

## INTERROGATING THE GAP

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*The following notes are an analepsis based on a 22 March discussion (Ranjbar, Parikh, Kunze) on the relation of political dialectics and the "excluded middle," represented as a gap that must be "interrogated" to break the hold of ideology. The phrase, "interrogate the gap," was coined by Ranjbar in order to set up a protocol to go beyond the usual stratagems of content analysis.*

1. Interrogating the gap is a form of investigative forensics, based on the fact that in any reversed predication, a middle or gap is *excluded* from discourse.

*This exclusion has the effect of preserving the gap, in the manner suggested by Hegel's term, Aufhebung ("cancelling and preserving"). Negative conservation amounts to a "witness protection program," but where the thing to be concealed is given the status of a nobody — not the same as a disguise intended to misrepresent someone as someone else, but to represent someone as not existing — i.e. to be defective within the system of cause and effect.*

2. Exclusion takes place at a joint between the system of causes (efficient, final, formal, material) and the "shadow system" of chance, distinguished by Aristotle into natural accident (*automaton*) and human affordance (*tuchē*). These two forms of chance create a vectorial space underlying but binding together the four "official" causes and serving as a repository for surpluses, positive remainders but also potentially negative, i.e. lacks, shortfalls, needs.

*Because exclusion takes place within a causal chain (and its exclusions), we can consider discourse as primarily involved in what is otherwise a "territorial operation." In other words, thought = place, coincidentally the basis of the memory technique attributed to Simonides of Ceos. The vectorial ring-structure of Simonides' invention has been shown by Kunze, and there is reason to expect this basic template to re-appear in discourse theory generally.*

3. In Lacan's theory of discourse, the occasion of exclusion takes place at the initiation of discourse, when "enunciation" (content) is distinguished from the *act* of discourse (*énoncé*). Jacques-Alain Miller has compared this to the shout of "Bomb!" that clears the room without any call for proof of a referent, i.e. an actual bomb. *Énoncé* "gets things moving by an exclusion, and in this we see the structure of reversed predication, an "extimation" of an inside to an outside.

*Thus, speech is regarded as an "expression" of thought or intention, a conversion of something inside the subject to a public zone. Discourse by definition takes place in public, but as in the case of Simonides we must consider how this "public" is being set up in order to fall. Translating to the more general case, this amounts to a "chaos theory" of thought's relation to place, a determination of a future moment "by the time of which" a zero-degree level of materiality will gain a voice. This, the future anterior comes to haunt discourse while it is "still standing."*

4. The metaphors of the shadow, the reflection, and the ominous future thus introduce elements of the uncanny into discourse from its initial instance of distinguishing enunciation from *énoncé*. In terms of Jentsch's bi-polar definition of the uncanny as determined by (1) the presence of death within life, Ab, and (2) the dead who does "not yet know he/she is dead," DA, discourse's surface belongs to a daytime haunted by the future anterior, the point at which the materiality of the excluded gap-as-substance will gain a voice (*apophrades*), while its cellar collects the dropped remainders of the causal chain.

*Efficient cause marks the initial split of enunciation into content and act; final cause moves forward a motive while concealing, even to the speakers, the true motives, tied up in the desire of the Other; and formal cause achieves its end by suppressing the materiality of its material basis. At each stage, the exclusions are collected and collated within an "unconscious" register that is simultaneously a system of defined by fluid dynamics, as the terms "fluent," "dis-cursive," "channels of communication," etc. The final step, apophrades, can be compared to the category of the "formless" in esthetics; and the instances leading up to this moment exhibit the logic of the "lipogram," the excision of a specific letter from the text, as in George Perec's novel, A Void.*

5. Fecal = feral. With the change of only one letter we can see the implicit relationship between what is wild and what is civil or cultured. The reversed predication that gives birth to civic space, a conversion of a forest by means of a clearing opened up to see the signs of the sky (Vico), is an obversion that retains the forest's logic in the personification of the wild man, a demon excluded ritually, a *homo sacer* in the legal system, but also the *manes*, ancestral spirits, in the context of domestic space. The relation of the civic to the excluded is, in all cultures, fire.

*The centrality of any theory of shit, a "coprology," to language theory, is evident in Vico's essential "reversed predication account" of the origins of humanity. With Lacan, Vico places thought both in and out of language (the Lacanian Symbolic), just as language defines itself through territorial exclusions that are not fully external. Thus, there are never pure categories of inside and outside that can be applied to culture; always an infinite series of divisions that re-create, fractal-like, instances within instances. Thus, the "home" (Livecchi) is destabilized by the demonic presence of unassimilatable externalities whose resistance to discourse can be understood only through references to discourse theory — i.e. the ambiguity of the pledge, the oath, and the honor holding together the networks of symbolic relations, e.g. the family.*

6. The wild man — an actual historical construct, prominent in the Middle Ages — is counterpart to the excluded, coprologic, impossible-Real. The wild man is the Lacanian "subject supposed to know," and his knowledge is inseparable from the coprology of exclusion: "He knows his shit," is the slang expression that reveals more than it knows (*kenosis* — a primary form of coprolalia, the involuntary utterance of obscenity, characteristic of Turette's syndrome).

*The subject supposed to know (our term: "fictim," to indicate the combination of "victim" and "fiction") appears to be the Hitchcockian "Man Who Knew Too Much." That is, the fictim of this film is endangered — a homo sacer — because he knows something but he doesn't know what that something is. Thus the fictim engages a double-bind condition, akin to the fate of the automaton. Choosing freely (tuchē) he cannot help but advance the "cause" that automates his progress toward a tragic end. He combines both aspects of the uncanny, Ad in his freely chosen affordances, and DA in his "automated" advance toward death.*

7. All language, Lacan warns, suffers from the fact that it (1) seems to fail to express the subject's thoughts, while (2) it "says too much" about the subject — i.e. it "automatically" refers to the shadow-zone, the surplus of exclusion, the sewer running invisibly beneath the city, hiding place of criminals and political outcasts. The too much and not enough are Lacan's *poinçon*,  $\diamond$ , also written to literally express this condition of simultaneously less than and more than,  $<>$ . Such, notes Žižek, is also the characteristic of shit, which "expresses" what is internal but unknown to the subject, but whose externality is, in all cultures, problematic.

*"Interrogating the gap" will always thus involve "getting into shit," i.e. involving the questioner in inextricable complications and social prohibitions. The lipogram (circumlocutions that avoid the direct encounter with this interrogation) are miniature versions of language streamlined to "flow freely," and thus the war against ornament*

*in speech and writing takes the form of a project to make language flow more efficiently. "Hangups" will always have some sense of an involvement with "fecal" obsessions, returning us to the primary Freudian-Lacanian "partial object," that is first naively experienced by the infant as an object of exchange, a happy possession meant to be given away. The direct effect of obsession, compulsion, will be henceforth connected to the desire — more in the subject than the subject him/herself — that reveals an unconscious limit or impulse. This means of discrediting discourse identifies the Other of discourse as the automaton that soils the thinker or speaker.*

8. Although the demon of discourse is the wild element, who "does not know what it is that he/she knows" (methods of interrogating wild men in the Middle Ages believed that they had to "interrogate the body" to get the truths of nature "out of him"), the fictim is also the exception to the castration rule that is required for symbolic cohesion in the "male" process of group definition. When Lacan writes his cryptic formula,  $\forall x \cdot \emptyset x$ , "all are subject to the laws of castration," he adds that this law exists only because of the important single exception to it, which states that "there exists an  $x$  determined by its saying no to the function of castration." This "no" exists as (1) someone who refuses the law of castration and (2) itself, the act of refusal — i.e. enunciation is also a composite of agent and act. By insisting on the application of the idea of reversed predication to the formation of symbolic networks, the (Vichian) case can be made about the origins of civilization: they depend on a complex and recursive act of territorialization.

*The demon negational element, the spirit of the wood and the wild, is not just a symbol of exclusion, a personification in the spirit of 16c. emblem books, he embodies exclusion — he places it in the modality of the performative. In effect, there is no negation outside the modality of the performative. This important rule — which is the "operating procedure" in interrogating the gap — demonstrates the relationship between subjectivity, and subjects, and the "lost but never actually possessed" element,  $a$ , Lacan's "object-cause of desire":  $\$ \diamond a$ . The desire that is the "desire of the Other," revealed in the causal "failure" of Aristotle's category of final cause (intention), is the basis of psychoanalysis, which interrogates fantasy specifically, through its formula of  $\$ \diamond a$ . Jacques-Alain Miller's contention, that the extimate (intimate externality) thus finds its proof in the "partial objects" that resist the territorial inclusion of civility yet cannot be trapped in their own forests — they are, hysterically, distributed within the field of *tuchē* because they are, themselves, affordance.*