

LACAN, US AND THE REAL (III)

ZIZEK and THE REAL OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCE

Seminar by

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I had planned to follow the last session of my seminar on the Real, but something just happened and it seems important enough to take it into account.

Since **the Real of sexual difference** is so significant of our time and mostly negated because wrongly understood as hierarchical.

Sexual difference is also linked to an impossible.



* Impossible is Real

This notion of Real as impossible — although we often hear about it — is still the most decisive contribution of Lacan and probably the most ‘misunderstood.’ I hesitate to use the word ‘repressed’ but maybe it is the proper term.

So the small event ... you know that Žižek holds a master class in Birkbeck, London. Well, in his last session (19/04/2016) he almost killed — at least symbolically — Jacques Alain Miller, precisely on his deep misunderstanding of the lacanian Real and on the sad consequences of this misunderstanding. He did so with his usual rigour, using Miller's works and own words. It is not the first time he attacks Miller, he already did it in past sessions (Birkbeck 2011) and pointed **an important drifting from lacan's teaching**. But what makes the story funny is that Miller himself, in a tweet, showing off as he usually does in the media, calls Žižek: his “pupil” (Žižek, mon élève). It's so funny because, of course, Žižek is far more intelligent than Miller and his knowledge of Lacan's teaching is much more accurate.



Here Žižek points very precisely how Miller's misunderstanding leads him to think that psychoanalysis could today ally with the liberal discourse.

And effectively, Žižek places Miller and Judith Butler on the same level of the negation of sexual difference. There is a confusion here :

The Real of sexual difference



* We are not complementary. We are, each in our own way, a failed totality, two different ways of failing....this is why sexual difference is Real.

... means that in any case what differs in the incarnation of a man and the incarnation of a woman cannot be reduced to a symbolic sequence.

The real as impossible is impossible to tell and to imagine because it is a gap.

I'll come back on this because it is crucial.

.

The Real I am speaking of now is the true **lacanian Real** :

Lacanian Real is not something exterior to the symbolic,
it is an inner limit to the symbolic.



* The Real is a inner limit to the symbolic.

If we can't consider the sexual difference, it is not because the other sex is inaccessible, rather it is because within ourselves it is still too close, and it will always be.

It is an internal limit linked to the signifier's chain itself which revolves on itself without applying to an external referent.

This is often forgotten and neglected. it was already settled by Turing, the inventor of data processing. Before his famous test to distinguish a man from a machine, he previously realised a first test to try and distinguish a man from a woman, basing himself on answers brought to him from behind a partition wall. A man and a woman are behind this partition wall and you must guess, based on their answers,

who is the man and who the woman, it is, of course, absolutely impossible.

The Real is never deductible to a symbolic sequence.



* - Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must remain silent...
- Are you quoting Wittgenstein?

The Real is internal to the signifier's chain. This is rather complex to understand: when we are in a representation of the relation between words and things. The purpose of a word is to aim a thing, a certain Real which is on the side of things, but a revolution first came from Ferdinand De Saussure — Course in General Linguistics — making a distinction between the signified and the signifier. Then, of course, came lacan's revolution, placing the signifier over the bar to insist on its primacy. We must not mistake the word and the signifier. A word can be a signifier, a signifier can be a word, but can also be a letter or a whole library.

The serial of signifiers arousing one another let the language hold on itself independently of the things they say.

So there is always a gap between words and things.

This gap is the Real.



* To give way on words is already to have given way on things.

The Real is not substantial, this is crucial because this is where Žižek first attack Miller.

In psychoanalytic schools, you won't be surprised, while psychoanalysis is a practice of the talk — talking cure — the collective organisation of these schools has taken priority on the practice. So we assist today at kinks coming from those who rule these schools but also linked to the way the system work. Each system divides itself as an entropy phenomenon and what is second takes the priority. In some schools they

have instated « *la passe* » at the entrance, for a « psychoanalyst » to be admitted.

« **La passe** » can be compared to Hegel's system of absolute knowledge, it means **to get to the term of an analysis** and to realise about:

the absolute of one's position



* Real is the « not-all » (pas-tout) of reality.

The « pas tout » (not-all) is the absolute.

I cannot know everything, an absolute knowledge means that it just fit my unconscious knowledge and from there, I keep away of what is not of my concern to concentrate mostly on my unconscious.

I say « my » unconscious because one of the consequences of this misunderstanding of Lacan is also linked to a will of recognition, a wish to construct an intellectual empire (Miller/Soler) that cannot match practice, simply because psychoanalysis works on **singularity**.

« Science of the particular », Lacan called it.



* Words are available to all , it is up to everyone to make an absolutely singular use of them.

Of course it is a universal but a universal which is not for all.

As soon you hear the word 'pour tous' (for all) the most representative phrase of this pseudo-universality, you can be sure you are far from the psychoanalytic field.

It cannot be « for all » because it is a singular universal. It is a universal that holds the Real of each subject.

If there is a collective, and, of course, there is, this is the point of interest, this is why I am speaking of the Real. Because the Real of Lacan lets you rearticulate the most intimate subjectivity, the one that characterise you in your absolute singularity and :

The collective is nothing else
than the subject of the individual.



* Collective is nothing but the subject of the individual.

So the way a new collective could be formed, as this is the psychoanalytic project, from the assumed singularity of each of us, cannot be on the model of « the law for all », you should first apply to it and then see... If so, it would be only following the same usual path which leads to a deadlock.

Recently, with two friends of mine, I crossed « place de la République » where was holding the movement « Nuit Debout ». What was curious is that it looked like if **the internet was transposed into reality**: many different communities side by side with passing zones between them.

But without a real unity, it is a total fantasy.

And what shows very well the **fantasy** and its poor value on the social ground is how they are so totally caught in the dominant discourse which they could think they are fighting.. The day of Francois Holland's appearance on TV, they placed a giant screen to watch him (!). You can imagine what kind of revolutionaries we are dealing with (!!).



Fancy French revolutionaries of 1789 listening to a discourse of Louis XVI?... or even in 1968, imagine them listening to De Gaulle.

It is very evocative of what is happening today but still, it shows there is **a symptom**.

Something is screwed in the dominant discourse. All these demonstrations can go nowhere because for a **revolution** to occur — remember what revolution means: coming back to the same place — :

It must first be achieved at the subjective level.



* In the fight between you and the world, support the world.

In the same way look at what is happening today in psychoanalytic institutions, they have become ... at least the discourse coming out of them, an addition to the dominant discourse, since it contains no subversion.

Subversion has completely vanished.

If you read Miller's text for instance, he writes a manifesto against the father « *il padre basta* » (enough of the father). Not only is it rearguard but it is also completely inappropriate. It does not correspond at all to the challenges of psychoanalysis. There are at least three forms of the father and it's not that simple.

Such a simplification leads to psychology while nothing is more antagonist to psychoanalysis than psychology. Lacan has already clearly stated it: psychology serves the discourse of the master, it searches for an adaptive conformity while subversion is totally on the psychoanalytic side.



So effectively, I am very grateful to Žižek for his intervention. You can listen to it on the internet. I did,

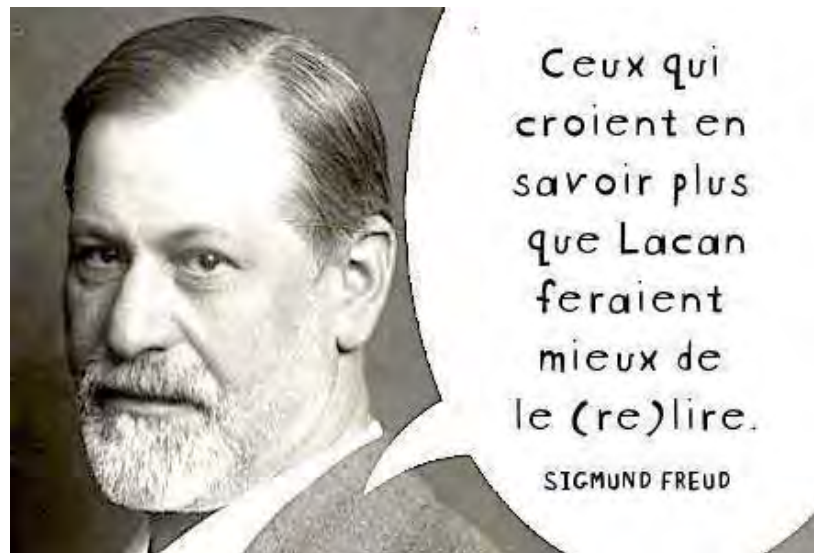
although my English is not so good but he has such a strong accent, it makes it easier to understand. The paradox is that he calls Miller his « old teacher ». For some reason, up to now, Žižek rather spared him. He did attack him previously once about:

the Real of jouissance

... and pointed very effectively what Miller was not understanding.

If Miller was in the discourse of the analyst, he would not care for people such as Bernard-Henri Levy, it is purely inconceivable, and in his school he would not let his name be quoted instead of Lacan.

Nowadays it is Miller who is read and no more Lacan.



* Those who think they know better than lacan should better read him (again)

Furthermore, he reads wrongly.

I have noted here one famous example. We are here in a society of parrots, most peoples just repeat what they have been told without knowing anything about it and so the most common quote on the Real is:

« The Real is when we bump ».
Well, this is not Lacan, this is Miller.

Everybody thinks it is Lacan. and Miller lets them believe it. The true Lacan's quote is:

« There is no other possible definition of the Real than the Real as impossible. When something is characterised as impossible it is the Real. When we bump, the Real, is the impossible to penetrate. »

Those are the precise words of Lacan and you see how Miller does this strange shortcut to Lacan: « *the Real is when we bump* ».

So in his school, all those who are in this kind of worship, when you listen to them at ECF, *l'École de la Cause Freudienne*; you hear them quote Miller and always address him a little compliment. Miller places himself as a screen in front of Lacan, and no one reads Lacan anymore, and this is how the lacanian subversion is lost.

Of course ECF is not the only one, in other schools too, in the *Forum du Champ Lacanien* they integrated « la passe » at the entrance of their membership. Colette Soler is in the same deadlock. Miller says she is a plagiarist. Effectively they both think there is a « Real unconscious » behind the Freudian unconscious.

They speak of two unconscious.

There is only one unconscious and it is inside the unconscious itself that you can grasp the possibility of your own Real. There is not something behind. If you think that there is something behind, then you are in a discourse far away from the rigour of the analytic approach. Transcendence will only arise from a contingency, from the words told by the analysand and from nowhere else, it is inside him.



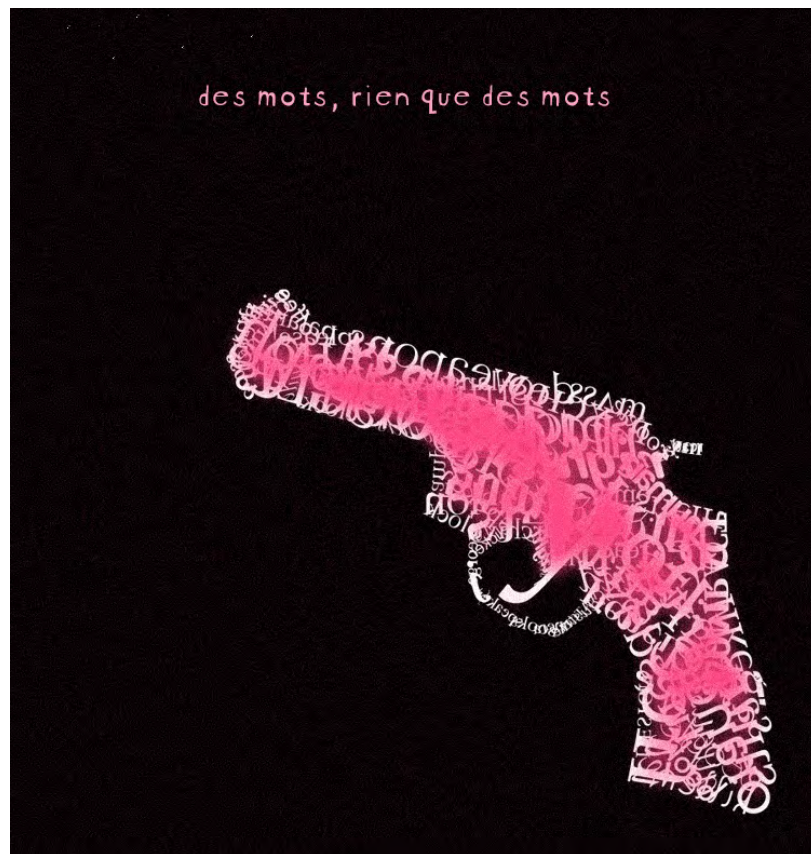
* As Lacan said, I also have only one unconscious, that is even why I think about it all the time.

And there we can place a little bridge and think that The Real — as so many forget it — does not come from the exterior. As Žižek pointed, we are still in a Spinozist vision where human being would have a capacity to shine and fortify itself

until he meets an obstacle who will limit him and stop him from his perfect shining, and this obstacle would be external.

Well, no! The obstacle is already inside us, in the unconscious.

The unconscious is not to be searched in the brain or the body, the unconscious is in the words the subject use, and by using these words, he will maybe subjectify what is of the domain of the unconscious.



* Words nothing but words

We cannot speak of a « Real unconscious » because unconscious is already the only Real we can access; we cannot access to the Real by any other way.

As Lacan said:

« words are like dead wood which regain life
by the action of the subject when he talks »

By talking he will subjectify his Real and touches something
which belongs to life.

Life is the Real itself.



But we enter here a paradox, it is not a life as imagined by the
new-age ideology, with green forest, cascades, and red fishes.

***No, it is life as a principle of immortality, something that
insists over death, and the name for this insistence is:***

the death drive

Freud commented on it already in *Beyond the pleasure
principle*. He wrote about the small piece of substance that
floats :

« about in an outer world which is charged
with the most potent energies and it would be

destroyed by the operation of the stimuli proceeding from this world if it were not furnished with a protection against stimulation. It acquires this through its outermost layer – which gives the structure that belongs to living matter – becoming in a measure inorganic and this now operates as a special integument or membrane that keeps off the stimuli, i. e. makes it impossible for the energies of the outer world to act with more than a fragment of their intensity on the layers immediately below which have preserved their vitality. »

This little bit, here represents for Freud the death drive.

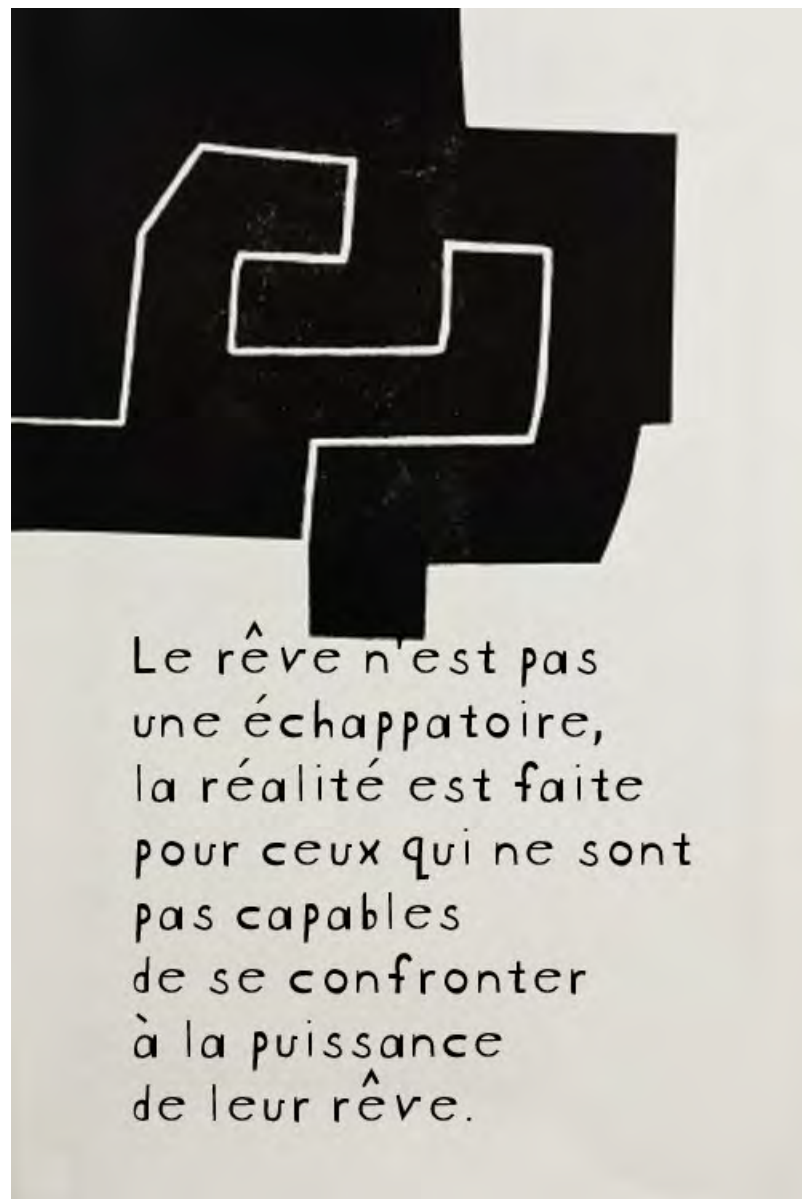
Most people using the syntagmatic « death drive » have no notion of that. It defines the opposite to what they think:

The eternal life that wants to never die.

So when we address the Real in this way, in the unconscious of each of us there is an inversion to produce.

See the answer Lacan gives to Catherine Millot, he explains that **the waking up is directly related to this death wish**. There is a tension on us to wake up. This waking up is related to the death itself. We could not stand this shock. So in a sense, Lacan agrees with most mystics and great theologians' thinkers, it is in our sleep that we change the most in function of our relation to our dreams.

It is in our dream
that we approach the closest to our Real.



* A dream is not a loophole, reality is for those who are unable to confront the power of their dream.

So Miller's mistake is to think that since the signifier belongs to the order of **semblance**, then, when we talk we are in the semblance — and nothing else.

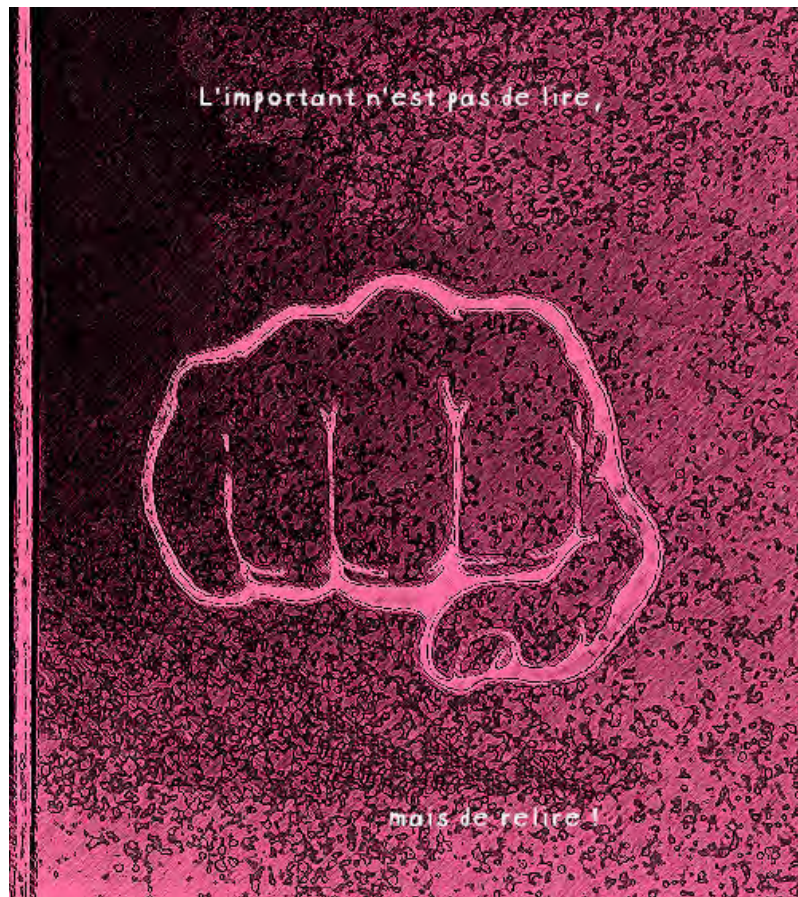
But no, In this semblance,
appearance as appearance is already the Real.



* This is the appearance of an appearance

The Real is not behind semblance, external to it. There is a permanent relationship between semblance and the Real.

This is also why I suggested earlier to call « repression » a certain failure to read Lacan to the end. It's another funny point when Žižek advise Miller to read Lacan.



* The point is not to read but to read again.

But he is right, it is as if Miller had started reading Lacan and then, suddenly set himself free of it, to rather stick to the dominant discourse since this discourse provides him a place in the world, that is to say he can be director, president, staging on the podium, etc.

And therefore the entire subversion of the psychoanalytic approach is evacuated while psychoanalysis holds only by its subversive way, that is to say, its absolute radical subversive power, is that it is an exercise on talking.

Now, as you know, in these institutions and conventions, there is no one who speaks. They just read. They read the texts they wrote. And this is a sidereal boredom.

When you listen to someone who is 75 years, who probably had 3 sexual adventures in his life, reading his text on female orgasm, it's enough to fall dead on the ground.

Speech, precisely, is what is alive in us
because it is where we carry this Real of death.

*Whenever we talk about what we do not know, we
announce our death to come.*

We do not differ it in talking. We mistake all the time, I mistake. I take the risk of mistaking whenever I speak, I take the risk of speaking.

In that context, of course, we cannot build psychoanalytic schools and hold conferences in the same way as a marketing conference and care for our territories — how many sub-schools have we in South America? China? or Texas? — it has no value for psychoanalysis. It is a discourse that denies, in some ways it is **the other side of the discourse of the Master**.

So the whole subversive side of psychoanalysis is now reactivated by someone like Slavoj Žižek, even if he is good friend with Badiou and in a certain way, it's understandable, although he is still far above Badiou. They both play a little duo that seems to me rather funny because I read both of them and I see what is at stake, It is not the 'Master and Marguerite' but « Master and Hysteric ».

Žižek is the Hysteric, in the discourse of the hysteric. In this sense, he is closest to the discourse of true philosophy and also to the Discourse of the Analyst. Because there is a direct

path from the discourse of hysteric to the discourse of the analyst. But not from the discourse of university to the discourse of the analyst. the discourse of university blocks the discourse of the analyst and takes its place.

So today, we assist to the psychologising of psychoanalysis.

Each time you have the structure of a university discourse you have left psychoanalysis. Even when they quote psychoanalysts, when they quote Lacan, most Lacanian are stupid, we must admit it. I attended enough seminars and meetings to realise how they do not really wear their words. This is the concept of a **master signifier**.

They simply use words. The concept of a master signifier is that there is no signified. The signified remains a mystery.

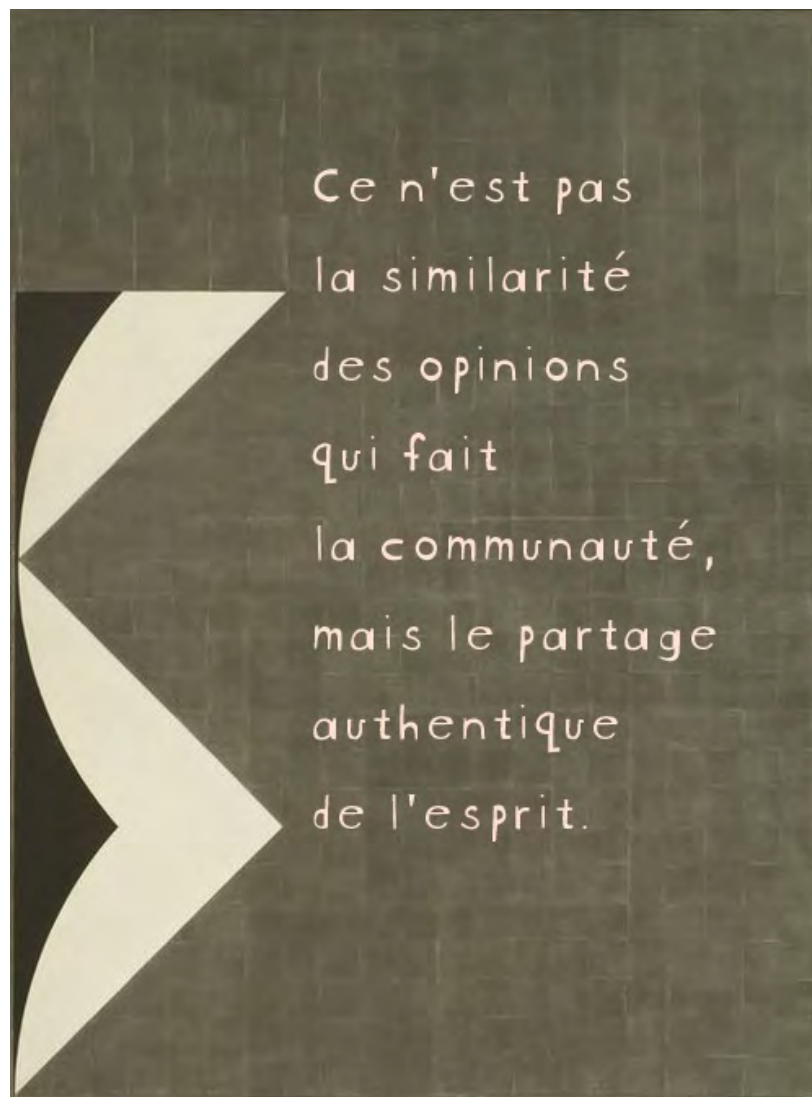
So a congregation takes place and they will say, ‘ha! Yes! That’s symbolic castration!’ and ‘that’s the Real! ’; but not one of them is able to define precisely what is the Real, or what is symbolic castration. Not one would take his own case as an example, investing his own words, placing his **enunciation** as Lacan would have said. They are fully in the enunciated, never in the enunciation.

That's why I dedicated this moment to Žižek’s intervention at Birkbeck, because, it is good news. Although he is an academic, he is not only that. he understands so well the Lacanian teaching including the Lacanian Real, unlike Badiou, precisely because Badiou rejects the notion of death drive. Badiou. can be brilliant on some aspects. When recently he spoke about the Paris mass killings and staged the subjectivity of the time and what is really happening, we

must admit he was really good at it, nothing to comment on that.

⇒ But compared to his philosophical system, precisely, subversion is not so much on his side even if he stands on the marge of philosophy.

⇒ **Subversion is on the side of Žižek**, as a pure hysteric he is able to deploy the discourse of the analyst and to live on it. You see him, covered with tics, nervous problems which he assumes **authentically** and **intensely**.



* It is not the similarity of views which founds a community, but the genuine sharing.

And above all, what he says and writes is a treasure for us because if not, really, there's nothing else to cling to.

When you look at :

the bankruptcy of speech and the fall of the words...



* Manners are deteriorating. The ab-sense of words is involved.

Did you notice how vocabulary and syntax have been weakening the last twenty years?

It's catastrophic. I see my students ... [translator note: CDS teaches in a school of graphic art] at their age I was myself far more interested in what was said and what was likely to be learned by experience and how commitment. Fortunately, I still have a few students able to surprise me and make me

happy for teaching, but not the majority, far from it, it's still a small minority.

But maybe it has always been like that since the first one to defend the **Hysteric Discourse** was Socrates, and you know how it ended.

Speaking today is a risky and dangerous exercise.



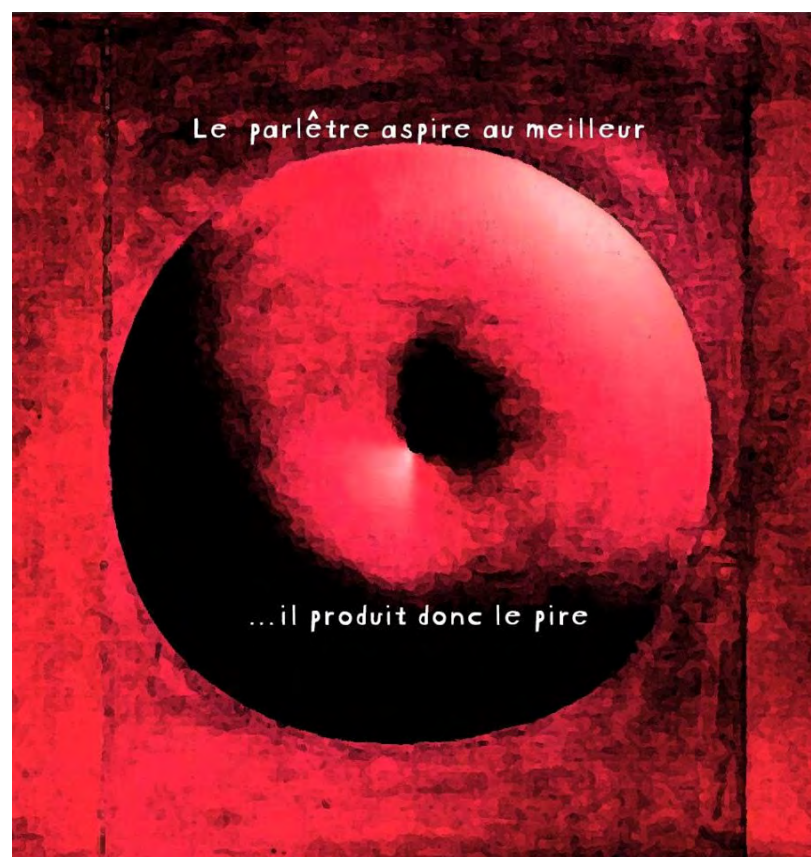
* Orwell, its happening now.

To speak truly... while supposedly under the reign of freedom of expression need some courage. That's the funny thing, exactly as in Orwell, everything has been reversed freedom is slavery, war is peace ... it is exactly the same.

[A question asking for more details on sexual difference.]

Yes, we will return to **sexual difference** because it really is a very important theoretical point. If there is not today an acceptance of sexual difference it is supposed in favour of a greater freedom. This is almost like an episode of “*South Park*” with pc toilet, especially politically correct toilet for those who cannot define themselves as either man or woman. So *a priori*, all this talk starts from a good feeling, but as we know, we should be wary of good feelings.

The « parlêtre » (speaking-being) always aim the good
and find the worst.



* The speaking-being aspires for the best ,therefore he product the worst.

So the problem of denial of sexual difference
is the denial of a fundamental antagonism.



* - Does men and women only agree by being quite ?

- Absolutely not, men and women do not need to talk to be caught in a discourse.

We live, from the beginning, both subjectively and collectively, and even historically, in an antagonism. There is always something going wrong with something else. Besides the definition of the Real could be: « what is going wrong ».

There are **different ways** to deny this antagonism.

I am so interested in this lacanian Real independently of what I already explored with you because I passed from my graphic work to my own psychoanalytic cure and I have found convergences between artistic research and analysis,

Lacan being the only one to take a part the gap between the gaze and the vision.

Sexual difference means there is a fundamental antagonism which is always denied.

Sexual difference of the subjective level matches
the class struggle of the collective level.



* To say that Lacan is unreadable is class propaganda.

If we read Marx attentively there is a class struggle but there is only one class, the « bourgeoisie ».

On the sexual difference it is exactly the same :

⇒ if we situate ourselves in regard to **sexual difference**, there is no neutral point from which we can situate ourselves since it is not exterior to us. I am already sexed when I situate myself and it's the same for the class struggle;

⇒ whether I belong or not to **the class**, I can only situate myself from a place I belong to.

This is one of the elements of the Real which makes the impossibility of the lacanian Real, something internal.

It should help you to make the difference between **prohibition** and **interdiction**.

⇒ **interdiction** can be read as inter-diction — between what is said —;

⇒ while **prohibition** is when “what is said between” becomes external.

The tension of interdiction is calmed down by the prohibition. in that parallel or rather this analogy in the Aristotelian sense, sexual difference and class struggle use the same logic:

To situate yourself on one side you must already belong to a side. You can't just say « I don't know what I am ». It's wrong.

If you were born as a man even if there is A difference between your sex and your gender, you can't erase the gap between sex and gender. This is the problem of gender theory that evacuates sex, sex becomes mingled with gender no ;

Sex is the Real.

Sex means 'to cut' there is a cut here which is evacuated or plugged on the collective ground, it is the same. You cannot

situate yourself out of the class struggle since you belong to society.

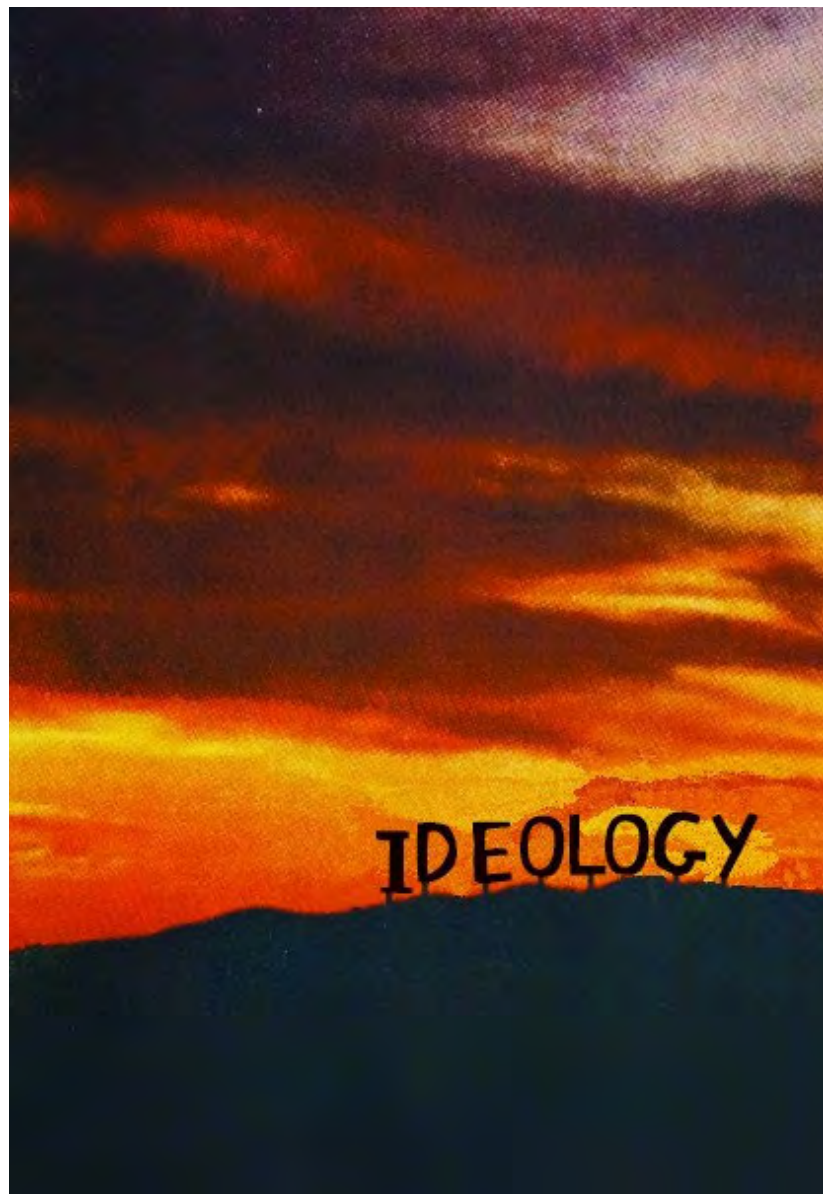
Here, It is crucial to read Kafka. one of the luminous and misunderstood writer.

Kafka says '*I belong to this society – don't consider me as a victim*' '*from inside this society I speak*'. in the class struggle you already are situated on one side. in Hegel's difference between **substance** and **subject** you already find this, the way class struggle is addressed. – I have seen it at 'nuit debout' – they are only parroting, just words out of context and out of their logical connection with other words which could be fertile for the subject.



In an **organic conception of society**, each side is at its proper place, you have the 'elite' to believe in elite ...if you think you are leftist and believe in elites, then you are not. There is no elite. Elites are always self-proclaimed, they put themselves in the position of representing the brain while workers would represent the arms and it would be a kind of possible harmony because each one would be at his right place.

This is pure ideology.



It never happened and does not exist. The society itself in this context, does not exist, it is a pure ideological construction which leads to a fascistic type of society.

The impossibility to constitute a society — which is the same as the impossibility of the Real of sexual difference — **is in the inter-diction of this society**, something is said between what is said; and as soon as you want to get out of this anguish you will look for a scapegoat.



* To read between the lines is less tiring for the eyes.

Jews are a typical example of a scapegoat 'if things are going wrong Jews are to blame' that's how the Nazi system worked instead of relying on inter-diction. When a society goes wrong, and going wrong is its normality.

There is no way to build
a metaphoric representation
of this society.

If you evacuate the inter-diction you get prohibition and you find an enemy: Jews. So what does negation of the real of sexual difference lead to?

They speak of multiplicity of identities, you can be ... whatever ... have different type of sexual preferences but this is gender, not sex. Sex is a cut, in the cut resides the antagonism, the more multiplicity they are, the more you negate the antagonism.

Deny is the disavowal of the fundamental antagonism.

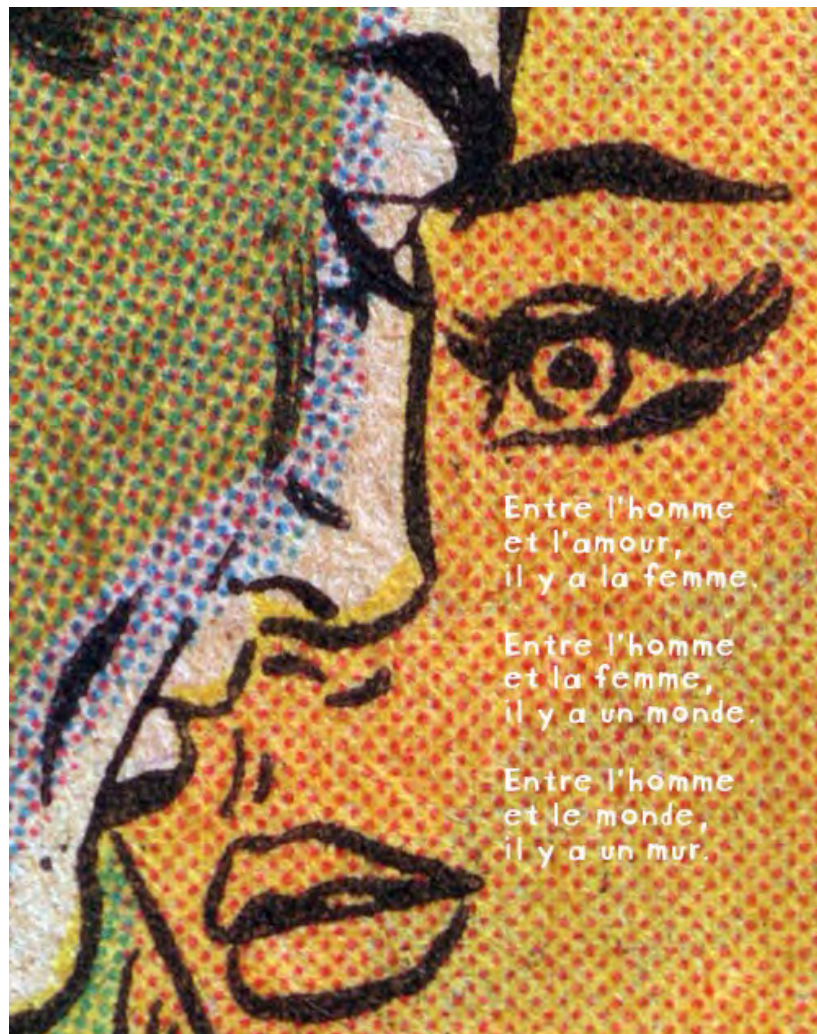


* already seen

So learning to live with the Real is learning to live with things going wrong. There is always something going wrong. This is normality on the level of subjectivity as on the level

of the collective. In an idealistic vision, smoothing all differences, necessarily we get to the worst as we have seen in 1940 with the Jews made responsible by the Nazi for all their troubles. So the enemy is stigmatised as external to deny that it is already inside ourselves in sexual difference.

I cannot reach the woman in me or a woman cannot reach the man in herself because they are too close one another and we can't manage to join this gap in anyway. They are incompatible levels, we can't assemble them, the gap is the Real.



* Between man and love, there is the woman.
Between man and woman, there is the world.
Between man and the world, there is a wall.

The Real is not substantial. There is no Real of nature. When you speak of the “Real of nature”, you use words to describe nature, so you “culturalise” it. This mean you deal with a denatured nature. Nature is always denatured by us since we are fully colonised by language.

This is a perception of what the lacanian Real is about.
