroir, encor
Que, dans l'oubli fermé par le cadre, se fixe
De scintillations sitôt le septuor.

For the English version, I have used Weinheim's translation from the University of California Press, all the while replacing 'Anguish' with 'Anxiety'.

- 36 See Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 1490.
37 See *Selected Letters of Stéphane Mallarmé*, 87.
38 Another translation for *ce qui fait ici sujet de l'angoisse* could be 'whatever turns anxiety here into a subject'.

Part III. Lack and Destruction

- 1 See Hegel's famous line in *The Phenomenology of Spirit*: 'Time is the Notion itself that *is there* and which presents itself to consciousness as empty intuition' (Ph 487). Badiou misquotes the original German, as if Hegel had written '*die Zeit ist der Begriff da*', whereas the actual line from the original reads: '*Die Zeit ist der daseiende Begriff selbst*'. Alexandre Kojève also comments on this passage in 'A Note on Eternity, Time, and the Concept', *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, ed. Allan Bloom, trans. James H. Nichols Jr. (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 101. Finally, Badiou introduces a pun on *là*, 'there', which translates the German *da*, and *le la du diapason*, the 'la' of the tuning fork. I have tried to retain something of this pun by using the expression 'that sets the tone'.
2 The French here uses *se clive*, 'splits', and *clivage*, 'splitting'. Another translation could be 'cleaves off' and 'cleavage' or even 'scission'. Badiou clearly has in mind the Maoist connotations of the logic of splitting or scission, as

- in the slogan 'One divides into two', suggested by the Lacanian *quand un fait deux*.
- 3 The French here is quite convoluted: *la théorie analytique tient cette équivoque dans l'instruction du désir d'où s'appréhende le sujet*, which could also be translated as 'the theory of psychoanalysis holds this equivocation to be instructive about the way the subject can be apprehended on the basis of desire'.
 - 4 The reader should keep in mind that this simplification of the world also refers to Mallarmé's definition of the act, alluded to above: 'The one available act, forever and alone, is to understand the relations, in the meantime, few or many; according to some interior state that one wishes to extend, in order to simplify the world' ('Music and Letters', D 187).
 - 5 An allusion to Mallarmé's 'Prose (for des Esseintes)'.
 - 6 Lenin, *Materialism and Empirio-Criticism*, in vol. 14 of his *Collected Works*, trans. Abraham Fineberg: 'Frankly and bluntly did Bishop Berkeley argue! In our time these very same thoughts on the "economical" elimination of "matter" from philosophy are enveloped in a much more artful form, and confused by the use of a "new" terminology, so that these thoughts may be taken by naïve people for "recent" philosophy!' (28).
 - 7 A reference to Xavier (brother of Joseph) de Maistre's *Voyage autour de ma chambre* (1790), translated as *A Journey around my Room*, foreword Alain de Botton, trans. Andrew Brown (London: Hesperus Press, 2004).
 - 8 'Half-saying' here translates Lacan's *mi-dire*, that is, the notion that truth can only be 'half-said' or 'half-spoken', whereby *mi-dit* is an obvious, Mallarméan-sounding homonym for *midi*, 'noon' or 'midday'. In his unpublished seminar on Lacan's antiphilosophy, Badiou discusses at length the differences and similarities between Lacan's 'half-said' and Mallarmé's 'midday', compared to Nietzsche's 'noon' as the time of the 'shortest shadow'.
 - 9 The French here, *mi-di(t)*, combines into a single word the otherwise homonymous *mi-dit* ('half-said') and *midi* ('noonday' or 'midday').
 - 10 Badiou may be thinking of Louis Althusser's discussion of the universal and the specific, in *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (London–New York: Verso, 2005), 183.
 - 11 'Discrepancy' here translates *décalage*, a term especially dear to Badiou's former teacher Althusser (notably in his early reading of Jean-Jacques Rousseau), which can also mean 'interval', 'lag', or 'gap'. See Althusser, 'Rousseau: The Social Contract (The Discrepancies)', *Politics and History*, trans. Ben Brewster (London: New Left Books, 1972), 113–60.
 - 12 The French *une mise en biais* ('slanting') could also be translated as 'a putting askew', 'a sideways glance', or a 'looking awry', as in the eponymous book by Slavoj Žižek. 'Twisted' here translates *tordu*, as in that which underwent a torsion, not straight.

- 13 Before quoting Lacan, Badiou uses the following expressions: *l'être-à-côté* ('being-to-the-side'), *l'être-para* ('para-being'), *du par-être* ('par-appearing'). Bruce Fink's explanation is useful in this context: 'The neologism Lacan creates here, *par-être*, is pronounced exactly like *par-être*, which means 'to appear' or 'appearing'. Two sentences further on, Lacan intends both meanings when he says that 'being presents itself, always presents itself, by *par-être*', i.e., by appearing and being beside (or alongside)' (S XX, 44–5 n. 19).
- 14 In French, *paravent* ('smokescreen' or 'screen') adds a further pun to the Lacanian neologisms based on *par-être*.
- 15 In French: '*Nous ne sommes rien, par-soyons le Tout*', which is a clear allusion to another famous line from 'The Internationale': '*Nous ne sommes rien, soyons tout*'. The effect of introducing Lacan's neologism of *par-être* into this line consists in slanting the view away from the dogmatic totality toward what lies beside or alongside the whole.
- 16 The French *sceau* ('seal') could also be translated as 'mark', 'stamp' or 'stamping'. In the discussion of Mallarmé above, I used 'seal' to translate *frappe* and 'stampings' for *timbrages*.
- 17 See Lenin, 'Once Again on the Trade Unions, the Current Situation, and the Mistakes of Trotsky and Bukharin', *Collected Works*, vol. 32, 70–107.
- 18 For Lacan, the best that this *bien-dire* or 'well-saying' can amount to is a *mi-dire*, 'half-saying' or 'half-stating'.
- 19 See Lenin, 'Marxism and Insurrection', *Collected Works*, vol. 26, 22–7: 'Of course, this is all by way of example, only to illustrate the fact that at the present moment it is impossible to remain loyal to Marxism, to remain loyal to the revolution unless insurrection is treated as an art'.
- 20 The suggestion is that Lacan, the Lenin of psychoanalysis, can also be its Mao, insofar as Lacan I and Lacan II would be like a king succeeding himself. Also implied is the notion that Jacques-Alain Miller, though a Maoist around 1968, is *not* the Mao of psychoanalysis.
- 21 The French here, referring to Lacan's *droiture à tenir sur la torsion* ('his steady uprightness about torsion'), continues the series of puns on straightness, rightness, steadiness, and torsion.
- 22 In French, the word translated as 'practice' in English is not *pratique* but *expérience*, just as in the previous sentence Marxism is defined as *le propos expérimenté de soutenir l'advenue subjective d'une politique*. *Expérience* and *expérimenté*, in this context, should not be read with the existential pathos of experience but in the sense of a formal and practical experiment, similar to what happens in inventive science or in artistic innovation.
- 23 An allusion, with inverted gender, to *Détruire, dit-elle*, the title of a famous novel and film by Marguerite Duras (1969), ostensibly inspired by May '68. Beyond this reference, the expression, even in the masculine form *Détruire*,

- dit-il* as used by Badiou, has taken on a life of its own and is frequently invoked in literary and artistic circles.
- 24 An allusion to Friedrich Nietzsche's well-known remark, in a letter to Brandes from December 1888: 'I prepare an event that, in all likelihood, will break history in two, to the point where a new calendar will be needed, and in which 1888 will be the Year 1.' In rejecting this view, *Théorie du sujet* clearly anticipates Badiou's conclusion, in a conference from 1992 on Nietzsche, about the 'antiphilosophical' nature of this 'break' *qua* archipolitical 'act' of grand politics. See Badiou, *Casser en deux l'histoire du monde?* (Paris: Les Conférences du Perroquet, 1992).
- 25 The French, *scœu*, was previously translated as 'seal' but here as 'stamp' so as to retain echoes of the pun on the homonymous *saut*, 'jump'.
- 26 Jacques-Alain Miller, 'Matrix', trans. Daniel G. Collins, *lacanian ink* 12 (1997): 48–9 (trans. modified).
- 27 The French here, *De là qu'il fait sujet*, could also be translated as 'Whence its quality as subject', 'From this it follows that it makes (for) a subject', or 'This explains why it constitutes a subject'. The use of an indefinite article in English, however, might wrongly suggest that there are several—or at least two—subjects (the proletariat and the bourgeoisie), whereas Badiou is correcting himself precisely on this point so as to affirm, as he did in the previous session of his seminar: 'There is only one political subject, for any given historicization.'
- 28 In French, the expletive *ne* that usually accompanies negation is absent: *le sujet aboutit à rien* (which I have rendered as 'the subject leads to nothing'), as opposed to *le sujet n'aboutit à rien* (which could be translated as 'the subject does not lead to anything').
- 29 In French, *se fait* and *s'effet*, with the latter being a neologism on Badiou's part, are homonymous. The whole sentence, though, is quite obscure: *la politique prolétarienne . . . est ce qu'elle se fait (s'effet) ne pas être (s'effet qui a nom 'communisme')*. The basic underlying idea is that the proletariat, like the unconscious, brings into being some element of nonbeing. Or, rather, through the unconscious and the proletariat, the ontological opposition of being and nonbeing itself is subverted.
- 30 The French, *la botte in c'est la botte!*, refers to a special coup, for example in fencing, or a secret weapon, unrecognized by the adversary. *Porter une botte à quelqu'un* thus can mean to attack or interpellate someone in an unforeseen way.
- 31 The French expression, *s'adosse au* (here translated as 'leans up against') beautifully conveys an image of truth with its *dos* ('back') up against the real.
- 32 In French, *une plaie* ('a sore') here also means 'a pain (in the neck)' or 'nuisance'.

- 33 Badiou, in personal conversations with the translator, suggests that '*mes tortillons*' could refer to the twisted elucubrations in Lacan's brain, but I have the impression that Lacan is rather referring to his students and disciples and *their* mental elucubrations. My translation tries to keep the ambiguity alive.
- 34 'Jams up' here translates the French *coince*, a notion Badiou will discuss below in the context of Lacan's topologies. Other translations could be 'wedges' or 'traps'.
- 35 'Blocks' here translates the French *fait coïncement*.
- 36 The French here, *changer l'homme dans ce qu'il a de plus profond*, corresponds to the first sentence of the famous 'Sixteen Points' decision, adopted by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on August 8, 1966, marking the beginning of the Chinese Cultural Revolution. In English, the full line reads as follows: 'The great Proletarian Cultural Revolution now unfolding is a great revolution that touches people to their very souls', in *The Chinese Cultural Revolution: Selected Documents*, ed. and with notes by K. H. Fan (New York–London: Monthly Review Press, 1968), 162. See also Badiou's comments in 'The Cultural Revolution: The Last Revolution?', trans. Bruno Bosteels, *positions: east asia cultures critique* 13 (2005): 489–90.
- 37 In French, this whole sentence is a bit convoluted: *Tenons la prise, plutôt, d'un biface subjectif, dont l'articulation nous donnera de la peine, pour y joindre la destruction fécondante et le bonheur d'y manquer*. The reference to *le bonheur d'y manquer* counters Lacan's mention of the happiness to be alive, quoted above.
- 38 In French, *morgue* can mean both 'morgue' or 'mortuary' and 'arrogance', 'smugness', 'superciliousness'. I have tried to keep hints of both meanings by using 'deadly arrogance' as a translation.
- 39 In French, *au-delà ou en deça* ('beyond or shy of') is also used by Lacan, S XX, 44.
- 40 The French here, *mise en défaillance*, is translated as 'the active failure'. Another possible rendering would be 'the putting into failure'.
- 41 In French, *droits*. This extends the pun, used earlier, on 'right' ideas and 'twisted' paths to truth. Here, in addition, the opposition is between 'straight' and 'contorted'.
- 42 'Lapses back' here translates *retombe*, which previously, in Part I, served as the French translation of Hegel's *Rückfall*, 'relapse', in the dialectical process.
- 43 In the notation of the 'mathemes' of anxiety, the superego, courage, and justice, I have used 'locus' for *lieu*, whereas elsewhere 'place' serves to translate both *lieu* and *place*. The mathemes are one of the few instances in *Théorie du sujet* where these two French terms are kept separate.
- 44 This is an allusion to a famous saying which the old Mao frequently used to