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The Biopolitical Unconscious: Not-All Persons Are Political

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The Biopolitical Unconscious:

Not-All Persons Are Political

Ross Gillum Shields

An honors thesis for the Department of Humanities and Media and Cultural Studies

Advisor: A. Kiarina Kordela, German Studies and HMCS

Macalester College – May 3, 2010

Abstract:

It is a tenet of post-structuralist theory that discursive series fail in their attempts to constitute themselves as totalities. A system can fail in two distinct ways—from Kant's dynamic and mathematic failures of reason, to Jacques Lacan's equation of the two failures of language with the two failures (male and female) of sex. Biopolitical theory offers the most recent account of failure and collapse, now on the geopolitical scale. Given that the biopolitical subject too is sexed, this thesis asks the question: How does biopolitics fail? Franz Kafka's aborted novels offer a premonition to a possible answer.

Writing has a double function: to translate everything into assemblages and to dismantle the assemblages.

–Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 47

[I]t is our task to bring about a real state of emergency.

–Benjamin, eighth thesis on the philosophy of history

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Preface: Apology For Topology (But There's No Excuse For a Bad Pun)

The following argument proceeds diagrammatically. Diagrams serve as convenient models for expressing thought for three reasons: First, they are inherently structural and assist the simultaneous reading of heterogeneous texts. Second, a spatial representation attempts to think structure in a synchronic fashion, which resists the introduction of diachrony, one of the primary means by which ideology covers up conflicts. Third, their mechanical nature allows diagrams to surpass impasses of thought in a similarly mechanical fashion. To the extent that we are automata, a fact attested to by Sigmund Freud's discovery of repetition compulsion, mechanism in thought is unavoidable. If the mechanism of diagrams appears artificial, the artifice involved echoes only the artifice underlying the subject.

"Be Careful!," warns psychoanalyst and theorist Jacques Lacan, "[diagrams] are supports for your thought that are not without artifice, but there is no topology that does not have to be supported by some artifice—it is precisely the result of the fact that the

subject depends on the signifier, in other words, on a certain impotence in your thinking" (*SXI* 209) The ambiguity of this warning is ripe. While it could be read as a condemnation of spatial thinking, it might equally be understood to imply that impotence and artifice—the imaginary—are necessary components of all forms of speech. With no little irony one of the strongest arguments for topological writing comes from Lacan's ostensible critic: "Nonphonetic writing breaks the noun apart. It describes relations and not appellations. The noun and the word, those unities of breath and concept, are effaced within pure writing" (Derrida, *Of Grammatology* 26).

Introduction: Discursively

Why write of discourse? Given the linguistic turn of contemporary philosophy, the answer to this question might seem self-evident. And yet it is this very philosophy that most rigorously warns against unquestioned presuppositions. If the post-structuralist and deconstructionist thesis that language permeates every aspect of experience is correct, and if we abandon the notion of a pre-discursive subjectivity, then it is understandable that discourse should play a major role in all aspects of *relating to* and *being in* the world. The psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan begins, one could say, with discourse. His "return to Freud" owes its force to the application of insights from structural linguists, notably Ferdinand de Saussure and Roman Jakobson, emphasizing the unconscious, structured *like a language*, of the *speaking* subject—subject to the *signifier*. Which is not to say that the signifier, language, discourse, and speech may be collapsed into an amor-

phous fluid of speech sounds and linguistic units. Rather, the emergence of structure should be accounted for within such a fluid. Organization from chaos. Or better: because there is properly no subject before the laws imposed by language, what must be accounted for is the *ex nihilo* emergence of subjectivity-effects, or the affectation of subjectivity. An uncritical acceptance of the premature death of the subject leaves thought stillborn or at least unprepared to deal with the traumatic repetitions of the structure it would disavow.

Discourse is the name given to these structural relations and as such can be considered a grammar of the subject. Broadly defined as a "social-link," discourse refers to the "stable relations" established through "the instrument of language" (Lacan, *SXX* 54; *SXVII* 13). "In the final analysis," writes Lacan, "there's nothing but that, the social link … [which] is instated only by anchoring itself in the way in which language is situated over and etched into what the place is crawling with, namely, speaking beings" (*SXX* 54). To study discourse is then to study the concept of relation as such. To the extent that these "stable relations" proliferate and bolster one another—a result of the fact that language colors every aspect of our being in the world—it should not be surprising that these relations might underlie such disparate fields as philosophy, psychoanalysis, literature, and political thought, (one is reminded here of Alain Badiou's four categories of truth—science, love, art, and politics) (*Ethics* 28). A presupposition of the speaking being within language, discourse structures not only the subject but also the relations between the subject and all other subjects—the relations between subjects and disciplines, intersubjective relations (intercourse), and interdisciplinary relations. Let the following paper then be an interdisciplinary analysis focusing on the structures and

aporias that follow from intersubjectivity. The thread linking these discursive disciplines is discourse itself and the ways in which it inevitably fails. To anticipate: Failure, the point of internal collapse of both content and form, will manifest itself in the Kantian antinomies of pure reason (science), the botched sexual relationship (love), Kafka's aborted novels (art), and power's control over life (politics).

Chapter one will concern itself with the relation between philosophy and psycho-analysis; far from unlikely bedfellows, the two still have much to say about each other even in light of some of the former's proponents' dismissal of the latter and the latter's self-characterization as anti-philosophy. Where philosophy ends psychoanalysis begins, taking up the (failure of the) tasks set by reason in the form of an analytic of desire and sexual difference. Authors: Kant, Lacan, Copjec.

Chapter two will examine the relation of the conclusion reached through chapter one to biopolitics, an apparatus whose importance becomes only more marked as the effects of a globalized economy draw relations between people, goods, and ideas closer together. By examining the underlying discourse of biopolitics, the question will be asked of its failure, and the way in which it nevertheless succeeds in spite of this failure. Given that reason, language, and sex fail in two distinct modes, I will argue that political discourse, a language in its own right, likewise fails in two modes, and that effective political praxis hinges upon distinguishing between these two kinds of failure. Authors: Foucault, Agamben, Schmitt.

This project will use the insights gained about discourse to produce a structural argument about the specific topologies traversed in the two main chapters. These will then be supplemented by brief analyses of Franz Kafka's work as a way of exemplifying

or elaborating them further. In a gloss on Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze mentions in passing Kafka "standing at the point of transition between the two kinds of society … disciplinary societies, and … control societies" ("Postscript" 179). Situated, then, at the birth of the contemporary biopolitical apparatus, the contradictions in Kafka's representations thereof might be seen to mirror contradictions in the apparatus itself.

The passage from discourse to the failure of discourse to what makes up for the failure of discourse may be loosely graphed onto Lacan's three registers: the symbolic, the real, and the imaginary. The insistence of a traumatic real (a failure) in symbolic attempts to produce meaning is in each case imaginarily elided—the real void of an *open* symbolic set is sutured by the imagination of *closure*.

I will ask the question of what it would mean to resist rather than elide the failure of discourse. Such a gesture takes the name of the not-all set. The logical function that dominates this section is not, as one might expect, negation but incompleteness. To the thesis that something of an *all*, of a discursive totality, functions in science, love, art, and politics, it will be insisted, respectively: Not-all experience is subsumable under the standard of reason; Not-all *jouissance* is utterable; Not-all literature can be interpreted; Not-all persons are political.

◊

Each discourse approached (transcendental ontology, psychoanalysis, literature, and biopolitics) will be treated as a distinct series, a set of elements obeying immanent laws according to its own internal structure. What justifies the discursive approach to these disciplines is the observation that no structure or series emerges in a void—there are always points of contact by means of which two or more series interact, cathect, reify,

and ramify each other. Deleuze notes the necessity of at least two structures: "two series being given, one signifying and the other signified, the first presents an excess and the latter a lack. By means of this excess and this lack, the series refer to each other in eternal disequilibrium and in perpetual displacement" (Deleuze, *Logic of Sense* 48). A similar exchange occurs between each series here investigated. The excesses of Kantian ontology (the thing in itself) are hence taken up by the lacks of psychoanalysis, and, inversely, the points of collapse of the transcendental system are supplemented with psychoanalytic concepts. This synthesis entails the production of a further excess that in turn serves as the necessary supplement for biopolitical rationality.

On the one hand, the economy with which each series complements another may appear as rigidly mechanical—on the other, through a closer examination of the mechanisms through which these excesses and lacks are internally produced, such processes are laid bare in their contingency. Proceeding with the conviction that the first step toward the impossible (i.e., the real) consists in showing how what presents itself as necessary is truly contingent, this project will content itself in attempting to articulate the mutual dependence of transcendental ontology and biopolitical rationality—if each series is conditioned by the other then neither can claim primacy over the other.

Chapter One: Failure in the Kantian University

I. Totality-Knowledge

The transition from pre-capitalist feudalism to secular capitalist modernity has been usually described as a process of rationalization. Culminating in the Enlightenment, so the story goes, objectivity, utility, science, the free market, and reason have waxed as God, the king, irrationality, and eventually the newly born subjectivity have waned. The irony of this description is that it declares the death of God (Nietzsche), of the author (Barthes), of the sovereign (Rousseau), and of irrational ideology in general (Mill) at the very moment when these terms become most entrenched. For example, Lacan writes: "[T]he true formula of atheism is not *God is dead*—even by basing the origin of the function of the father upon his murder, Freud protects the father—the true formula of atheism is *God is unconscious* (*SXI* 59). Similarly, Michel Foucault, in "What is an Author?" investigates the lingering function of the presumed-dead author as "the ideo-

logical figure by which one marks the manner in which we fear the proliferation of meaning" (119). In a parallel gesture Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt identifies the lingering (and violent) role of the sovereign presupposed for the normative legal functioning of democratic governmentality. Finally, numerous theorists have critiqued the traditional understanding of ideology on the grounds that the strongest ideology is precisely that which does not present itself as such, that is to say, which presents itself as objective.[1] In each case, the death of the subject ensures its survival on the plane of the unconscious. Rational objectivity has then not so much supplanted ideological subjectivity so much as, in obscuring the subjective ideological investment in objectivity, it has universalized both the subjective and the ideological.

What we are dealing with here is a revolution in discourse. Specifically, the ninety-degree rotation that constitutes the transition from the feudal discourse of the master to the capitalist discourse of the university. The following excerpt from early in Jacques Lacan's twentieth seminar may suffice by way of introduction to the implications of this revolution:

> This world conceived of as the whole (*tout*), with what this word implies by way of limitation, regardless of the openness we grant it, remains a conception—a serendipitous term here—a view, gaze, or imaginary hold. And from that results the following, which remains strange, that some-one—a part of this world—is at the outset assumed to be able to take cognizance of it. This One finds itself therein in a state that we can call existence, for how could it be the basis of the "taking cognizance" if it did not exist? Therein has always lain the impasse, the vacillation resulting from the cosmology that consists in the belief in a world. On the contrary, isn't there something in analytic discourse that can introduce us to the following: that every subsistence or persistence of the world as such must be abandoned? (*SXX* 43)

The discourse of the university is cosmological, and as such, is absolutely concerned with upholding the notion of objective totality, the truth of the One. It is here that we can identify the pervasiveness of the role played by the master signifier, the "some-one"

within a body of knowledge, in laying claim to universal and objective application—"the fantasy of totality-knowledge [*savoir-totalité*]" (33). Enlightenment rationalization can then be seen to have this totality-knowledge as its object. What is surprising in Lacan, and what comprises his difference from so many critiques of the Enlightenment, is the possibility suggested here of a way out—the suggestion that one might abandon the subsistence of the world. Were this One, assumed to cognize the world, shown to be inconsistent, non-identical with itself, or in any way contingent upon or conditioned by an Other, would this not imply that the discourse of the university, the paradigm of objective modern thought, is itself not-all (*pas-tout*)? Hinted at here is the possibility of further revolution, of a transition from the discourse of the university to the discourse of the analyst. In fact, Lacan designates four possible discourses with the following mathemes (respectively, the discourse of the master, the discourse of the hysteric, the discourse of the analyst, and the discourse of the university):

$$\frac{S_1}{\$} \xrightarrow{\;/\!/\;} \frac{S_2}{a} \qquad \frac{\$}{a} \xrightarrow{\;/\!/\;} \frac{S_1}{S_2} \qquad \frac{a}{S_2} \xrightarrow{\;/\!/\;} \frac{\$}{S_1} \qquad \frac{S_2}{S_1} \xrightarrow{\;/\!/\;} \frac{a}{\$}$$

Each matheme is composed of four fixed places:

$$\underline{\text{agent}} \quad \rightleftarrows \quad \underline{\text{other}}$$
$$\text{truth} \qquad\qquad \text{production;}$$

and four movable terms:

S_1, the master signifier
S_2, knowledge
$\$$, the subject
a, surplus *jouissance* (*SXX* 17).

Each term of one discourse can be rotated ninety degrees clockwise to take on a new role in a new place, in this way yielding the next discourse in the series. While the existence of only four permutations (as opposed to the expected sixteen) might seem somewhat

arbitrary, this limitation is justified by pointing to the fact that the terms involved (S_1, S_2, *a*, and $\$$) are defined, like any signifiers, by their difference to the other signifiers. Because it is the position relative to one another that determines the value of the terms, "the chain, the sequence of letters of this algebra, must not be disturbed"—the order of the chain cannot be changed without altering the signification of each term (Lacan *SXVII* 14).

The university discourse can thus be unpacked to read as follows: Any discourse or body of knowledge (S_2), in order to present itself as objective and by extension universal (as per the master's command (S_1) "Keep on knowing"), that is, in order to become all-knowing, solicits a surplus or imaginary gaze (*a*) to fill in its gaps (Lacan puns here, speaking of the "*a* student" who takes upon herself the burden of completing a discipline) (*SXVII* 120, 121). In doing so, however, the body of knowledge in question invariably produces its own failure or split ($\$$), which, in the next cycle, will serve as the raw material *qua* aporia-to-be-overcome.

To take an example from physics, the inexplicable constancy of the speed of light in any frame of reference (a gap in the universality of S_2) led to the development of special relativity (via the production of a new *a*, a new gaze—here, literally, entailing the destruction of classical perspective), which, unable to account for gravitational effects (a contradiction *qua* $\$$), was further developed into the general theory of relativity. Inherent in this process is the notion of progress, the teleological expansion of knowledge, manifest here with the expectation of a Grand Unified Theory to unite gravitation with the weak and electromagnetic forces. This expectation is continually disappointed, however, as the subject is never produced without its split—impotent, as is designated by the

barring of the bottom arrow between $\$$ and S_1, to see itself as master of its own knowledge (*SXVII* 203).

II. Antinomy and *Aphanisis*

This cycle of aporia and rationalization is demonstrated in its elementary form by Immanuel Kant, whose description of the antinomies of pure reason might be read as a formalization of the process by which attempts to form a totality lead to their own failure. In contradistinction to the pure understanding, which, in ordering appearances according to laws that pertain to experience within time and space is satisfied by producing local and empirically verifiable judgments, the concepts of reason are insatiable (*Prolegomena* 44; § 22). They instead "aim at the completeness, i.e., the collective unity of all possible experience" (65; § 40). In more precise terms this means that, "for a given conditioned, reason demands on the side of the conditions … absolute totality," whether these conditions be spatial (concerning what is external to a closed space), temporal (concerning what is prior to a given instant), or causal (concerning logical presuppositions) (*CPuR* 386; A 409 B 436). While the understanding is content so long as no experience or law contradicts any other, reason demands the further assertion that its laws are unconditional and applicable to the *totality* of experience.

In the drama of the discourse of the university, as we have seen, the principle two actors represent the master (S_1) and knowledge (S_2). These roles are then taken up in Kant's thought by the faculties of reason and the understanding. Reason is here the master signifier, S_1 (also known as the unary signifier due to its connection with the concept of totality), that compels the understanding, S_2 (the binary signifier) insofar as it

designates knowledge, to regress to the unconditioned totality of experience. The synthesis of appearances into experience facilitated by the understanding thus finds its limit in reason's regress to the absolutely unconditioned. By reading the interaction between reason and the understanding in terms of the interaction between S_1 and S_2, light will be shed on both relations.

One point that will become increasingly important for my argument is that reason, according to this description, proceeds according to differential and formal rules. To understand a particular occurrence is impossible unless the sum of its conditions is first understood. An occurrence—for example, the sun rising this morning—can only be understood once the totality of laws responsible for this daybreak have been taken into account. But it is even more complex: implicit in this accounting "why this?" is the question "why this way and not some other?" Not only positive laws, but also the negative question "why not otherwise?" must be elaborated. Experience is then most rigorously defined not positively by what a thing is, but negatively, by what it is not. According to this logic, a conditioned is truly given only if the totality of its conditions, both positive and negative, is likewise given.

The problem with the demand for the absolutely unconditioned, and what ultimately leads to reason's conflict with itself in the antinomies, is that the totality of the conditions of a conditioned can *never be given in experience*, since the "synthesis [which constitutes this totality] first occurs in the regress, and never exists without it" (Kant, *CPuR* 444; A 499 B 527). Any unconditioned obtained by the regress logically presupposes this regress. Moreover, because the empirical synthesis occurs in time, and is consequently blind to the future, one has "no right to assume the absolute totality of the

synthesis and of the series thereby represented" (445; A 500 B 528-529). If the regress to the unconditioned is in itself conditioned (both logically and temporally), reason would stand in contradiction to itself—and it is for this reason that Kant concludes that the regress to the unconditioned is never really given (*gegeben*) but merely set as a task (*aufgegeben*) (444; A 498 B 526).[2] The totality of conditions can never be given not just because there is not enough time to examine, say, the universe of billiard balls that lead to the sun rising this morning, but for the much stronger reason: The sun rises only in experience, and experience is only ever produced as part of a temporal regress. Without this regress there is no experience, but with it, experience is necessarily incomplete, limited, as it were, by time. The task set by reason can never be completed, and the attempt to do so, by taking it as given, causes reason to overstep its bounds as it endeavors "to establish its principle of unconditioned unity"; moreover, "though it indeed does so with great though illusory appearance of success, it soon falls into such contradictions that it is constrained, in this cosmological field, to desist from any such pretensions" (385; A 407 B 433).

Kant's catalogue of these pretensions, in which pure reason—in its attempt to establish a cosmological totality—necessarily fails, rests on a classification of the totality of experience based on the categories of reason, summarized below.

We have first the division of phenomena into the world and nature. The world designates "the mathematic[] sum-total of all appearances and the totality of their synthesis" and concerns the regress to the temporally and spatially unconditioned (Kant, *CPuR* 392; A 418 B 446). Nature, on the other hand, refers to this same world "when viewed as a dynamic[] whole," that is, when regressing to the logically unconditioned, to "the unity

in the existence of appearances" as synthesized according to the laws of causality (392; A 418-419 B 446-447). The most important aspect of the world/nature distinction lies in their respective topological textures. While the world consists of homogenous appearances with a possible limit beyond which nothing may be posited, nature consists of heterogeneous causal relationships, which admit of the possibility of boundaries: "bounds ... always presuppose a space existing outside a certain definite place and inclosing it; limits do not require this, but are mere negations which affect a quantity so far as it is not absolutely complete" (*Prolegomena* 86; § 57). This distinction gives rise to the corresponding division between the mathematic antinomies, which pertain to judgments regarding the totality of the world (i.e., time and space), and the dynamic antinomies, which pertain to judgments regarding the totality of nature (i.e., causality).

Each antinomy is then further divided into thesis and antithesis according to two ways of viewing the unconditioned, succinctly summarized by Kant:

> [The unconditioned] may be viewed as consisting of the entire series in which all the members without exception are conditioned and only the totality of them is absolutely conditioned. This regress is to be entitled infinite. Or alternatively, the absolutely unconditioned is only a part of the series—a part of which the other members are subordinated, and which does not itself stand under any other condition. (*CPuR* 391-392; A 417 B 445)

Because there are two ways of conceiving of the unconditioned, there are two judgments that can be made regarding the totality of both the world and of nature. This duality will account for the existence of the thesis and antithesis in each antinomy. The thesis will argue that the absolutely unconditioned is an unconditioned yet finite part of the series, whereas the antithesis will unfold via the logic of the infinite regress, according to which each part is conditioned, while only the totality itself is unconditioned.

It is now only a matter of crossing the second division (finite unconditioned/infinite unconditioned) against the first (world/nature) in order to determine the

elementary form of the antinomies of pure reason—a sort of metaphysical Punnett square (*figure 1*).[3] The mathematic antinomies, in their attempts to regress to the spatial and temporal unconditioned of the *world*, then can be reduced to the following contrary pair of arguments: the thesis, which states that there exists an absolute dawn of time and edge of space, and that matter consists of indivisible simples; and its antithesis, which concludes that the magnitude and duration of the world are infinite, and that the divisibility of matter is likewise infinite. (Kant, *Prolegomena* 74-75; § 51).

Figure 1.	(Dynamic) Nature	(Mathematic) World
Finite Thesis	Necessity / Freedom[4]	Limited Space and Time / Simplicity
Infinite Antithesis	Contingency / Natural Necessity[5]	Unlimited Space and Time /Divisibility

Mutatis mutandis, the dynamic antinomies, in their attempts to regress to the logical unconditioned of *nature*, can be reduced to the following seemingly contradictory pair of arguments: the thesis, which states that there exists a free and necessary first cause, and its antithesis, which concludes that contingent natural necessity determines everything (Kant, *Prolegomena* 74-75; § 51).

And yet, with the distillation of the antinomies, the discourse of the university has not yet emerged—we are instead squarely on the level of the discourse of the master. The master, reason (S_1) demands of the understanding (S_2) that it seek the unconditioned via the maxim: "keep on knowing." This results in the production of the theses and antitheses of the antinomies (*a*), which turn out to be in contradiction with each other—they are split (⧸) over the subject (of inquiry). Returning to the introductory quotation from *Seminar XX*, we see confirmed that any attempt to conceive of the world (or for that

matter, nature) as a whole does indeed engender an imaginary point of view—a surplus characterized just as much by lack and contradiction as a positive contribution to our reason—for this is the status of these theses: illusory, transcendental dialectic resulting from the hyperbolic use of reason (see: Kant, *Prolegomena* 65; § 40). What we learn from the master is that the split subject that plays the role of its truth is fundamentally blind to the fantasmatic nature of its production (see: Lacan, *SXVII* 108). This explains one possible stance one can take toward this failure, this split: "assuming an obstinate attitude, dogmatically committing [oneself] to certain assertions, and refusing to grant a fair hearing to the arguments for the counter-position" (Kant, *CPuR* 385; A 407 B 434). We could visualize this as follows:

$$\text{Discourse of the Master (blocked)}: \frac{S_1}{\$} \rightarrow \frac{S_2}{a}$$

Pure Reason	$\rightarrow$	The Understanding
Antinomy		Theses and Antithesis

This reads: Reason solicits the understanding to regress to the unconditioned, producing antinomic theses and antitheses, which, in their dogmatism, are unable to see the very antinomies they embody.

Kant is most wary, however, of a second attitude towards the contradiction of the antinomies, namely, the *euthanasia of pure reason*, reason's temptation of "abandoning itself to a skeptical despair" in light of its own "entirely natural antithetic" (*CPuR* 385; A 407 B 433-434). One might go as far as to substitute Kant's Greek with Lacan's, and give this *euthanasia* its true sense in *aphanisis*, a term used by the latter author to denote the fading of the subject faced with the nature of its split (Lacan, *SXI* 219). In the schema resulting in the *aphanisis*, or alienation, of the subject, the unary signifier, in its attempt

to represent a subject to another signifier, tends to become *aphanized*, to fade into just another signifier, insofar as it recognizes the other signifier as representing the subject to itself (the first) in turn (218). Predicated on the uncompromising logic of "either ... or"—either I represent a subject or you do—and neither signifier wiling to concede, the subject disappears in both cases (210).

Substitute reason and the understanding for the first and second signifiers, and a similar process unfurls: Reason demanding a unary totality and the understanding insisting on producing surplus divisions, the former yields to the binarism of thesis and antithesis. The undecidability between the two situations then threatens to *aphanize* reason and would result, if unchecked, in the euthanasia of reason (radical skepticism) through its own self-contradiction. Kant, being the foremost of philosophers, is naturally unwilling to let this happen and sets out to solve these antinomies. Thereby begins the discourse of the university proper, as reason makes another bid for totality-knowledge out of the split produced in the antinomies, out of the aphanisis of the subject. Anticipating the argument, it will be important to discern the nature of the new surplus produced in the discourse of the university.

III. Solution and Separation

Beginning with the mathematic antinomy, whether or not there exists a limit to space and time, Kant concludes that both thesis and antithesis are false (*Prolegomena* 77; § 52c). This is due to the fact that "neither assertion can be contained in experience, because experience either of an infinite space or of an infinite time elapsed, or again, of the boundary of the world by an empty space or by an antecedent empty time, is impossible"

(77; § 52c). Because the regress to the unconditioned is accomplished through the synthesis of experience from appearances, and because this synthesis occurs "only in our representations," it would be mere folly to assume that this experience pertains to anything outside of our representations (77; § 52c).

Whereas both thesis and antithesis of the mathematic antinomies have been proven false, predicated on the faulty assumption that these judgments could be extended beyond our experience, the dynamic antinomies are "opposed to one another by mere misunderstanding" and may astonishingly both be considered true (Kant, *Prolegomena* 78; § 53). The thesis, that there exist free causes, and the antithesis, that all is subject to natural necessity, may *both* be held as true to the extent that there may exist *heterogeneous* causes, one free and one determined, given that causality "does not in the least require [homogeneity]" as do space, time and divisibility (78; § 53). Recall how the grounds for dismissal of both the thesis and antithesis of the mathematic antinomy were that, in attempting to judge the homogeneity of space and time, they produced a claim about something radically heterogeneous to these concepts, namely the world outside of experience. Since the dynamic medium, causality, "by means of which something is posited through something else quite different from it," already presupposes heterogeneity, the positing of the existence of a free cause outside of experience does not contradict the fact that all experience must be objectively synthesized according to the rules of universal natural necessity (78-79; § 53). The strict delineation of two heterogeneous domains, appearances governed by the laws of natural necessity opposed to free things in themselves, is the price of the compatibility of the two theses in the dynamic antinomy: "[I]f natural necessity is referred merely to appearances and freedom merely to things in

themselves, no contradiction arises if we at the same time assume or admit both kinds of causality, however difficult or impossible it may be to make the latter kind conceivable" (78; § 53). Kant's attempt to imagine this latter kind presupposes its reification, as it required the splitting of the world into appearances and *noumena*, things in themselves.

Psychoanalytic theorist Joan Copjec argues that, in every case, the antinomies say either too much or too little (230-231). The mathematic antinomies say too much, to the extent that all that can be proven regarding their contrary claims of a finite or infinite world is the falsity of the opposing stance—the mistake lies in assuming that because the thesis is false, the antithesis is true, or vice versa, whereas there in fact exists a third possibility: that neither is true, that these false judgments amount to an attempt to experience what is beyond experience (230). As a result, no existential judgment regarding the world can be made: "the solution to this antinomy, then, lies in demonstrating the very incoherency of this assumption [that the world exist], the *absolute impossibility* … (Kant's Words) of the world's existence" (Copjec 219; quoting J. M. D. Meiklejohn's translation of the *CPuR*, 294). The "too much" of the mathematic antinomies is then "a surplus, because illegitimate, affirmation burden[ing] each statement" (230). The dynamic antinomies, on the other hand, say too little, to the extent that, in order to reconcile the thesis and antithesis, access to the thing in itself is subtracted as a possible experience: "the removal or separation of freedom from the realm of mechanical causality is what dissolves the radical inconsistency, the absolute impasse, on the dynamic side" (230).

Kant's transcendental idealism serves as a model for the discourse of the university in the shape of the dynamic solution to the illusory dialectic of the antinomies.

Feeding on these antinomies, pure reason, embodied in Immanuel Kant (as Hegel embodied absolute spirit), comes to the drastic conclusion that it must limit itself in its speculative pursuit, thereby ensuring the consistency of its domain. In discussing Kant's counter-intuitive claim that "[p]ure reason abandons everything to understanding," Deleuze notes:

> [T]he Ideas of reason refer to the concepts of the understanding in order to confer on them a maximum of both systematic unity and extension. Without reason the understanding would not reunite into a whole the set of its moves concerning an object. This is why reason, at the very moment it abandons legislative power in the interests of knowledge to the understanding, nevertheless retains a role, or rather receives in return, from the understanding itself and original function: the constitution of ideal foci outside experience towards which the concepts of the understanding converge. (*Critical Philosophy* 10, quoting Kant, *CPuR* Transcendental Dialectic, Book I Section I; Transcendental Idea [CPuR A 326 B 383-4]; and 19)

The understanding (S_2) can then be understood to take over the legislative role (the role of the agent in Lacan's schema) to the extent that reason has left it this role as a result of its self-critique. In return, reason (S_1) receives from the understanding a new way to guarantee totality: through the construction of an exception, of a negative space—ideal foci outside experience. In so doing reason has conceived the surplus judgments of "too much" or "too little" (*a*), born of the antinomies, to be responsible for its conflict with itself. The production of this surplus likewise entails another split (S̸), insofar as the subtraction involved in the solution on the dynamic side, this installation of an internal limit, amounts to the separation of the *noumenon* (thing in itself)—an ideal focus located *outside experience*. In Copjec's reading, which will serve as an important bridge on our way towards biopolitical application, this entails the loss of Being: "it is precisely existence—or being—that is subtracted from the universe that forms there" (231). Ironically, the original project set as a task by reason, to seek the One, has found its most consistent solution in the foreclosure of the One *qua* Being—like the father, the imperatives of reason prove most effective when reason itself has left the scene. Copjec defines this task

in terms of "a certain impotence, since everything can be included therein *except* being, which is heterogeneous to the conceptual world" (231). Impotence being represented by Lacan with the bottom arrow in the below matheme, we can now read the relationship between the One and the subject of philosophy, split by Kant into appearances and *noumena*, as being similarly impotent.

Discourse of the University : $\frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightleftarrows \frac{a}{\$}$

The Understanding	$\rightleftarrows$	Surplus Judgment
Reason		Appearances/Noumena

This reads: Reason abandons the legislative role in its speculative interests to the understanding, which in turn fulfills reason's demand for totality by the construction of a surplus prohibition against representation of the noumenon that will henceforth serve as a transcendent foothold for the scientific subject, producing in the same gesture this very dualism: appearances/noumena.

Lacan's observation that the master survives in a sublated or hidden form is reflected in two ways given this Kantian twist. "What happens," notes Lacan, "between the classical master's discourse and that of the modern master, whom we call the capitalist, is a modification in the place of knowledge" (*SXVII* 31). S_2 has changed roles; knowledge has taken up the legislative role of reason, its former master. That the discourse of the university takes over from the discourse of the master is similarly reflected in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* insofar as the terms that problematized the first formulation, having rotated ninety degrees, provide the solution in the second: what was produced in the discourse of the master, the surplus theses and antitheses, are called upon in the discourse of the university to delimit the possible objects of the understanding (one always says "too little"); the truth of the master, that his philosophy hinged on antinomic

presuppositions, is universalized by the discourse of the university in the production of the division between the things in themselves and appearances. A subjective split has become objective.

This objectification of a subjective division is what psychoanalysis calls separation. Not surprisingly, Kant's answer to the euthanasia of pure reason is structurally analogous to the subject's answer to its own *aphanisis*. In Lacan's reading of Freud's work, separation consists in the *Urverdrängung*, primary repression, of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the representative of representation (*SXI* 219). Quite simply, insofar as the master (unary) signifier, S_1, is the *Vorstellung*, the representation of the subject, "*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*" designates the other (binary) signifier, S_2, that comes to represent the first one—that is, the *Repräsentanz* of the *Vorstellung* (217). Since, as we saw in the structure of *aphanisis*, the subject tends to fade when the master signifier is seen to be dependent on another signifier, the simplest solution to this fading is to repress the signifier next in the signifying chain: S_2. This prohibition of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is furthermore considered primary (*ur*) to the extent that it is presupposed for any subject that will be able to come forward as speaking—prolegomena to the science of the speaking subject, if you will.

Separation then functions on the side of the dynamic antinomy when pure reason undergoes a primary repression of a portion of itself, namely, access to the thing in itself, saying always "too little." Corresponding to this is a relegation of freedom to the inaccessible noumenal realm: "what the subject has to free himself of is the aphanistic effect of the binary signifier and, if we look at it more closely, we shall see that in fact it is a question of nothing else in the function of freedom" (Lacan, *SXI* 219). Rather than it

being, as one might expect, a matter of saving freedom in light of the aphanizing binary signifier (a possible reading of both Lacan and Kant), access to the now transcendent freedom is repressed.

Being having been subtracted from the whole, too little having been said as a result of the prohibition involved in the solution of the dynamic antinomy, the real lack of the aphanized subject is replaced with the symbolic lack of prohibition. It now becomes possible to formulate the role of fantasy that results from separation and which underlies the discourse of the university and Kant's universe: $\$\diamond a$ (read: the barred subject [the real lack produced in aphanisis] in every relation to the *petit objet a* [the surplus imagined behind the symbolic prohibition operative in the field of the Other]) (Lacan, *SXI* 209). One lack makes up for the other as the two are superimposed, allowing in this way for the establishment of transference, in which subjective desire is imagined behind the prohibition operating in the field of the Other (see: 214-215).

The progress of Kant's argument can be cast in similar terms. First, the master's reason attempts to form a totality by means of the two ways of regressing to the unconditioned, resulting in the philosophical subject's split into an imaginary pair of thesis and antithesis—$\$$ is blocked with respect to a. This split is next recognized as an antinomy, for which as the theses and antitheses are held to be responsible ($a \rightarrow \$$). The universal application of reason is then reinstated through the imaginary surplus of the "too little," the imposition of an internal limit, and the separation of the *noumenon* from the subject—the subject is now separated from and enters into a relation with his *objet a* ($\$\diamond a$) (compare the diagrams in *Biopolitical Unconscious* 15 and 20).

IV. Transcendence and Transference

The exact role of transference for the Kantian University has yet to be examined—how is it that imaginary substance makes up for the void of the thing in itself? What is Kant's desire? Could it be that the "too much"—the assertion of existence rejected in the solution to the mathematic antinomy—takes the place of the lack instituted by the "too little" imagined in the solution/separation of the dynamic antinomy? At the very moment when substance seemed separated and prohibited by pure reason, it is re-found. This is because, as we will see, the thing in itself *qua* lacking is the Lacanian real—"that which is always in the same place"—not as a plenitude, but as a loss, as a failure (Lacan, *SVII* 70). Its loss is always just behind appearances in the same way that *jouissance*, the real unobtainable enjoyment that "presents itself as buried at the center of a field and has the characteristics of inaccessibility, obscurity and opacity," underlies and motivates desire (209). Since, following the introduction of the signifier, desire is always the desire for a signifier, the object assumed to exist behind the signifier, that which would yield *jouissance*, can never be reached.

The comparisons do not end there—totalizing knowledge, S_2 supported by the truth of S_1, what we recognize as reason in Kant, writes Lacan, "is a means to *jouissance*" (*SXVII* 50). This is not to suggest that *jouissance* is achieved by Kant. Rather, precisely the opposite—*jouissance* is preserved as a lack insofar as the thing in itself is made absolutely inaccessible to experience. Just as reason's attempts at totalization lead to the repetition of the antinomies and the loss of reason's capacity to make claims regarding the thing in itself, the automatic repetitions of the articulation of signifiers (S_2) leads to "a loss of jouissance … [a]nd it is in the place of this loss introduced by repetition that we

see the function of the lost object emerge, of what I am calling the *a*" (48). This claim could be extended to say that the imposition of any totalizing differential structure (with its necessary internal failure) produces a loss via the repetition of this failure. Into the lacuna carved out by this loss, then, flows the *objet a*. The separation of the Thing (*das Ding*) makes room for the influx of desire.

In fact, the original separation of the Thing that, once attained, would yield *jouissance*, is the precondition for the smooth functioning of the pleasure principle, the submission of the totality of life to the law of desire. This is because to experience *jouissance* would imply the fulfillment of totality and the collapse of desire, in the same way that the experience of the thing in itself (*das Ding an sich*) would yield a contradiction in reason and its *aphanisis*.[6] Through the mechanism of separation a transcendence is instigated that protects the newly born subject from fading. The self-imposed restriction of reason regarding the thing in itself can then be viewed as nothing more or less than the surplus prohibition of the attainment of *jouissance*. In both cases prohibition functions to guarantee the dominance of the Thing prohibited, the semblance of which (substantial substance, *petit object a qua* cause of desire) can then be imagined behind each phenomenon.

Cast in terms of boundaries and limits (recall from Kant: "bounds ... always presuppose a space existing outside a certain definite place and inclosing it; limits do not require this, but are mere negations which affect a quantity so far as it is not absolutely complete"), separation transforms the *limits* of pleasure into a such a *boundary* beyond which *jouissance* is expected (Kant, *Prolegomena* 86; § 57). Deleuze interprets the phenomenon known as the death drive (*Thanatos*), the beyond of the pleasure principle

(*Eros*), theorized by Freud in his work of the same title, as the law governing the space beyond the bounds of pleasure: "There are no exceptions to the principle but there is a residue that is irreducible to it; nothing contradicts the principle, but there remains something which falls outside it and is not homogenous with it—something, in short, beyond…" (Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty* 112, 114). That *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle is subject to taboo (Deleuze investigates the phenomenon in the broader context of masochism and sadism) ensures that all semblances of pleasure gained will never be sufficient to satisfy desire. *Jouissance*, the satisfaction of desire, entails the end of desire—this is the significance of death in the death drive.

The irony, of course, lies in the fact that prohibition is entirely unnecessary to prevent the experience of *jouissance* or the thing in itself—both in themselves impossible feats. Reason did not need Kant to tell it that it could not experience the thing in itself, any more than *jouissance* needs the castrating father (or indeed the analyst) to be unattainable.[7] Prohibition's primary end must therefore be recognized to be the way in which it binds the subject to the rule of reason or law of desire—by prohibiting access to the thing in itself, the status of its existence is put beyond question. That the thing in itself is lacking in the regime of appearances threatens to disrupt the totalizing project set as a task by reason, but by prohibiting access to the thing in itself, it is effectively separated and guaranteed some degree of existence in its isolation. We see this in psychoanalysis as well: whereas direct exposure to the noumenal lack (*jouissance qua* lacking) induces the *aphanisis* of the subject, the separation of this lack via the *Urverdrängung* of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* institutes the desiring subject in a relation to fantasy. It is because experience is *denied* the thing in itself that experience *desires* the thing in itself (insofar

as totality is set as a task by reason). This would seem to point to the conclusion that the transference of an imaginary desire for substance onto the lack of the thing in itself is neither the accidental product of a misreading of Kant, nor the result of a lack of rigor on Kant's part, but rather the structural result of Kant's solution to the dynamic antinomy. It is not that this lack makes possible the imputation of desire, but rather necessitates it.

This can be further understood by focusing on the relation of reason *qua* differential system to the thing in itself. Let us pose the paradoxical question (ignoring, for a moment, Kant's prohibition): "what are the conditions of the unconditioned?"

The transcendence of the thing in itself in the solution to the dynamic antinomy requires that this thing be unconditioned. However, given the basic differential nature of reason, it is impossible that the unconditioned not be influenced by what it conditions, even if this relationship is purely negative.[8] It must then be concluded that the part of reason that undergoes self-repression is the immediate referent of the unconditioned—that is to say, what is conditioned only by the unconditioned. Since the unconditioned is defined differentially against what it immediately conditions, the former may be seen as somewhat dependent (or conditioned) by the latter.[9] Because this would yield a contradiction, what the unconditioned immediately conditions must be repressed. This may be easily visualized. In the following sequence, each term conditions and is conditioned by another, as indicated by the reversible arrow: $S_1 \longleftrightarrow S_2 \longleftrightarrow S_3 \longleftrightarrow S_n$. In order to prohibit this reversibility—the term connecting the presumed unconditioned, S_1, with the rest of the chain, $S_3 \rightarrow S_n$—the intermediary S_2 is repressed, as is indicated by the double strikethrough, thus yielding the now non-reversible chain: $S_1 \rightarrow \cancel{\cancel{S_2}} \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_n$.

This repression may furthermore be seen as the proper end of reason, in that the latter's very consistency depends on it. It is not, then, that pure reason reveals the truth of the world as split between appearance and the thing in itself, but that *pure reason inaugurates this split in order to institute itself as consistent and universal.* Nevertheless, the repressed desire for substance cannot but return, insofar as "repression and return of the repressed are the same thing" (Lacan, *SI* 191).

We are now in a position to understand the point of articulation between psychoanalysis and Kantian idealism. Kantian idealism leaves us with a gap—the surplus prohibition against access to the thing in itself resulting from the solution to the dynamic antinomy. It is meaningless to argue about whether the thing in itself exists or not. At the very least we can say that it subsists in the form of a hole punched in the symbolic universe. Psychoanalysis then provides a description of the way in which this hole is filled—the *objet a* takes its place.

We can furthermore now answer some questions about the One: it exists, but only via the fantasmatic supplement of substance (i.e., through the imagination of a plentiful being). Such is the import of the oft-quoted passage in *Seminar XI*: "if beyond appearance there is nothing in itself, there is the gaze" (Lacan 103). Yet an alternative to such existence is offered in *Seminar XX*: "that every subsistence or persistence of the world as such must be abandoned" (43). Lacan directly addresses Kant as he unfolds this argument, speaking of the way in which language fails with respect to being:

> [L]anguage, in its meaning effect, is never but beside the referent. Isn't it thus true that language imposes being upon us and obliges us, as such, to admit that we never have anything by way of being (*de l'être*)?... What we must get used to is substituting the "para-being" (*par-être*)—the being "*para*," being beside—for the being that would take flight ... I say the "para-being" (*par-être*) and not the "appearing" (*paraître*), as the phenomenon has always been called—that beyond which there is supposedly that thing, the noumenon. (44-45)

Para-being, it would seem, as apposed to appearing, would not admit of any *noumenon* beyond it—except for the gaze, that is, the imaginary assumption of a being beside (para) us. If noumenal Being is replaced with this para-being, which sits always beside the referent—a signifier, not of being, but of the way in which it is always missed and only imagined—transcendence (and hence the repression of its immediate referent), as that to which experience has no access, might be avoided. Lacan continues, "it is in relation to the para-being that we must articulate what makes up for (*supplée au*) the sexual relationship qua nonexistent" (45). What would it mean to resist all transcendence, to cling to the *absolute* impossibility of the world (i.e., the impossibility of its existence coupled with the refusal to imagine it) conceded briefly by Kant? Furthermore, why is this project so easily derailed in the solution to the dynamic antinomy?

V. Sex and the Failure of Totalization

The articulation of the psychoanalytic (Lacan) and ontological (Kant) series can be taken further. Already much work has been done identifying transcendental metaphysics (and dualisms in general) with the patriarchal organization of society. Most concisely demonstrated in Derrida's phrase "phallogocentrism," a phallocentric societal order is irrevocably coupled with the logocentric tradition of western metaphysics. While it has already been shown that the psychoanalytic concept of the imaginary is necessary to supplement gaps in Kantian ontology, an inverse relation functions with equal importance, namely, that sexual difference is a product of the institution of the transcendental method.

Joan Copjec argues this point extensively in her rereading of Kant's antinomies through Lacan's formulas of sexuation. Starting from the identification of reason with signification, she writes:

> Within discourse there are no positive terms, only relations of difference. One term acquires meaning only through its difference from all the others—ad infinitum, since the final terms is [sic] never at hand. Put another way, the statement that discourse is ongoing simply acknowledges a *rule of language* that prescribes the way we must proceed in determining the value of a signifier. We would not be wrong to call this prescription a *rule of reason*—reason, since Saussure, being understood to operate not through the modalities of time and space (as Kant believed) but through the signifier. (205)

Understood through structural linguistics, it is the signifier (a differential formal element) that demands totality in order to produce signification. However, a differential signifying system is never complete: insofar as each signifier is capable of being retroactively modified by changes in its difference to the next, the attempts on the part of such a discourse to form a totality inevitably end in failure. Following Lacan's statement that the sexed subject is always the speaking subject, one might therefore be tempted to conclude that because the signifying system is never complete, "there is no stability of sex" (i.e., there is no stability of Being) (Copjec 206). This, however, would be a mistake, to the extent that it "converts the progressive rule for *determining* meaning (the rule that requires us to define meaning retroactively) into a *determined* meaning"; it illegitimately extends the inconsistencies of the signifying process to an inconsistency on the level of being (206-207). So, while human sexuality is an effect of the introduction of the signifier, the signifier nevertheless does *not* determine it (even in the last instance).

Contrary to the notion that sex is determined by the signifier, Copjec via Lacan proposes that sex is rather the product of the failure of the signifier to produce stable sexual norms, analogous to the way in which desire results from the failure of the subject to achieve *jouissance* from the signifier: "sex is the stumbling block of sense" (204). It is,

according to Copjec, the *failure* of language (and hence the failure of reason) that results in sex: "sex is the structural incompleteness of language" (206). While the logic of the dynamic antinomy has already been shown to underlie the male subject, the hitherto unexamined female position of enunciation is predicated on a structure that goes beyond the limit imposed by castration. Moreover, it is because language and reason fail in two ways that there are two distinct sexes: male and female. Signification presupposes, on the one hand, the ability of any signifier to modify diachronically and retroactively all the others, and on the other hand, "all the other signifiers, the total milieu that is necessary for the meaning of one" to exist as a synchronic totality (206). The synchronic totality of signifiers is structurally incomplete for the same reason that the totality formed by reason is incomplete: the regress from one signifier to the next, from the conditioned to its condition, must occur diachronically. It is no surprise then that the two sexes, the two failures of signification, are structural analogues of the mathematic and dynamic antinomies, the two failures of reason to form a totality (see: Lacan, *SXX* 56-57; Copjec 213).

Figure 2. (Lacan, SXX *78)*	The Nature of Man	The World of ~~Woman~~
Existential Quantifier	$\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$	$\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$
Universal Quantifier	$\forall x\ \Phi x$	$\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$

In explaining his "four propositional formulas" (see: *figure 2.*; note the analogies to *figure 1.*, *Biopolitical Unconscious* 14), Lacan begins by asserting: "every speaking being situates itself on one side or the other," in one relation to the phallic function (denoted: Φ), the male, or the other, the female (*SXX* 79). These formulas are therefore an attempt to represent sexual difference, that is, the two positions of enunciation from which one

can relate to totality (see: Copjec 215). A word of explanation is required, however, before they become legible: "Φ" designates the proposition "is submitted to the phallic function," which is then modified by a quantifier. "∃" represents the existential quantifier, and can be translated "there exists (at least one)," while "∀" represents the universal quantifier and can be translated "all." Furthermore, "the quality of a proposition is determined by the quality of its copula, either affirmative or negative. The affirmative is unmarked, while the negative is marked by a bar placed over the predicate term" (214).

In keeping with the existential status of the world, it is immediately obvious that both quantifiers on the female, mathematic, side are *negated*—pointing to the claim made by Lacan earlier in the seminar that "Woman does not exist," as well as to the convention of writing "~~Woman~~" (*SXX* 57). The male, dynamic side, by contrast, *asserts* the existence of a nature of man in both the singular and pleural. This existence is, however, "merely ... conceptual," just as, in the dynamic antinomy, proving the *possibility* of the existence of thing in itself is not the same as asserting its *actual* being (Copjec 231). The nature of man and the world of woman are furthermore divided, like the antinomies, into antonymic propositions according to the two possible ways to constitute totality.

The finite, partial way of regressing to the unconditioned accords to the quantifier ∃ and a negated proposition ($\overline{\Phi x}$)—as the heterogeneous exception to the homogenous space of the rule, *one x* is seen to account for all other. Recall how in Kant a single exception, the thing in itself, can be said to cause freely an occurrence. On the other hand, the infinite path toward the unconditioned accords to the quantifier ∀ and an asserted proposition (Φx)—a self-explanatory bid for totality. In Kant this is seen when an attempt is made to understand the totality of natural causes of an occurrence.

By crossing the *quantity* of the function, whether it will proceed by means of an exception (∃) or a totality (∀), with the *existential status* (dynamic man is asserted, mathematic woman is negated) the two poles of the two sexes are realized.

The male, dynamic side then divides into "there is at least one *x* that is not submitted to the phallic function" (*one* man *is* an exception to the function), and, "all x (every *x*) is submitted to the phallic function"(*all* men *are* subject to the function). The female side divides into "there is not one *x* that is not submitted to the phallic function" (the *one* woman who could serve as an exception to the function *is not*), and "not-all (not every) *x* is submitted to the phallic function" (*not-all* women are subjected to the function) (Copjec 214). For now, in the interest of critique, I will constrain myself to the male perspective.

The resolution to the antinomy employed by the male side (so that both arguments be true) replicates the psychoanalytic mechanism of separation—masculine sexuality can only present itself as an *all* through the exception of one part, one signifier which would not be subject to castration (the significance of submission to the phallic function) (Lacan, *SXX* 79). Recall that separation is a way of cementing the subject in the face of aphanisis. In this schema resulting in the *aphanisis* of the subject, the unary signifier, in its attempt to represent a subject to another signifier, tends to become *aphanized*, to fade into just another signifier, insofar as it recognizes the other signifier as representing the subject to itself (the first) in turn (*SXI* 218). Predicated on the uncompromising logic of "either ... or"—either I represent a subject or you do—and neither signifier wiling to concede, the subject disappears in both cases (*SXI* 210).

Separation then functions to elide the subject's *aphanisis* by severing a part of the subject through the repression of another. This cut-off organ, symbolized by the first signifier, S_1, is then protected from the aphanizing effect of the signifier insofar as the signifier that would represent it, S_2, is repressed: $S_1 \rightarrow \cancel{S_2} \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_n$. The exception presented by $\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$ is this master, unary signifier, which, on a purely formal level, finds itself preserved as an absolutely transcendent exception outside of the symbolic order (the realm of experience in Kant) through the primal repression of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the binary signifier. However, it is this latter (binary) signifier that is excluded from the totalizing function in the sense of primary repression, while S_1 is a cut-off organ, that is, its status pertains to the thing in itself/Being, not to the signifier which can be repressed. In other words, unlike S_2, whose reversible causal relation to the rest of the conditioned elements must be repressed, S_1 is radically separated (cut-off) from the chain of signifiers. It is then not that S_1 is in itself not a signifier, quite the contrary: rather, S_1, in itself a signifier, *becomes* the cut-off organ and loses its signifierness by virtue of its relation to the other signifiers (especially viz. S_2). While separation cannot occur without repression, it presupposes this radical cutting-off of being: Recalling the model $S_1 \rightarrow \cancel{S_2} \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_n$, repression designates the "thrown out" intermediate term, $\cancel{S_2}$, that allows for the radical separation of Being (S_1) from the larger signifying chain.

In sum, the male position of enunciation, the attempt to form a nature of man, is the result of a cycle of *aphanisis* and separation structurally analogous to the dynamic logic of Kant's transcendental critique. The male subject is first aphanized as the unary signifier discovers its dependency on the binary. The former then becomes transcendently separated as the latter is repressed (see: Lacan, *SXI* 219). The functional difference

between these two terms, separation and repression, lies in the fact that, while every connection with the repressed *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is effaced, the separated master signifier maintains a transcendent relation with all other signifiers. This relation is complicated by the fact that separation is defined as the severing of the relation of conditionality. The relation, then, between the master signifier and the rest of the chain is one of non-relation. The unconditioned S_1 is posited as a heterogeneous cause and is simply added to the regular conditionality of each term, as, in the dynamic antinomy, an occurrence exhibits both a free cause and one of natural necessity. Furthermore, because S_1 exhibits no direct relationship with any term in the series, its indirect, transcendent relation may be said to hold intuitively for *all* terms of the chain.

Into the lack produced by this repression we expect an influx of the imaginary desire of the Other (Lacan, *SXI* 214-215). While in Kant this was manifested by substance taking the place of the inaccessible thing in itself, for the sexed subject we see an imagined Other (a fetish to be desired) taking the place of the primary lack (the partner who would yield *jouissance*). At this stage the function of the *objet petit a* can be seen to replace surreptitiously that of the master signifier. The importance of this stage can be understood by the fact that, alone, the master signifier designates nothing. Any referent to such an absolute unconditioned would entail a limitation, a condition, and the aphanisis of S_1. In order then to have significance the master signifier must be doubled by the *objet a*—the object to which the master signifier will henceforth refer. Because *a* is an (albeit imaginary) object, and not a mere signifier, there is furthermore no risk of aphanisis at this stage.

This *objet a* is made possible by the fact that the repression of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* has left a gap in the symbolic order—the *petit objet a* fills in this gap and serves imaginarily as the immediate and self-identical referent to the master signifier. We then end up with a situation in which the unconditionedness of the master signifier is no longer compromised, insofar as the difference between S_1 (Being) and the *objet a* (substance) is imaginarily elided: $S_1 \leftrightarrow S_2 \leftrightarrow S_3 \leftrightarrow S_n$ has developed into $S_1 \leftrightarrow a$ // $S_3 \rightarrow S_n$ ("//" denotes that the terms on either side have been separated). Henceforth S_1 and the *objet a* are sublated into one self-referential (self-caused) cause. For the male subject, this is the equivalent of the doubling of the master signifier by the phallus (a fetish object). The phallus and the drive for totality then condition each other, and, in their sublated unity (made possible only through the imposition of the imaginary) present themselves as self-caused.

Because the *objet a* is imaginary it must be continually refound in the body of the Other, the sexual partner. To the extent that representations of the Other are, in the formation of the subject of patriarchy, on the one hand imaginary (denying the Other's singularity), and, on the other hand limited to seeing the Other as the cause of desire, the male subject appears politically problematic. Lacan writes:

> On the side of man, I have inscribed $\$$ [the split subject], certainly not to privilege him in any way, and the Φ that props him up as signifier and is also incarnated in S_1, which, of all the signifiers, is the signifier for which there is no signified, and which, with respect to meaning (*sens*), symbolizes the failure thereof. ... [T]his $\$$ never deals with anything by way of a partner but object *a* inscribed on the other side of the bar. He is unable to attain his sexual partner, who is the Other, except inasmuch as his partner is the cause of his desire. In this respect, as is indicated elsewhere in my graphs by the oriented conjunction of $\$$ and *a*, this is nothing other than fantasy. (*SXX* 80)

Just as the fantasmatic *objet a* takes the place of $\cancel{S_2}$, so the fetishistic object cause of desire takes the place of the repressed term ~~woman~~. That the situation resulting from the

male position of enunciation so closely replicates the occidental position toward the Other put forth in post-colonial orientalist critiques is of particular interest, since it implies a certain parallel between the development of the subject within patriarchy and the development of patriarchy *qua* subject. What relationship, it must be asked, do S_1, S_2, and the *objet a* have to the relevant terms of political theory: the sovereign, the Other, and bare life? If it is possible to articulate the political dynamic in the terms elaborated throughout this chapter, the question might then be asked as to the significance of an alternative way for the sexual relationship to fail, and, in failing, ultimately succeed. The female position of enunciation (structured according to the logic of the mathematic antinomy) could be seen to have considerable political ramifications: "[F]or Woman, something other than object *a* is at stake in what comes to make up for (*suppléer*) the sexual relationship that does not exist" (63). Before we can begin, however, to examine the implications of these theses, we will have to make a significant detour through the theories of sovereignty and biopolitics outlined by Michel Foucault and developed by Giorgio Agamben.

Interlude One: Kafka's Circumscription of Failure

> To do justice to the figure of Kafka in its purity and its peculiar beauty one must never lose sight of one thing: it is the purity and beauty of a failure.
>
> –Benjamin, "Reflections on Kafka" 144-145

"In every case," writes Walter Benjamin on Kafka, "it is a question of how life and work are organized in human society" ("*Reflections on Kafka"* 122). But what makes Kafka's stories so powerfully reflect and in many cases predict the organization of society? Deleuze and Guattari offer one theory to this effect in their concise book *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*. In his famous letter to his father, Kafka describes his personal tyrant's body laid across the surface of the Earth: "I feel as if I could consider living in only those regions that either are not covered by you or are not within your reach" (cited in Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 10). Deleuze and Guattari read this in literal terms and consider the implications of such an "exaggerated Oedipus": "The photo of the father, expanded beyond all bounds, will be projected onto the geographic, historical, and political *map* of the world in order to reach vast regions of it…. An Oedipalization of the

universe" (10). I will argue, focusing on Deleuze and Guattari's reading of two of Kafka's unfinished novels, *The Trial* and *The Castle*, that through such an Oedipalization of the universe, the projection of the Oedipal series (the result of the Oedipal process being the male subject described above) on the political and spatial series, Kafka accomplishes the simultaneous investigation and deconstruction of each. More generally, by mapping the coordinates of desire onto the spatial and political, Kafka provides a bridge for discussing the sexed and the biopolitical subject.

Kafka enlarges his father to such a degree that every inch of space unoccupied by his presence, every possible argument against Oedipus, is scrutinized with the closest precision. Moreover, because this image of the father is projected onto the geo- and biopolitical series, what holds for the one holds for the other such that the "comic expansion of Oedipus allows one to see these other oppressor triangles through the lens of the microscope" (Deleuze and Guattari *Kafka*, 12). This superimposition of the Oedipal scenario onto the political situation, in bringing the two series together, allows for the possibility of a crossreading and critique that might serve as a template for my own project of reading psychoanalytic theory against biopolitical theory. Furthermore, because both the sexual and the political are cast in spatial terms, a spatial solution or alternative discovered in Kafka's writing should have an equivalent alternative for the sexual and biopolitical subject. If "Kafka attempts to extract from social representations assemblages of enunciation … and to dismantle these assemblages," it should be understood that these assemblages of enunciation are modes of the male position of enunciation, and that their dismantling lays the latter bare in its contingency, in this way opening up the possibility of an Other position of enunciation, that of feminine *jouissance* (46).

Feminine *jouissance* thus offers an alternative to Oedipus. If my thesis is correct, and if feminine *jouissance* is operative in Kafka's work, then an equivalent spatial and political alternative should be identifiable. This, I would argue, is the importance of Deleuze and Guattari's interpretation—that they manage to trace the movement in Kafka's text from the male position to the female: "*An unlimited field of immanence instead of an infinite transcendence*" (*Kafka* 51).

In spatial terms, the dichotomy of transcendence and immanence is suggested by the architecture of the courtrooms in *The Trial* and the layout of the village in *The Castle*. For example, the image of the transcendent judge is replaced by the image of contiguous rooms, one leading into the next. Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari note that, "[i]n *The Castle*, the apparent unity gives way in turn to a basic segmentation ('[The Castle was only] a rambling pile consisting of innumerable small buildings closely packed to-gether')" (*Kafka*, 8).

Transposed onto the dynamics of power of the two novels, the transition from transcendence to immanence becomes the transition from law to desire, or, the gradual realization that desire permeates every aspect of law: "*where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone*" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 49). Hence the abandonment of K.'s initial plan of making embassy directly with the Count, opting instead to attempt to gain the favor of various steward and substewards. Hence also, in both novels, the network of relations developed by K, often sexual, with supporting female characters (girls, landladies, barmaids, et al.).

We have already seen how separation is concomitant with transcendence. Male desire is maintained through the transcendent separation of *das Ding*, which, if attained,

would yield *jouissance*. For this reason, if K. were to reach the castle, receive a sentence, or enter the law, this would undoubtedly be the worse thing possible for him as a male subject and would entail the destruction of his desire. His death drive would in this way obtain directly its lethal object. Much interpretation errs on this point, assuming naively that K. wants to gain admittance. It should rather be insisted that K. *wants to desire to* gain admittance (as per the formula: man's desire is desire of the Other), but that actual admittance to the space of the transcendent would spell his death, as well as the immediate end of the novel. (Incidentally, this is why Kafka could not complete any of his three major novels, *The Man Who Disappeared*, *The Trial*, or *The Castle*; his failure in this respect was a structural necessity imposed by the form of his subject matter.)

The female position of enunciation on the other hand takes an entirely different stance towards *jouissance*—as with the figure of the mystic: "they experience it, but know nothing about it" (Lacan, *SXX* 76). *The Trial* and *The Castle* might be read as the gradual dawning of the epiphany: *jouissance* is experienced, but nothing is known about it. Nevertheless, in circumscribing this *x*, the mechanisms and power structures that have grown up around it are gradually laid bare. As both novels unfurl, K. becomes ever more deeply entrenched in the pursuit of his desire: on the one hand, while fighting his case, and on the other, at the base of the castle. Especially in *The Castle* does it become clear that the initial image of the castle on the hill fades as K.'s pursuits change radically. Here, as elsewhere, "it is less a question of presenting this image of a transcendental and unknowable law than of dissecting the mechanism of an entirely different sort of machine, which needs this image of the law only to align its gears and make them function together" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 43).

The Trial offers more difficulty on this point considering how Max Brod's edition ends (Kafka's intended order of the chapters is contested)—with K.'s death. Nevertheless, a discussion of his legal options with the painter Titorelli sketches the possible positions of enunciation he could take towards his case, opting in one case for "protraction." Here are Titorelli's words:

> [P]rotraction is when the trial is constantly kept at the lowest stage. …You can't let the trial out of your sight; you have to visit the relevant judge at regular intervals, and any extra chance you get as well, and try to keep him as well disposed as possible in all ways. … If nothing is omitted in this respect, you can be sufficiently assured that the trial will never progress beyond its initial stage. The trial doesn't end of course, but the defendant is almost as safe from a conviction as he would be as a free man. … The trial must be kept constantly spinning within the tight circle to which it's artificially restricted. (160-161)

Deleuze and Guattari consider K.'s gradual acceptance of protraction (an alternative to the transcendent oscillation between guilt and innocence of "apparent acquittal") as a victory of the immanent model over the transcendent: "the whole story of K revolves around the way in which he enters more deeply into [protraction]. … He thereby leaves the abstract machine of the law that opposes law to desire, as body is opposed to spirit, as form is opposed to matter, in order to enter into the … mutual immanence of a decoded law and a deterritorialized desire" (*Kafka* 52). Protraction serves as the juridico-political reflection of Lacan's strongest statement against phallic *jouissance*, his ethical imperative: "Don't give up on your desire" (see: *SVII* chapter XXIV; pp. 311-325). The logic of this maxim, linking transcendence to immanence, is expressed in spatial terms in the following extract from Kafka's "The Advocate":

> So if you find nothing in the corridors open the doors, if you find nothing behind these doors there are more floors, and if you find nothing up there, don't worry, just leap up another flight of stairs. As long as you don't stop climbing, the stairs won't end, under your climbing feet they will go on growing upwards. (451)

The trial will never progress beyond its initial stage, as desire will never develop into its end and death. By prolonging desire indefinitely, protraction offers one formula for resisting the inevitable coming-up-short with respect to *jouissance* encountered by the male subject.

Deleuze and Guattari remark that Kafka's writing is antipathetic to all metaphor. Quoting Kafka's diary from 1921 ("Metaphors are one of the things that makes me despair of literature."), they note, "Kafka deliberately kills all metaphor, all symbolism, all signification, no less than all designation. Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor" (*Kafka* 22). I propose that this aversion should be read in conjunction with the following statement of Lacan:

> [J]ouissance would do better to hush up, but when it does, that makes the very absence of the sexual relationship a bit harder yet to bear. Which is why, in the final analysis, it doesn't hush up, and why the first effect of repression is that it speaks of something else. That is what constitutes the mainspring of metaphor. (*SXX* 61-62)

Urverdrängung can then be seen to be the mainstream of metaphor, the elementary form of which is the *objet petit a* taking the place of the repressed. Metaphor, speaking in the place of the Other, is predicated upon the latter's repression. ~~Woman~~, on the other hand, doesn't speak her *jouissance*. Perhaps Kafka's refusal of metaphor is related to this refusal to speak, contenting himself instead to write—or better yet circumscribe—the failure of the sexual relationship. If the thesis of an enlarged Oedipus is correct, then a path is outlined by Kafka for a refusal of metaphor in biopolitics (the metaphor of bare life, *bloßes Leben*), and the circumscription of the failure of the biopolitical order.

Chapter Two: There's No Such Thing as Biopolitics

> Jacques-Alain Miller: From another direction, what gives you the confidence to prophesy the rise of racism? And why the devil do you have to speak of it?
>
> Jacques Lacan: Because it doesn't strike me as funny and yet, it's true.
>
> With our jouissance going off the track only the Other is able to mark its position, but only insofar as we are separated from this Other. Whence certain fantasies—unheard of before the melting pot.
>
> Leaving this Other to his own mode of jouissance, that would only be possible by not imposing our own on him, by not thinking of him as underdeveloped.
>
> –Lacan, *Television* 32

I. The Biopolitical Relationship that Shouldn't Be/Never Fails

Copjec's analysis makes it clear that, while the sexual relation is real, other differences with which it is commonly conflated (of race, class, and ethnicity for example) are themselves purely symbolic (207). This does not, mean, however, that the raced, classed, and ethnicized subject is not him- or herself always already sexed. Although race, class, ethnicity, and generally the body or *bios* are by no means natural categories, but rather (agreeing with the dominant opinion of cultural studies) the products of complicated historical processes and constructs, the distinction between One (S_1) and Other (S_2) which underlies this symbolic is rooted firmly in the real—in short, the body is sexed. This is one of the central theses of this paper: *the biopolitical subject is sexed*. Which is to say: The biopolitical relationship, like the sexual (and the two are undeniably intimately intertwined; it is no accident that Foucault developed his theory of biopolitics halfway

through writing *The History of Sexuality*), never fails to fail, but more precisely, *biopolitical discourse never fails to fail in two distinct modes—the dynamic and the mathematic.*

Saying that the biopolitical social link (a synonym for discourse used by Lacan) never fails to fail does *not* mean that structural necessity will inaugurate a new non-biopolitical paradigm (Lacan, *SXX* 54). Rather, an initial failure is presupposed for success. This is what leads Lacan, in his *Seminar XX*, to conclude: "botching (*ratage*) is the only way of realizing [the sexual relationship] if, as I posit, there's no such thing as a sexual relationship" (58). This is because *jouissance*, the object of the sexual relationship insofar as it signifies "orgasm" in addition to "enjoyment," is, as we haves seen, circumscribed as a lack by the failed attempts at its achievement, themselves a result of the introduction of the differential system of the signifier. *Jouissance* is therefore that which "shouldn't be/never fails [to be]" (*qu'il ne faut pas*) (59).[10] It "shouldn't be" insofar as its *absence* is a condition for the desiring subject. It "never fails" insofar as its absence is a *condition for the desiring subject*. In the same way that unattainable *jouissance* is presupposed by desire structured as "metonymy, eternally extending toward the desire for something else," the unattainable object of the biopolitical relationship (which we will specify later) is presupposed by the symbolic network of apparatuses and relationships that constitute biopolitical discourse (Lacan, *Écrit* 431). It doesn't seem like much of a stretch, then, to speak of, in this case, the biopolitical relationship that shouldn't be/never fails.

Although this discourse succeeds in never failing to fail, the success of its interpretation hinges on clarifying in which way it fails. If the biopolitical relationship should be seen to fail in the dynamic way, it will be necessary to inquire as to the nature of its

jouissance and the status of the imaginary desire (*a*) that makes up for the lack thereof. If, on the other hand, the biopolitical relationship should be seen to fail in the mathematic mode, this would require a different interpretative apparatus, an *Other jouissance*.

II. Sovereign- and Biopower

Foucault initially defines biopower through its difference to its predecessor, the power of the sovereign. Whereas sovereign power was exercised as a "right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself" culminating in the "privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it," a newer form of power arises which is "bent on generating forces, making them grow, and ordering them" (*History of Sexuality* 136). While the former is a "subtraction mechanism" which oppresses and kills, the latter generates and is hence productive (136).

This new power, situated by Foucault from the seventeenth century on, is then further subdivided into two coexisting poles: anatomopolitics and biopolitics, to which correspond respectively disciplinary techniques and regulatory controls (*History of Sexuality* 139). The disciplinary techniques of anatomopolitics, explicated at length in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, "were used to ensure the spatial distribution of individual bodies (their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance)" (*Society* 242). These techniques are productive insofar as they give rise to the host of institutions dedicated to ensuring their preservation. As a result, we see the development of the modern carceral system, as well as others of "surveillance, hierarchies, inspections, bookkeeping, and reports" (242). These techniques of power take as

their subject/object the delinquent, who is as much a product of anatomopolitics as the symptom treated by the disciplinary apparatus (see: *Discipline* 251-292).

The regulatory controls of biopolitics proper are only arrived at once power is directed "not at man-as-body but at man-as-species" (Foucault *Society* 243). This power is thus "situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population" (*History of Sexuality* 137). Here we are dealing with phenomena such as "[h]ealth-insurance systems, old-age pensions; rules on hygiene that guarantee the optimal longevity of the population; the pressures that the very organization of the town brings to bear on sexuality and therefore procreation; child care, education, et cetera" (*Society* 251). The subject/object of biopolitics, while intersecting significantly with that of anatomopolitics, consists in domesticating those random elements of a society that resist statistical standardization. Regulatory biopower operates like the statistician concerned with decreasing the standard deviation of a set of data; it is "a technology which brings together the mass effects characteristic of a population, which tries to control the series of random events that can occur in a living mass, a technology which tries to predict the probability of those events (by modifying it, if necessary, or at least to compensate for their effects" (249). The margin of error to be reduced is the degenerate element, which not only throws off the data spread, but also threatens to contaminate the rest of the population through its biological and cultural reproduction (see: 252).

It is also important to note that these new anatomopolitical and biopolitical mechanisms and the old, sovereign mechanisms of power "are not mutually exclusive and can be articulated with each other" (Foucault, *Society* 250). Just as the discourse of

the university sustains in a sublated form the discourse of the master, the sovereign continues to function within the biopolitical state. Foucault designates the power of the sovereign the power to "take life or let live," while biopower is determined by its capacity of "making live and letting die" (241; 247). Whereas the former power revealed itself through death and deprivation, the latter, operating through production and life, can hardly tolerate death: "Power no longer recognizes death. Power literally ignores death" (248). As a result the problem of death, the continued execution of the sovereign's right to take the life of its subjects, must somehow be negotiated with the biopolitical injunction to live.

That Foucault describes the contradiction between the sovereign's right to kill and the production of life in terms of "paradoxes that appear at the points where the exercise of this biopower reaches its limits," should be underscored (*Society* 253). Although a comprehensive analysis of this antinomy will become possible only through the analysis of Agamben's formalization of the struggle between life and law, let it suffice for now to demonstrate that a conflict between the master's sword and the life of the population yields a two-pronged paradox: On the one hand, the right of the sovereign, if universalized, would yield the destruction of the population, "the power to kill life itself," epitomized by the threat of the atomic bomb. (253). "At the opposite extreme," continues Foucault, "you no longer have a sovereign right that is in excess of biopower, but a biopower that is in excess of sovereign right" (254).

The first possibility, of an unlimited sovereign, corresponds to the proposition, $\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$: there exists a member of the population not subject to the biopolitical law, and by extension to the prohibition of killing. The exception posed by the sovereign would seem,

in this case, to negate the rule. On the other hand, a biopower in excess of sovereign right corresponds to the proposition $\forall x \Phi x$: all elements of the population are subject to the rule of life. Here, sovereignty becomes impossible as the biopolitical rule becomes so entrenched that the possibility of death is foreclosed.

Between these two extremes, universalized death and impossible death, biopolitical society is suspended, and, unable to sustain this suspense, threatened with its own disappearance—*aphanisis*. It is the *all* that once again causes problems. The limit cases of the antinomy resulting from the intersection of sovereign and biopolitical power both concern the quantity *all*—*all* persons are subject to the sword of the sovereign (as a result of his not being subject to his own sword i.e. he is uncastrated), or *all* persons are subject to limitless biopolitical forces—both entail the collapse of the social system they pose in the first place.

If the existence of the sovereign threatens biopolitics with its disappearance, it is equally evident that, in spite of this paradox, the order continues to function. Just as reason manages to recover from the paradox of the dynamic antinomy, just as male subjectivity is viable in spite of the apparent paradox of the male sex, biopolitics manages to effect a separation that makes it possible to displace the problem onto a heterogeneous element (see: *figure 3.*). In Kant this heterogeneity was constructed via the prohibition of reason against the experience of the thing in itself. This internal limit serves both a negative and a positive function: to prevent reason from falling into contradiction, *and* to maintain an empty space susceptible to the imputation of imaginary substance. The corresponding Foucauldian prohibition, racism, without which, "the modern State can scarcely function," divides the homogenous population, like Kant's universe, into distinct

heterogeneous groups (Foucault *Society* 254). "What in fact is racism?" asks Foucault rhetorically, to which he responds: "It is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power's control: the break between what must live and what must die" (254).

The negative function of racism concerns eugenics, which is structured according to the logic: "as more and more of our number die, the race to which we belong will become all the purer" (Foucault, *Society* 257). Because the biopolitical order is concerned with the promulgation of the forces of life, irrational elements (degeneracy, spontaneity) are suppressed through the construction of the racial Other onto which these undesirable qualities are displaced. In Kant's transcendental critique, because certain potential aspects of experience are outside of time and space, and hence not subsumable to the objective laws of reason, they are similarly displaced onto the likewise constructed *noumena*. The prohibition against representation of the *noumena* then becomes a prohibition against the political representation of the racialized Other.

The positive function of Foucauldian racism consists in the production of the Other space in which race will be constructed/imagined. Agamben's work could be said to take up the positive aspect of racist prohibition, arguing that the biopolitical order necessarily produces this figure whom he names *homo sacer*, the bearer of bare life living in the state of exception.

Figure 3.	Heterogeneous Population	?
Sovereign Power	All life is subject to death	?
Anatomo/Biopolitical Power	All life is subject to law/life	?

III. *Bios* and *Zoē*

The macroscopic observations and broad theorizations of Foucault are to a certain extent refined through Agamben's overtly structural methodology. This is accomplished primarily through the transposition of the struggle between power and life onto the ancient Greek distinction of *bios* and *zoē*, political and bare life (*bloßes Leben*). A similar dialectic of totality and its exception is thereby promulgated, as the totality of the political order (*bios*) seeks to include that which exceeds it, bare life (*zoē*). I will concern myself with two aspects of Agamben's thought—bare life and the state of exception, "the original structure in which law [*bios*] encompasses living beings [*zoē* or bare life] by means of its own suspension" (*State of Exception* 3). Since, as we will see, bare life appears always as that which exceeds the political order, we can recognize its absence as constitutive—*zoē* functions as a lack. To this lack, I will argue, respond the excesses of the two series previously addressed—transcendental ontology and the desiring subject. More precisely, insofar as sex, the product of the application of enlightenment rationality on its subjects, is "a means of access both to the life of the body and the life of the species," it occurs at the intersection of the individual and the collective, life and law, Eros and Oedipus; the success of the biopolitical re-production of these same subjects then hinges upon its utilization of sexual difference (Foucault, *History of Sexuality* 146).

Foucault's genealogies yield again and again a situation in which the law's efforts to constitute itself as universally valid comes invariably against an excess. To the extent that a positive delineation of law's jurisdiction implies a space beyond that boundary, this excess should be considered, not as a pregiven or prediscursive positivity, but as the retroactively presupposed excess of the law itself. The annexation of this space by the

law has historically taken three major forms. First, sovereign power reached the boundary imposed by the Enlightenment, that designating a "rational," and "free" subjective space, the space of rights beyond the capacity of law to govern. Second, this space was colonized by anatomopower's hold over the individual body. The body was disciplined, and the law was inscribed on the flesh of subject. Third, anatomopower reached the boundary of the life of the population, which has most recently been colonized by the regulatory apparatus of biopolitics.

Agamben, expanding on Carl Schmitt's topology of the *Ausnahmezustand*, state of exception, notes that, in each case, the way in which the law deals with its excess is more complicated than the latter's mere inclusion, consisting rather in "letting the juridical order … withdraw from the exception and abandon it" (*Homo Sacer* 18). He continues: "the exception does not subtract itself from the rule; rather, the rule, suspending itself, gives rise to the exception and, maintaining itself in relation to the exception, first constitutes itself as a rule" (18). Note its cunning: by producing the exception itself, and by maintaining this "relation to an exteriority," the law manages to account for this exception on its own terms—somewhat paradoxically, the sovereign universality of the law and its suspension are equiprimordial (18). Thus, it is not that a pre-given set of life-elements has been slowly colonized by a law-function (this is the teleological model in which law was first concerned with seizure of property, then the individual body, then the population, etc.), but that law, coming across an internal limit, posits a space beyond that limit, the space of "right," and of "freedom," thereby transforming the *limit* into a *boundary* (limits, recall, permit no such space beyond). Agamben's conclusion that biopolitics has developed to thanatopolitics, the politics of death as opposed to the politics of life, is

meaningful here to the extent that the beyond of a boundary (i.e., the pleasure principle) has been shown, in other contexts, to be the domain of the death drive, *Thanatos* (see: 122). Thus, while for Agamben, "[e]uthanasia signals the point at which biopolitics necessarily turns into thanatopolitics," I would argue that biopolitics is always already thanatopolitics to the extent that it topologically presupposes its own beyond.

Agamben designates this structure the "*relation of exception*": "the extreme form of relation by which something is included solely through its exclusion" (*Homo Sacer* 18). The external, it turns out, does not represent the failure of the law to include; rather, the law's originary activity consists of creating this binary, tracing the "threshold between the two, on the basis of which outside and inside, the normal situation and chaos, enter into those complex topological relations that make the validity of the juridical order possible" (19). The positive function of the delineation of a state of exception stabilizes and universalizes the political in the same way that the exceptional thing in itself stabilizes the domain of reason and offers a solution to the dynamic antinomy.

For Agamben, the figure burdened with this exception is the bearer of bare life itself, the eponymous *homo sacer*, the equivalent of the racialized Other in Foucault. This historical reality has its roots in the Ancient Greek distinction between two forms of living: *zoē*, "which expresses the simple fact of living common to all living beings," and *bios*, "which indicated the form or way of living proper to an individual or a group" (*Homo Sacer* 1). Because, through Aristotle, the latter (in *bios politicos*) became equated with the political life of the subject under the law, the former, insofar as it represents that which must be overcome in the transition from animal to political entity, came to serve as the exception to *bios*: "simple natural life is excluded from the *polis* in the strict sense";

zoē cannot but become a concern for politics to the extent that it represents its exterior (2; see: 7). *Bios*, in order then to render its domain consistent, must place itself in a relation of exception to *zoē*, whereby the latter serves as a constituting inclusion/exclusion to the former.

The transition to modernity then consists in the gradual increase of the degree to which *zoē* is included in *bios*, resulting in a state in which they are indistinguishably superimposed (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 9). This can be explained through the focus on liberties and rights, conceived of as an integral part of the Enlightenment, insofar as "the spaces, the liberties, and the rights won by individuals in their conflicts with central powers always simultaneously prepared a tacit but increasing inscription of the individuals' lives [*zoē*] within the state order [*bios*]" (121). Each individual political right (foremost of which is the right to life itself—predicated on pure *zoē*) has the underside of validating and justifying the exclusion from which it would purport to represent a liberation.

The conception thus arrived at may still be characterized as somewhat naïve to the extent that it understands *zoē* to be a natural presupposition of *bios*. It must rather be emphasized that it is the structure of the sovereign state of exception that institutes this dualism in the first place. Through this relation of exception, sovereignty traces the border between *bios* and *zoē*, "and from time to time renews this threshold of indistinction between outside and inside, exclusion and inclusion, *nomos* and *physis*, in which life is originarily excepted in law" (*Homo Sacer* 27). The power of sovereignty lies in making a decision on the undecidable. When it is taken into account that *zoē* and *bios* have become absolutely conflated in an undecidable zone of indistinction, it would appear the

sovereign decision, to draw a line between the two, has become universalized, and that the result of the past three hundred years of democratization is, in this regard, absolute totalitarianism. This is what allows Agamben to explain the continuity with which "twentieth-century parliamentary democracies were able to turn into totalitarian states," and to view the concentration camp as the biopolitical paradigm of the modern, "the space of this absolute impossibility of deciding between fact and law, rule and application, exception and rule, which nevertheless incessantly *decides between them*" (122, 173; emphasis mine). This decision, moreover, is a sovereign decision on death, given that it consists in the violent reinstatement of an arbitrary boundary between *zoē* and *bios*, between mere life that can be killed and that which has been recognized politically as valuable, and in which (in the context of euthanasia) "one man finds himself in the position of having to separate *zoē* and *bios* in another man, and to isolate in him something like a bare life that may be killed" (142).

In fact, the isolation of bare life as capacity to be killed is the realization of the enlightenment opposition between private/free life and public law. With the inscription of each individual right in law, life becomes increasingly reduced to its bare (*bloß*) biological existence. A crisis might then be expected as the expansion of the domain of law is taken to its limit, toward an *all*. Law, or power, which amount to the same thing (as in *nomos*), has traditionally exploited two frontiers as sources of its life/object. The first progress is the legal inscription of various rights in the political order, beginning with the right of the sovereign and culminating in the universal notion of human rights. The second progress concerns national boundaries and the construction of the populations to which these rights pertain. Following World War I and the collapse of the nation-state

model, the production of an Other space on which to project the sovereign right to kill has become increasingly difficult. Though racism has managed, through the construction of both external and internal foreign elements held in a state of exception, to mediate the productive forces of biopolitics with the destructive fact of bare life, the symptoms of late capitalism indicate that this measure will prove insufficient to deal with what results from the combination of these two forms of progress. Globalization and bare life may be considered absolute limit terms beyond which no further space, exceptional or otherwise, may be posited. *All* of the world has been colonized; *all* aspects of life have been seized by power. In the absence of further frontiers/boundaries, how will the heterogeneity required to found the biopolitical subject be maintained?

I think that two situations are possible here. The first has been previously alluded to and consists in the opening of an internal state of exception. This amounts essentially to the insistence of racism within a frame in which it is no longer strictly applicable; it entails the forcing of heterogeneity onto a homogenous set and choosing between who lives and who dies in the undecidable situation in which "we are all virtually *homines sacri*," bearers of bare life (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 115). Because we are all *virtually homines sacri* does not mean that we are all *actually homines sacri*—Agamben is not extending Foucault's claim to say that we have *all* become the racialized Other necessary for the maintenance of the biopolitical order. Rather, his statement should be interpreted as implying that at any moment our virtual status can collapse into actuality depending on factors largely unknown to us. Kafka's work is exemplary in making this point, as is evident in the law's dealings with Joseph K., the protagonist of *The Trial*: The events portrayed in the novel are motivated by the mere fact that "someone must have slan-

dered" him (*Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben*) (See: *Homo Sacer* 52-53; Kafka, *The Trial* 3).

The other possibility insists on the ontological lack of the transcendent exception. It asks: what would the non-existence of further exception ($\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$) entail for the *all* insofar as the latter presupposes exception? To answer this question satisfactorily, I will argue, entails moving beyond the structure of the male, dynamic antinomy toward the female and mathematic, which, as has been shown, similarly resists the possibility of the transcendent solution. Such advice might be read into Agamben, although he is quite vague on this point, calling for the reader "to ask if the political fact is not perhaps thinkable beyond relation and, thus, no longer in the form of a connection" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 29). The rest of this chapter will concern itself with the distinction between these possibilities—the virtual and the real (*wirklich*) state of exception.

IV. The Biopolitical Unconscious

The number of times Agamben uses examples from structural linguistics to elaborate his theory of biopolitics points to a deeper connection between the two. To take a strong example: "the particular structure of law has its foundation in this presuppositional structure of human language" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 21). Again: "The sphere of law shows its essential proximity to that of language" (20). It would seem justified, then, to identify the grammar of language (e.g., metonymy, metaphor, difference, subject-verb-object) with the grammar of the law. Furthermore, given that "the unconscious is structured like a language," the grammar of the subject would be expected to fall along similar structural lines (Lacan, *SXI* 149). The nature of the structure we are dealing with is

differential to the extent that each signifier is defined by what it is not. In Kant's transcendental critique, this is manifest in that each conditioned is determined by its conditions. In language, differentiality denotes the way in which words are defined negatively—the signifier "tree" is defined as NOT "dog," NOT "France," NOT "mutton," NOT "Kant," NOT "Saussure," *ad infinitum*. Similarly, that the unconscious is structured like a differential system of signification leads Lacan to discern the mechanisms of alienation and separation, which stem directly from the fact that the unary signifier (S_1) depends on the binary signifier (S_2) for its meaning.

If the law, in the broad sense of a *nomos* which would encompass both politics and relations of biopower, has anything to do with language, it could be summed up as follows: *Biopower is structured like a language, that is, differentially*. In Foucauldian terms this could be reformulated by noting the complex network of apparatuses responsible for the formation of the subject. A subject is differentially defined against the apparatus of power/knowledge that determines him or her. Here the bankruptcy of human rights discourse makes itself obvious—the liberal free subject endowed with rights is the presupposition of the power structures he or she resists: "Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free … slavery is not a power relationship when man is in chains … consequently, there is no face-to-face confrontation of power and freedom" (Foucault, "The Subject and Power" 428).

Foucault continues: "Freedom may well appear as the condition for the exercise of power," as the thing in itself conditions the objective synthesis of appearance, and as S_1 conditions S_2 ("The Subject and Power" 428). A monistic perspective that recognizes the immanent reversibility of certain causal relationships—first formulated in Spinoza's

statement, "God is the immanent, not the transitive, cause of all things"—would provoke us to reverse this relation and investigate to what extent power is the condition for the exercise of freedom (*Ethics* 46). After all, what would freedom signify without the measure of imprisonment? However, it is this very reversibility that is prohibited through the relation of exception. Freedom, in Kant's conception "the faculty of starting an event spontaneously," is a synonym of the unconditioned (*Prolegomena* 79; § 53 footnote 39). In order to avoid the antinomic contradiction in terms that would result from a conditioned unconditioned, the relation of the law towards freedom cannot be a relation with something relational, since to relate to the relational in no way prevents the reversibility of this relation. Hence the relation of exception may be articulated as the "positing of a relation with the non-relational" (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 29). It is obvious that a separation is somehow enacted through the mechanism of the state of exception. As we have seen, separation entails the transcendence of the master signifier at the expense of the repressed *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*. It must then be asked, what is repressed, what is separated, in the state of exception.

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Because the biopolitical relation is differential, it makes sense to speak of a biopolitical unconscious. We take our subject to this unconscious to be the sovereign, "he who decides on the exception" (Schmitt 5). In Schmitt's reading of his contemporary, Hans Kelsen, legal positivism consists in the fact that "the basis for the validity of a norm can only be a norm" (19). Although Schmitt and Kelsen both see in this account a monism demanded by the "unity of the viewpoint of cognition" (i.e., that all norms are determined *by* norms in a hierarchical fashion according to the homogenous maxim: like determines

like), Kelsen's description of such a situation contradicts itself and leads necessarily to the question of a transcendent dualism (18). The transcendent term here takes the names, "constitution," "state," "decision," and "sovereign":

> The state, meaning the legal order, is a system of ascriptions to a last point of ascription and to a last basic norm … the terminal point of ascription, the point at which the ascriptions, which constitute the essence of juristic consideration, "can stop." This "point" is simultaneously an "order that cannot be further derived. (Schmitt, quoting Kelsen 18)

The totality of the system of ascriptions, when viewed as a chain of conditioned laws, necessarily leads to this "terminal point," an analogue of the unconditioned in Kant. Like reason, the legal order presented by Kelsen regresses to the unconditioned law (sovereign constitution), which is accepted uncritically. Yet, in the law's demand for normal application, for a "homogenous medium" to which it might apply, it is this unconditioned which presents a problem (Schmitt 13). Schmitt asks rhetorically, "On what does the intellectual necessity and objectivity of the various ascriptions with the various points of ascription rests if it does not rest on a positive determination, on a command?" (20). This exception, non-legal command or decision, is intolerable to Kelsen's positivist legal philosophy. Schmitt concludes, "the result of [Kelsen's] deduction is that 'the concept of sovereignty [*Souveränitätsbegriff*] must be radically repressed'" (21). I propose this statement be taken literally, insisting on the proper psychoanalytic sense of repression: *In order to establish the unity of a law applicable to a homogenous normal situation, the concept of sovereignty must be repressed.* What Kelsen is unable to see, but what Schmitt begins to grasp, is that this repression of the concept of sovereignty guarantees its survival, its return, just as (as we have mentioned before, and in an analogous turn) "repression and return of the repressed are the same thing" (Lacan, *SI* 191). Note well that we are not dealing with the sovereign *per se* but rather with the *concept* of sovereignty—with what

is this second order concept associated? To answer this question we will have to look a little closer at the mechanics involved between the sovereign and his representation.

In the same way that the thing in itself produces and guarantees the apparent situation in its totality, the sovereign, according to Schmitt "produces and guarantees the situation in its totality" (Schmitt 13). Structured according to the discourse of the university, the repression of the representations (S_2) of the master signifier (recall the model: $S_1 \rightarrow \cancel{S_2} \rightarrow S_3 \rightarrow S_n$) ensures the master signifier's survival as the motivating drive for the totality of representation in general. The repression of the concept of sovereignty by the norm would then be expected to have the effect of universalizing the function of the sovereign, just as the master signifier, Being, maintains a transcendent relation of non-relation to *all* elements of the signifying chain. The concept, or representation, of the sovereign may then be said to be present in his effect, his function: what we have seen from Foucault to be the right to kill—the decision on life and death. It is this arbitrary decision that is unpalatable to the biopolitical order. By repressing the sovereign decision, his transcendent place is assured within biopolitical discourse. The sovereign himself is preserved as a transcendent exception through the *Urverdrängung* of S_2, the decision to kill.

The political import of this formulation lies in the fact that the repression of the "concept of sovereignty" (i.e., the decision) by constitutional democracy cements the sovereign as an absolute transcendent exception while blinding the democratic subject to the continued execution of the sovereign decision (which returns insofar as it is repressed). Because the decision is invariably bound with the figure who bears its effects, *homo sacer* is understood to be the representation of the sovereign. The sovereign exists

only in his relationship to *homo sacer*, yet it is this relationship that must be repressed lest the transcendence of the sovereign be compromised. In the metaphysical series, Being came to be imaginarily doubled by substance, which filled in the gap in the symbolic order left by the repression of knowledge of Being. In the biopolitical series, this imaginary redoubling is effected by bare life. The metaphor of bare life is imagined in the place of *homo sacer*. By referring to bare life (the redoubling of the sovereign, the *sine qua non* of biopolitics), instead of to *homo sacer*, what functions as the sovereign in the biopolitical order (i.e., bare life itself) becomes a transcendent and autonomous (self-cause) entity.[11] Kelsen's foreclosure of the concept of the sovereign produces the sovereign choice, the decision between who lives and who dies, as a symptom on the level of the real—and thus as radically incontestable. It is in this specifically psychoanalytic sense that *homo sacer* (the repressed effect or representation of the sovereign) is the biopolitical unconscious, with bare life as its symptom.

The prohibition of sovereignty within the biopolitical order represents one way to deal with the antinomy that results from the continued exercise of sovereign power, a recasting of the aporia played out in the discourse of the master and made up for through the transition to the discourse of the university. This is what allows Agamben, following Foucault in spite of his own claims, to identify Nazism as "the first radically biopolitical state" as well as to conclude that "all citizens can be said, in a specific but extremely real sense, to appear virtually as *homines sacri*" living in a permanent and universalized state of exception modeled after the concentration camps of Nazi Germany (*Homo Sacer* 111). A *potential* antinomy of political rationality, through this repression-solution, has then been made *actual*. Law has responded to a paradox by living out its antinomic terms—*all*

life is hence doubly subject to the simultaneous and absolute valorization and denigration of life.

V. Not-All Persons are Political

I now turn to the second mode in which universalization can fail, the mathematic antinomy, the question of feminine *jouissance*, and the real state of exception. If the biopolitical subject is sexed, does he, understood to be structured by the fundamentally male logic of the dynamic antinomy, imply a female alternative? Benjamin's eighth thesis on the philosophy of history, the passage that provokes Agamben's digression, is short and deserves to be quoted in full:

> The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the "state of emergency" [*Ausnahmezustand*] in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight. Then we shall clearly realize that it is our task to bring about a real [*wirklich*] state of emergency, and this will improve our position in the struggle against Fascism. One reason why Fascism has a chance is that in the name of progress its opponents treat it as a historical norm. The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are "still" possible in the twentieth century is *not* philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge—unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable. (*Theses* 257)

What is called for by Benjamin is no less than a new philosophy of history, one, I would argue, that takes into account the imaginary closure of the biopolitical set effected through the dynamic separation of bare life from the biopolitical order. While I would not pretend to know exactly what this new philosophy would look like, the above analysis should at least allow for a negative articulation. Given that we are all virtually *homines sacri*, two decisions present themselves as possible: The first (sovereign) decision consists in dividing the virtual state of exception into heterogeneous groups (e.g., the first and third world): those who belong to the first are *not actually homines sacri* (though *virtually* they remain so); those who belong to the second group *are actually homines*

sacri, the virtual state of exception has for them collapsed into actuality. The second decision consists in viewing the situation as a synchronic and homogenous not-all set and hence refuses to disconnect, via the mechanism of separation, the exceptional sovereign (doubled by bare life) from the norm it establishes. This second form of decision, I will argue, constitutes the essence of the *real* (*wirklich*—opposed to both virtual and actual) state of exception, and is structured in the mode of the mathematic antinomy and feminine jouissance.

The possibility of these two decisions is predicated on the structural ambiguity inherent in the statement: $\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$, which, I would argue, characterizes the current political situation. That we are all *homines sacri* should be read: *There is no life (zoē) that is not subject to power (bios)*. Corresponding to the first decision outlined above, this statement can be interpreted to imply "therefore all life is subject (either virtually or actually) to power": $\forall x\ \Phi x$. However, to leap from the logic of "there is not an x who is not" to "all x" *presupposes a totality, an all, of x*, which, in turn, presupposes the sovereign exception: $\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$ (see: Lacan, *SXX* 103). On the other hand, the domain of power may be incomplete. If this case is applicable to the present political situation, as I believe it is, the statement, "there does not exist a person who is not subject to power" ($\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$), indicates nothing other than a constituent incompleteness within biopower itself: not-all persons are political: $\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$ (see: *figure 4.*). That not-all persons are political does not imply that there exists at least one element that is untouched by the mechanisms of biopower, a pure sovereign *zoē*—this would presuppose the givenness of the totality of both life and law. Instead, it is concluded that the domain of biopower can never be given as a totality, and that *zoē* cannot be assumed to exist behind political existence any more than things in

themselves can be assumed to exist behind appearances. This latter structure, I would argue, approaches the real (*wirklich*) state of exception called for by Benjamin.

Because the statements "$\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$" and "$\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$" make no claim of existence (unlike "$\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$" and "$\forall x\ \Phi x$" which actively assert the existence of both an exception and a totality), there can be no prohibition, no exception, no untouchable depth, in which substance or bare life could be imagined. Incompleteness in itself does not demand a gaze beyond appearances—the latter emerges only as a result of the presupposition of a beyond, namely, the heterogeneity produced in separation and the dynamic antinomy. This is not to say that $\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$: $\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$ is the formula for a post-ideological politics or ontology. Although the absence of a gaze and the homogeneity of the female formula of sexuation and the mathematic antinomy might seem to point in this direction, it should be insisted that no totality is given—the homogenous is incomplete, and there is no reason to expect that these cracks would not invite the imaginary (or any reason to wish this were the case). What is resisted is the illusion by which this imaginary appears self-identical with the master signifier, where S_1 is doubled by the imaginary object, the unity of which two terms is viewed as unconditioned. Because no transcendent heterogeneity is instituted, whatever gaze takes the place of the lacks in the Other will never be able to present itself as wholly separate from the symbolic order (as S_1 in the male formula). Hence any gaze or imaginary will be self-conscious of its status as such, as the unconscious, both biopolitical and otherwise, will be laid bare in its effects.[12]

Figure 4.	Nation-State	Globalized Population
Sovereign Power	All life is subject to death $\exists x\ \overline{\Phi x}$	No life is not subject to power $\overline{\exists x}\ \overline{\Phi x}$
Anatomo/Biopolitical Power	All life is subject to law/life $\forall x\ \Phi x$	Not-all persons are political $\overline{\forall x}\ \Phi x$

VI. Toward a Mathematic Interpretation

The paradigm of feminine *jouissance* suggests that we do away with each *objet a*, all signifiers masquerading as things in themselves, including the notion that bare life could be discovered in the body of *homo sacer*. An alternative to the imaginary *a* is offered by the matheme S(Ⱥ), the signifier of the incomplete Other. Not surprisingly, S(Ⱥ) is one more way to designate the not-all. Lacan goes so far as to place the burden of differentiating between psychoanalysis and psychology (a four-letter-word in his book) on the distinction between S(Ⱥ) and *a*:

> The aim of my teaching, insofar as it pursues what can be said and enunciated on the basis of analytic discourse, is to dissociate *a* and A by reducing the first to what is related to the imaginary and the other to what is related to the symbolic. … *a* has lent itself to be confused with S(Ⱥ), … and it has done so by means of the function of being. It is here that a scission or detachment remains to be effectuated. It is in this respect that psychoanalysis is something other than a psychology. For psychology is this uneffectuated scission. (Lacan, *SXX* 83)

If the work of psychoanalysis is to effect the scission between the *objet a* and S(Ⱥ), the work of critical biopolitical theory would be to effect a scission between the bare life imagined in the field of the Other and the Other as the inconsistency of political representation.

A practical measure might be drawn from this conclusion: *Bare life cannot justify political action* (action subversive to the biopolitical totality). Action on behalf of the Other's bare life reduces life to a fetish, an *objet a*, the prop on which the totality of the biopolitical order is constituted. This recommendation in itself is nothing new and amounts to a reiteration of points made by Agamben and Badiou, among others. What *is* productive, the benefit of reading Agamben against Lacan against Kant, is twofold: First it shows that a viable alternative exists to the dynamic, patriarchal norm—namely, an immanent philosophy and politics modeled on the not-all set. Second, by demonstrating

the points of connection between disciplines (e.g., bare life, jouissance, S(Ⱥ)), I intend to suggest that a shift from the dynamic to mathematic structure and mode of interpretation in one series (i.e., science, love, art or politics) could not fail to affect the dynamics of another. This would seem to link theory and practice and demonstrate the political efficacy of one's choice of psychoanalysis and ontology.

"There's no such thing as the sexual relationship," write Lacan, "because one's jouissance of the Other taken as a body is always inadequate—perverse, on the one hand, insofar as the Other is reduced to object *a*, and crazy and enigmatic, on the other, I would say" (*SXX* 144). And what is more perverse, crazy, and enigmatic than wars fought in the name of preserving life? If there is no such thing as the biopolitical relationship it is because bare life in itself does not exist but is always projected by a community on its Other. In doing this the Other is reduced to a fetish. If, on the other hand, the life of the Other were viewed as the signifier of the incompleteness of the community, then I doubt very much that it could continue to be mobilized in the name of the defense of society.

The political relation is not-all. Such is hinted at by Freud when he questions whether it is possible to love ones neighbor (*Civilization* 65-66). Indeed, Freud's work on mass psychology takes as its initial presumption the role of *Eros*, as Lacan describes it, a "tension toward the One," coupled with the presupposition of *Thanatos*, the death drive, in both the individual and collective subject (Freud *Group Psychology* 31; Lacan, *SXX* 12). Therefore, while the sexual relationship fails due to the impossibility of making 2 = 1, "them-two sexes" faced with "the desire to be One," is it not to be expected that the "massifying" techniques of biopolitics, an attempt to make One out of many, *e pluribus unum*, should likewise fail? (Lacan, *SXX* 12; Foucault, *Society* 243). That not-all persons

are political should *not* be interpreted as the confirmation of a reading of Agamben that concludes that *homo sacer* is the necessary result of enlightenment rationality. Rather, the not-all points to a fundamental inconsistency of biopolitical logic, casting doubt on the existence of its very object, bare life, and, hence, ambiguity on the future of the political situation.

The resistance to such "mathematic" biopolitical interpretations (e.g., anti-humanisms) can be analyzed as a symptom of the dynamic separation. Since the consistency of the liberal political subject is predicated upon the inclusive exclusion of bare life, resistance should be expected to claims denying the latter's existence. It is only by resisting this separation, by refusing the assumption that failure denotes the existence of the object missed, by insisting, with Lacan, on the distinction between S(Ⱥ) and *objet petit a* (bare life), that the mathematic antinomy, the not-all set, the *real* (*wirklich*) state of exception called for by Benjamin, can avoid collapsing, respectively, into the dynamic antinomy, the closed set, and the *virtual* state of exception, identified by Agamben to be the strongest ideological weapon wielded by the One against the Other (Lacan, *SXX* 77). Indeed, to the extent that political philosophy attempts to create a coherent, objective worldview, presupposing the totality of law and the existence of its object, life, it will not fail to produce its own failure and symptom while reproducing those of Kant.

Interlude Two: Kafka's Writing of the Impossible

> To speak of the deconstruction of sex makes about as much sense as speaking about foreclosing a door.
>
> –Copjec 210

I. A Foreclosed Door

To exemplify the difference of my thesis from Agamben's position I conclude by turning once again to Kafka, and specifically "Before the Law," of which Agamben has offered his own interpretation. First, the text of Kafka's well-known and oft-interpreted parable "Before the Law":

> Before the law sits a gatekeeper. To this gatekeeper comes a man from the country who asks to gain entry into the law. But the gatekeeper says that he cannot grant him entry at the moment. The man thinks about it and then asks if he will be allowed to come in sometime later on. "It is possible," says the gatekeeper, "but not now." The gate to the law stands open, as always, and the gatekeeper walks to the side, so the man bends over in order to see through the gate into the inside. When the gatekeeper notices that, he laughs and says: "If it tempts you so much, try going inside in spite of my prohibition. But take note. I am powerful. And I am only the most lowly gatekeeper. But from room to room stand gatekeepers, each more powerful than the other. I cannot endure even one glimpse of the third." The man from the country has not expected such difficulties: the law should always be accessible for everyone, he thinks, but as he now looks more closely at the gatekeeper in his fur coat, at his large pointed nose and his long, thin, black Tartar's beard, he decides that it would be better to wait until he gets permission to go inside. The gatekeeper gives him a stool and allows him to sit down at the side in front of the gate. There he sits for days and years. He makes many attempts to be let in, and he

> wears the gatekeeper out with his requests. The gatekeeper often interrogates him briefly, questioning him about his homeland and many other things, but they are indifferent questions, the kind great men put, and at the end he always tells him once more that he cannot let him inside yet. The man, who has equipped himself with many things for his journey, spends everything, no matter how valuable, to win over the gatekeeper. The latter takes it all but, as he does so, says, "I am taking this only so that you do not think you have failed to do anything." During the many years the man observes the gatekeeper almost continuously. He forgets the other gatekeepers, and this first one seems to him the only obstacle for entry into the law. He curses the unlucky circumstance, in the first years thoughtlessly and out loud; later, as he grows old, he only mumbles to himself. He becomes childish and, since in the long years studying the gatekeeper he has also come to know the fleas in his fur collar, he even asks the fleas to help him persuade the gatekeeper. Finally his eyesight grows weak, and he does not know whether things are really darker around him or whether his eyes are merely deceiving him. But he recognizes now in the darkness an illumination which breaks inextinguishably out of the gateway to the law. Now he no longer has much time to live. Before his death he gathers in his head all his experiences of the entire time up into one question which he has not yet put to the gatekeeper. He waves to him, since he can no longer lift up his stiffening body. The gatekeeper has to bend way down to him, for the great difference has changed things considerably to the disadvantage of the man. "What do you still want to know now?" asks the gatekeeper. "You are insatiable." "Everyone strives after the law," says the man, "so how is that in these many years no one except me has requested entry?" The gatekeeper sees that the man is already dying and, in order to reach his diminishing sense of hearing, he shouts at him, "Here no one else can gain entry, since this entrance was assigned only to you. I'm going now to close it."

Agamben's interpretation consists of two movements. First, he reads Kafka's legend as an allegory of the structure of the sovereign ban (the relation of exception). The man from the country is hence the figure caught in the state of exception; "law applies to him in no longer applying, and holds him in its ban in abandoning him outside itself" (*Homo Sacer* 50). Clearly denied entrance to the law, the man from the country is included in the law insofar as he spends his entire life in its antechamber. That the entire apparatus (the gatekeeper, his Tartar's beard, the stool, the fleas, the very entrance) is "assigned only to you [i.e., the man from the country]" forces the conclusion that the law and the subject existing in its exception are equiprimordial.

At this point, I accept fully Agamben's interpretation—it is not difficult to see that the form of the dynamic antinomy (the form of the virtual state of exception) is here described with remarkable clarity: the law can present itself in its totality *only* with the

catch-22 that entrance is prohibited. While *included* in the law's jurisprudence (the man from the country does not question the gatekeeper's prohibition; he takes it upon himself to obey), the man from the country is denied *membership*. Once entrance is obtained, the façade of totality crumbles. Consider the state of the law viewed from inside *The Trial*: a maze of bureaucracy and subjective desire, a far cry from the objectivity presaged by the novels epigraph (i.e., "Before the Law" itself, which makes a further appearance toward the end of the unfinished novel).

However, I disagree with Agamben when he translates this interpretation into a political strategy for combating the state of exception. Opposing the usual interpretations that "read the legend as the tale of the irremediable failure or defeat of the man from the country," Agamben concludes, in light of the last line of the parable:

> [W]e can imagine that all the behavior of the man from the country is nothing other than a complicated and patient strategy to have the door closed in order to interrupt the Law's being in force. And in the end, the man succeeds in his endeavor, since he succeeds in having the door of the Law closed forever (it was, after all, open 'only for him'), even if he may have risked his life in the process (the story does not say that he is actually dead but only that he is 'close to the end'). (*Homo Sacer* 55)

Agamben then goes on to identify "compelling the doorkeeper to close the door of the Law" with "making the virtual state of exception real" (57). What is problematic is that the recommendation of Benjamin ("to bring about a real [*wirklich*] state of emergency") is equated to death at the service of the pursuit of justice. Even if the man from the country does not die—and despite Agamben's objection there is every indication that he does: "the man is already dying (*schon an seinem Ende*)"—to bide one's time waiting for the transcendent state to collapse seems counterproductive. Taking *The Trial*'s Joseph K. as its tragic hero, a mathematic approach would plug its ears with wax, ignore the silent protestations of the gatekeeper, and walk through the open door of the law. Moreover, if

entrance to the law can be equated with the attainment of *jouissance* (see: "Interlude One," *Biopolitical Unconscious* 37-42), and if the attainment of *jouissance* spells out the death of the male subject, perhaps this death, the death of Oedipus, is one path toward the ethical ideal of Antigone. Enmeshing himself always farther in the mechanics of the law, discovering what appeared from a distance as transcendence to be immanence, speeding up its processes, K. pays for his precociousness with his life—but at least, with this gesture, *The Trial* ends…

II. Impossibility in Writing

Of course few things ever *really* end, least of all Kafka's unfinished novels. At the very least they stop being written. Lacan translates the Aristotelian modalities into writing. That which "doesn't stop being written" is necessary; that which "stops not being written" is contingent; that which "doesn't stop not being written" is impossible (Lacan, *SXX* 144-145). Briefly, the transcendent exception, in continuing to subsist while being neither presented nor represented, is *impossible*. It, like the sexual relationship, doesn't stop not being written. It's obstinate not-being-writtenness, its impossibility, is its essential quality. The objective order of representation, the symbolic edifice built out of this real, receives its *necessity* directly from the impossibility of the exception. The symbolic is hence "that which doesn't stop being written". To designate the function of the imaginary in sustaining the relation of the symbolic and the real is then to reveal the symbolic in its *contingency*, by stopping not writing it; by writing the impossible: "it is in the mode of the contingent that the phallic function stops not being written" (94).

Kafka writes the impossible insofar as, in K.'s circumscription of *jouissance* and elaboration of the mechanisms of desire, he reveals that, "[j]ustice is not Necessity but, quite the contrary, Chance," or in other words, contingency (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 49). This of course directly contradicts the words of the priest regarding the interpretation of "Before the Law": "you don't have to consider everything true, you just have to consider it necessary," (Kafka, *The Trial* 223). True, it is the necessity of the law that gives it its strength; but by considering this necessity of the law and the impossibility of a transcendent justice in the mode of contingency, that necessity is discredited.

Although the task of writing the impossible, proceeding according to the ideal of the not-all, may be endless, some comfort might be had by extrapolating from Lacan's words the fourth possible permutation of the various negations of " to stop" and "to be written": Although *The Trial* doesn't end, it *does* stop being written—the very definition of possibility.

The necessary, the symbolic totality of writing, is predicated on the impossible as the totality of appearances is predicated on the exceptional thing in itself and as the biopolitical order is predicated on the exceptional sovereign/*homo sacer*. By making the impossible (what doesn't stop not being written) contingent (to stop not writing it), the necessity of the necessary is in turn compromised—it stops being written.

Recapitulation: Infrastructures

We have spoken at length of excess and lack. The lack of one series takes up the excess of another—secular reason, biopolitics, and the psychoanalytic subject supplement and condition one another. Deleuze, drawing on the insights of structural linguistics (Jakobson's zero phoneme) and transcendental critique, names this lack/excess the "Object = x" and notes how, by virtue of "the property of always being displaced in relation to itself, of 'being absent from its own place,' its own identity, its own resemblance, and its own equilibrium," it circulates universally, here as lack, there as excess, "assuring the bestowal of sense" within each series (Structuralism 184; *Logic of Sense* 51). In Badiou's set theoretical ontology this lack is known as the empty set. By examining its manifold presentations and representations of the void—here an excess (as in the *objet a*), there a

lack (as in S(Ⱥ))—we will see how this void confers sense on the biopolitical male subject.

Agamben takes advantage of Badiou's set theory to clarify the role played by the sovereign exception within a system of political representation, employing the distinction between membership and inclusion. This will serve as our starting point. Membership and inclusion define two of the most basic relationships between a set or multiple and the elements of which it is composed. Membership enjoys axiomatic status (and can for this reason only be grasped intuitively), and is written $b \in a$ (i.e., element b belongs to set a). The set defined by $(\forall x)\ [x \in C]$ then designates the set of all elements x that belong to a collection C.

Inclusion, on the other hand, is a specific operation in which *all* of the elements of one set or multiple (let us call x all of the elements of a set b) are counted as members of a larger multiple, a, written $b \subset a$ (i.e., set b is included in set a or b is a subset of a), and in expanded form, $(\forall x)\ [(x \in b) \rightarrow (x \in a)]$ (i.e., for all x, to say that x belongs to b implies that x belongs to a). The set defined by $(\forall x)\ [x \subset C]$ then designates the set of all elements x that are included in the collection C.

These operations are relevant to the study of biopolitics to the extent that Badiou identifies membership with presentation and inclusion with representation:

> One then says that a term *is a member of* a situation (in political terms, these are single individuals insofar as they belong to a society). And one says that a term is *included* in a situation if it is represented in the metastructure (the State) in which the structure of the situation is counted as one term (individuals insofar as they are recodified by the State into classes, for example, or into "electorates"). (*Homo Sacer* 24; see: Badiou, *Being and Event* 81-103)

While a "normal" element is taken to be both a member of a situation and included in the state or metastructure of the situation, two special cases present themselves: excrescency,

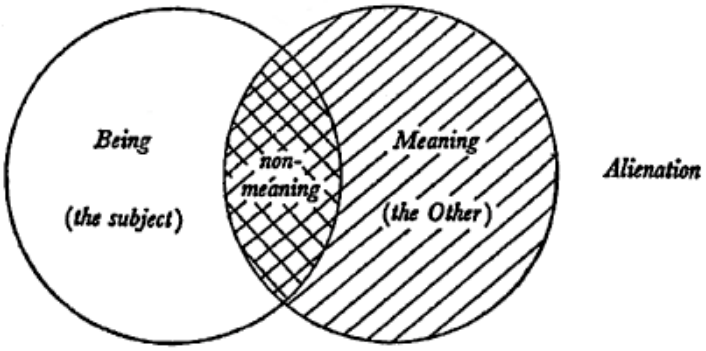
in which an element is included (represented) without being a member (presented); and singularity, in which an element is a member (presented) of the situation without being included (represented) in the state (Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 24). Absentee voters or fake names, which, while not belonging to a community, are nevertheless counted in the community on the level of representation, are excrescent elements. Illegal aliens on the other hand, who lack the right to vote and hence to be counted as "one term" within a vote or census, are singular members of a community.

Furthermore, let us note that membership and presentation pertain to the level of *Vorstellungen* while inclusion and representation pertain to the level of *Repräsentanzen*. This is easiest to grasp by bringing together Kant and Freud: things in themselves, which I have identified with *Vorstellungen*, are re-presented as appearances or signifiers, *Repräsentanzen*. We might then expect that the homologies that exist between the Lacanian subject (specifically, the male subject—we should not forget that the subject of alienation and separation, the operative mechanisms governing the articulation of the *Vorstellung* and the *Repräsentanz*, is the male subject) and the biopolitical subject would be reflected in the topologies, the set-theoretical infrastructures, that underlie them both.

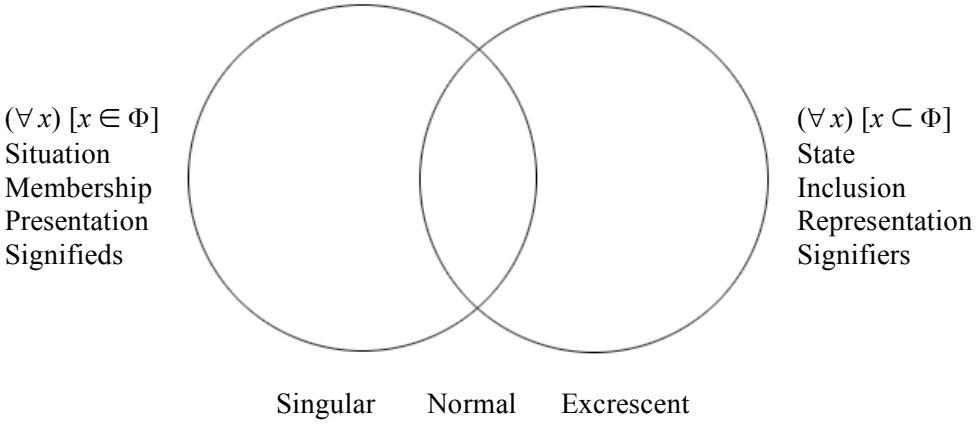
Recall how separation results in the splitting between the level of presentation, *Vorstellungen* (things in themselves), and the level of representation, *Repräsentanzen* (appearances). The border term, the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz*, the *Repräsentanz* of the *Vorstellung*, that by which the unconditioned is immediately conditioned, is then re-pressed, functioning thereafter as the unconscious of the subject.

In Lacan, what is both presented *and* represented, the existing *and* speaking subject, due to the either/or imposed by alienation, can only exist *or* speak: "if we choose

being, the subject disappears, it eludes us, it falls into non-meaning. If we choose meaning, the meaning survives only deprived of that part of non-meaning that is, strictly speaking, that which constitutes in the realization of the subject, the unconscious" (*SXI* 211). This is illustrated in the following diagram (*SXI* 211):



Agamben invites us to view the occupants of the border between presentation and representation in Badiou's schema as the state of exception—what I have identified as the unconscious of the biopolitical subject. A splitting, similar to that of the Lacanian subject, thus occurs between the situation and the state of the situation:



But what plays the role of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* in Badiou's schema? What figure occupies the no man's land of the state of exception? Can it even be formalized mathematically? I will proceed with a tentative yes with the following qualification:

mathematic formalization is a system of signs, which, in its axiomatic form, would present itself as a consistent, closed theory. When, in a meta-gesture, mathematic formalization is itself found incomplete (Gödel), the function of the imaginary will prove indispensable in covering up the very undecidability of the axioms on which the symbolic (mathematical formalization) is based.

The first obvious candidate for the role of the *Vorstellungsrepräsentanz* is pure singularity—the situation of the illegal alien (see: Agamben, *Homo Sacer* 25). Indeed according to Agamben, this plays the role of *homo sacer* in Badiou's thought. However, Agamben argues instead: "*The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included*" (25). In other words, Agamben views the exception as an element that is *both singular and excrescent*; *presented without representation* and at the same time *represented without presentation*. This famous Agambenian "undecidability," *both* this *and* this, is the first step toward deconstructing Badiou's symbolic—in the interest of clarity, we will have to go further. I argue that an additional nuance must be taken into account in order to describe adequately the state of exception in set-theoretical terms. Reading Agamben against himself we find that the state of exception is not the simultaneous "undecidability" between singularity and excrescence, but that it takes two guises, one virtual, one real: The virtual state of exception consists in the *inclusion*, on the level of the state of the situation (representation) of the element that exists *singularly* only on the level of the situation (presentation). Conversely, the real [*wirklich*] state of exception consists in the *membership*, on the level of the situation (presentation), of the element that

properly inheres *excrescently* only on the level of the state of the situation (representation).

The gist of my argument, and what justifies this digression into set theory, is that the void or "Object = *x*," may be considered in two aspects relevant to the study of biopolitics, depending on whether the emphasis is given to excrescence or singularity.

Inclusion of Singularity in Lacan: As the *inclusion* of singularity, the void functions as the *petit objet a*: not simply the non-existent representation of pure presentation but the representation capable of imaginarily filling the gaps in presentation. Singularity, the void *qua* lacking, the aliatory point of the absence of "taking place" in the situation is here mediated through the representational apparatus, so that a paradoxical shadow is imagined to be substantial. At this juncture we see the effects of representation on the non-existent and non-presented object—i.e., its ability to make it appear (as if it were) existent and presented.

Membership of Excrescence in Lacan: On the other hand, as the *membership* of excrescence, the void takes on the characteristics of s(Ⱥ), at times also written "~~Woman~~." The presentation of what exists only as representation without referent, this excess signifier of the incompleteness of the Other nevertheless has real effects within the situation itself. What is emphasized by the membership of excrescence is the materiality (membership in the presentation) of the signifier itself. S(Ⱥ) never looses sight of its signifierness,—its role as pure placeholder within the algebra of the subject, or as zero phoneme within her grammar.

Inclusion of Singularity in Agamben: The state of exception, like the void, may be considered in two distinct ways (repeating Agamben: "The exception is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a member and cannot be a member of the whole in which it is always already included") (*Homo Sacer* 25). As the inclusion of singularity it takes the form of bare life—the political representation of the unrepresentable. Insofar as *zoē* is the always already absent exception and presupposition of *bios*, the inclusion of singularity takes the form of the effects of this absent *zoē* on the metastructure of the state—the object of so many laws, bare life is the mere reflection of the mis-presented void of Being.

Membership of Excrescence in Agamben: What Agamben does not consider explicitly is a second likely definition of the sovereign exception: *qua* membership of excrescence its effects appear dissident to the biopolitical order. This might be viewed as Badiou's "inconsistent or rioting crowd," the "emblem of the void" wholly subversive to both the situation and its state (*Being and Event* 109). This is furthermore the point at which *homo sacer* exceeds the exception to which it is normally confined, as *zoē* again exceeds the confines of *bios*. *Homo sacer* and bare life are then two sides of the same void, or better yet, the same *x* appearing under two distinct gazes.

◇

The difficulty of the necessary act of distinguishing between the inclusion of singularity and the membership of excrescence stems from the fact that the biopolitical and indeed epistemic and subjective apparatuses involved receive their consistency from a blurring of these two circumstances. The undecidability recognized by Agamben between singu-

larity and excrescence might then be seen to be a politically motivated consequence of the biopolitical order. Take the example of Lacan: it is essentially through a superimposition of two manifestations of the void, the *objet a* and inconsistency of the other, S(Ⱥ), that the subject is capable of separating off its unconscious and securing its position of enunciation: "Object *a* comes to function with respect to that loss [S(Ⱥ)]" (*SXX* 28). Or the example from biopolitics: it is through the imagination of bare life in *homo sacer* that he is able to function as the excluded term that renders consistency to the biopolitical order. Finally the example from Kant: it is through a failure to discriminate between the failure of representation (the inclusion of singularity) and substance (the membership of excrescence) that the latter is allowed to displace the former and produce the illusion of a transcendent God. Here again we see the function of metaphor in the bestowal of sense on the male, biopolitical subject. Based on the formula "one word for another," *objet petit a* for a repressed signifier in the locus of the Other (S_2 or S(Ⱥ)), "metaphor is situated at the precise point at which meaning is produced in nonmeaning" (Lacan, *Écrits* 423). Lacan finishes this sentence with a mystical touch that strikes the authors as a suitable last word for the present concern: "in deriding the signifier, man defies his very destiny" (423).

Endnotes

[1] See also e.g., Robert Pfaller's reading of Louis Althusser: "[S]cience does not destroy ideology when it breaks with it. Ideology persists in a conflictual coexistence with the new science" (230). Or Slavoj Žižek's reading of Lacan: "[I]deological fantasy structures reality itself" (44).

[2] Note the double meaning of "*aufgeben*," both "set as a task" and "given up," which implies that the task is practically impossible.

[3] For the sake of clarity of argument I will follow the common convention of treating as equal the first and second antinomies of the mathematical side (concerning respectively temporal/spatial limits and the divisibility of matter) as well as the third and fourth antinomies of the dynamical side (concerning respectively freedom and necessity). This conflation is admissible on the grounds that, for our purposes, they are saying the same thing.

[4] Although necessary freedom would seem to be a contradiction in terms, this marriage is central in underlying Kant's moral philosophy, which holds that it is only possible to be free through strict obedience to reason (*Prolegomena* 81; § 53).

[5] Contingency and natural necessity seem likewise contradictory, however, this objection is easily dismissed when the antinomies are closely examined—the terms necessity and contingency must be taken as defined against their dialectical opposite. Thus, it is a question of necessity (in the thesis) vs. contingency (in the antithesis) and freedom (in the thesis) vs. natural necessity (in the antithesis). That all is subject to natural necessity means merely that all experience accords with the laws of causality, which laws themselves may be said to be contingent as opposed to possessing some innate meaning or necessity (in the thesis sense—an undetermined part of the regress).

[6] Lacan makes this point in a comparison of the discourse of the university, which seeks totality-knowledge, with Hegel's self-consciousness (*Selbstbewusstsein*):

> [I]f this historical machine, which is in fact only the progress of the schools and nothing more, ever did culminate in absolute knowledge, it would only be to mark the annulment, the failure, the disappearance at the conclusion of the only thing that motivates the function of knowledge—its dialectic with jouissance. Absolute knowledge is supposed to be the abolition of this conclusion, purely and simply. (*SXVII* 35)

[7] The prohibition of *jouissance* and of the thing in itself could be said to be just as superfluous as the ban (*Verbot*) of the doorkeeper in Kafka's parable, "Before the Law" (see: "Interlude Two," *Biopolitical Unconscious* 68-72).

[8] This is clear on the level of the signifier: the significance of "unconditioned" clearly depends on the negative relationship established between it and "conditioned."

[9] An important difference, it must now be noted, between Kant's conception of reason and the conception of reason as a differential formal system, lies in the recognition by the latter of the possibility of the reversibility of the causal chain in the form of immanent causality, which holds that a cause can be an effect of its own effect (the unconditioned can be conditioned by what it conditions). This is why Kantian thought is not (yet) structuralism.

[10] Bruce Fink, translator of the twentieth seminar, elaborates this difficult-to-translate pun:

> *Falloir*, used in all the tenses, but only in the third person singular, *il faut*, *il faudrait*, etc., means "one must," "one should," "one has to," "it is necessary," and so on. *Faillir* means to "fail," "falter," "default," "miss," or "come up short"; in certain contexts, e.g., *j'ai faille faire une gaffe*, "I almost made a blunder," it means to be on the verge of doing something. Both *faillir* and *falloir* are written *faut* in the third person singular, present tense. *Hence la jouissance qu'il ne faut pas* is the jouissance that mustn't be, shouldn't be, but can't fail to be or never fails anyway. (Lacan, *SXX* 59; footnote 20)

I employ the translation "shouldn't be/never fails" instead of "shouldn't be/never fails [*to be*]" for the following reasons: *Jouissance*, because it fails, *is not*, but it *is* in the mode of failure (which justifies the addition of the infinitive "to be"); the former articulation, however, allows for the additional connotation that it is precisely in the mode of never failing to fail that *jouissance* can both be and not be simultaneously. In the final section of this work I will define the paradox of simultaneous being/non-being/never-failing-to-fail in terms of the Aristotelian mode of impossibility, reinterpreted by Lacan as the necessary existence of a constitutive failure: that which doesn't stop not being written (see: *Biopolitical Unconscious* 71-72).

[11] Although this degree of abstraction risks eliding significant details and producing an undue air of totality, in the interest of clarity and to aid the understanding the following analogous formulas may be sketched:

Mathemic Series:	$S_1 \longleftrightarrow a$ // $S_3 \rightarrow S_n$ repressed: $\cancel{S_2}$
Psychoanalytic Series (Love):	One $\longleftrightarrow$ phallus // all other signifiers repressed: ~~Woman~~
Ontological Series (Science):	Being $\longleftrightarrow$ substance // knowledge repressed: ~~knowledge of Being~~
Biopolitical Series (Politics):	Sovereign $\longleftrightarrow$ bare life // political subjects repressed: ~~homo sacer / the decision to kill~~

Note that the *objet a* operating in each series may more or less be transposed from any one to the other, facilitated by its status as imaginary—this term is in each case imagined in the gap left in the symbolic by the repressed term.

[12] To take this position does not strike the authors as easy, and would require a near-Nietzschean will to critique without falling into the illusion of depth: the seriousness of a child at play. Lacanian figures embodying the female position of enunciation are few: Sophocles' Antigone for one; and all seem to be coupled similarly with death. Indeed to embody the female position might necessarily entail death, with the provision that with every reinvention of the subject the subject necessarily dies.

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