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MADNESS AND SUBJECTIVE DESTITUTION: TOWARDS A POSSIBLE EXIT FROM CAPITALISM

ABSTRACT

Madness, as Hegel tells us, is inherent within all, a state each of us moves through each time we acquire a new habit. Like madness, subjective destitution is also an inherent state, one each of us moves through in our initial state of being. The two states converge in the acquisition of a new habit when one is momentarily without a nature and, at the same time, submerged in madness, when one is no longer what they were and not yet what they are about to become. Though, as Lacan tells us, one cannot choose to go mad, and one does not choose to be born into poverty (or other forms of subjective destitution), one can, nonetheless, make a determination to engage in the act of subjective destitution and madness as a means for emancipation. The two states converge in a novel configuration that replicates, though differs from, spirit's process of becoming.

KEYWORDS

Hegel, Marx, subjective destitution, capitalism, Lacan.

I

Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature* ends with the death of an animal. It is from out of this death that spirit arises: "Above this death of Nature, from this dead husk, proceeds a more beautiful Nature, *spirit*" (Hegel 1970: 443). Indeed, spirit's spirit originates from this waste, "the death of the animal is the becoming of consciousness" (Hegel 1967: 164). Implicit in nature's circular process – moving through a series of stages, then returning back into itself – is nature's own death, "The goal of Nature is to destroy itself and to break through its husk of immediate, sensuous existence, to consume itself like the phoenix in order to come forth from this externality rejuvenated as spirit" (Hegel 1970: 444). It is the nature of spirit not merely to be nature but to break with nature and set itself in opposition to it. This destructive constructivity that produces novelty is at the core of Hegel's system of *Aufhebung*.

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Nature's death at the end of *Philosophy of Nature* bleeds into, and is absorbed by, *Philosophy of Spirit*¹ where spirit, in its process of becoming, enters and returns out of nature. Subjective spirit is *Naturgeist*, spirit still immersed in the slumber of nature, or what Hegel calls *Seele*, or soul. Here, spirit is asleep in its unknowing and not yet for itself. Spirit begins, in other words, in sleep where it is neither itself nor nature, in a suspension between death and life, in a form of undeadness.

In this state of what Hegel calls *Seelenhaftigkeit* (2007a: 72), spirit works nature, or subjectivity, out of itself, "Spirit, just because it is the goal of Nature, is *prior* to it, Nature has proceeded from spirit: not empirically, however, but in such a manner that spirit is already from the very first implicitly present in Nature which is spirit's own presupposition" (Hegel 1970 444). Spirit facilitates its own coming into being (with and against nature). Yet, each time spirit engages in the act of negation, it vanishes, "Insofar as something mediates itself with itself, the other by means of which it is mediated disappears and with this the mediation itself disappears" (Hegel 2007a: 81). Through this process nature, along with spirit, vanishes (Hegel 2007b: 9). Spirit, in other words, is its own vanishing mediator.

In *Philosophy of Spirit* Hegel describes spirit's journey as the liberation struggle (*Befreiungskampf*) through which spirit emancipates itself. Spirit's process is one of repeated contradiction, of negating "every fixed determination" (ibid.: 114). This three-stage process consists of, first, *dreaming through* (*durchträumen*), where spirit "still lies in *immediate, undifferentiated* unity with its objectivity" (ibid.: 87), second, *madness* (*Verrücktheit*),² where spirit is confronted with a particularity it is unable to assimilate into its interior; and, finally, *habit*, where spirit masters this moment of conflict, resulting in a form of ambivalent mastery.

Spirit is nothing but its resistance to spirit: by opposing the obstacle of this estrangement – its self as other as limit – spirit ceaselessly pushes itself beyond its limits, changing its nature. These negations are a form of death through which spirit passes. Indeed, spirit would die were it not to pass through death. This self-othering, or *Sichanderswerden*, is crucial. Spirit's liberation occurs through the process of these annihilations, or negations, of its self, the result of which is the production of its true being. What spirit becomes through this liberation struggle exists already as Idea, and yet, it is also something entirely novel: "Spirit is free, but first it is merely implicitly free in itself. It has to bring forth what it is implicitly in itself. This process is the content of our discipline:

1 Hegel's text, *Die Philosophie des Geistes*, is translated as *Philosophy of Mind*, though the German word in the title, *Geist*, means "mind" and "spirit". Because Hegel refers to this entity as spirit, I will be using the term "spirit" rather than "mind".

2 The term *Verrücktheit* translates most commonly to madness and insanity. The word has been translated as "derangement" (Michael Inwood), "insanity" (Daniel Bertold-Bold), and "dementia" (Robert R. Williams), among others. Hegel's use of the term refers to the general category of which there are three distinct categories. I have chosen to use the term madness due its more general and neutral connotations.

to liberate oneself, i.e., to liberate oneself from nature” (Hegel 2007a: 71). In spirit’s doubling of itself, it produces a new copy of itself, but one with difference. Thus, within itself, spirit already holds its future self, and yet, it does not yet know what this future self is. It is only its ability to mediate, everything else falls away in this process of becoming, a process that adds as it subtracts.

Once spirit has annihilated spirit, in order to work with this emptiness, this nothingness needs stabilization. By positing a limit between its self and nature, by creating this division, spirit creates a means to stabilize this nothingness (Hegel 2007b: 22). This marking of a limit defines subjectivity. Spirit becomes what it is by determining what it is not. (ibid.: 131) When spirit posits something, it falls back into the void of its abstract interior, what Hegel calls the Night of the World (1983: 87), into momentary madness:

The human being is this Night, this empty nothing which contains everything in its simplicity – a wealth of infinitely many representations, images, none of which occur to it directly, and none of which are not present. This [is] the Night, the interior of [human] nature, existing here – pure Self – [and] in phantasmagoric representations it is night everywhere: here a bloody head suddenly shoots up and there another white shape, only to disappear as suddenly. We see this Night when we look a human being in the eye, looking into a Night which turns terrifying. [For from his eyes] the night of the world hangs out toward us.

Into this Night the being has returned (ibid.: 87).

Spirit’s recognition of its limitation introduces a split where it can either recoil back into its interior abyss of madness, or move through its limit, an act Hegel describes as an act of audacity (*Vermessenheit*) and madness (*Verrücktheit*)” (2007: 22). Thus, retreating into its interior and moving through its limit are both forms of madness.

Hegel describes the rupture that occurs during spirit’s separation from nature as “the madness of the human being”, “where spirit falls away from its lucidity and freedom into its raw natural condition (*Natürlichkeit*)” (2007a: 72, footnote 42). This process of becoming represents a crisis, as Catherine Malabou explains:

The formation of individuality represents a crisis. It is clear that in the word ‘crisis’ we hear the double meaning of the term ‘judgement’—as a rupture and as a decision.... In fact, the further the ‘self’ advances in the movement which constitutes its own formation, the more it finds itself dispossessed of itself, to the point of becoming truly mad. It seems that spirit does not leave its initial state of self-hypnosis, its original slumber, except to sink further into alienation (2005: 31).

The moment a subject moves into second nature, when it is no longer what it was and is not yet its new, second nature, is an instance of madness. In this moment, one is without a nature. In a sense, in this discrete moment, one is nothing. Hegel describes madness as a moment of instability where a subject

experiences disorientation (2007b: 126). The state of being Hegel describes is one of being untethered, of being “plunged into absolute uncertainty” (ibid.: 126). Such occurrences can transpire during moments of personal change, when, for instance, one learns a new habit like riding a bicycle, or during large shifts in society. Providing the French Revolution as an example, Hegel writes, “many people became insane by the collapse of almost all civil relationships”, (ibid.: 126) thus, linking madness to revolution. Because this disarray undoes the structures that were hitherto considered the edifices of reality, this moment presents a radical opening.

During such moments of instability there exists the possibility of a subject’s becoming stuck. This occurs when some part of itself cannot be integrated into its overall system. As a result, the subject enters what Hegel calls *derangement* or madness (ibid.: 114). And yet, moving through this in-between state is necessary for change. This is why madness, for Hegel, is inherent to humans, “an essential stage in the development of the soul” (ibid.: 114). Crucially, madness exists at the very crux of our being. As Slavoj Žižek has shown, Hegel’s inclusion of madness in his system marks a friction, an indigestible remnant, the result of which is a point of resistance from within (Žižek 2009a).

Indeed, man has the “*privilege of folly and madness*” (Hegel 2007b: 114) (*mensch hat vorrecht der narrheit und des wahnsinns*) (Hegel 1986: 168). Hegel’s use of the term *vorrecht* suggests that humans have not merely the right (*Recht*), but the *vor*, or *pre*, right, to go mad, a right that comes before a right. And yet, because it comes before the right, it cannot be claimed. Therefore, madness is a right one is unable to claim. If madness is a *Vorrecht*, it is a privilege, a special right, one is granted. Madness remains a possibility we can neither choose nor not choose, can neither plan for nor plan to evade. Illuminating the inherent paradox of madness, Lacan will present a similar conception of madness, insisting both that “The mad person is the only free human being” (1967: 11) and, at the same time, “Not just anyone can go mad” (Lacan 2006: 144).

Hegel posits habit as a means to quell madness (Hegel 2007b: 131). And yet habit, though it produces freedom from madness, can itself become habitual in the form of oblivion. The repetition of an action that begins as a deliberate choice results in an aspect that becomes sublimated into one’s everyday being, “that the soul thus makes itself into abstract universal being, and reduces the particularity of feelings (of consciousness too) to a determination in it that just is, is habit” (ibid.: 131). What at first seems strange and may initially be experienced as a shock, eventually becomes, in a sense, nothing: entirely unnoticeable. Because it provides stability, habit is necessary for a subject’s interior cohesion and for social cohesion. Due to habit, feeling becomes second nature, allowing one to engage in the world, to not get stuck on a particularity, as Hegel writes, “the essential determination is the *liberation* from sensations that man gains through habit, when he is affected by them” (ibid.: 131). Thus, habit produces freedom.

Yet, because habit results in a form of forgetting, habit is also a form of un-freedom. Further, because habit becomes second nature, we become habituated

to habit, “in habit man’s mode of existence is natural, and for that reason he is unfree in it; but he is free in so far as the natural determinacy of sensation is by habit reduced to his mere being, he is no longer different from it, is indifferent to it, and so no longer interested, engaged, or dependent in respect to it” (ibid.: 131). When feeling becomes second nature, one loses awareness. Thus, at some level, one is always in a state of oblivion.

Hegel uses the term *Vorrecht* precisely three times in *Philosophy of Spirit*. As already discussed, Hegel declares *Wahnsinn* and *Narrheit* to be *Vorrechte*. But for Hegel the act of *Aufhebung* is also a *Vorrecht*, “The subjectivity of the animal contains a contradiction and the urge to preserve itself by sublating this contradiction; this self-preservation is the privilege of the living thing and, in a still higher degree, of spirit” (ibid.: 11). (“*Die Subjektivität des Tieres enthält einen Widerspruch and den Trieb, durch Aufhebung dieses Widerspruchs sich selbst zu erhalten; welche Selbsterhaltung das Vorrecht des Lebendigen und in noch höherem Grade das des Geistes ist*” (Hegel 2016: 20). Here, Hegel uses the word animal, or *Tier*, rather than human, “*Die Subjektivität des Tieres*, or “the subjectivity of the animal”, signaling the inherent nature of animal within human. Crucial, also, is Hegel’s use of the term *Trieb*, or drive: it is not merely the contradiction and its *Aufhebung*, but also the drive to preserve itself, that Hegel includes in this third *Vorrecht*.

Though *Vorrechte* are rights one cannot claim, one can, nonetheless, make a determination to claim a right, just as one can make a determination to take an action. As with absolute knowing, one makes a determination (to begin) and then makes a determination to let go of what results from this determination. Cognition is required for the initial determination, but then one must make the determination to suspend cognition. This suspension is described by Malabou as “a state of spiritual hypnosis corresponding actually to a time prior to the ‘I’ which, on this account, precedes man as such” (2005: 28).

In *The Ontology of the Accident*, in her analysis of brain trauma, Malabou describes subjects who are born anew, “An unrecognizable persona whose present comes from no past, whose future harbors nothing to come, an absolute existential improvisation” (2012: 1–2). This new form of being arises through the accident (ibid.: 2), which we can also understand as a crisis. This crisis results in a new form of the subject, a subject who already existed, in a process akin to spirit’s becoming. This “new being comes into the world for a second time” (ibid.: 2). Describing this new subject sprung from its own being, Malabou writes:

We no longer look like anything living, but nor do we look like anything inanimate. We must imagine something between the animate and the inanimate, something that is not animal but that has none of the inertia of stone either. The inanimal? (ibid.: 70).

This suspension between knowing and not-knowing is a state of undeadness. When spirit exists in the suspension between what it was and what it

will be, in this moment, it is nothing. Suspended, it is between states of being. Here, with this willful forgetting, one makes a determination to suspend judgement for an undetermined time. One suspends judgement and then, in a sense, enters the suspension.

This form of forgetting has something to do with Lacan's concept of stupidity in Seminar XV. In the seminar Lacan praises stupidity (2002: 12), "The true dimension of stupidity is indispensable to grasp as being what the psychoanalytic act has to deal with" (ibid.: 12–13). This form of stupidity, what Lacan refers to as "*de-connaissance*", which translates to "un-knowledge", is not a lack of knowledge but, rather, that which exists between knowledge and lack of knowledge.

For Lacan, truth exists in the precise place where the subject's loss of knowledge coincides, at the site where the symptom appears. It is through the symptom that the subject speaks: the subject is, for Lacan, this speaking. And yet the subject remains unaware of this truth. "The truth, this is what psychoanalysis teaches us, lies at the point where the subject refuses to know...The symptom is this real knot where the truth of the subject lies" (ibid.: 202).

The act of initiating psychoanalysis, like spirit's act of determination, also requires a determination followed by a suspension of judgement. Describing the presupposition inherent to the psychoanalytic act, Lacan explains, "What is at stake when what we are dealing with is the divine dimension and generally that of the spirit, turns entirely around the following: what do we suppose to be already there before we discover it?" (ibid.: 13). When one decides to take a leap, to engage in a *salto mortale*, this suspension has a hypnotic quality to it, akin to Hegel's description of animal magnetism. Though, he explains, it would be foolish (*töricht*) to liken the phenomenon to philosophy, and though we must consider animal magnetism a form of disease and a decline in spirit below ordinary consciousness:

in so far as in that state spirit surrenders its thinking, the thinking that proceeds in determinate distinctions and contrasts itself with nature, yet, on the other hand, in the visible liberation of spirit in those magnetic phenomena from the limitations of space and time and from all finite connexions, there is something that has an affinity to philosophy, something that, with all the brutality of an established fact, defies the scepticism of the intellect and so necessitates the advance from ordinary psychology to the conceptual cognition of speculative philosophy, for which alone animal magnetism is not an incomprehensible miracle (Hegel 2007b: 8).

Animal magnetism allows for a "*sichlosmachen*", a releasing of spirit from its self, and thus from thinking, and from all finite limits including those of space and time. Such a state is one that is "diseased" and in which "a separation of the soulful from mental consciousness" occurs (ibid.: 99). This state of suspension Hegel describes as also occurring in universal form, in, for example, "*sleep walking, catalepsy, the onset of puberty in young women, the state of pregnancy, also St Vitus's dance, and the moment of approaching death*" (ibid.:

99). Such a state results in an internal splitting of the self, *Zerrissenheit*, that which is indicative of madness. In his description of this state of being, Hegel includes those of “religious and political exaltation”:

In the war of the Cevennes, for example, the free emergence of the soulful showed up as a prophetic gift present to a high degree in children, in girls and especially in old people. But the most remarkable example of such exaltation is the famous Jeanne d’Arc, in whom we can see, on the one hand, the patriotic enthusiasm of a quite pure, simple soul and, on the other, a kind of magnetic state (ibid.: 99).

Joan of Arc abandons her life without knowing what it is she is entering into or what the final result of her act will be. Through the subtraction of what she is, something new appears.

II

Capitalism, with its origins in the French Revolution, arose from the destruction of feudal society and the breaking up and dissolving of the monarchy (Soboul 1977: 3). The result was a shift from a society where subjects were dependent upon one another to one where each exists for themselves, driven by their own wants and needs. This violent breaking up (*Zerrissen*) of society, resulting in disunity (*Zerrissenheit*), is akin to Hegel’s description of a subject’s internal splitting (*Zersplitterung*), “into different faculties, forces, or, what comes to the same thing, activities, represented as independent of each other” (2007b: 6), which results in madness.

This rupturing of society resulted in the dispersal of the sovereignty into the people. “This substance entered”, Eric Santner writes, “like a strange alien presence—an imminent heterogeneity—into that of the people” (2020:51). What Santner describes as a “strange alien presence” can be understood as the globs and pools of gelatinous matter Marx attributes to the spectral quality of value which has a mesmerizing effect, propelling subjects to it while, simultaneously, altering their very nature (Marx 1976: 128). This process shares a similar structure to what Hegel refers to as chemism (2010: 645). In Hegel’s conception of chemism an object or organism is altered internally and, as a result, is drawn, unconsciously, to other, stronger, objects. But unlike the chemical process that occurs in spirit’s process of becoming where chemism is the result of mechanism, the chemical process brought about by capitalism results in mechanism. In, for example, the machinery of production and the human body (and mind) of the worker, “in the factory we have a lifeless mechanism which is independent of the workers, who are incorporated into it as its living appendages” (Marx 1976: 548).

The alien power, Hegel writes, “that generates magnetic somnambulism in a subject is mainly another subject” (2007b: 108). In capitalism, there is no subject capable of drawing subjects to them in this way. Or, rather, the subject capable of this overwhelming power is what Marx calls the automatic subject.

This subject that is not a subject is the result of a chemical process where both forms of value commingle:

in the circulation M-C-M both the money and the commodity function only as different modes of existence of value itself, the money as its general mode of existence, the commodity as its particular or, so to speak, disguised mode. It is constantly changing from one form into the other, without becoming lost in this movement; it thus becomes transformed into an automatic subject (Marx 1976: 255).

This chemical process produces a form of libidinal excess, what Marx describes as spectral materiality [*gespenstige Gegenständlichkeit*], a gelatinous [*Gallerte*], substance extracted from the laboring body of the worker then transposed to objects which, once they become filled with this invisible, charged substance, become commodities (ibid.: 128). This charged matter that fills objects is also transfused into the human subject who, as a result, is transformed to an “animated monster which begins to ‘work’, ‘as if its body were by love possessed” (ibid.: 302).

This charged matter is an “intensity of undead life”, (Santner 2001: 54). As Santner explains, “We are dealing here with a paradoxical kind of mental energy that constrains by means of excess, that leaves us stuck and paralyzed precisely by way of a certain kind of intensification and amplification, by a “too much” of pressure that is unable to be assumed, taken up into the flow of living” (ibid.: 22). Unlike spirit’s form of undeadness, dynamic at its core transitioning through moments of forgetfulness during repeated instances of self-negation, capitalist undeadness is a combination of oblivion and freneticism. Here, we have a destructive form of habit, habit perverted by capitalism, resulting in mechanism. We have a subject who has become the mechanical action he performs, moving without thought, existing in a death-like state.

The madness at the core of capitalism is the transformation of use value into exchange value, a procedure through which use value vanishes and, in this vanishing, exchange value is added. Though there is a contradiction at the center of this phenomenon, the phenomenon invisibilizes itself. Capitalism’s form of self-valuation bears a similarity with the self-production of spirit but in a problematic form. While contradiction is inherent to the self-production of both spirit and capitalism, unlike spirit, capitalism covers over contradictions and thus, does not sublimate them. Because this process remains invisible, we take the strange matter of commodities to be natural. Even political economists remain blind to this alteration to society (Marx 1975: 52).

This process mimics and yet perverts spirit’s process of becoming. While spirit’s system is one of self-negation and self-valorization, where spirit reproduces itself as something novel, with capitalism we have, instead, a process of duplication where something vanishes and yet, this vanishing is veiled by its replacement with something else. Stated otherwise, with spirit, we have the production of something new through contradiction, while with capitalism we

have reproduction with contradiction that is covered over. Without contradiction, or contradiction that is covered over, there is no possibility for change.

With the appearance of capitalism, nature is replaced and capitalism becomes (human) second nature. While with spirit's interaction with nature and nature's interaction with spirit, both spirit and nature self-generate and disappear. Once they transform themselves, what they were no longer exists. When capitalism replaces nature, capitalism generates itself but, unlike nature and spirit, it does not disappear in the process but, instead, continues self-replicating. In addition, because capitalism introduces mechanism, which nature does not, it thus naturalizes nature.

As a result of the French revolution and the appearance of capitalism, the human subject is without its nature, transformed to animal nature. Human nature, removed from human, is replaced with the worship of money and commodities, "Money is the estranged essence of man's work and man's existence, and this alien essence dominates him, and he worships it" (Marx 1987: 172). The human subject becomes "man in his uncivilized, unsocial form, man in his fortuitous existence, man just as he is, man as he has been corrupted by the whole organization of our society, who has lost himself, been alienated, and handed over to the rule of inhuman conditions and elements – in short, man who is not yet a *real* species-being" (ibid.: 159). Man's nature is removed and replaced with this new second nature, egoistic man. As Marx writes, "*egoistic* man is the passive result of the dissolved society, a result that is simply found in existence, an object of immediate certainty, therefore a natural object" (1987: 167). This new human is "not yet a real species being", regressing to a pre-human state, and yet, he becomes this not-yet-human precisely due to what we call civilization, "the whole organization of our society" (ibid.: 159).

Marx's concept of human nature, *Gattungswesen*, is predicated on human needs that are not fixed upon each individual or even upon the human species but, rather, change according to human society and history (1993: 222). These needs are natural but when taken in isolation, when man attends to them as if they are no more than mere needs, they reduce man to animal, that which is not capable of determinations, who has no contradiction, and experiences only an endless series of the same,

Nature as such in its self-internalizing does not attain to this being-for-self, to the consciousness of itself; the animal, the most complete form of this internalization, exhibits only the spiritless dialectic of transition from one individual sensation filling up its whole soul to another individual sensation which equally exclusively dominates it; it is man who first raises himself above the individuality of sensation to the universality of thought, to awareness of himself, to the grasp of his subjectivity, of his I—in a word, it is only man who is thinking mind and by this and by this alone, is essentially distinguished from nature (Hegel 2007b: 15).

Furthermore, due to the alienation of labor, man feels free only when engaging in the fulfilment of these needs: "as a result, therefore, man (the worker)

only feels himself freely active in his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in his dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal. What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal” (Marx 1959: 30). This new human subject appears as natural and yet, his nature is animal (animal nature). This is because he has forgotten his animal nature and has been reduced to animal with his focus entirely on fulfilling his individual needs.

Though there were instances of pre-capitalist greed during, for example, antiquity, what Marx calls driven greed, these were exceptions. With capitalism, such exceptions become the norm (Johnston 2017: 272–273). For both Marx and Freud, drives are not givens but mediated by the social, resulting in the altering of structural, as well as phenomenal, dimensions. These mediations render the drive an object, and the (drive) object, then, alters the subject (ibid.: 280). Capitalism does something to do this original drive, as Adrian Johnston writes: capitalism alters the libidinal configuration of subjects from pre-capitalism’s “more constrained and implicit (in itself [*an sich*]) to more unbound and explicit (for itself [*für sich*])” (ibid.: 272).

Pre-capitalist and capitalist drive correlate with pre-capitalist and capitalist greed. In *Grundrisse* Marx describes greed as “a particular form of the *drive*” (1993: 222) as distinct from the craving for a particular kind of wealth, such as for clothes, weapons, jewels, etc. With capitalism pre-capitalist drive becomes a new form of drive, greed, as Marx writes, “the mania for possessions is possible without money; but greed itself is the product of a definite social development not *natural*, as opposed to historical” (ibid.: 222). Though we had pre-capitalist drive and a pre-capitalist “mania for possessions”, with capitalism, the two conflate, resulting in what Marx calls greed. This new form of greed does something to subject formation.

This state of man reduced to animal is described by Andrey Platonov in his short story “Rubbish Wind”. The wife of Albert Lichtenberg, the main character, is described as becoming animal as the result of fascist society, “though she had been a dear and magnificent being”, he writes, “As he got dressed Lichtenberg saw that Zelda was crying and had lain down on the floor; her leg was bared, it was covered with the rampart sores of an unclean animal; she did not even lick them, she was worse than a monkey – a monkey looks after its organs with painstaking care” (1999: 67).

In contrast, Lichtenberg is emptied out, a mere husk, “He could not immediately remember, that he existed and that it was necessary for him to carry on living, he had forgotten the weight and feeling of his own body” (ibid.: 67). Lichtenberg’s emptiness can be likened to what Alain Badiou describes as the self-purification of the working class (2009: 35), that combat ought to be against one’s interior where bourgeois belief and habit reside, “It is by realizing its interior unity, by purifying itself of its determination (of its division) by the bourgeoisie, that the working class projects itself expansively in the destructive battle against the imperialist place” (ibid.: 35). Lichtenberg’s experience of forgetting the weight of his body seems, also, to correlate with

Santner's description of the libidinal charge subjects experience. This charge manifests in a weight one experiences in the body or, as Santner writes, in the flesh. This flesh is the site where we experience the cut of the symbolic in our being, what he calls "incarnation" (Santner 2011: 31–32). Lichtenberg's experience is the opposite of what Santner describes, his is a body that is light, free of such investitures.

Man is an animal and yet, man's knowledge of being an animal is what makes man not an animal, or, rather, an animal that is not an animal, as Hegel writes in the *Lectures on Aesthetics*:

Man is an animal, but even in his animal functions, he is not confined to the implicit, as the animal is; he becomes conscious of them, recognizes them, and lifts them, as, for instance, the process of digestion, into self-conscious science. In this way man breaks the barrier of his implicit and immediate character, so that precisely because he knows that he is an animal, he ceases to be an animal and attains knowledge of himself as spirit (Hegel 1975: 80).

An animal does not know it is an animal and this not-knowing separates animal from human. But when man forgets his animal nature, it is as though he drops to a level below that of animal. This state is articulated nicely by Frank Ruda when he writes, "the worker is less than an animal because he loses the knowledge that he has of his lack and thereby lacks even lacking the animal-way" (2018: 85). Under capitalism, man precisely forgets his inherent animal nature and is reduced to what Marx calls man's "cattle-like existence" (1959: 3).

Hegel makes a distinction between the human and animal with regard to need (1991: 228). Animal need is limited: it needs food and water, for example, and these needs cannot be extended (ibid.: 228). In contrast, though human need, like animal need, also originates in survival, it is expandable through the human will (ibid.: 228). Indeed, precisely because need is tethered to human survival, we continue to strive after whatever objects are presented as human needs, "the tendency of the social conditions towards an indeterminate multiplication and specification of needs, means, and pleasures—i.e. *luxury*—a tendency which, like the distinction between natural and educated needs, has no limits [*Grenzen*], involves an equally infinite increase in dependence and want" (ibid.: 228).

Desire, on the other hand, for Hegel, is spirit's drive to sublimate its otherness in an object. There is a doubling of desire which occurs at the outset, manifesting in an urge to sublimate this otherness, and, then, again, in the sublation of this otherness, "but by this sublation of the object the subject...sublates its own lack, its disintegration into a distinctionless I=I and an I related to an external object, and it gives its subjectivity objectivity just as much as it makes its object subjective" (Hegel 2007b: 156). In this act, spirit transcends "the self-centredness of merely destructive desire" (ibid.: 157). Thus, desire can be understood as spirit's repeated act of negation, this act of annihilation and destruction. Desire is what drives man to act. And yet, with the emergence of capitalism, man's desire is perverted by becoming bound to objects, and man is reduced

to “the animal reality bound to individuality” (ibid.: 15). While desire propels one into the future, a future without a definitive goal, desire bound to an object binds one to the present moment (Timofeeva 2018: 107). One becomes stuck in the ever-revolving sameness of the now.

To be human is to be of the world. As Heidegger writes, “the animal is poor in world; Man is world-forming” (1995: 184). The animal does not have a world. Or, rather, it has a world but its world is not shared with the human. For Hegel, the animal is the creature that is less than human. The animal is constrained within its sphere, external to the human. And yet, the human has animal nature within it. Spirit arises from out of the death of nature. Like the human, the animal exists, but it exists outside the human world.

Describing Descartes’ wonder at the animals’ existence within this between space, Oxana Timofeeva writes, “those animals are almost already dead, or rather undead, and, incidentally, one might say, that a passage from life to death, their short stay in the grey zone in between, is an object of scientific and aesthetic inspiration in the Classical Age” (2018: 55).

Platonov’s “Rubbish Wind” depicts the becoming-animal of humans, a transformation that results from a poverty of living. The mutation is one that is both spiritual and physical—one begins slowly to go mad—forgetting, and then losing the ability to use one’s mind—as one is slowly transformed to animal. In the story, two forms of this type of madness are described. As with madness, habit, and undeadness, there is a good and bad form of becoming animal. Lichtenberg’s wife is depicted as animal, but also as mad and dead, “uttering...the cries of dead madness” (1999: 67). “Her mouth”, he writes, is “filled with the saliva of greed and sensuality” (ibid.: 67). It is as if the very matter of capitalism has filled her up and is spilling out from her body. In contrast, Lichtenberg’s madness is one of being emptied out, “mostly he kept forgetting himself, perhaps some surplus of suffering consciousness was switching off the life inside him so it should be preserved if only in sad forgetfulness” (Platonov 1999: 71). Though his wife is reduced to mad, dead, animal, Lichtenberg retains the core of his being, “now she was a beast, scum of crazed consciousness, whereas he would always, until the grave, remain a human being, a physicist of the cosmic spaces, and even if hunger were to torment his stomach right up to his heart, it would not reach higher than his throat, and his life would hide away in the cave of his head” (1996: 68).

The “hunger” afflicting Lichtenberg and his wife, this starvation, results in a strange chemical alteration. Lichtenberg’s wife goes mad, her mind and body overcome with “greed” and “sensuality”. Lichtenberg also experiences hunger, and yet this hunger does something different to him. Rather than propelling him into a ravenous state, it results, instead, in a space between himself and the insane world of Nazi Germany. Though he could fall in line with the madness he sees around him, he refuses, and this resistance to hunger and to his oppression, sustains him. Picked up by the police and taken to a concentration camp, Lichtenberg is described upon his examination as “A possible new species of social animal, developing a layer of hair, extremities debilitated, sexual

attributes poorly defined; this subject, now removed from social circulation, cannot be ascribed to a definite gender;...” (1999: 80). With Lichtenberg, there is a becoming animal of man and yet man neither remains human, nor is he formed into animal. Instead, he is transformed into something else: a form of waste, or refuse, out of which something new appears.

This division between human and animal and animal within human shifts already with Kant. While with pre-Kant, the concept of animal as a force that might take over human was one situated externally, with Kant this animal is one that is lodged within the human. As Žižek writes, “in the pre-Kantian universe, humans were simply humans, beings of reason, fighting the excesses of animal lusts and divine madness, while only with Kant and German Idealism is the excess to be fought absolutely immanent, the very core of subjectivity itself” (2009b: 22). In his analysis of this shift, Žižek describes the inherent undead or inhuman nature of this transformation between animal and human:

In Kafka’s *Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa’s sister Grete calls her brother-turned-insect a monster—the German word used is “ein Untier”, an inanimal, in strict symmetry to inhuman. What we get here is the opposite of inhuman: an animal which, while remaining animal, is not really animal—the excess over the animal in animal, the traumatic core of animality, which can emerge “as such” only in a human who has become an animal (ibid.: 22).

This excess out of which this inhuman appears is a form of undeadness that belongs neither to spirit nor to capitalism’s undeadness. It arises from capitalism’s libidinal matter, transformed through a subject’s act of self-negation. Not through material death, but rather through an instance of symbolic death, through subjective destitution, which we will examine more closely in the third part of this paper.

Capitalism, due to repetition, becomes habit, or second nature, thus invisibilizing itself. While habit is the practice of repeating an act that becomes nothing over time, with capitalism, habit is habit that, sublimated into capitalism, makes, through the act of repetition, everything the same. As a result, difference vanishes. What is repeated remains hidden (Badiou 2009). Through repetition, we forget difference. With nothing to help orient us we are drawn into capitalism’s infinite flow without recourse. Habit, the very mechanism that ought to provide a remedy for madness becomes, itself, a form of madness.

The animating quality that comes to life due to capitalism results in a strange paradoxical configuration—one is charged with libidinal matter while, at the same time, stuck in a state of paralytic stasis. Inanimate objects are animated with this matter while human animation is displaced by this animating source, the result of which is a state of suspension. While spirit’s undeadness is one where spirit moves through its death as it becomes itself, in capitalism, subjects are immobile while being filled with a life-force that is also a form of living death. While spirit is in constant movement in its voyage to its self, the capitalist subject is petrified in a form of freneticism that leads nowhere. As Santner writes, “this ‘animation’ at issue for Marx, is something that is ultimately

deadening—or rather, *undeading*—for human beings, something that drives them while holding them in place, a condition Walter Benjamin once referred to as ‘petrified unrest,’ *erstarrte Unruhe*” (2006: 81). This charge of undeadness, is an “intensity of undead life” (ibid.: 22). Santner likens this state to that of mania. “The “manic” side of modern melancholy can thus be understood at least in part as a mode of response to what Marx characterized as the spectral dimension of our life with commodities” (ibid.: 82). This combination of stuckness and frenzy differs from spirit’s in-between space, a good form of undeadness that constructs out of destruction. In capitalism, this constructive undeadness changes and becomes a state where one is dead while still living, a form of destruction that is not constructive.

What Benjamin describes as poverty of experience, where subjects experience something but have no experience of their experience (1996: 732), becomes actual both in madness and in capitalism. The reality we are unable to experience is an experience that is rendered meaningless. With its structure of exchange value, capitalism creates a world in which all aspects of life become calculable, commodified. Thus, because everything is exchangeable, everything becomes the same, losing distinctions. As Marx writes, “Just as in money every qualitative difference between commodities is extinguished, so too for its part, as a radical leveller, it extinguishes all distinctions” (1976: 229). This leveling down of everything, where difference no longer exists, ends in indifference, *Gleichgültigkeit*. Thus, the poverty of experience is both our inability to experience and the very meaningless experience we are unable to experience. The experience Benjamin describes, that of the destruction of forms of experience, can be understood as a form of living dead. The structure of experience is missing and yet, one goes on living, nonetheless.

And, as we continue living, though not experiencing this living, the old, what has happened before now, continues, accumulating, refusing to die. This “old” that continues, remaining alive, at the same time, does not exist for us. In this space between the past, or history we remain ignorant to, and a future we are no longer able to imagine, we are stuck within a structure of the lack of a history and a (historical) future, resulting in the form of unconscious of a particular time. As Jean-Joseph Goux articulates, “[...] the form of unconscious typifying a given period is constructed upon the lack, the failing, in the dominant structure, of strata that “precede” or “follow” that period’s dominant level of fixation, with the understanding that this precession or succession refers not to real history but to a structural phenomenon” (1990: 77). Subjects experience the time they are living in as a phenomena unconnected to history or a historical future. There is thus, a lack of temporal.

In this stuckness in the infinite now we are in the realm of the animal whose mode of experience is constrained by its mode of survival – of following its desire for food, water, and reproduction – and is thus fixed in the now without a future or past. At the same time, we are in the realm of madness and death: Hegel’s description of “a representation torn off from the totality of actuality” (2007b: 120) (*der Wirklichkeit abgerissenen*) is a rupture, a cutting off

from (*zerreißen*) and this being cut off from actuality, from reality or existence (*Wirklichkeit*) is a form of death, of being relegated to the realm between deaths.

III

Subjective destitution, or what Lacan also calls *désêtre*, or *unbeing*, marks the termination of analysis where fantasy, what had hitherto served to obscure reality, finally falls away, releasing a subject to the freedom of *unbeing*. Akin to Hegel's absolute knowing, this state is described by Lacan as one of "absolute disarray" (1997: 304), where a subject is reduced to their purest, emptiest, and is confronted with the fragility of their own life, which is also to say, their death. As a result, the subject stands before the abyss in a state of sheer anxiety:

That really is what is at issue, at the end of analysis, a twilight, an imaginary decline of the world, and even an experience at the limit of depersonalization. That is when the contingent falls away—the accidental, the trauma, the hitches of history—And it is being which then comes to be constituted (Lacan 1988: 232).

Lacan describes this state as "twilight". Surprisingly, this is the same term he uses to describe Schreber's descent into madness:

First, there were several months of pre psychotic incubation in which the subject was in a state of profound confusion. This is the period in which the phenomena of the twilight of the world occur, which are characteristic of the beginning of a delusional period (1993: 217).

Thus, twilight describes both the space precipitating a subject's decent into psychosis and subjective destitution. There is a proximity, in other words, between the two states. Though they are not the same, in both, a subject removes themselves from the symbolic, experiencing a symbolic death.

While with psychosis, one is in the abyss, with subjective destitution, one stands at the edge of the abyss. This edge is a state of anxiety, the terror one encounters when facing the nothing that is not an absence but, rather, the presence of something that remains unknown or, as Lacan articulates, the lack of lack. While the psychotic fills this gap with hallucination and the capitalist subject fills it with disavowal, the subject of subjective destitution stands before the abyss in a state of sheer anxiety. Inherent to Lacan's articulation of subjective destitution, the analysand is rendered to a state of *hilflosigkeit*. It is in this state that one transitions from one state of being to the other, where, as Žižek writes that:

we overcome mortality and enter undeadness: not life after death but death in life, not dis-alienation but extreme self-abolishing alienation—we leave behind the very standard by means of which we measure alienation, the notion of a normal warm daily life, of our full immersion in the safe and stable world of customs. The way to overcome the topsy-turvy world is not to return to normality but to embrace turvy without topsy (2022: 290).

In his directive that we embrace “turvy” rather than “topsy”, Žižek connects subjective destitution with madness. By invoking Marx’s critical analysis of capital’s “enchanted, perverted, topsy-turvy world”, he connects madness and subjective destitution with emancipation. This zero level where a subject identifies with their own destitution is the site where they set themselves free from capitalist greed and madness without a need for escape because they have already escaped.

Like madness, subjective destitution is inherent within all. Each of us exists in this state before we enter the cut of language and then, again, each time we acquire a new habit. This space between what we are no longer and who we are yet to be is akin to spirit’s beginnings when spirit is pure being, immediate, or “natural spirit”. As Hegel writes, “But this pure being is the pure abstraction, and hence it is the absolutely negative, which when taken immediately, is equally nothing” (1991a: 139). By entering one’s nothingness, one’s inherent destitution, one gains access to what had previously remained veiled. Importantly, what becomes visible was always there to begin with. It is only through this subtraction that the otherwise invisible comes to light, as Alenka Zupančič writes:

Destitution of the subject precedes subjectivity. You don’t start with subject and then go about its dismantling. It is not as if whatever subjectivity there is, it is there on behalf of the destitution. The notion of the subject is related to this radical negativity, but it isn’t as if we have to destitute the subject, as if we are persons and then we have to destitute ourselves (2015: 196).

Destitution is a surplus that arises out of this negativity. For Hegel, madness is both a destructive and a constructive force and yet it becomes wholly destructive under capitalism, resulting in capitalist madness. Capitalism, replacing nature, takes the place of nature, which has vanished in the process of subject formation. With subjective destitution we return to a form of destructive construction. We return, but we return with something added.

In Lacan’s concept of psychoanalysis it is not through the affirmative that a subject becomes but, rather, through its relentless process of self-negation. When the analysand reaches the end of psychoanalysis, they reach what Lacan calls “*la passe*” or “the pass”, and what he also calls “the leap”:

Naturally, many things are done, one could say that everything in the organisation of psychoanalysis is done to conceal that this leap is a leap. That is not all. On occasion people will even make a leap of it on condition that there is a kind of blanket stretched over what has to be got over which does not let it be seen that it is a leap. It is still the best case. It is, all the same, better than putting a little safe, convenient foot-bridge, which in that case no longer makes of it a leap at all (2002: 109).

What makes a leap, then, is that it not be made into a “foot-bridge”, that the actor, in other words, remain both aware and unaware of its existence. This suspension is also a form of undeadness, where a subject exists in the space between in a form of nothingness—having emptied itself out of its self—plus

the surplus that comes about through this act of emptying one's self. In his articulation of the Kantian indefinite judgment, Žižek describes this form of the undead as the "Inhuman":

The indefinite judgement opens up a third domain which undermines the underlying distinction: the "undead" are neither alive nor dead, they are precisely the monstrous "living dead". And the same goes for "inhuman": "he is not human" is not the same as "he is inhuman"—"he is inhuman" means something completely different: the fact that he is neither human nor inhuman, but marked by a terrifying excess which, although it negates what we understand as "humanity", in (sic) inherent to being-human (2009b: 21–22).

For the subject who exists inside and yet outside capitalism, who exists, for instance, in what Badiou calls *zonages*, spaces where human life has been abandoned, living at the level of pure survival and yet, resists allowing their desire to be bound to the objects of their basic needs for survival, this act of resistance moves the subject beyond animal and beyond bare human. Reduced to the level of mere survival, reduced to that which is less, even, than animal, there exist, nonetheless, subjects able to move past this state of being and thus enter a moment of what can only be called courage. Hegel describes spirit's moving beyond its limits as an act of madness and audacity. This correlates with Brecht and, in particular, his poem "All of Us or None of Us". In Brecht's poem it is only those reduced to this state, one that is both a subtraction and, due to this subtraction, also an addition, who have the capacity to see those who are starved or beaten by the enemy and save them by joining them:

Slave, who is it who shall free you?
 Those in deepest darkness laying?
 Comrade, those alone shall see you,
 They alone can hear you crying.
 Comrade, only slaves can free you.

In Brecht's poem it is only the other – the other of the other – who also has nothing – who has the ability to free those who are enslaved and, in freeing them, frees themselves. Here, we have a death that matters: a death of the subject that is not material, but symbolic. This is akin to spirit's becoming through self-annihilation, spirit's doubling of itself but a doubling that adds something else.

Subjective destitution has a similar structure. Through becoming nothing but what one is – reducing one's self to pure being, or a good form of undeadness – something else is brought about, something novel. This formula is the inverse of Hegel's equation with regard to the enslavement of he who slaves others, as Hegel writes, "*Der Unfrei Mensch hat und macht andere zu knechten, der in sich freie mensch lässt die anderen frei*" (2007b: 136). This is also why one who takes another's freedom, takes away their own freedom. Relatedly, there is no freedom for the one if all are not free and there is no freedom for all, if even one is unfree.

Joan of Arc is the exemplary figure for the unity of subjective destitution and madness. Abandoning her family, home, and community to follow a voice no one but she can hear, Joan of Arc abandons herself – negating all determinations that make her who she is (daughter, sister, peasant, worker) – to become this enigmatic something who is also nothing. She abandons everything for a community that does not (yet) exist. In her act of becoming nothing, Joan of Arc becomes everything. Describing Joan of Arc’s act of self-negation, Badiou writes, “A patriot without a nation, a populist without an insurrection, a Catholic without the Church, a woman without man: this is how Joan traverses appearances and subtracts herself from all predicates” (1997: 32). The space she enters is the space between two deaths. In her act, she enters the space where one sees the death of one’s life, the limit that, as Lacan tells us, “touches the end of what he is and what he is not” (1997: 304).

It is the act itself that transforms the subject, the subject *passes through it*. As Jacques-Alain Miller writes, “every true act is a suicide of the subject”, through which “the subject is reborn as different” (2006: 21). In her act, Joan of Arc removes herself from the symbolic order – she is no longer what she was and yet, she is not yet something new. She exists in this abeyance. This is made concrete during her trial, when in court, she is asked for her surname, by responding that she does not know. Her name, her family, all the predicates that had once adhered to her, fall away. She no longer belongs to her family or community, she belongs to no one and nowhere. This site where subjective destitution and madness converge results in an antagonism that makes visible that which had previously remained invisible.

This death of the self is akin to spirit’s self-annihilation in its process of becoming. It is in the moment spirit has engaged in its act of self-negation, when it is no longer what it was and is not yet what it will be, that it is plunged again into its abstract being, back into the abyss of madness. This site where madness and subjective destitution converge is an exit from capitalist oblivion. The negation of what is not, brings to light a world that as of yet does not exist.

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Sintija Kruz

Ludilo i subjektivna nemaština: ka mogućem izlasku iz kapitalizma

Apstakt

Ludilo je, kako nam kaže Hegel, svojstveno svima, stanje kroz koje svako od nas prolazi svaki put kada stekne novu naviku. Poput ludila, subjektivna nemaština je takođe inherentno stanje kroz koje svako od nas prolazi u svom početnom stanju postojanja. Ova dva stanja se spajaju u sticanju nove navike kada je neko na trenutak bez prirode i, istovremeno, potopljen u ludilo, kada više nije ono što je bio i još nije ono što će postati. Iako, kako nam Lakan kaže, čovek ne može da izabere da poludi i ne bira da se rodi u siromaštvu (ili drugim oblicima subjektivne nemaštine), ipak se može odlučiti da se uključi u čin subjektivne nemaštine i ludila kao sredstvima za emancipaciju. Ova dva stanja se spajaju u novu konfiguraciju koja replicira proces nastajanja duha iako se od njega razlikuje.

Ključne reči: Hegel, Marks, subjektivna nemaština, kapitalizam, Lakan.