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Edward Dioguardi

The Birth of Thinking From the Spirit of Negation

Summary: [1]

The following essay is an analysis of philosophical categories that commentators extrapolate from Sigmund Freud's short 1925 text "Negation (*Verneinung*)."

In particular, my text takes as its starting point a commentary on Freud's text by Jean Hyppolite and Jacques Lacan that takes place during the latter's first seminar, Octave Mannoni's 1969 text on disavowal (*Verleugnung*) in Freud and beyond, but moreover, the Slovenian Lacanian school's own work on both of these commentaries. While these authors (discussing Žižek and Zupan*?*i? here in particular) have cogently analyzed figures of negation in Freud's corpus and also centered their corpuses on the critique of the "fetishist disavowal" constitutive of ideology, a notable question persists: what of the relation between these two figures, *Verneinung* and *Verleugnung*?

My own basic claim is that *what denial/Verneinung negates first and foremost is disavowal/Verleugnung itself*. First, I begin with a historical anecdote about Freud's "*Verneinung*" text. From here, I center Alenka Zupan*?*i?'s own further commentary on Hyppolite and Lacan's analyses of "Negation (*Verneinung*)" in relation to different modalities of negation that she borrows from Alain Badiou's 2008 text "The Three Negations." Alongside classical, intuitionist, and paraconsistent logics, Zupan*?*i? and Slavoj Žižek advance a fourth possible logic in which neither the law of the excluded middle nor the law of noncontradiction applies, and I will argue in these terms that Lacan's focus on *Verneinung* and negation is a thread that connects his first seminar to some of his latest, in addition to grounding his "return to Freud." Finally, I attempt to draw out the full implications of Zupan*?*i?'s claim that "*Aufhebung* activates [*Verneinung* as] the very point that separates...two realities [...and] puts this point to work" with reference to some key moments in the Judeo-Christian tradition that exhibit the tension between *Verneinung* and *Verleugnung*.

"Such is the inaugural affirmation, which can no longer recur [*être renouvelée*] except through the veiled forms of unconscious speech, for it is only by the negation of the negation that human discourse allows us to return to it." – Lacan, *Écrits*, p. 323 (from Seminar 1)

Verneinung a?n?d? ?V?e?r?l?e?u?g?n?u?n?g?: The Two Negations?

In the brief 1925 essay entitled "Negation (*Verneinung*)," Freud (1925) advances a series of observations about the "manner in which our patients bring forward their associations during the work of analysis" (p. 233-240). When a patient, says, for example,

Now you'll think I mean to say something insulting, but really I've no such intention." we realize that this is a rejection, by projection, of an idea that has just come up. Or: "You ask who this person in the dream can be. It's *not* my mother." We emend this to: "So it *is* his mother." In our interpretation, we take the liberty of disregarding the negation and of picking out the subject-matter alone of the association. It is as though the patient had said: "It's true that my mother came into my mind as I thought of this person, but I don't feel inclined to let the association count." (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240)

Yet Freud quickly goes on to note that in the passage from "it is not his mother" to "it is his mother,"

...only one consequence of the process of repression is undone – the fact, namely, of the ideational content of what is repressed not reaching consciousness [...] the outcome of this is a kind of intellectual acceptance of the repressed, while at the same time what is essential to the repression persists [...] We succeed in conquering the negation as well, and in bringing about a full intellectual acceptance of the repressed; but the repressive process itself is not yet removed by this. (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240)

Thus, for Freud,

the content of a repressed image or idea can make its way into consciousness, on condition that it is *negated*. Negation is a way of taking cognizance of what is repressed; indeed it is already a lifting [*Aufhebung*] of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed. We can see how in this the intellectual function is separated from the affective process. (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240)

In her two unsurpassed commentaries on Freud's essay, Alenka Zupančič (2017) emphasizes that "the crucial thing is never simply to reconstruct the other, repressed story, but to work in the direction of circumscribing the point *in the present reality* where the repression (of some aspect of this reality) is being actively sustained. It is only here that we arrive to something like truth" (p. 492).

In light of Zupančič's summary of the basic point of Freud's *Verneinung*, it is worth making note of a curious background story about the essay. It is alleged that upon examining the typescript of Freud's "*Verneinung*" essay, the German psychoanalyst Ilse Grubrich-Simitis discovered that Freud had originally entitled his essay "*Verneinung und Verleugnung*" – "Denial and Disavowal" – but at some point crossed out the latter term, thus leaving us with the official title of the text, "*Verneinung*".[2] For Freud scholars like Alan Bass (2000), for whom disavowal/*Verleugnung* exists in at times ambiguous relation with denial/*Verneinung* in Freud's corpus, this finding potentially leads us further in the direction of the claim that by the end of his life, Freud had come to consider disavowal – and no longer repression – to be the primary mechanism of psychic processes (p. 7). However, supposing the truth of Grubrich-Simitis' finding, does this discovery not only point in the opposite direction, but towards a more fundamental elucidation of the very relation between repression and disavowal? Did Freud not literally do a *Verneinung* of *Verleugnung*, akin to saying "whatever the primary mechanism of psychic processes is, it's not disavowal!"?

The implications of this claim are perhaps greater than they intuitively seem. Just as Freud argues in his examples in the "*Verneinung*" essay, to "deny" the primary nature of disavowal itself for psychic processes does not entail that disavowal – or ambivalence, or fetishism, to speak of some related notions – might in fact be taken as the base level of our psychic reality. Rather, it would appear that we could interpret Freud's own spontaneous revision to the typescript to suggest that while this reference to disavowal may constitute a "lifting of the repression" of disavowal in the first instance, it does not constitute "an acceptance of the repressed" process of disavowal (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240).

This is to say that for Freud, there remains a necessity to not pass directly from the idea that something is not what it is to the idea that something is what it is. Incidentally, such an all-too-direct passage corresponds precisely to the basic matrix of what Slavoj Žižek (following Octave Mannoni) takes as the basic problem of ideology, fetishist disavowal: "I know very well that this is (not) the case, but nonetheless I act as if it's (not)

the case.” In effect, the deception of ideology consists not in what one thinks, but instead in what one does.[3]

In Mannoni’s 1969 essay (Mannoni, 1969/2003) on the topic “I Know Very Well, but All the Same,” he argues that “*Verleugnung* cannot be confused with denial [négation]” — *Verneinung* in Freud’s German — for the reasons that the latter does not “require a ‘but all the same,’” and that “the sole reason for the ‘but all the same’” is itself “the ‘I know well’” (p. 72). When one “denies” a certain associative content in analysis — say, following Freud’s example, that the woman appearing in one’s dream is their mother — it is for Mannoni a matter of knowledge, not belief. Whereas the subject of *Verneinung* can be said to repress the knowledge that the woman in their dream is their mother, the subject of *Verleugnung* knows this is the case, but for this reason must make reference to the order of belief (p. 72).

Yet Freud’s own analysis of *Verneinung* would seem to attest that Mannoni does not fully draw out the implications of the unearthing of repressed content in the order of knowledge. Is it not Freud’s point that even and especially when the patient can be brought to recognize and therefore know that the woman in their dream that they denied or negated is, indeed, their mother, that “the repressive process itself is not yet removed by this” (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240)? Drawing out the consequences of Freud’s analysis, we might also ask: is the “intellectual acceptance of the repressed” not precisely *Verleugnung*? Mannoni’s formula for *Verleugnung* seems in this sense to contain a latent moment of *Verneinung* within it: “I know very well that X is the case, but nonetheless, whatever’s the case, it’s not X.” However, proceeding again in accordance with the principles of Freud’s *Verneinung* analysis, knowing that there exists a denial (of a certain knowledge itself) underlying the basic formula of disavowal only constitutes an “intellectual acceptance” of the existence of the denial/*Verneinung* itself that inheres within it (per Mannoni, the locus of the “but all the same” is the “I know very well”), despite any “lifting” of repression that this knowledge, embodied in a negation, represents (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240).

In his spoken commentary on Freud’s paper delivered in Jacques Lacan’s seminar, Hyppolite (Lacan, 1966/2006, p.746-755) remarks that the word Freud uses to speak of the “lifting of repression” evidenced by a negation — which he distinguishes from “acceptance” of the repressed — is precisely *Aufhebung*, “Hegel’s dialectical word, which means simultaneously to deny, to suppress, and to conserve, and fundamentally to lift [*soulever*]” (p. 747). Hyppolite goes on to elaborate that the word might refer to “the *Aufhebung* of a stone, or equally the cancellation of my subscription to a newspaper” (p. 748). Consequently, he extends Freud’s invocation of *Aufhebung* further into the Hegelian lineage when he goes on to describe the “intellectual acceptance” of the repressed in terms of Hegel’s figure of the “negation of the negation”: in passing from “not-X” (as a negation of “X”) back to “X” itself, “what transpires here,” for Hyppolite, “is intellectual, but only intellectual, affirmation qua the negation of the negation” (p. 749).

Despite his perspicuous Hegel references, does not Hyppolite all too quickly collapse together the “lifting”/*Aufhebung* of repression that takes place with the articulation of a negation and the subsequent moment of the “intellectual acceptance of the repressed”? Zupan*?* suggests as much when she writes that while *Aufhebung* is itself synonymous with “negation of negation” in Hegel’s philosophy, the moment of “intellectual acceptance of the repressed” described by Freud represents something like “a ‘bad’ version of the Hegelian ‘negation of negation’, the way *not* to understand it” (Zupan*?*, 2017, p. 482). To Zupan*?*, “what (I say) I’m not, determines me not only negatively (like in the abstract negation: I am the *other* of this), but also in its own right, directly. In a way, *I am* what I say I’m not” (here one might recall Kant’s distinction between negative and infinite judgment, often invoked by Dolar, Žižek, and Zupan*?* herself) (p. 484-485). Thus, “negation of negation” might more accurately be figured as the initial negative judgment of *Verneinung* now grasped as a positive moment in itself — hence Freud’s famous comment in the essay that “no?” is the hall-mark of repression, a certificate of origin like, let us say, ‘Made in Germany’” (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240).

Yet Zupan*?* also goes on to elaborate the necessity of the moment of the “false *Aufhebung*” that Hyppolite associates with the “intellectual acceptance of the repressed” insofar as he describes the latter as a moment

of a “negation of the negation”:

...if *Verneinung* thus appears as a false *Aufhebung* of the repression, whereas analysis should bring out its proper *Aufhebung*, we should not forget that *Verneinung* is at the same time the very thing from which the analysis develops in a direction that will effectively do something to and with the repression. Or, in other words: the “true” *Aufhebung* necessarily starts out as a “false” one, it necessarily starts out as a comedy of itself. Freud’s practical and theoretical break-through was to take this comedy very seriously. And something similar could be perhaps said for Hegel: is not the *Phenomenology of Spirit* actually a *Comedy of Spirit*, taken with all philosophical seriousness? (Zupančič, 2017, p. 484-485)

In sum, Hyppolite’s reference to negation of the negation would ironically seem to itself constitute a false *Aufhebung* in the development of the reflection on *Aufhebung* in Freud’s “*Verneinung*.” Hyppolite’s equation of the “intellectual acceptance” of the repressed with “negation of the negation” such that we conceive of the latter as synonymous with a return to positivity (i.e. that the negation of “not-X” would not be “not-not-X,” but a return to “X”) would itself seem represent a necessarily false moment on the path toward Zupančič’s “correct” distinction between the “false” and “true” *Aufhebung*. Insofar as it is only with reference to the latter’s text that we are able to properly parse out the distinction between “lifting” of repression in the moment of negation and “intellectual acceptance” of repressed as *Aufhebung*, we are now able to more precisely inquire into the status of the *Verneinung* implied in Mannoni’s formula for *Verleugnung*. In Freud’s own privileged example of the logic of fetishist disavowal, he almost directly mirrors the aforementioned movement from the patient’s “negation” to the “intellectual acceptance” of the repressed, but from a different angle: a boy knows very well that his mother does not have a penis, but nonetheless, he goes on believing that she does (Freud, 1927, p. 147-157). Here, we encounter Hyppolite’s figure of the negation of negation, where the statement that something is not the case is itself “negated” with the statement that it is the case.

Crucially, though, one can imagine a formula of *Verleugnung* that inverts the location of the negation, as if inverting Freud’s schema in the “*Verneinung*” essay itself following an “intellectual acceptance” of repression: “I know very well that it is the case (that I am that; that the woman in my dream is my mother; that my mother *has* a penis; etc.)...but nonetheless, I don’t believe it is the case.” How are we to apprehend the relation between these two matrices of the relation between denial/*Verneinung* and disavowal/*Verleugnung*? In light of the matrix by which we would appear to move from a positive term representing an “intellectual acceptance of the repressed” to a negative term constituting *another Verneinung* (and thus another *Aufhebung* or “lifting” of repression *in this very moment of negation*), it would also appear that the matrix of *Verleugnung* that consists in a passage from negativity (not-X) to positivity (X) might be grasped in the manner of Žižek’s (1989) joke about the man who was cured of the belief that he was a piece of grain followed by a giant chicken (p. 33): the “I know my mother doesn’t have a penis, but all the same, I believe she has one” of *Verleugnung* might suitably be re-configured as “I know she doesn’t have one, but does the Other know (/do you know?) she doesn’t have one?”

Hence, Freud maintains the distinction between *Aufhebung* and *Anahme* (Freud, 1925, p. 233-240): “lifting” of the repressive process and “acceptance” of the repressed content. Yet an attentive reader might wonder: could we not conceive of the fact that *Aufhebung* of the repressive process does *not* constitute an *acceptance* for Freud as itself another instance of negation? Applying the same procedure here, we can be sure that acceptance *is* just a kind of lifting of the repressive process. Here, again, an acceptance of something like an abstract notion of repressed content as resulting from the process of repression, but not an understanding of the content itself; it amounts to a disavowal/*Verleugnung* of *repression* with a false “I know”: I know repression works the following way, that I have to accept I repress the fact that the woman in my dream is indeed my mother...(but nonetheless, I don’t, because I see no necessity of this acceptance). Yet it is apparent that the fact that one could remain blind to the subjective appearance of acceptance’s necessity is because of a misunderstanding of the lifting of repression itself as a matter of accepting that one *IS* repressing at all. In effect, one collapses the repressive process with the repressed content.

As such, Zupan*?* writes:

If we reduce the Freudian notion of the unconscious to the difference between a content that is present to the conscious and a content that is “repressed from it”, if we reduce it to the opposition between being or not being *conscious* of something (or between consciously *accepting* or not accepting something), we lose it entirely. The repressive process is something different from the repressed content. (And, to be said in passing, this is also a crucial lesson to keep in mind in these politically heated times. We could say that whereas the “liberal left” has been for a long time preoccupied by “lifting the repression” and making us *accept* the repressed content (accept and tolerate the Other, the differences...), the repressive process remained absolutely intact. If anything, it has intensified.) (Zupan*?*, 2017, p. 484)

In this sense, this asymmetry between the *lifting* of the repressive process and *acceptance* of repressed content attests to the primacy of the repressive process itself over that which is repressed, such that *for Lacan, repressed psychical content does not precede its return from repression* (say, for example, in the popular “iceberg” model of the unconscious)[4], and the “return of the repressed” (content) also retroactively constitutes the very fact of repression. Along these lines, Samo Tomšič accurately emphasizes that repression should not be conceived in opposition to “production,” but rather that the repressive process should itself be understood as productive (Tomšič, 2015, p. 132). Simply put, psychical content can only be conceived as “repressed” in relation to the repressive process through which it passes. One might thus imagine the process of repression to be surprisingly analogous to that of digestion: something is supposed to have been taken into the psyche (eaten), it is subjected to a certain process (digestion, metabolization), and finally expelled outward as properly “repressed content.”[5]

What, then, are we to make of the hypothetical initial content taken into the psyche, whose status would seem indeterminate insofar as it emerges transformed as “repressed content” that is inextricably bound up with the process of repression itself? It is also in the “Negation” essay that Freud offers a compelling figuration of what he elsewhere calls “originary repression” in precisely these terms.[6] The original constitution of “the thinking subject” (Zupan*?*, 2012, p.1) occurs, for Freud, through a double move, which, “expressed in the language of the oldest – the oral-instinctual impulses,” involves “taking in” as the basis of affirmation (*Bejahung*), on the one hand, and “*Ausstoßung* (“expulsion,” or “pushing out,” as basis of negation)” on the other (p. 1). The “taking in” of content that is to become “repressed” is only conceivable against the background of a more fundamental “expulsion,” although this expulsion is only conceivable once affirmation/*Bejahung* occurs, and an inside/outside distinction appears already established for the subject. Yet this very distinction wherein “expulsion” can be conceived “in the language of...oral-instinctual impulses” as “spitting out” – supposing an initial moment of “taking in” – has as its logical obverse the topological inversion where “the condition of the good, and of experiencing pleasure, is now precisely in finding the object *outside* (in reality)” (Zupan*?*, 2012, p. 1):

The cut between inside and outside, between affirmation and negation, does not produce two things but three: 1) affirmation (some positivity); 2) negation (absence, what is not); and 3) the *place*, or *locus*, of their difference [...] the step from the (mythological) original *Lust-Ich*, or pleasure-ego, to subjectivity proper (and to the constitution of objective reality) is the step of including, of “taking in”—not simply some exteriority, but precisely the difference (crack or gap) that separates “me” from the outside, from what is not me [...] the cutting off (of the future outside reality) leaves a mark, a trace, which is precisely what the subject relies upon in its constitution. (Zupan*?*, 2012, p. 1)

Zupan*?*'s commentary relies primarily on Lacan's own engagement with the text during his first seminar, his introduction and response to the commentary on “Negation” he had invited Hyppolite to deliver (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 308-334). Directly broaching the question of “what thus becomes of that which is not let-be in...*Bejahung*,” Lacan (1966/2006) claims “Freud told us right away that what the subject has thus excised (*verworfen*), as I put it, from the opening toward being will not be refound in his history, assuming we designate by the latter term [history] the locus in which the repressed manages to reappear [...] *what did not*

come to light in the symbolic appears in the real" (p. 332). Thus, for Lacan, "*Ausstoßung*...constitutes the real [qua] the domain of that which subsists outside of symbolization." Likewise (in the words of Zupan?i?'s apt summary of Lacan's own discussion of "Negation"), "the constitutive affirmation, *Bejahung*, (inevitably) also *takes in* [my emphasis]...the materialization of its own limit" that takes place in *Ausstoßung*, and therefore "constitutes that peculiar third dimension, which is neither outside nor inside, neither subject nor object, neither something nor absence; rather, it has the precise structure of the "with-without," and of the curve that this expression indicates or traces": the "locus" of the difference between positivity and negativity alluded to by both Lacan and Zupan?i? (Zupan?i?, 2012, p.1).

In these descriptions of the subject's constitution through originary repression with reference to Seminar 1, one finds an anticipation of Lacan's much later reckoning with the question of how to conceive the unity of the thinking subject amidst a constitutively incompletely symbolizable reality. In effect, Lacan's late seminars re-figure the previous "materialization" of the subject's limit — through the coincidence of affirmation/*Bejahung* and *Ausstoßung*/expulsion that introduces the subject into the symbolic order, separating them from the real in order to re-introduce it in reality, and giving rise to the imaginary order of reality in this process of originary repression as well — with the topology of the Borromean knot. Lacan's (2005/2016) remarkable formulation that Joyce "cancell[ed his] subscription to the unconscious" (p. 146) gives an almost *sinthome*-like consistency to Lacan's own corpus insofar as the *cancellation of a subscription* is also precisely the phrase Hyppolite uses (along with "the *Aufhebung* of a stone") in Seminar 1 to define the German word *Aufhebung* to Lacan's French audience apropos Freud's claim that *Verneinung* constitutes a "lifting [*Aufhebung*] of the repression, though not, of course, an acceptance of what is repressed" (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 748). While it would appear that Lacan presents Joyce as one who is impossible to analyze because he has effectively cut off any relation to the unconscious, the repeated reference to "cancellation" raises questions about the ambiguous nature of its relation to that which it is "subscribed." Namely, are we to understand Joyce's having "cancel[ed] his subscription to the unconscious" as a divorce from (or even overcoming) of the "repressive process" (in the manner of *Verleugnung*, or even more radically, *Verwerfung*)? Or alternatively, should we understand Joyce's cancellation of his subscription to the unconscious as a cancellation that more fundamentally constitutes the very division between unconsciousness and consciousness, and consequently, the unity of the thinking subject in terms of the aforementioned inside/outside distinction, a kind of originary repression?

Here, one might benefit from taking the term "subscription" literally, as Lacan frequently used subscripts ("S1," "S2", et al.) to designate signifiers in the symbolic signifying chain, the + 's and - 's that constitute the represent the subject solely through their relation to each other. If "subscription" is a basic feature of signification as such (recall again, here, the notion of *Bejahung*/affirmation), then one might also just as well understand Joyce's "cancellation of subscription" — his *Aufhebung* — as an originary repression or positing of limitation, "the locus" (per Zupan?i?) of the symbolic order proper, the differentiation between positivity and negativity itself that makes possible to this very subscription.

Nonetheless, the clarity achieved from the common reference to "cancellation of subscription" and the question of the subject's constitution binding Lacan's corpus across 22 seminars poses additional questions about the purpose of the topological schema Lacan employs toward his analysis of Joyce. Even in the "*sinthomic*" figure of the subject's constitution, then, we find something akin to what Zupan?i? describes as a "crack," "gap," or "with-without" that functions to preclude the reality of a "common point" that would allow for an intuitive middle point between the inside and outside of the subject. Lacan goes on to state this directly; axiomatically, even:

Henri Cesbron-Lavau: When you go from the three-component Borromean knot to the four-component knot, into which the symptom is introduced, the three-component Borromean knot vanishes as such [...] from this perspective, the hope for any cure in analysis seems to pose a problem.

[Lacan:] There can be no radical reduction of the fourth term [*sinthome* posited in addition to the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real in a "three component Borromean knot"], not even in analysis,

because as Freud stated [...] there is an *Urverdrängung*, a repression that can never be undone. It is in the very nature of the symbolic to include this hole. This hole is what I'm aiming at, and in it I recognize the *Urverdrängung* itself. (Lacan, 2005/2016, p. 30)

How does psychoanalysis proceed at all toward a “cure,” then? Moreover, how is one to interpret the status (ontological, or lack thereof) of a “locus” (per Zupan*?*i?) that constitutes the inside/outside division (itself effectively the problem of Freud's “meta-psychology” as such)? The force of these questions is palpable in light of the fact that in the shift from the speculative, meta-psychological figure of the subject's constitution in Freud's “Negation” to topology proper in the Joyce seminar, Lacan comes to *presuppose* the mediation of “inside” and “outside” (and indeed, originary repression itself as a supposition[7]) such that one is no longer operating within the same discursive parameters. Instead, Lacan comes to treat the constitution of the subject as a matter most directly articulated in terms of counting and number.[8]

Lorenzo Chiesa (2016) emphasizes that just before declaring the primacy of the division of a point into two-foci in Seminar XX (Lacan, 1975/1998), Lacan (2011/2018) went so far as to enact what we might call a *denial/Verneinung* of two-ness itself in when he declared that there are “not-two” sexes (p. 10).

The formula ‘There is no sexual relationship’ tells us that it is real that there are two sexes, and that the real is thus “dual.” But [...] the two natural sexes are always apprehended by our species retroactively and, what is more, in an asymmetrical way (i.e., woman's sex can only be represented phallically as not-all), *the two of sexual difference is actually equivalent to the “not-two,”* [my emphasis] the missing of the second sex. (Chiesa, 2016, p. 28)

How might one begin to understand the “repressive process” sustaining Lacan's *Verneinung* of two-ness? The reason for this repression[9] would seem to consist in the very logic of the passage one makes in moving from a unitary point, to two points, to multiplicity as such when counting:

[...] the passage from 0 and 1 as 2 qua not-two to 2 as a natural number is what, for Lacan, is problematic in Frege's logical account of number, and has for him distinctively ontological repercussions. This passage is also crucial for any attempt at distinguishing between imaginary ordinary love—the semblance of 2 as one natural number—and true love—the not-two. With regard to the latter, the question then arises as to whether the not-two is, to put it simply, phenomenologically subjectivizable as such. (Chiesa, 2016, p. 228 [footnote 190])

Simply put, for Lacan, the passage from 1 to 2 appears in the first instance like a repetition of the passage from 0 to 1; however, in a second moment, this passage from 0 to 1 itself appears to have been conceived in the image of a passage from 1 to 2 in a multiplicity of “ones.” In other words, in dealing with 1 and 0, i.e. the genesis of structure or counting as such, one returns again, to quote Zupan*?*i?, to the question of the relation between “1) affirmation (some positivity); 2) negation (absence, what is not); and 3) the *place*, or *locus*, of their difference” (Zupan*?*i?, 2012, p.1). It is for this precise reason that one of Zupan*?*i?'s commentaries on Freud's “Negation” embarks on a study of different forms of logic in order to attempt to grasp the relation between the aforementioned constitutive denial/*Verneinung* of repressed content (“it's not my mother”) and the fact that this content only acquires a proper existence at all (as “it is my mother”) through this very negation and its correlative repressive process.

The Fourth Negation?

Following Alain Badiou's 2008 essay “The Three Negations,” Zupan*?*i? (2012) constructs the relations between P and non-P (mother and not-mother, in terms of Freud's “Negation”) in terms of four different forms of logic, each defined by different configurations of basic laws (p.1): classical logic, within which the law of the excluded middle and the law non-contradiction both apply; intuitionistic logic, within which the law of the excluded middle is suspended, but the law of non-contradiction still applies; paraconsistent logic,

within which the law of the excluded middle still applies, but the law of non-contradiction is suspended; and finally, a “fourth possibility” — which I will call “psychoanalytic” — within which both the law of the excluded middle and the law of non-contradiction are suspended.[10] The pragmatic implications of these logical problematics for the numerical analysis above is as follows: in classical logic, P is the case or non-P is the case — one or the other, and not both, with no possibility of a third option; intuitionistic logic would appear to modify classical logic on the basis of also allowing a third option (neither P, nor non-P, but something else; an “in-between,” a matter of degrees between P and non-P); paraconsistent logic would appear to modify classical logic by also allowing both options (P and non-P) simultaneously; the psychoanalytic logic allows for the exceptions of both intuitionistic logic and paraconsistent logic at the same time (the possibility of neither P, nor non-P, but something else, *and* P and non-P simultaneously). While the potency of the negation implied by the fourth form of logic is so “weak” that Badiou ruled this option out entirely, Zupan*?* anchors her analysis of Freud’s “Negation” in this very possibility (p.1).

Proceeding in lockstep with Zupan*?* in his own commentary on Badiou’s “The Three Negations,” Žižek (2012) advances an argument in favor of the fourth logical option on political grounds:

As might be expected Badiou’s privileged example is that of revolution. The communist revolution is classical, a radical confrontation with no third option, either us or them: the poor worker who before the revolution appears as nothing in the political field, becomes the new hero of this field. In the intuitionist space of social-democratic reformism, the poor worker appears in the political field, but is in no way its new hero: the idea is to reach a compromise, to find a third way, to maintain capitalism, but with more social responsibility, and so forth. In the third case of paraconsistent space, we get a sort of undecidability between event and non-event: something happens, but, from the point of view of the world, everything is identical, so we have event and non-event simultaneously – a false event, a simulacrum, as in the fascist ‘revolution’ which denounces ‘plutocratic exploitation’ and maintains capitalism. As Badiou concludes: ‘The lesson is that, when the world is intuitionistic, a true change must be classical, and a false change paraconsistent.’ But what if today’s late-capitalist world is no longer intuitionistic? Is not postmodern capitalism an increasingly paraconsistent system in which, in a variety of modes, P is non-P: the order is its own transgression, capitalism can thrive under communist rule, and so on? Here, classical change no longer works, because the negotiation gets caught up in the game. The only remaining solution is thus to go with the fourth option (dismissed by Badiou, which should be given a different reading) [...] we are dealing here with a ‘third way’ (neither proletarian nor capitalist) which is not excluded, but also with a suspension of the principle of contradiction (it is the proletariat itself which strives to abolish itself, its condition. (Žižek, 2012, p. 1009-1010)

Recapitulating Žižek’s critique of Badiou in terms of our ongoing analysis above, we might say that while Badiou’s affirmation of classical logic suggests the choice of one option over another one (i.e. P over non-P), his own additional denial/*Verneinung* of paraconsistency (i.e. its consignment to the status of a “false change”) moreover suggests something like a *repressed paraconsistent logic*: against the assumed background of intuitionistic logic, the “classically” affirmed option “P” exists only to negate that which was already represented as its negation, non-P. By contrast, Žižek argues that the world is not structured intuitionistically, but paraconsistently, such that the choice between one option “P” and another “non-P” gives way to an indistinction of the two.[11] For Žižek, this paraconsistency is closely related to the ambiguous logic of fetishist disavowal/*Verleugnung* as figured by Mannoni (“I know very well that this is (not) the case, but nonetheless, I act as if this is (not) the case”) (Žižek, personal communication)

How, then, does this relate at all to the fourth type of logic discarded by Badiou, but affirmed by Zupan*?* and Žižek? As in the example of “social-democratic reformism,” Badiou’s intuitionistic world schema conceives of the potential third option that is neither P nor non-P as a “compromise” that itself stands for the very subsumption of the original two positions (P and non-P) into *one* option (not-not-P) — a logical consequence of the fact that Badiou’s schema upholds the law of noncontradiction. As such, Badiou posits the unity of P and non-P within the intuitionistic “compromise,” but in such a way that the distinction between P and non-P within that position is lost against the additional opposition of the *united* P and non-P

to *another* term.

When Žižek posits the “fourth” logical “possibility” as that which would suspend or negate paraconsistency itself, it would appear that he also introduces a third option with the suspension of the law of the excluded middle, just like the intuitionistic world Badiou supposes. Yet how is one to conceive of the function of this fourth possibility of a “psychoanalytic logic” if the law of noncontradiction is also suspended, such that one neither necessarily has to unite P and non-P into one term, nor is it conceivable for them to posit P, non-P, and non-non-P as a unity of three terms (recall, again, Lacan’s emphasis in Seminar XX [1975/1998] that threefold points don’t exist for the reason that each point is itself split in two)?

The intuitionistic and paraconsistent worlds that Badiou and Žižek assume, respectively, might be helpfully taken as exceptions to the classical logic schema of “one or the other” in tension with one another along the lines of the impossible choice Lacan describes in his Seminar XI (1964/1973) as a model of the subject’s alienation.[12] Lacan claims that in confronting the mugger’s gunpoint demand “your money or your life!”, one encounters the forced choice that is constitutive of alienation (and in a certain respect, subjectivity itself). While there is really only one true option (since if one chooses to save their money, they lose their life, thus making their money irrelevant), this option still leads to losing all of one’s money, and therefore a life deprived of the ability to “live” in any meaningful sense, so to speak.

Likewise, the choice “intuitionistic or paraconsistent!” situates the subject in a similarly impossible situation. Conventionally, one imagines the impossibility of the mugger’s choice “your money or your life!” to inhere in the fact that there exists no “third option” that would allow one to break out of the bind of “bad” and “worse” options. The “intuitionistic or paraconsistent!” choice clearly demonstrates the exact contours of Lacan’s “your money or your life!”[13] choice: the (imagined) “right” choice *is* the intuitionistic “compromised” (in all senses of the word) “third” option as such, and the paraconsistent split between two options presents the *form* of the impossible choice, i.e. “your money or your life!” is in fact a choice instantiated by the opposition of “your money” *and* “your life.”[14] Even with regards to classical logic, we might consider the paraconsistent split between two options a “question” posited retroactively from the perspective of the “answer” that is a particular form of logic (Žižek, 2012, p. 1009-1010).

In what way can the psychoanalytic fourth logical possibility negate paraconsistent logic, especially if the only difference between them consists in the additional suspension of the law of the excluded middle (along with the suspension of the law of noncontradiction), in a sense affirming or allowing the possibility a third option (and seemingly not negating anything *except the negation of intuitionistic “third” option and paraconsistent “dual” options themselves*)? Just as one works through the *vel* (inclusive or) of alienation by conceiving of “your money or your life” in the form of an “inclusive or” statement (i.e. it resolves into neither “P” nor “non-P,” but takes the choice between the two as itself an option or term), in a reflexive way, one can imagine this move apropos the “intuitionistic or paraconsistent!” choice. That is to say, one can conceive of intuitionistic and paraconsistent logics as two modes of symbolizing a more fundamental impossibility inherent to classical logic itself — namely, how to articulate any relation whatsoever between positivity (“P”), or that which can be said to exist, and negativity (“non-P”), that which cannot be said to exist.[15]

In intuitionistic logic, we remain within conventional wisdom, or what in Hegelian terms one might call bad or spurious infinity: P and non-P “add” together to also make “P” (i.e. $1 + 0 = 1$). In paraconsistent logic, this negativity is asserted as an autonomous element; one is caught — in Lacan’s terms, alienated — between P and non-P. With regards to the question of how to understand the paraconsistent possibility “both P and non-P,” the issue of how to interpret this “both” arises: do P and non-P constitute what we might conventionally consider *two* separate options, or one option insofar as they are both the case?[16]

A similar logic is present in Mannoni’s (1969/2003) basic formula of disavowal/*Verleugnung*, “I know very well it’s not the case (but all the same, I act as if it is the case)”: do they “know,” not know, or “both”? As with Freud’s step from unearthing repressed content to the necessity of analyzing the repressive process

itself, the solution to this issue lies in a shift in the very framing of the question. Following Freud, we ought to pass from Mannoni's rendering equivalent "knowing" and "not-knowing" as if they constitute a proper "two" positions that resolve into one through his situating of "knowing" (or acceptance/*Anahme*, per Freud in "Negation") as the locus of "but all the same" in *Verleugnung* to instead conceiving the very ambiguity of paraconsistent logic as a *split between itself and the intuitionistic position*. In other words, the split of "fetishist disavowal"/*Verleugnung* that Mannoni describes — and which, it is worth repeating, Žižek takes as the very model of ideology — consists in taking P and non-P as two "ones," after which follows "non-non-P" the intuitionistic move to a "middle" or "third" option, or resolves the split into two attributes of a more fundamental single situation (hence the importance of the earlier joke, "I know she doesn't have one, but does the other know that?", which splits this situation into [at least] two elements).[18]

The fourth, psychoanalytic logic contributes a twist where P and non-P are themselves *not-two* insofar as there exists an identity of P with non-P, which itself attests to the non-identity of P with itself. Or as Zupan*?* puts it with regards to the "Negation (*Verneinung*)" problematic: "The accent is thus on the fact that it is precisely this individuum, unequal to its notion, that is the actual notion of mother" (Zupan*?*, 2012, p.1). One can see the way in which this logic allows us to raise questions about the presuppositions of paraconsistent logic (as well as functioning as a critique of the logic of fetishist disavowal in the process): the presentation of the paraconsistent split between "P" and "non-P" in such a way so that non-P does not resolve into (another) "P" already situates us in the psychoanalytic logic. One can posit *Verleugnung*'s "I know" only insofar as this very knowledge is conceived as itself a stand-in for that which is necessarily and originally repressed in the passage to consciousness. *Verneinung* is the emblem of having made this passage and evidence of the instantiation of both the very distinction between conscious and unconscious knowledge, and the *lack* of a common medium that would encompass their difference (this is to say that consciousness is itself incomplete, subject to retroactive [re-]determination). As Zupan*?* puts it, "the logic introduced by the concept of the unconscious is not actually intuitionist, but rather a paradoxical twist of the classical logic itself" (p.1).

Correspondingly, it can be said that this fourth logical possibility might fittingly be called "psychoanalytic" insofar as it aligns closely with what Lacan designated as the passage from "alienation" to "separation" in his Seminar XI: *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 1964/1973, p. 203-215). Yet a further implication of this analysis remains:

Relating this to Freud we can say that the end of analysis could finally, and indeed, be formulated in terms of 'therefore it is mother.' Yet this now refers neither to a simple opposite of mother as denied nor to the empathetic 'Mother is' implying her fullness 'in herself' beyond her appearance in the world. Instead it refers to what one might formulate as follows: THIS, and nothing else, is mother. (Zupan*?*, 2012, p.1)

At this level, one leaves behind the "false *Aufhebung*" of *Verneinung* for the "true *Aufhebung*." Does this then bring the subject back to the intuitionistic choice of two options that are collapsed together in view of a third position beyond this split? One is compelled to answer in the negative insofar as this shift to the "true *Aufhebung*" indicates a *separation* that itself registers to consciousness a kind of negation and the working-through of repressed content — returning to the beginning of Freud's analysis of "Negation" from another angle.

The Question of "the Third": the Negation of Negation?

Simultaneously, though, the question of a "true *Aufhebung*" in the analytic context effectively centers on the production of a new master-signifier or, "S1." One might understand the difficulty of this production — which is, to reiterate, generated in the very movement of repression — in relation to the "deeply ambiguous" nature of the subject's split between two signifiers, which Žižek describes aptly in elaborating upon an issue

of theological interpretation departing from the problems of paraconsistent logic and *Verleugnung*:

Luther's SIMUL JUSTUS ET PECCATOR is for me deeply ambiguous. It can mean that, once you really assume that you are a sinner, [you] are already beyond sin. (In the same way, for some Marxists, when you experience yourself as a reified object of exchange in a capitalist society, you are already a subject, i.e., only a subject can experience him/herself as such.) But it can also mean that, say, I am a dishonest pig, and I openly confess this, counting on the fact that my addressee will take my confession as a proof that I am not a dishonest pig. I had years ago a corrupted professor who told us, students: "I know I am a dishonest pig!", and I was tempted to answer him with a version of the old Marx bros joke: "*This guy is saying he is a dishonest pig, and he acts like one, but this shouldn't deceive you, [he] really is a dishonest pig!*" So admitting that I am a dishonest pig can be a fetish obfuscating the fact that I really am a dishonest pig. (Žižek, personal communication)

In this reading, the tension between the two terms is already resolved in the direction of the negative term, as in the early case of the formula of *Verleugnung* containing a moment of *Verneinung*. While not opposing this reading, one is compelled to trace the contours of its logic insofar one could tackle the counterargument that Luther's "*simul*" is a condensed figure of man as both "just" and "sinner," itself representing a displacement of "man" itself.[18] Going even farther, one might take "man" itself as a kind of metaphor or common substance that stands in for the very tension between justice and sin, if not for the fact that for Luther already, humanity is defined by the chasm that separates it from God (such that humanity is predetermined, but in such a way as to lack the knowledge of that the fate to which it is predetermined), and indeed, the separation of God from himself in the incarnation of Christ (Lacan, 1986/1992, p. 92-93; 97).[19]

The theological problem of *Christology* — which found its most succinct articulation in this Protestant doctrine of predestination, the separation of man and God through which the secular universe arose — comes around (with no small amount of dialectical irony) again in a roundabout form in the aforementioned issue of the mediation of common and proper nouns in the Catholic Joyce. There exists a subtle but significant difference in the logical configuration of terms across Judaeo-Christian doctrines. While Lacan commonly mentions the fact that the Hebrew God of the Old Testament injuncts his chosen people to deny other gods "before [His] countenance" while *de facto* admitting their existence (Lacan, 1986/1992, p. 81) (and also posing the question of whether God himself can utter or produce a *Verneinung* or negation), in effect asserting the difference between God as an "S1" and "gods" as "S2"'s, and Luther's theological doctrines separate man from God's sovereign decisions on fate, the issues posed by this division can retroactively be seen to have already reached a point of irresolvable tension as early as the 431 Council of Ephesus. The two positions that came into tension at this ecumenical council are described clearly in the logical example Diarmaid MacCollough provides in his 2009 BBC series *A History of Christianity*. On the one hand, a camp (the followers of Nestorius) who believed Christ's man and god-like parts to be like oil poured into water: separated, but contained in this very separation. On the other, a camp (the followers of Cyril of Alexandria) who believed them to be like wine poured into water, which condenses together while splitting the identity of the beverage. Ultimately, while Nestorius was deemed a heretic, the Church reached a compromised "intuitionistic" solution in positing that Christ exists in a "hypostatic union" (MacCollough, 2009) — although one can imagine different ways in which *Verleugnung* ("I know very well Christ is God/man, but nonetheless he's (also) a man/God") or *Verneinung* ("whatever He is, He's not (just) a man/God! [Christ is...Christ]") might be elaborated from classical, paraconsistent, and psychoanalytic logical premises from the bases of Nestorius and Cyril's positions.[20]

Likewise, we find in Lacan's analysis of Joyce the question of how proper nouns and common nouns — godlike from manlike parts, in Christological terms — come to be separated, and hence Lacan claims that the entire set of traditions representing the "exception" (Lacan, 1981/1997, 65) of Judaeo-Christian civilization would culminate in Joyce — whose name, like Freud's, signifies *jouissance*, the only substance recognized by psychoanalysis (for Lacan) (Lacan, 1975/1998, p. 36-37). One might helpfully conceive of the problem of the production of a master-signifier in relation to one of Lacan's early schemas from "The Instance of the Letter in the Unconscious; or, Reason Since Freud" (Lacan, 1966/2006, p. 412-445):

Man Woman

— —

Door Door

Lacan invoked this schema in order to attest to the primacy of the signifier over the signified, his argument consisting in the fact that one doesn't apprehend the distinction between "man" and "woman" or the meaning of any signifier in terms of some signified content or substance, but rather their relation to other signifiers. Yet as we have seen, his later work turns to a different issue (all the while confronting the *Verneinung/Aufhebung* question of how the subject's "positing their own presuppositions") (Žižek, 2012, p. 157): how is distinction possible? In light of this consideration, one might advance something like the following alteration to the "Instance of the Letter" schema:

Joyce Joyce

— —

Door Door

Note that this schema poses the issue of what Leibniz called "the identity of indiscernibles," insofar as the indiscernibility of the signifiers in question allows for us to alternatively conceive of them as like the "signified" terms beneath the bar in the figures:

? ?

— —

Joyce Joyce

In the first instance, Lacan attempts in *The Sinthome* (2005/2016) to resolve the issue of how it is that the distinction between common and proper nouns is introduced — in terms of the earlier discussion of *Verneinung* and *Aufhebung*, how "subscription" comes about in the first place — with recourse to the concept of *lalangue*, the aspect of language that consists purely in "the function of phonation" and the *jouissance* involved in speaking itself (p. 61). Namely, as noted above, he suggests that Joyce's name signifies *jouissance*, and since *jouissance* is the only substance of psychoanalysis, one might conceive of the signifier "Joyce" as a proper noun that, as it were, stands intuitionistically for a term that would unite the very order of common and proper nouns, S2's and S1's; unconsciousness and consciousness.

Upon Lacan's second move, where he jumps across languages to evoke the commonality between Joyce and Freud's (freud → *freude* = "joy" in German) surnames (Lacan, "Joyce the Symptom (I)"), one realizes that this collapsing of common and proper nouns represents a conceptual error, albeit a productive one. Rather than attesting to a sort of meta-language of *sens* (i.e. that the names "Freud" and "Joyce" together comprise modes of the substance "psychoanalysis"), one ought to proceed in the opposite direction. The fact that the two "Joyce" signifiers can assume the place of the "signified" bathroom doors in the "Instance of the Letter" schema after having previously been located as distinct "signifiers" in the schema despite their identical nature attests, instead, to the division of the common substance supposed by the "doors" in the schema itself.[21] What sort of schema, though, might we imagine between two things or even worlds that have nothing in common (we have returned once more to the problem of the division of a point in two)?

Another transparently *stupid* reference (in the vein of the earlier pineal/penile gland analogy) presents itself here as the vehicle for a "higher," metaphysical point. Those who came of age in the early days of the internet might remember an early meme that took *lalangue* as its basis, but from an inverted angle that emphasized the primacy of metonymy over metaphor. A web page featured two buttons, one labeled "beer

can in British accent” and another “bacon in Jamaican accent”; the joke, however, was that in terms of “phonation,” the sound one would hear upon clicking each of these buttons is exactly the same. We might imagine an “Instance of the Letter”- type schema based on this ridiculous joke to look something like the following:

X Y

— —

British Jamaican

The catch, however, is that one encounters a kind of “identity of identity and non-identity” insofar as “X” and “Y” might represent “identity” and “non-identity,” respectively, in addition to standing for the same *sound*, such that the schema might be more appropriately rendered in the following way:

(Beer can—Bacon)

— —

British Jamaican

The above schema figures an aural version of something like the famous image of anamorphic distortion in which one can see “two faces” or a “vase,” but not both at the same time.[22] Upon further analysis, though, the terms involved in the “beer can/bacon” meme appear far from coincidental, insofar as Jamaican *patois* itself partially emerges from the immanent split of the British Empire into itself and the countries it once colonized. In this sense, the split between the two perspectives is not “S2 and S2” (two common nouns), but more precisely akin to the distinction between “S1” and what Lacan designated as the object-cause of desire[23] [*objet petit a*], the symptomatic point of a given world (in this case, the British Empire). Returning to Lacan and Joyce themselves, the former attributes the issue that the latter’s work is “not readable [...] certainly not translatable into Chinese” to the fact that “the signifier stuffs (*vient truffer*) the signified” within it. In terms of the signifier/signified schemas above, this is to say that “signifiers fit together, combine and concertina [...] such that] something is produced by way of meaning [...] that can be read in an infinite number of different ways” (Lacan, 1975/1998, p. 36-37).

By contrast, if one adapts the basic lesson of the UK-Jamaica schema that metaphoric condensation by means of “the function of phonation” itself *nonetheless still supposes a metonymic chain of association irreducible to this function* born from the “spirit of negation” (Zupan?i?, 2012, p.1), we might find in Lacan’s comment about the impossibility of translating Joyce’s work into Chinese ripe for further analysis. In particular, the fact that a translator named Dai Congrong *did* eventually translate Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* into Chinese[24] suggests less the possibility of “multiple Joyces” (insofar as this option fails to resolve the question of how the S1/S2 distinction comes to be posited; how “subscription” comes about; what a “true *Aufhebung*” looks like), but a figure akin to Zupan?i?’s “with-without” and the above “fourth logic” insofar as translation incorporates precisely that which is “lost in translation” into the very act of translating. Alas, in the move through which an “other Joyce” is conceived — say, Joyce in Chinese as opposed to Joyce in English — a different, non-intuitionistic “third” option becomes imaginable inasmuch as the positing of a *positive term* like “Chinese Joyce” can on the one hand negate “(English) Joyce,” but it can also negate something yet different.[25] Here, Lacan’s associations between Joyce’s struggle in the imperial language of English against his native Gaelic (Lacan, “Joyce the Symptom,” p. 9) and his reference to China, which was similarly colonized by the British Empire (along with the abovementioned Jamaica), gives a very clear rendering of Lacan’s otherwise potentially opaque pronouncement: “I do not say ‘politics is the unconscious’ but simply ‘the unconscious is politics’” (Lacan, Unpublished, 16.11.1966).

Since the revelation of what else could have been negated is itself nothing but an effect of the signifier’s “retroactivity” (Žižek, 2012, p. 207-213) — that is to say, determinations only posited after the fact — one

can now discern the path from *Verneinung* to the “true *Aufhebung*”; “the birth of thinking out of the spirit of negation” (Zupančič, 2017, p. 485). Returning to the Old Testament God’s self-differentiation from other gods in the Second Commandment, might not his conversion of denial/*Verneinung* of other gods to the injunctive form of a commandment represent a kind of disavowal for himself, and the very moment of “originary repression” for his people; a *Bejahung* of “Him” correlative to the *Ausstoßung* of God from the sphere of the human (secular) universe, marked by the denial/*Verneinung* of other gods?

We also find its obverse in a crucial moment of the New Testament gospels. Following Martin Luther’s own translation of the Bible into German, we find that Jesus tells Peter he will *verleugnen* him — traditionally translated as “deny,” and sometimes “disown,” but in our Freudian lexicon here, “disavow” — “three times before the cock crows.”[26] In response and in strict homology with our earlier reflection on the history of Freud’s “Negation” essay, Peter *denies that he will disavow* Jesus. Of course, Peter does precisely this three times, and upon the third disavowal of knowing Jesus, the cock crows, and Peter immediately weeps upon the realization of the prophecy (New International Version, 2011, Matthew 26:75).

Fittingly, it is Peter, the one who disavowed God but moreover actualizes this disavowal through *denying Him*, who goes on to found the Church, thus effectively giving body to this negation, having been lifted (in the sense of *Aufhebung*) to this status *through* denial. In sum: first belonging to God himself in relation to other gods, this negativity is actualized with the immanent split of God into Father and Son; then, this denial is realized to be that of God in himself (“my god, my god, why have you forsaken me?”) (New International Version, 2011, Matthew 27:46); ultimately, though, God’s denial of himself is first and foremost his believers’ denial, but it is these very unbelievers who manifest, in their emancipatory collective or social bond, “the Holy Spirit.” The psychoanalytic discourse can be said to follow a similar path in its actualization of the truth of unconscious knowledge through denial inasmuch as the “true *Aufhebung*” is actualized through denial/*Verneinung* itself. Before the rock-solidity of Joyce’s Catholicism for Lacan (Lacan, 2005/2016, p. 101) or Freud’s bedrock of castration (Freud, 1937, p. 252), there was the Bible’s own play on the letter with Jesus’ bestowing the name Peter/Petrus[27] to the disciple (who was once) Simon, the one who would come to deny him, but also ultimately preserve him in the moment of his death and resurrection:

And I say also (I also say) unto thee. As thou hast said unto me, “Thou art the Christ,” so I say unto thee, etc. Thou art Peter (??????, Petrus), and upon this rock (?????, petra) I will build my Church. (New International Version, 2011, Matthew 16:18)

It is in this sense that we can claim Peter and Freud’s founding gestures[28] are, following Zupančič (2017), instances of *Aufhebung*, which itself “activates [*Verneinung* as] the very point that separates...two realities [...and] puts this point to work” (p. 493).

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Notes:

[1] The titular phrase for this article appears as “the birth of thinking out of the spirit of negation” in Zupančič, “Not-Mother: On Freud’s *Verneinung*”, e-flux journal #33, 2012.

[2] I owe this anecdote to Altaira Calderella, who herself learned of this anecdote from Alan Bass.

[3] See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, for example.

[4] Perhaps the conception of the unconscious as a kind of substratum of consciousness, at least without the intricate dialectics of the inscription of unconscious thoughts into conscious ones (with the attendant crucial function of the border between the two, the preconscious, etc. [see the famous Chapter 7 of Freud’s *The Interpretation of Dreams* for example]) accounts for the frequency of the popular reference to “the subconscious” in the wider cultural reception of Freud’s work. (see also footnote 116 on “hypostasis”).

[5] Slavoj Žižek has invoked a similar analogy in comparing the entirety of Hegel’s dialectical process to one of defecation where “it is precisely as discarded that the released part [of an object] is, on the contrary, and if one may be permitted to insist on the excremental metaphor, the *manure* of spiritual development, the ground out of which further development will grow. The release of Nature into its own thus lays the foundation of Spirit proper, which can develop itself only out of Nature as its inherent self-sublation.” (“The Idea’s Constipation?”, Preface to Second Edition of *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, XV).

[6] See Tomšič, *The Capitalist Unconscious*, 130-133 for an elucidation of the notion of “originary repression,” as well as the justification of the translation of “*Ur-verdrängung*” into English as *originary* and not *primal* or *primary* repression.

[7] See again: Lacan, *The Sinthome*, 30. Despite the consistency of Lacan’s terms across 23 seminars, it is insofar as Lacan no longer analyzes the very process by which repression is posited and instead axiomatically declares the existence of an *Urverdrängung* that I follow Žižek in his claim that Lacan’s later post-XX seminars and the very notion of *sinthome* represent a failure (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gRQduUvaSVk>).

[8] Of course, there are moments where Lacan anticipates this notion – specifically, Seminar V’s “The Three Times of the Oedipus Complex” – but it is only with his turn to topology that Lacan begins to consider the constitution of the subject mathematically, as it were.

[9] This would seem to be consistent with Alain Badiou’s notion of the “count-as-one” that converts while positing, as it were, “inconsistent multiplicity” into a “consistent multiplicity” of ones.

[10] “The principle of the excluded middle, or the excluded third (if you have a proposition P, P is either true or false; that is, either P is true or non-P is true. We cannot have a third possibility); The principle of noncontradiction (it is impossible to assert simultaneously, in the same context, the proposition P and the proposition non-P).” Zupan?, Not-Mother: On Freud’s *Verneinung*, e-flux journal #33, 2012.

[11] Žižek often gives the example of having once encountered in a hotel room an ashtray with a no-smoking sign on it (<https://www.rt.com/op-ed/410064-women-protest-sexuality-rules-dangers/>)

[12] This double bind also evokes Lacan’s formulae of sexuation from *Seminar XX*, insofar as the two positions represent exceptions that posit the very norm from which they deviate, but that this deviation is itself Real, and per Joan Copjec’s own analogy with the formulae of sexuation, Kant’s antinomies.

[13] See Lacan, *Seminar XI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*.

[14] The 2019 film *Uncut Gems* presents an inversion of the standard actualization of the “your money or your life!” forced choice: in compulsively throwing winnings from sports bets back into more sports bets instead of paying off massively accumulating debts, the protagonist Howard Ratner “wins” by continuing to make money, eventually even coming out ‘in the green,’ only to ‘pay’ in blood for his “winning” when his frustrated debtors no longer tolerate his gambling addiction, and shoot him dead. In a sense, his “life” in the sense of personal/family/love relations is largely empty, and his money (closer to Marx’s miser, as opposed to a capitalist, hence circulation is not his goal) is already his true “life” insofar as his specific mode of *jouissance* consists in spiting his many naysayers. One might note the striking similarity of the relatively undignified figure of Ratner to both Lacan’s counterargument against Kant (in his own “Kant *avec* Sade”) that there exist some that can *only* enjoy with the prospect of the gallows waiting for them as well as Socrates’ affirmation of his own death at the beginning of philosophy(!) (in contrast to Christ’s death at the hands of Roman authorities, described in every Catholic mass as “freely accepted,” perhaps we might even speak of Socrates’ death as “freely chosen?”), and of course, Lacan’s Antigone from Seminar VII.

[15] This is both reminiscent of Lacan’s formula of sexuation, as mentioned in a footnote above, as well as Hegel’s (in)famous “identity of identity and non-identity.”

[16] The Maoist answer to this question, affirmed by Badiou, is, of course: “One divides into Two.”

[17] I am alluding here to Spinozism.

[18] See also Agnes Heller’s “The Simul: Reiner Schürmann Reads Kant through Luther,” in which she summarizes Schürmann’s argument that it is none other than Luther, and not Descartes, who represents the birth of modern subjectivity proper..

[19] See also Herman Westerink's *The Heart of Man's Destiny: Lacanian Psychoanalysis and Early Reformation Thought*.

[20] See also Dmitri Nikulin's *Neoplatonism in Late Antiquity*, 202, for an elaboration of the notion of *hypostasis* (in contradistinction to *pary-postasis*...not unlike paraconsistency!).

[21] Perhaps we might speak of the metaphorical function of these bathrooms doors in terms of what Hegel called *Sittlichkeit*.

[22] One might also recall by association here Lacan's reflections in Seminar VII on the vase as the original human artifact and re-enactment of creation *ex nihilo*, as well as the abovementioned idea from the same seminar about God's commandment that his people should not worship other gods "before [His] countenance" – more literally, his *face*.

[23] "That which, as an obstacle, gets your desire in motion," per Žižek. Of course, there is only one face involved in the monotheistic universe of creation *ex nihilo*, and one does not know it through observation, but rather believes (i.e. at least attempts to "keep the commandments," per Jesus).

[24] See: Kaiman, Jonathan. "Finnegan's Wake becomes a hit book in China," *The Guardian* 5, Feb 2013.

[25] It is for this reason that Žižek and Župančič repeatedly describe their psychoanalytic rehabilitation of German Idealist philosophy in terms of the following joke from Ernst Lubitsch's *Ninotchka*: "??A guy goes into a restaurant and says to the waiter: "Coffee without cream, please." The waiter replies: "I am sorry sir, but we are out of cream. Could it be without milk?" (see Žižek's *Absolute Recoil* for the most elaborate analysis of this logic). A further elaboration of the example in this context: "Chinese Joyce" could be taken as a negation of "(English) Joyce" as such, but it could also negate something like "(Chinese) not-Joyce"; however, it is only with the ripping out of context of the first term in its negation that its content becomes conceivable. The translation of Joyce into Chinese may look just as much like "Joyce without England" to English readers as it might look like "Joyce without Chinese" to Chinese readers.

[26] See <https://www.biblestudytools.com/lut/matthaus/26-34.html> and <https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/Matthew%2026:34> for comparison

[27] The question of how this Greek language pun could have been uttered by the Aramaic speaking Jesus remains, as it were, "originarily repressed" insofar as it is not a historical question to be answered with a wealth of information or archaeological evidence, but rather a point of nonsense sustaining a larger field of sense in the biblical discourse.

[28] See Lacan's Seminar II for his analysis of Freud's "dream of Irma's injection" in which the meaning of dreams (and thus the beginning of psychoanalysis) is announced to him.

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Bio:

Edward Dioguardi is a PhD student in Comparative Literature at New York University and a curatorial fellow developing an exhibition for June 2023 on institutional psychotherapy and *art brut* at the American Folk Art Museum. His ongoing philosophical projects center on an investigation of our modern political economy's inheritance from both Reformation-era texts' attacks on the Ecclesiastical "salvational economy" of the 16th century and Ancient Greek philosophical reflections on éρ?s and appearance. [edioguardi3@gmail.com]

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