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Techne and Impossibility: Re-reading Žižek's Ideology-Critique as *Geisteskritik*

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I. The Many Faces of Non-Identity

Žižek relies on three articulations of impossibility to generate the dynamic that animates his dialectical materialism: repetition, reduction, and remainder.¹ (Žižek 2001: 78-83) Across his catalogue of works Žižek develops the critique of ideology through the methodological structure of this 'dialectical materialist' approach. As a methodology dialectical materialism is composed of four moments that constitute the procedure as a method: firstly the *positing* of some thesis, secondly the *reversal* of the thesis, thirdly the *inversion* of the reversed thesis, and finally the *inverse reversal* of the thesis which constitutes a new positing.² (Buck-Morss 1979: 77-81) An example of this is as follows: "all history is natural" and therefore transitory,' "all nature is historical" and therefore socially produced,' "actual history is not historical" but merely the representation of the victor,' and finally 'representation is unnatural because it denies the transitoriness of history.' (Buck-Morss 1979: 131) Žižek follows the method of dialectical materialism to intervene in and critique ideology through moments of 'non-identity,' the limit of political, social, and cultural identification and belief.

This materialist and dialectical unfolding of ideology-critique with Žižek's characteristic blending of philosophy, psychoanalysis, and popular culture is particular to Žižek's 'Slovenian' brand of ideology-critique. While such ideology-critique is bound to French political philosophy and social critique after Althusser, it is important to note that the kind of ideology-critique Žižek is engaged in is also highly reminiscent of the early Frankfurt School scholarship. This germane relation is flagged by the two particular ways that Žižek uses non-identity: the critique of aesthetics and the demystified structure of existence *a propos* ideology-critique. The first of these is characterised by attentiveness to the socioeconomic conditions of the aesthetic field. Žižek is not in search of a theory of art to justify his dialectical materialism, but rather he treats the aesthetic dimension of any object as the grounds for ideology-critique to take place. (Žižek 2006b: 3-13) Such a move is highly reminiscent of the way Adorno produced his various critiques during his association with the early Frankfurt School.

Like Žižek, Adorno maintained an intellectual procedure where the critical philosophical gaze intervenes in the object to reveal its non-identity with itself. (Buck-Morss 1979: 47) An example of this comes from Adorno's early critique of Kierkegaard, which holds to the formal structure of his later analyses with the Frankfurt School. (Buck-Morss 1979: 23) In this critique Adorno turns the socioeconomic forces sustaining and producing the bourgeois *intérieur* against Kierkegaard's mystical departure into existentialism, charging that Kierkegaard's philosophy dissolves the worldliness it sets out to salvage from Hegel. (Buck-Morss 1979: 115) This inversion of Kierkegaard allows Adorno to bring the Danish existentialist's philosophical project into the dialectical fold of materialism and further Adorno's end of renewing the validity and value of aesthetics as a domain for unearthing and "knowing objective truth." (Buck-Morss 1979: 114) This valuation of aesthetics goes well beyond the importance (or lack of) either Kierkegaard or Hegel imagined for the aesthetic field. The privileging of aesthetics by Adorno gives his ideology-critique a particular slant where we find aesthetics deployed to read the formal conditions of various political scenarios.

This aesthetic over-determination is similarly characteristic of Žižek's ideology-critique. An example of this is Žižek's careful reading of Ludwig van Beethoven's *Ode To Joy*, the unofficial anthem of the European Union (E.U.), to articulate the economic movements and social inconsistencies within the political constitution of the E.U. (Žižek 2006: 569-572) In this reading Žižek clearly shows his critique's indebtedness to Adorno:

Of course, these lines are not meant as a criticism of Beethoven; quite the contrary, in an Adornian mode, one should discern in this failure of the fourth movement Beethoven's artistic integrity: the truthful indexing of the failure of the very Enlightenment project of

universal brotherhood. (Žižek 2006: 571)

Here Žižek is distilling the moment of non-identity not as the positing of some transcendental truth but as the 'truthful indexing' of a failure in Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* that is integral to the constitution of the work as a whole. In Adorno's critique of Kierkegaard the valorisation of interpretation leads him into the spaces of the bourgeois *intérieur* in order to fragment Kierkegaard's philosophical project so it could be remade to serve the intervening interrogative method of dialectical materialism. A point of similarity therefore emerges with the respective critiques of Adorno and Žižek insofar as Kierkegaard's mysticism is the product of a doubled-interiority of the subject that Adorno intervenes in by critiquing the spiritual 'double' as the bourgeois *intérieur*. (Adorno 1989: 40-46) Thus Kierkegaard's 'religious' dimension is deprived of its belief and collapses back into the material aesthetic field where the process of ideology-critique can then set about locating its constitutive non-identity (i.e. the spiritual double) and demystifying the bourgeois *intérieur* as a socially formed historical object.

While Žižek is interested in the spaces beyond the reign of interpretation, Adorno's affirmative analysis of interpretation in his critique of Kierkegaard gives Žižek's ideology-critique an aesthetic basis from which to depart. This fundamentally colours Žižek's dialectics and materialism, and proffers the opportunity for him to laterally engage with ideology across the spectrum of everyday life. Yet, like Adorno, Žižek pushes the aesthetic field to its very limits of its demystification in this engagement.

II. Simulation and *Geisteskritik*

The demystification aimed for by the dialectical materialism discussed above is clearly not a direct correspondence between what a subject knows and an objective order of reality against which this knowledge can be simply indexed. In Žižek's ideology-critique however, this demystification does invoke a loose correspondence between the constitutive failure that limits knowledge and the life-world (*Lebenswelt*) of the subject. This correspondence marks each terrain with a particular topology. Žižek expresses the genesis of this topology through the aim of demystification: it does not target some extra-worldly transparency but the opaque core of our everyday experience that resists interpretation.

We should be careful here to resist reading this relationship between opacity and transparency as a simple binary-opposition because, as a topology, the relation is far more ambiguous and complex than a simple juxtaposition of ideas. In *The Plague of Fantasies* Žižek

gives a good example of the problematic ideological compartment of transparency in the instance of technology:

Modernist technology is 'transparent' in the sense of retaining the illusion of an insight into 'how the machine works'; that is to say, the screen of the interface was supposed to allow the user direct access to the machine behind the screen... The postmodernist 'transparency' designates almost the exact opposite... the interface screen is supposed to conceal the workings of the machine, and to simulate our everyday experience as faithfully as possible. (Žižek 1997: 131)

Here Žižek aligns transparency with the power of belief, the faith in instrumental thinking that guides human practices and communication in everyday life. The path of this belief in instrumentalising everyday life may appear to lead into a culture of calculation that the dialectics of Žižek's materialism accounts for. Yet rather the problem for Žižek is how this instrumental mode of thought hides its culture of calculation with the post-modern "*culture of simulation*." (Žižek 1997: 131) The term 'simulation' aptly captures the nuances Žižek gives to the incommensurability between the conception of an object the subject retains and the resistance of the object to the subject's subjectivisation of it. We may even go so far as to extend this notion to include the body of the subject, inasmuch as the subject has some relation to their embodied appearance. This resistance (non-identity) of the object provokes Žižek to find an interlocutor with the meaninglessness of existence portrayed in Kierkegaard's existentialism in a similar way to Adorno. However, where Adorno liquidates Kierkegaard's idealism Žižek draws out an opacity that underlies the Ideal, the apex of idealism. (Buck-Morss 1979: 111-121; Žižek 2006b: 206) This opacity comes to bear on the subject through the verisimilitude of the culture of simulation.

Simulation presents a problem for Adorno's elevation of interpretation in his *Geisteskritik* (critique of spirit/ideas). If we examine the case of his critique of Kierkegaard for example, Adorno states:

All Kierkegaard's gloomy motives have good critical sense as soon as they are interpreted in terms of social critique. Many of his positive assertions gain the concrete significance they otherwise lack as soon as one translates them into concepts of a right society. (Buck-Morss 1979: 121)

While Žižek is similarly engaged in social critique, his framing of post-modern simulation collapses the category of 'right society' that Adorno appeals to. (Žižek 1997: 140-143) Perhaps it is this that motivates Žižek to not propose an alternative social or political model, and instead

provide a vigorous critical interpretation of existing ideological conditions. (Žižek 2002a: 132-134) In light of this intervening tone of Žižek's ideology-critique it is necessary to consider that if the realm of everyday experience is simulated by the technology, which in no small way goes toward constituting the fabric of this everyday experience, then the rightness of everyday life is not being called to justify itself. The question of a reference to some measure outside the self-legitimation/self-referentiality of everyday experience is made irrelevant by technological simulation. Given that technology is part of human activity, party to the Aristotelian relation of *techne* to *praxis* and *poiesis*, interpretation is here restricted as that point where *techne* folds back into itself. Žižek refuses to outline an alternative political model because it is the everyday life that is the focus of his critiques. (Butler *et al* 2000: 9) Even when Žižek takes aim at international politics, he is all the time referring his readers to the everyday reality of these politics, the inescapability of their formal structure. (Žižek 1993: 200-237)

The shift from imitation to simulation in the conception of technological transparency is important for everyday reality because it marks an adjustment in the correspondence between our conception of the world and the activities through which we engage with the world. As the interface of technology comes to more and more simulate our everyday experience,

The price of this illusion of a continuity with our everyday environs is that the user becomes 'accustomed to opaque technology'... In other words, the user renounces the endeavour to grasp the functioning of the computer, resigning himself to the fact that in his interaction with cyberspace he is thrown into a non-transparent situation analogous to that of his everyday *Lebenswelt*. (Žižek 1997: 131)

Within everyday experience we have to 'find our bearings' by trial and error, and Žižek is therefore suggesting that trial and error is faithfully simulated for us by our relation to technology. In effect, this technological simulation of Sisyphean everydayness reinforces that the conceptions of the subject must conform to the structure of the object for human *praxis* to take place; "the postmodernist universe is the universe of naïve trust in the screen which makes the very quest of 'what lies behind it' irrelevant." (Žižek 1997: 132) This naïve acceptance is problematic for Žižek because it exposes the subject to a kind of phenomenological stupor as regards finding their way in their life-world where the totality of phenomenal appearance is trusted as a self-sufficient whole. This trust is underscored by Žižek as a trust in the opaque object, a trust which forfeits the subjectivisation of the subject. The domination by the phenomenological comportment of the object therefore dominates the conception of the object, and exposes the narcissistic belief of the subject to the extreme vulnerability of "actual psychic contact with another person." (Žižek 1997: 133)

In the post-modernist universe this opaque interiority of consciousness which defines the subject from the object is problematic in its relation to the world because it is constantly on the brink of disruption. (Žižek 1999: 103-104) This precariousness comes of looking toward the opaque object for some point of identification without being critical of the effects of this object. Here alienation can take place within the confines of the life-world, with the important Lacanian qualification that alienation takes place along the imaginary axis of binary oppositions, i.e. subject-object, right-wrong, passive-active, etc. That is to say, the naïve trust in the phenomenology of everyday experience alienates the subject's *techne* from identification by turning it inward, e.g. the subject 'does' being in the container of her/his life-world. This alienation embeds *techne* in an imaginary scenario where understanding the function of *techne* (its knowable objective truth) is made irrelevant. (Žižek 1999: 107-110) The prosthesis and extension of the human in its technological metamorphoses is therefore a moment of bondage to the prevailing binary oppositions in our everyday experience/life-world rather than emancipatory and of symbolic overwriting/separation. The subject is thus doomed to compulsive repetition, to endlessly repeat the attempt to identify with the object where the very opacity of the object means that it resists inclusion in the identity of the subject that seeks to identify with it. Yet, all too tragically, the subject needs these objects of the life-world to identify their position in the symbolic universe otherwise they are bereft of their particular subjective constitution. The culture of simulation is thus a form of compensation for this lack of social separation, attempting to mimic the delineation of the individual in her/his autonomy when it is merely a repetition of the 'instrumentation' of everyday experience.

III. Returning to Repetition in Kierkegaard

Žižek formulates the repetition derived from the culture of simulation in three different dispositions co-extensive with Kierkegaard's philosophy and Lacan's psychoanalytic theory: the aesthetic attempt to recreate, the repetitive appeal to some symbolic mandate in ethics, and the religious compulsion to repeat historical events outside the frame of historical necessity. (Žižek 2001: 78-83) However, as above it is important to note that repetition relies on a fundamental opacity (impossibility) of the object that antagonises the subject to repeat. (Žižek 2001: 78-79) When encountered in an imaginary scenario this impossibility of repetition is experienced "under the guise of the imaginary deadlocks that the subject encounters when he endeavors to resuscitate the fullness of past pleasures." (Žižek 2001: 78) This is the attitude of the aesthete, the subject who professes a great sensitivity to the beauty of art and nature. (Žižek 2002: 113)

This is also the subject of the culture of simulation whose *techne* is consistently configured to appear with the same immediacy as everyday experience. The sensitivity of the aesthete is therefore problematic because of their sensitivity to the ineffability of beauty. And this ineffability has its repercussions for the subject in the way “even if, on the level of ‘reality,’ the thing is exactly the same, it now leaves him cold and indifferent.” (Žižek 2001: 78) Coupled with binary opposition, repetition therefore traps the subject in their processes of failed identification because repetition becomes the apogee of identity, never making identity successful but at the same time being the process through which it can be achieved. In Žižek’s Lacanian terminology this repetition is the drive of the ego-ideal toward the Ideal-ego, the concept the subject has of their phenomenological self in some relation to what they want to believe they are. (Žižek 1989: 121-123)

If we reflect on this impotence of identification, to ask whether our wish to identify with the opaque object in the first place is justified, this reflection must invoke an ethical or symbolic domain which can supply the measure of this process. Indeed, such a measure is already inherent to the acknowledgement of the failure of identification. (Freud 1962: 253-254) In this ethical register the subject is within a ‘symbolic universe’ where repetition “is a sign of maturity... We find satisfaction in the return of the Same.” (Žižek 2001: 78) This satisfaction is structured around the enjoyment of the repetition of a signifier. In terms of a shift away from the aesthetic subject held in the embrace of the culture of simulation, the ethical stage is characterised by a shift toward the *techne* of identification. This *techne* is repetition, but in the symbolic register repetition is a difficult failing; it constitutes the ideal point “at which we overcome the futile yearning for the New without falling into a nostalgic backward-directed attitude, [which] is never present as such.” (Žižek 2001: 78) Žižek here signals the self-referential paradox of the symbolic universe: the ideal point between hope (the belief in the Ideal-ego) and memory (the trust in the ego-ideal) is present “only in the mode of hope or memory.” (Žižek 2001: 79) Thus in place of the wild procession of imaginary deadlocks/binary oppositions, where the subject announces they are ‘this and not that,’ we find the Ideal future perfect already present in the ego-ideal (Mallarmé’s ‘*futur antérieur*’). Herein the ego-ideal furnishes the retroactive reference of achieving identification with the Ideal-ego that refers us back to the reliable rhythm of our attempts to achieve the ideal point.

Further, this coalescing of the repetition to attain the ideal point and the enjoyment of this Ideal in its ideation constitutes *techne*. That is to say, *techne* is the mode of enjoying in and of the symbolic universe with the qualification that *techne* cannot be the Ideal, even though it promises the subject access to the Ideal-ego. Hence, in the structure of the culture of simulation

the role of *techne* is to reduce sociality to a circle of enjoyment, a tessellation of pleasure that functions as the guiding principle of post-modern sociality.

This formulation of *techne* sets the post-modern culture of simulation to appear with a shading of neutrality. Simply put, the reproduction of everyday experience is the universal norm of simulation. However, such simulation fails to repeat *techne* as a fundamental (artistic) gesture due to the ethical neutrality/separateness of its activity. (Žižek 2005a: 110) Here we are drawing out the line of Lacanian criticism so prevalent in Žižek ahead of his Leninist tendency to pass off freedom as a neutral loop because the culture of simulation entraps the subject in their life-world by compensating for the subject's place in the symbolic universe by diffusing the unifying symbolic trait of the subject across many discursive forms. (Žižek 2004: 180-181) The culture of simulation is therefore subordinated to the symbolic universe where repetition is enacted as the repetition of a signifier that repeats "the symbolic *trait unaire*, the mark to which the object is reduced." (Žižek 2001: 79) And this holds the important consequence that a culture of simulation has the symbolic effect of reducing the reality of everyday experience to a series of marks that overwrite the phenomenological/imaginary content of everyday experience, in turn which renders the everyday experience which the subject trusts as indistinct, kitsch, cosmetic, unreal, and so forth, although it nevertheless coordinates and promotes the subject's compulsion to repeat rather than some limited freedom to choose. (Freud 2003: 83) A 'free act' thus becomes the intervention in and traversing of 'culture' as a type of diffusing compensation for this symbolic reduction of the subject to the *trait unaire*, to begin from the ordinance of 'thou art that.'

Where the aesthete is beholden by the infinite march toward the Ideal-ego and the ethical subject reduces objects to a series of metonymic and metaphoric marks that stand-in for the objects, the third comportment of repetition in Kierkegaard invites a retroactive recognition of real necessity:

What Kierkegaard has in mind here is, ultimately, the well-known opposition of two attitudes to history: when we are thrown into historical 'becoming,' caught in its flow, we experience the abyss of history's 'openness,' we are forced to choose; afterward, when we cast a retrospective gaze on it, its course loses the character of 'becoming' and appears as the manifestation of some 'eternal' necessity. (Žižek 2001: 79)

The problem for Kierkegaard, according to Žižek's commentary, is that those who comprehend the whole of history or cast prophecies on the future err on "the free decision involved in the act of becoming." (Žižek 2001: 79) The repetition of history does not mean to re-enact what necessarily came to pass but to undermine the very status of history as a linear chain of necessity by making visible the "existential deadlock" of free decisions made at the time, "the

weight of decisions [people] were forced to assume within [a] unique constellation.” (Žižek 2001: 79) Žižek is aiming here to elucidate the traumatism of the Real (necessity) where a failure to integrate the opacity of the object’s resistance to conceptual liquidation re-emerges in the repetition of the object in an imaginary scenario, symbolic universe, or a subject deprived of their subjectivity on the virtue of their free choice. (Žižek 2000: 148; 2002: 136-137) This formulation of repetition is important because it suggests that the point where concepts break down, their non-identity with the object they capture in their conceptualisation, can repeatedly emerge within the ahistorical stasis of the culture of simulation in post-modernity. (Žižek 2001: 80-81) This re-emergence of the traumatic kernel of the object’s resistance to conceptualisation means that far from annihilating everyday experience by way of simulation, the technological saturation of post-modernity is thwarted by the very reality it attempts to simulate. (Žižek 1999: 116)

IV. A Dark Contingency

The critique of Kierkegaard by Adorno reveals another dimension of Žižek’s formulation of repetition and its constitutive limit or impossibility. Adorno suggests that Kierkegaard incorporates the hallmark of historicity unabashedly presented by Hegel’s notion of history (the progression of objective spirit) by trying to avoid Hegel’s philosophy of history through a turning inward to the category of ‘the person.’ (Adorno 1989: 32-34) According to Adorno, historicity re-emerges in the transient existential situation as hereditary sin in Kierkegaard:

In Kierkegaard’s doctrine of hereditary sin, history is nothing else than the formal schema according to which the intrasubjective dialectic is to reverse into the dialectic of the ‘absolute.’ It establishes the borders against mere subjectivity, leaving, however, the historical fact in dark contingency. (Adorno 1989: 34)

Adorno’s metaphors allude here to Žižek’s regard for the opacity that persists in Kierkegaard, to the point where the subject is reduced to an objectless symbolic mark as an ‘I’ in historical discourse. All the more importantly, the concrete antidote to the post-modern simulation of history is given a twist here reminiscent of Benjamin’s theses on the philosophy of history: history is not natural because history means the violent act of decision recorded by a dominant victor. (Benjamin 1968: 245-255) The representation of history is always insufficient to represent the totality of history because the truth of history is one-sided; the facticity of the facts remains in dark contingency. (Žižek 2001a: 148-149)

While this opacity is vital for Žižek’s analysis, repetition is the main support of the

analyses of historicity in Kierkegaard enacted by both Adorno and Žižek. The first way repetition arises in both discussions is through the process of dialectical materialist critique. Here, the way an object is expressed/represented as being always-already within the codifications of the symbolic universe is the moment of its positing. For Adorno, this makes any aesthetic expression a possible site for objective truth because the imagining of a symbolic mark/expression always relies on the concept it expresses, and it is when conceptual thought breaks down at the point of non-identity that truth can emerge, i.e. where when repetition is suspended but *techne* continues. (Adorno 1989: 40-46) That is to say, the plenitude of representation in the symbolic universe becomes reversed into an insufficiency when it is deprived of its conceptual support.

Žižek's Lacanian reading of repetition in Kierkegaard also suggests that it is the way *techne* is performed that is at issue because the formal structure that registers the craft of constituting subjectivity as the expression of a phenomenological intent is itself prone to insufferable impossibility. This gap between simulation and the everyday phenomenological experience of our life-world reappears again and again in the attempt to simulate everyday experience precisely because the subjective life-world is treated as an object. As an object of simulation the experience of the life-world is rendered opaque at its core, and therefore the conceptual understanding at the level of symbolic meaning is inverted. This opacity distinguishing everyday experience from its simulation comes under the banner of Adorno's 'dark contingency,' something that thwarts the simulation of the life-world because it is itself lacking total transparency. The subject's very awareness of (and trust in) experience implies that there is something opaque to believe/trust in, something ideal.

Due to his dialectical materialism, Žižek often suggests this opacity is the mark of the subject in their life-world. (Žižek 2006b: 45-46; 2000b: 62; 1993: 33-35) By being a subject we engage *techne* to integrate into and identify with the world we find ourselves in. But tragically this process leads us into alienation at the same moment as the mediation of *techne* puts the world at a symbolic distance, a "sickness unto death" (Žižek 1997: 90) where imaginary possibility is of greater value than real/impossible actuality; the anxiety of what one can be over-determines what one is. (Žižek 2006b: 89; 2002a: 136-137; 2001a: 105) Following Adorno, this relation extends this repression of the relation between the subject and the world further than the 'organic' level of immanence, reaching out to the phantasmatic ideal to assure the consistency of the life-world. Here we should be careful not to return to the 'God's view' of ideology and reality wherein the stripping away of ideology gives us "access to objective reality as it 'truly is'." (Žižek 2005: 263) As Žižek phrases it: "the ultimate support of the critique of ideology – the

extra-ideological point of reference as 'ideological' – is not 'reality' but the 'repressed' Real of antagonism." (Žižek 2005: 263) The subject's 'sickness unto death' rests on the inability to internalise some hard traumatic kernel which they then attempt to negotiate around by positioning themselves in relation to the phantasmatic ideal. On the one hand, the fantasy of beauty (i.e. technological progress improves the quality of human life) sustains the plane of immanence where the subject is/relates. On the other hand, the other side of fantasy sustains where the subject is not, the spectral apparitions that invoke my envy about what the Other is doing just out of my sight (i.e. humanity is only able to be thought through technological ways and becomes yet another technical object). For the immanent communal relation to be sustained the community is regulated by the former 'beautifying' fantasy while the latter 'envious' fantasy embodies its necessary disavowal. (Žižek 2005: 266) The challenge then is to locate the antagonism that distorts these fantasies, necessitates their askance particularity.

This process bears a striking similarity to our earlier methodological elaboration of dialectical materialism. Here we have the reversal (critique) of the inverted thesis, that conceptual understanding alone is insufficient for knowledge, and so the process of dialectical critique returns to the aesthetic sphere of material appearances and a new thesis: the human subject pursues the understanding of the world through *techne* but this process itself puts the world at a distance and it is only by the failure of *techne*, when technology does not smoothly function, that we are forced to confront the world beyond the mystical conceptual strictures of the 'object.' One should note here the clearly Hegelian position being elaborated: the contradiction of *techne*, understanding the world only puts it at a greater distance, reveals the limit of *techne*, i.e. when technical understanding fails the subject is forced to confront the world beyond her/his conception of it.

V. The Two Prongs of Mallarmé: Necessity and Antecedence

The ontological repercussions for maintaining this naïve phenomenological trust in the experience of the life-world are elaborated on by both Badiou and Žižek using the demonstrative example of Mallarmé's experimental poetic modernism. Underlying Žižek's engagement with Mallarmé is the formulation of the commands of authority in the post-modern universe as imperatives to enjoy. (Žižek 2002: 231-233) As an imperative, this argument about the formal structure of duty in the post-modern universe constitutes the particular mode of enjoying (*mode de jouir*) that values the variety of objects and activities able to be taken up by the subject. With this configuration of propriety supporting his argument, Žižek is specifically interested in two

features of Mallarmé's work: the future perfect and the failure of sustaining identification. The future perfect (*futur antérieur*) tense of Mallarmé's famous 'nothing takes place but the place' (*rien n'aura eu lieu que le lieu*) is read by Žižek to be "dealing with a utopian state which, for a priori structural reasons, can never be realized in the present tense." (Žižek 2000: 31) This first aspect suggests that far from merely being an ignorant stasis, the post-modern subject's naïve trust in phenomenological experience has a powerfully conservative political direction and fetishist economy of value. The presence of an ideal point in the present constellations of value and social links in the life-world encourages the identification of the subject at the same moment that the subject can never realise this identity beyond merely a token gesture, a marker of the yet-to-come. And this tension remains an extant simulation of the future proper.

Žižek takes up a second aspect of Mallarmé's work where this failure of identification is its justification, "his entire writing is nothing but a series of failed attempts to produce 'the Book'." (Žižek 2002: 110) In the case of Mallarmé this repetition of failure constitutes the justification of "modern art as 'experimental'." (Žižek 2002: 110) Such a formulation of the tension between what is and what ought to be is a shift into a symbolic universe where transparency is impossible. This impossibility is included within the bounds of the symbolic universe with the advent of an ethical agency, "of an irreparable symbolic debt which undermines the 'regression' to the fetishism [sic] that pertains to the status of the traditional work of art." (Žižek 2002: 111) Fetishism therefore disappears from the symbolic universe, only to emerge as a little piece of real-value that animates and disrupts the continued attempts to constitute a symbolic totality. To rephrase the interlinking of these two aspects of Mallarmé in the terms of *techné* and impossibility: it is not that the symbolic universe reifies *techné* as a tool for performing the identity we experience in our life-world but that technology, technical knowledge, and techniques (more broadly, technicity) are staged as a claim to identity where you can be anything, anywhere, at any time, but only where the subject *is not* present. In the categories of Lacanian psychoanalysis *techné* therefore appears along the vector from the Imaginary to the Real, it is the realisation of a fantasy decoy that promises the total perfectibility of identity and only alludes to the successful constitution of 'my place in the world' against the backdrop of nothingness. When I attempt to locate myself in this imaginary scenario it dominates me, renders my identity a merely 're-presentational metaphor' of who I am and not 'the real me.' As a fundamentally symbolic object, identity is herein set against the symbolic universe as a space of meaningless formulae unable to be integrated into our vivacious life-world. *Inter alia*, as the realm of nothingness the symbolic universe therefore constitutes *techné* only to immediately dissolve its activity where *techné* cannot serve the life-world of the subject, and thus identity is short-

circuited from within the very processes that constitute it. Identity herein becomes a void place, and it is this paradox of the placelessness of the promise of place sustained by technology as a symbolic construct that is the 'loop of freedom' invoked by *techne*.

The logic here is that of the Moebius strip articulated in the later work of Lacan. Žižek's use of this logic denotes that when the subject attempts to locate themselves at the heart of a signifying order as the agent who structures the symbolic universe they find that this place of super-egoic entronement is always just beyond the grasp of the subject in the Symbolic. Compositely, this would suggest that Badiou's entronement of Mallarmé as *the* poet of the Event means that Badiou recognises in Mallarmé's *oeuvre* an acute awareness of this antecedent displacement. What at first appeared to be the powerful arbitrary designations of an 'authoritarian personality' becomes historically necessary and beyond the reach of the lust for power. Such a critical evaluation of the symbolic universe demystifies it at the same moment that it reveals the principles and axioms that guide *techne* as standing in for a blind horrific necessity which deprives the subject of their subjectivisation as autonomous individuals. *Techne* here functions as a stand-in for a normative necessity outside the subject's *histoire*, or, in Hegelese, 'the negation of the negation of *techne*' is autonomous because causality is exterior to the identity of the subject. This is exemplified by Žižek's allusions to Stalin's appeal to historical necessity wherein "we, the Communists, are people of a special mould. We are made of special stuff." (Stalin in Žižek 2002: 257) And what is the Lacanian name for this 'special stuff' but the "*objet petit a*, the sublime object, the Thing within a body." (Žižek 2002: 257) Hence we come upon the procedure of subtraction where the kernel or trace (*tracé*) of the Real is found in the imaginary semblance standing in for the Abyss by stripping away all the descriptive (imaginary) content to access the hard core of the semblance, that which makes its existence necessary and Real (in the Lacanian sense).

It is at this impossible point that Žižek seems close to Badiou between the recognition of subjectivity within the bounds of an imaginary scenario staged in the ontological abyss so as to spare the subject an encounter with the necessity of some dark contingency and the Pyrrhic elucidation of the kernel of the Real. Hallward has suggested Badiou endorses a move toward condensing the imaginary semblance into a complex pure, singular, and sublime object where for Žižek the ontological abyss, the Abyss, disappears when we remove the simple/fundamental imaginary stand-in (there is literally Nothing to orient the subject). (Hallward 2003: 149) But Badiou's entronement of poetry by way of Mallarmé troubles this point. With Mallarmé Badiou develops poetry as a procedure capable of providing us with generic truths, and herein Mallarmé becomes "a thinker of the event-drama." (Badiou 2005a: 191-198) In Mallarmé's work Badiou

finds a double sense of the “aleatory event” of coming upon truth: “the staging of its appearance-disappearance, and of its interpretation which gives it the status of an ‘acquisition for ever’.” (Badiou 2005a: 191) With Mallarmé one often finds references to traces of an absent cause, an antecedence that directs the critical gaze toward the truth that something has indeed occurred. It is not a refusal or ignorance of the ontological abyss, but a more subtle method of its expression in service to the revelation of truth.

Given Badiou’s tendency toward revelation in the case of Mallarmé what then does Žižek’s engagement with the French symbolist poet reveal of his ideology-critique and the place of *techne*? Let us begin with the culmination of the points presented from the work of Badiou above: “one must not conclude in nihilism.” (Badiou 2005a: 198) As a relational and transformative activity, *techne* can serve many ends including nihilistic clearing. Within Žižek’s ideology-critique it is possible to discern nihilism engaging the subject from without through Žižek’s morbid “fascination with a lethal Thing.” (Žižek 1989: 181) The manifestation of the Thing leaves nihilism as an acerbic taste in the subject’s mouth as they are forced to ‘ingest’ their contingent basis under the rule of something resisting the instrumental machinations of the technologically savvy subject of the post-modernist universe, e.g. the predestination of necessity overwhelms the polymorphous performance/constitution of identity. As an explicitly subjective activity *techne* therefore becomes subservient to the imaginary-Real as it is subsumed by some sublime Cause.

This move from the covering over of identity to the apparition of necessity haunts the subject’s *raison d’être* with a sublime Cause. Herein nihilistic clearing becomes, on the one hand, crucial to critiquing the ideological filler sustained by this covering over. Yet such a clearing threatens the subject’s *raison d’être* with the deprivation of its purpose. This interior threat of critique manifests in the empty space of the normative background conditions sustaining the symbolic universe as the logic of the discourse is sublated and nothingness washes into the empty space of normative conditions. With the *nihilio* of nihilism inhabiting the normative framework we are then confronted with the positive law of *techne*, how the subject is to craft their *raison d’être* in the fragmentation of a discourse deprived of its normativity. This task is an exemplar of transitions from one normative framing to the next. Copyright, for example, forever classes challenges to its normativity as ‘pirating’ as though to suggest that the agents of the illicit challenge are bereft of obeying the rules of capitalist ownership when it is rather that the mode of ownership itself has become untenable given the disappearance of the old horizon/limit of possibility that sustained the background conditions of this socio-institutional framework; the ‘order’ of copyright being exposed as pathologically obedient to the determinate

conditions of the objects under its aegis such that there is no 'natural right' to ownership at all (one is reminded here of the electronic hacker mantra from the 1980s: 'the information wants to be free'). Far from technological developments threatening to destroy the fabric of society or the emergence of some kind of 'neo-Luddism' that can visualise industrial collapse and ruin, the annihilation of the normative background conditions destroys the fantasmatic framework that sustains the limits and possibilities of the axiology that makes objects mediated by the symbolic universe intelligible. (Jones 2006: 230) Here we encounter a kind of psychical break wherein the chaos that would otherwise be gentrified by discursive logics surges through the symbolic universe and destroys the 'autonomy of choice' held in check by the dialectic of limitation and possibility.

Nevertheless, the subject persists in this 'meaningless universe,' and the way is open for the reconstitution of the normative conditions. This shift from negative annihilation to transformative affirmation is precisely the point where Badiou demands that we cannot conclude in nihilism. (Badiou 2005a: 198) Yet there is a certain shift that must take place here, from clearing customary determinate values to dedicating oneself to a Cause. This shift rests on the persistence of the subject, or to phrase it in terms of dialectical materialism: while everything 'out there' may objectively exist, where does my seemingly transparent subjective interiority fit in a world of opaque material? It is not enough for the subject to simply produce something or perform an action, they must have a 'frame' through which this production or action can be understood. This frame is the positive law of *techné* inasmuch as the term designates art and craftsmanship, the 'way' something is produced or acted out. Herein *techné* performs the normative conditioning of the symbolic universe *after* nihilism has cleared the customary traditions, determinate content, and so forth. Yet *techné*'s positivity relies on the persistence of the subject which is itself a negation of the objective order of material that is crafted through *technics*.

This post-nihilistic breaking out of annihilation is given philosophical license by another relevant lesson Žižek draws from Mallarmé: the persistence and therapeutic value of thought. Žižek pertinently aligns himself with Mallarmé's (and Badiou's) designation of the coincidence of subjectivity and universality:

I become 'universal' only through the violent effort of disengaging myself from the particularity of my situation: through conceiving this situation as contingent and limiting, through opening up in it the gap of indeterminacy filled in by my act. (Žižek 1997: 222)

Therefore it is not the case that the subject has a spurious moral duty to engage their life-world

in a critical manner because this position relies on there being an ideological 'filler' for the gaps in the life-world of the subject, the moments of decision are filled in by the 'right' choice. Instead, and as Hallward outlines in his discussion of Žižek and Badiou, Žižek qualifies critical thinking with the extra-clinical value of a "therapeutic form of engagement with the real." (Hallward 2003: 151) In this way Žižek's intellectual project finds its point of difference with Badiou's thought. For Badiou focus is given to the event of truth which destroys and renews the conditions of my existential situation. Žižek on the other hand focuses on the occurrence of the Real in the paradoxes of everyday experience in the life-world of the subject. This differential formulation of Žižek's focus signals that while thought may be reduced to "an ultimately passive and at best therapeutic form of engagement with the real" (Hallward 2003: 151) in his ideology-critique, this simply emerges because Žižek affirms the fundamental role of inconsistencies in enabling life-world activities to be meaningful in an otherwise indifferent world. And it is this strong focus on the paradoxes of the Lacanian Real that constitutes the critical import of Žižek's ideology-critique: to not let the dangers of the (de)mystifying of *techné* in our life-world pass by unnoticed.

VI. Beckett and the Abyss

Beckett appears in Žižek's critical analyses as a figure that helps to further the above elaboration of the indivisible and persistent drive that defines the subject *a propos* the attempt at purification by Mallarmé and the consequence of its post-nihilistic transformative affirmation by *techné*. Where Kierkegaard provides Žižek with a critical formulation of repetition and Mallarmé delivers a configuration of experimentation which Žižek subsequently twists to reveal the effects of an imaginary semblance, Beckett's work exemplifies Žižek's formulation of the human condition *a propos* Kierkegaard and Lacan: "Man as such is 'nature sick unto death', derailed, run off the rails through a fascination with a lethal Thing." (Žižek 1989: 181) This fascination with 'a lethal Thing' is given a particular comportment in Beckett's *oeuvre* that specifies it as partly composed of repetition, imaginary lure, and the especially Beckett-esque framing of human existence as the drive to persist. Žižek uses the language of this Beckett-esque persistence to compose a wager on the basis of drive that moves near to Badiou's insistence on thought: "in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on." (Beckett in Žižek 2006c: 120; Beckett 1976: 418) This insistence of the 'core' of humanity can subsequently become a sublime object of ideology, as in the case of human rights where this real-kernel of the human is the basis for the ideological Cause of humanitarian debate. Moreover, we should note how this drive to persist conjures the coincidence of necessity and ethical agency at the precise moment

of the subject's non-identity. To return to the example of human rights, this coincidence suggest that humanitarianism is a discursive method of mediating the repression of the antagonistic kernel that persists in the heart of being 'human,' allowing rights to assert humanity as a Thing and not merely another epistemological object. However, here the subject's being human does not coincide with their identity within the bounds of the language of rights but instead the subject becomes 'human' through the drive to persist beyond the limited nature of humanitarian discourse. It is as though the naming of 'the human' in rights discourse obscures the unbearably 'all too human' element that persistently resists to be gentrified by the symbolic universe that propagates the 'second-order' representational language of rights. Beyond the noisy discourse of human rights, the 'all too human' persists in silence as the locus of what makes the subject necessarily human and, therein, bound to the (categorical) ethical moment that frames the customary morality of rights.

Žižek takes his wager on drive from the language of Beckett's *The Unnameable* (1976). This reference elucidates an important feature of the framework of Žižek's ideology-critique, namely the reformulation of non-identity. What is at stake in Žižek's critical analysis is not a dialogical opposition of two elements but rather a specific triadic relation where a third element intervenes in the juxtaposition of a thesis and its antithesis. (Žižek 2006c: 120) Beckett's characters manifest their 'all too human' humanity as this third element in a modality reminiscent of Žižek, an indivisible remainder that resists being subsumed into the dialectical interplay of 'the human' and 'the unhuman.' Herein, the indivisible remainder that Žižek takes from his reading of Schelling underscores the grounding of hysterical human subjectivity, "the hysterical – feminine – subject merely 'imitates' morality, symbolic order, and so on; she merely 'puts on' morality without effectively identifying with it." (Žižek 1996: 78) Like the indivisible remainder that grounds the 'imitative play' of the hysterical subject, Beckett's drive to persist grounds the subject in the opaque core of their *raison d'être* that always exceeds the attempt to describe this subjective purpose in the determinate ontic horizon of discourse and its objects. This minimalist conception of the subject is crucial to understanding both Beckett and Žižek's comments on 'the human condition' because it is here that we find a formulation of the 'all too the human,' that which resists and exceeds discourse and at the same time interrupts the phantasmatic consistency of discursive logic (i.e. the ethical injunction intervenes in the customary morality sustained by discourse).³

We can observe this distortion as the effect of the inhuman on the terms of the human and unhuman by way of the activity of *techne*. The inhuman intervenes in the human as that which makes the human *necessarily human*. Beyond all purification, the kernel of the Real in the

imaginary content of 'the human' defines the human as a persistence that cannot be articulated in the imaginary content alone. Positing thus becomes 'alienation' through the very *techne* of imagining ourselves as human. Compositely, in the instance of the unhuman, the inhuman intervenes as that point where the human is revealed as fundamentally indifferent to the symbolic universe and therefore meaningless to it. Because the order of the symbolic universe is negative it furnishes reality with objects that differ from one another. The associations between these objects are sustained by the self-referentiality of representation, the logic/syntax of the symbolic universe. The third element intervenes in the fundamental motion of the symbolic universe to thwart the over-writing ofthetic positing. This intervention forces the unhuman to fall short of constituting a Whole, a totality. Indeed, the inhuman functions as a primordial Third that puts the human 'out of joint' with the unhuman.

Herein, we may read the third element as a formal structure. Like non-identity, it manifests at the point where the object exceeds our conception of it. And also like non-identity, the third element provides a focus for critique. However, unlike non-identity this element is not some part of reality shining through our imagining. Rather, the third element is not a manifest resistance but something real that exceeds reality's insistent existence. Simply put, this 'third element' is a persistent and radical antecedent.

Beckett emphasises this third element within the class of what Žižek calls a minimal difference, the bare minimum between existence and nothingness. (Žižek 2003: 93-98) But whereas Mallarmé's poetry invokes a subtraction of the Abyss in an attempt to access "*the Book*," Beckett's theatre and prose identifies the human with their inhuman element. (Žižek 2002: 110) This emphasis on the third element pushes Beckett's characters to constellate their *raison d'être* in the face of an existential abyss, the half-light of non-being (*non-sens*). The subtracted subjects of Beckett's work dwell in the turmoil of imprecise repetition and re-beginning (re-presentation). (Hallward 2003: 404n9) Under this (Badiou's) description, Beckett's characters come very close to Žižek's articulation of the Lacanian third, the Real; "the sense that the Real in Lacan can only be grasped through negative description," (Lecerle 2004: 214) i.e. senseless, indifferent, impossible, and so on.

The status of this persistent acting in the Real, signalled by Beckett, is received differently by Badiou than by Žižek. Badiou praises Beckett for this reduction of human subjects to their generic state because it signals the anti-philosophical emergence of truth as some unnameable element internal to the object. (Badiou 2005: 54-55) For Žižek however, the real-act is a special case of the human subject encountering the ultimate 'truthlessness' of their finitude. (Žižek 2000a: 166-167; Hallward 2003: 261) In both instances the Real persists as the focus

proper, but Badiou and Žižek's respective exegeses are discursively different. Despite this tension at the level of discourse, both Badiou and Žižek conceptually point to the Real as a resistance; for Badiou it is the resistance toward naming and fantasisation, for Žižek it is the resistance toward totality and death.

According to the ideology-critique of Žižek, the meeting of objects' resistance to the conceptual furnishings of the subject's persistence confronts the subject "with the death drive at its purest, prior to its reversal into sublimation." (Žižek 2000a: 160) Following this principle of the encounter between objective resistance and subjective persistence in the real-act, to say Beckett's characters are reduced to a type of bare humanity is to follow Žižek all the way:

What 'Death' stands for at its most radical is not merely the passing of earthly life, but the 'night of the world,' the self-withdrawal, the absolute contraction of subjectivity, the severing of its links with 'reality'. (Žižek 2000a: 154)

This passing from the bonds of symbolic reality does not conclude with silence. Rather, following Lacan, Žižek designates this nihilistic clearing of existence as the moment of "the symbolic New Beginning, of the emergence of the 'New Harmony' sustained by a newly emerged Master-Signifier." (Žižek 2000a: 154) This reconstitution of the symbolic universe puts the subject out of joint with the positive order of entities. The subject heretofore 'posited' becomes the indivisible excrement of the reconstituted symbolic universe because they have undergone a radical subjective destitution in their encounter with the death-drive. (Žižek 2000a: 161; Hallward 2003: 262) Thus we can come to an understanding of repetition and re-beginning in Beckett, the way the subject that is deprived of all but a positive minimum of unnameable truth persists as a remainder in the eternal Abyss. Indeed, the death-drive is not a tendency toward self-destruction but rather *immortality*, the resuscitation of finitude through persistence (life beyond death, the dimension of the undead). (Žižek 2000a: 294) This minimalist reduction of the subject to the bare minimum of their self-posed *raison d'être* heralds the drive to persist, to re-structure the universe of symbolic relations from the vantage given by this (Žižekian) minimalism.

Although the Abyss does differ from the subject's self-positing as a remainder as it is signalled by the work of Beckett, the subject in the Abyss is neither alienated nor separate. The minimum of difference between the Abyss and the subject-as-remainder flags the contingent existence of the subject's persistence wherein their activity, named '*techne*' above, is reduced to a form that is purified and subtracted. However, when Žižek locates the subject stripped bare by Beckett in political ordering, such as that of the 'undead' Jew in the Nazi concentration camps (the *Muselmann*), we already find an ideological reconfiguration underway. (Žižek 2006b: 112-

113) Žižek appropriately names this human subject reduced to their generic indivisibility a 'sublime object of ideology.' (Žižek 2006b: 113 & 365-366) Such a subject is an ideological phenomenon insofar as at the level of description they are reified by the socio-symbolic order structuring reality (as with the discourse of human rights, in a way our humanity echoes that of the *Muselmann*). That is to say, reification occurs when the discourse focuses on a particular object and fills any inconsistencies in the symbolic universe/reality with the semblance of this object. However, despite the illusions endowed by this reification Žižek stands by the strength of the ethical moment which it engenders. (Žižek 2006c: 118-120) When the subject is taken as generic they are reduced to an inhuman remainder that cannot be absorbed into the reified symbolic description of humanity but which nonetheless constitutes the truth of humanity because it cannot be explained away by the self-referentiality of the symbolic universe. Ethics therefore emerges from the truth of *techne*, the attempts of the subject to find their place in the symbolic universe when the symbolic universe ejects them and they nonetheless persist.

The repercussion of this formulation of ethics *a propos techne* is that the subject is exposed to a radical Otherness. (Žižek 2006b: 113) Such Otherness situates other subjects beyond merely constituting New Age mirror-images along the path to my self-realisation. Rather, in others I observe an abyssal dimension which defeats my ability to empathise with them: "can I really rely on him? Who is he? How can I be sure that his words are not a mere pretence?" (Žižek 2006a: unpaginated) In this precise sense the subject-as-remainder constitutes a stand-in for this abyssal dimension, a contingency which at any moment might disrupt the flow of the relation between the subject and another entity. For this reason, when we inquire into another's purpose for doing something,

[It] is not simply an inquiry into 'What do you want?' but more an inquiry into 'What's bugging you? What is it in you that makes you so unbearable not only for us, but also for yourself, that you yourself obviously do not master?' (Žižek 2006a)

A subject as an other (and ultimately as a subject as such) is therefore always subject to a presupposition, a belief, because all relations that can be constituted are in some way part of a symbolic logic. Given to the pretence of the signifier in this way, the subject is always 'a subject supposed to...'. This supposition is filled out by whatever product the symbolic universe associates with the *techne* of the subject. In the case of the psychoanalyst for example, the analyst is the subject supposed to know the meaning of the patient's symptoms. (Žižek 2006a: unpaginated) Or, in the case of Žižek's engagement with ideology-critique, Žižek is the subject supposed to intervene in ideas and elucidate their critical structure. *Techne* therefore always

implies the pretence of a commitment to its ends, even though it holds the status of a means rather than that of a synthetic imperative. But further than this, as a presupposition in possession of some antecedent truth, the subject is haunted by their *a* that exceeds their designation by the symbolic universe because they cannot directly access the real-kernel of their self, it must always be mediated and performed *vis-à-vis techne*. (Žižek 2006a: unpaginated) Thus the critical value of Žižek's ideology-critique is that it interrogates this pretence of the signifier which can represent the subject for another signifier, but which is not the subject as such in their private historico-genealogical specificity.

VII. Conclusion

In the above discussion it was revealed that the critique of *techne* as an ideological phenomenon extends from the understanding of *techne* as the dynamic character of the subtracted subject as a bare remainder of the idea (*Geist*) of her/himself. The effects of this dynamic constitute the structure of the life-world of the subject. And this constitution can be seen in the 'Aristotelian' character of the life-world; the way its validation hinges on activity/*techne* having some pretence to purpose. (Habermas 2003: 44) In this context, the demystification of the life-world is a direct intervention into this sense of purpose. From here we have seen how Žižek's ideology-critique interrogates this *raison d'être* of the life-world to the end of locating its imaginary contents that serve to form the ideological filler that renders the life-world transparent, without distortion or paradox. To Žižek's reasoning, this ideological naturalisation of the life-world through its simulation is problematic for the explicit reason that it conceals the disruptive forces which traumatically impose themselves on the subject, such as the case of necessity or the pretence of *techne* that deprives the subject of their historico-genealogical specificity. (Žižek 1989: 123)

The naturalising of the subject's ethico-symbolic *raison d'être* taking place in the life-world is critiqued by Žižek as the second in a series of three restrictions on the subject's ability to consistently constitute a social link. By way of Kierkegaard we observed above how Žižek elucidates these three moments of imaginary alienation, symbolic separation, and subjective destitution. (Žižek 2001: 78-83) In each moment Žižek designates a mode of enjoying and an opaque core which the mode of enjoying repeatedly attempts to colonise but cannot directly access. This critique of repetition results in a very particular conception of the subject and *techne*: the human subject pursues the understanding of the world through *techne* but this process itself puts the world at a distance and it is only by the failure of *techne*, when technology

does not smoothly function, that we are forced to confront the world beyond the mystical conceptual strictures of the 'object.'

Ultimately, this confrontation of the subject with the symbolic universe binds them to an ethics *a propos techne*. Using Žižek's insight as to how the subject observes an abyssal dimension in other people that defeats their ability to empathise with them, this abyssal dimension was revealed above as a radical element which may at any moment disrupt the social link between subjects, thwarting their *techne*. (Žižek 2006a: unpaginated) Such a radical element is precisely the *a* of the *objet petit a* discussed above, but in the context of morality and the social link formed through discourse it must be performed and mediated by *techne*. Therefore, we may conclude that Žižek's ideology-critique reveals an antagonism at the heart of the category of the symbolic universe, "the world of the machine," (Lacan 1988: 47) that threatens to rupture this symbolic universe, and this is fundamentally driven by the aesthetic modulation of his critique as *Geisteskritik*.

Notes

1. These three levels also have their Lacanian coordinates as imaginary alienation, symbolic separation, and subjective destitution, which we must pass over herein due to the unfortunate limitations of space.
2. For both Žižek and Adorno, in the mode of dialectical materialism this style of intervening critique takes aim at the formal 'ideated' structure of the ideas/spirit (*geist*) which are contained by some ideological belief/motif, and therefore has an affinity with Idealist metaphysics.
3. This philosophical rendering of the underlying theory of ontological persistence in Beckett's prose ostensibly differs from the orthodox reading of finitude in French theory; see Migernier's *Beckett and French Theory* (2006) for a summary of this orthodoxy.

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