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~~Political Capital~~ 1

Foucault's disregard for desire creates a society where resistance to power is impossible
Copjec, Joan, 01, Read My Desire

Earlier we said that the argument which maintains that structures are real is psychoanalysis's greatest challenge to the historicism that pervades much of the thinking of our time. But we must also acknowledge that these two powerful modern discourses—psychoanalysis and historicism, represented here by Lacan and Foucault, respectively—have in common the conviction that it is dangerous to assume that the surface is the level of the superficial.[11] Whenever we delve below this level, we are sure to come up empty. Yet the lessons each discourse draws from this conviction are strikingly divergent. Psychoanalysis, via Lacan, maintains that the exclusivity of the surface or of appearance must be interpreted to mean that appearance always routs or supplants being, that appearance and being never coincide. It is this syncopated relation that is the condition of desire. Historicism, on the other hand, wants to ground being in appearance and wants to have nothing to do with desire.

Thus, when Lacan insists that we must take desire literally, we can understand him to be instructing us about how to avoid the pitfall of historicist thinking. To say that desire must be taken literally is to say simultaneously that desire *must be articulated,* that we must refrain from imagining something that would not be registered on the single surface of speech, and that desire *is inarticulable.* For if it is desire rather than words that we are to take literally, this must mean that desire may register itself *negatively* in speech, that the relation between speech and desire, or social surface and desire, may be a negative one. As Lacan puts it, a dream of punishment may express a desire for what that punishment represses.[12] This is a truth that cannot be tolerated by historicism, which refuses to believe in repression and proudly professes to be *illiterate in desire.* The emergence of a neopopulism cannot be blamed on Foucault, but the historicism he cultivated is guilty of effacing the pockets of empty, inarticulable desire that bear the burden of proof of society's externality to itself. *Disregarding desire, one constructs a reality that is realtight,* that is no longer self-external. One paves the way for the conception of a self-enclosed society built on the repression of a named desire. This, in turn, prepares the path for the reemergence of the Glucksmanian pleb, who has only publicly to declare this desire and to claim the rights that belong to it. If this book may be said to have one intention, it is this: to urge analysts of culture to become literate in desire, to learn how to read what is inarticulable in cultural statements.

Foucault is wrong. Their resistance and hope for an ideal world are ~~just~~ masturbatory. Our pluralist society is founded on their ability to "resist." Copjec, Joan, 01, Read My Desire

Again, Foucault's point is that it is because there is a multiplicity of discourses that this promise is held out. But Freud's analysis of the totemic form of society offers a different answer. The ideal father—the number-one son in the society of brothers—only affirms, only becomes the principle of the regulation of alliances, *by forbidding excess enjoyment*, only becomes the principle of knowledge and intelligibility by casting out the object *a* that marks the point at which the order of intelligibility collapses. Foucault wanted to found his analysis of disciplinary power on the expulsion of the notion of the repressive father. He thought he accomplished this by describing a mild and provident form of law—an ideal father, in psychoanalytic terms. The problem is that in expunging the primal father, the one who commands *jouissance*, and replacing him with the ideal father (the law of power/knowledge), Foucault installed the very principle he meant to eject: the principle of interdiction. For the ideal father *is* the father who interdicts—*jouissance*. He is able to shelter and protect only because he interdicts excess pleasure. According to Freud, it is his interdictions—therefore not the other contradictory discourses or subject positions—his *interdictions* that give the subject a whiff of hope; it is they that suggest the possibility of transgression. In forbidding excess enjoyment, they appear to be its only obstacle; the subject/prisoner is thus free to dream of their removal and of the bounty of pleasure that will then be his.

But how can we be so sure that Foucault is incorrect, that it is not the potential collision of different discourses that provides the possibility of transgression? Because in a totemic society, a society ruled by a tutelary power, the contradictions among discourses are largely unacknowledged and conscientiously guarded against. The totemic is a pluralistic society. America is a good example. The scrupulous autonomy and independence of the brothers are assured in this fraternity. The field may be glutted with contradictions without disturbing the society in the least. This is not to say that the social order remains stable; we claimed earlier that it is not. As Freud makes clear in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, the

more one renounces enjoyment, the more one is obliged to renounce it. Every sacrifice of pleasure strengthens the demand for sacrifice. In a society ruled by a provident power—an ideal father—interdictions grow more and more numerous. Witness the fresh lot of interdictions that besiege us daily: barriers—from gates, to moats, to attack dogs—have begun to encircle our homes and to forbid entry to any strangers; injunctions are posted on everything from walls to milk cartons—don't smoke here, don't smoke there, don't eat this, don't eat that, and above all don't abuse your children. If you need any proof that a tutelary power is fundamentally the signifier of the death of the primal father (the one who enjoys), you will find none better than this current obsession with child abuse. The primal father is primarily the father who seduces the child—at least this is the guise under which he appears most often to psychoanalysis, in the complaints of the hysterics. More generally we could say that the campaign against the primal father is visible in the increasing abhorence of the pleasure of others. In fact, the intolerable Other *is* pleasure in today's society. What have increased as of late are interdictions. These are the mechanisms that construct the phenomenon that Foucault calls surveillance.

You may have recognized here what we earlier called the *unvermögender* Other; the ideal father is "a man without means." The only way to be master of desire—which is what the ideal father is supposed to be—is to be either impotent or dead. The fraternity this father constructs is equally impotent, paralyzed by the interdictions that are required to stave off the conflict between the brothers. The best literary illustration of this is James Joyce's *Dubliners*. Language, country, religion. Three ideal fathers and a slough of interdictions. Such a society cannot continue indefinitely. The law of the ideal father is eventually repealed, and the despotic primal father returns. A totalitarian regime takes over.

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The whole of society will never reveal itself. Language, lacks, and this lack is society's generative principle. We set life free
Copjec, Joan, 01, Read My Desire

A corollary of Foucault's denigration of the supposed idealism of language-based analyses is his complaint that they "flatten out" the phenomena they purport to study, that they place all phenomena on the same plane.[7] This is certainly true in one sense; a linguistically informed analysis is obliged to forgo the possibility of a metalanguage; the field of phenomena to be analyzed, therefore, cannot be stratified. No phenomenon appearing there my be taken to account for, to interpret, all the others; none stands above the others as the final interpretant, itself beyond interpretation. Yet wouldn't Foucault himself sanction such a destratification, such a demurral before the assertion of a metaprinciple? And isn't the linguistic argument against metalanguage an argument, finally, against the notion of an immanent cause, a notion that has, since Hume, been demonstrably unsupportable?

The upshot of all of this is that if Foucault is right (without meaning to be) about language's "flattening out" of phenomena in this first sense, he is wrong in a second sense. For one of the things he surely does mean is that the linguistic model completely *unfolds* the *whole* of the society it analyses, puts the whole thing on the same plane. But if we were to follow out the reasoning begun earlier, we would arrive at the opposite conclusion: an acknowledgment of metalanguage's impossibility compels us to realize that the whole of society will never reveal itself in an analytical moment; no diagram will ever be able to display it fully, once and for all. At the same time this acknowledgment does *not* compel us to imagine a society that never quite forms, where—as the deconstructionists would have it—events never quite take place, a society about which we can say nothing and do so in an endless succession of statements that forever fail to come around to the same relevant point. To say that there is no metalanguage is to say, rather, that society *never stops realizing* itself, that it *continues* to be formed over time.

For, what we do when we recognize the impossibility of metalanguage is to split society between its appearance—the positive relations and facts we observe in it—and its being, that is to say, its generative principle, which cannot appear among these relations. What we do, in essence, is *install* society's generative principle, provide for it a place beyond the realm of positive appearances. Fitted out thus with a generative principle, society ceases to be conceived as a dead structure, mappable on some flat surface; society is finally by this means brought to life. And we are released from the constraints and the absurdity of a nominalist stance, which would necessitate our naming each moment of a society, each transformation of it, a different thing; it is now possible to posit the existence of a singular space, belonging to society, which various sets of relations come to fill.

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Some of you will, of course, object that to refer to a split between appearance and being is to betray the basic rule of our supposedly materialist linguistic position: no existence may be posited that does not first inscribe itself in language. Yes, and the corollary is true as well: everything inscribed in language must be given a fair hearing; if its signature appears there in language, the possibility of its being must be entertained. Whenever the split between being and appearance is denied, you can bet that one particular inscription is being overlooked: that which marks the very failure of metalanguage. Language speaks voluminously in positive statements, but it also copiously speaks of its own lack of self-sufficiency, its inability to speak the whole unvarnished truth directly and without recourse to further, exegetical speech. Some elision or negation of its powers writes itself in language *as* the lack of metalanguage. This negation is no less an inscription for its not being formulated in a statement, and the being it poses presents no less a claim for our consideration.

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Lacan over Foucault

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Foucaultian and Lacanian conceptions of power are mutually exclusive. Foucault's essentialism destroys the possibility of freedom, while Lacan's lacking subject exists outside of power, possibilizing resistance

Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

Second, it allows us to theorize a notion of the outside that has so far eluded us. Given the poststructuralist argument about the pervasive nature of power, language, and discursive structures, one cannot talk, as the anarchists did, about an actual place outside power and discourse from where the domination that it gives rise to can be opposed. There is, as we have said, no essential, uncontaminated point of departure outside power. However, what if the outside were to be seen as a "thing" which is inside the world of power and discourse, yet somehow missing from that structure? It may be seen as a kind of traumatic void, a kernel of emptiness which is within the structure of symbolization, yet which constitutes an outside because it resists symbolization. In other words, the Real or lack is not necessarily the outside of the symbolic order of Law but rather an "excluded interior"; a "thing" which is not exactly outside the structure but absent from it. Lacan talks of the Real as "excluded in the interior."[14] J.A. Miller sees the Real as a kind of Moebius strip, which confuses the line between the subject and the symbolic; the subject is the "cut" which allows the strip to be laid out flat.[15] This notion of the *excluded interior* or *intimate exterior* may be used to redefine the outside. Because it is an outside produced by the failed and incomplete "structure," it is not an essence or metaphysical presence. It does not transcend the world of the symbolic [or discourse or power] because it "exists" *within* this order. It is not a spatial outside, but rather a *radical* outside—an outside, paradoxically on the "inside." Therefore the gap between meaning and symbolization can be constituted as a radical outside, not because it is from a world outside the symbolic structure, not because it is a transcendental essence, but because it is a void which cannot be filled, a lack which cannot be represented.

This outside of the lack thus avoids the pitfalls of essentialism and place. It is not a presence but rather a creative and constitutive absence. This concept is useful in several respects. It can possibly provide a nonessential "ground" or nonplace for resistance; it opens the structure of subjectivity to change and contingency, allowing the invention of new political identities. If the subject is not wholly determined and interpellated, there is a "space" opened for a politics and an identity—albeit an unstable one—of resistance.

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Power and Lack

Moreover, the logic of the lack can be applied to the question of power itself. It may be argued that the identity of power is ultimately a failed identity. As Ernesto Laclau and Lilian Zac argue, power can never become absolute, because when it does it loses its identity as power.[16] If power is ubiquitous, as Foucault argued, then it becomes indefinable and abstract; it can no longer really be seen as power. Perhaps this was the mistake that Foucault made in his analysis of power. For power to have an identity it cannot be absolute; there must be a gap between it and what it oppresses. Even Foucault conceded, although power is "everywhere," it exists in an agonistic relation to resistance, and this would indicate the need for some notion of a gap that defines power in opposition to itself. However, Foucault, as we have seen, is rather unclear on this point. This lack in the structure of power is what constitutes power's identity as "power" and it cannot function without it. It differentiates power from other signifiers. Yet, paradoxically, this lack makes resistance to power possible. Like Derrida's notion of the supplement, the lack is both necessary for the constitution of identity of power, while at the same time it destabilizes and allows it to be resisted. In other words, the lack is the limit of power: it is the limit that both defines it and threatens it. Perhaps this notion of a constitutive lack as the limit of power was what Foucault was driving at. This lack, however, is not an essential place of resistance: it is created by power itself, and is only the excess or surplus of meaning which escapes it. The Real of power is not outside the order of power, but rather operates on the inside: it is the void within power that both subverts its meaning and, through this subversion, gives it meaning. So, therefore, the Lacanian idea of a constitutive lack may be applied to power; it creates the possibility of a radical outside that both constitutes and resists power.

This notion of power as constituted by its fundamental lack can be contrasted with Foucault's idea of power as all pervasive. Foucault argued that although power is "everywhere," it masks itself through the juridico-discursive model, which leaves a gap between power and the society that it oppresses. For Foucault, power would not be tolerable if it did not mask itself partially, if there did not appear to be a "place" of resistance that it does not invade. So, for Foucault, while power disguises itself through the lack, this lack or gap between power and what it dominates does not actually exist. A Lacanian notion of power would be almost directly opposed to this: rather than power disguising itself through an ideological lack, it is actually constituted through a real lack. Power cannot be omnipresent because if it is, it loses its identity as "power." For power to exist, then, there must be some kind of gap limiting it. As I have argued, this gap is not a metaphysical or essentialist notion like the anarchist idea of human essence; it is itself a void in the symbolic structure of power, but it exists nevertheless, and while it exists it limits power. So this lack between power and the subject is not a deception, as Foucault suggested: it would, be according to Lacan, real and actually constitutive of power as an identity.

There is a parallel here with Stirner's conception of the state. Stirner argues that the power of the state is not absolute; in fact, it is very fragile and is based largely on the subject's obedience to it. Once the subject realizes this, then the state's power over him will be undermined. The state is, like God, an abstraction based on the individual's abdication of his own authority; it is merely an inverted image of the individual, based on his own lack. Stirner says: "So in State-life I am at best—I might as well say, at worst—a bondman of myself."[17] Using a similar, yet Lacanian-inspired, logic Zizek argues that everyone knows that the power of bureaucracy is not absolute, yet we behave as though it is and this is what perpetuates its power.[18] So one might say, then, that rather than power being ubiquitous and absolute, while claiming that it is not—as Foucault argues—power *is* actually limited and lacking, yet claims to be ubiquitous and absolute. For Foucault, in other words, the all-pervasiveness of power is masked by a lack; whereas for Lacan, the lack in power would be masked by its all-pervasiveness.

B

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Framework = pwr relations

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THE EXAMINATION OF POWER RELATIONS PRECLUDES POLICY ANALYSIS

Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

> The point of this discussion is not really to offer a definition of power that has hitherto eluded us, but on the contrary to recognize that power is abstract and indefinable, and to construct a definition precisely through this very resistance to definition. Rather than saying what power is, and proceeding from there, it may be more productive to look at the ways in which theories and ideas of revolution, rebellion, and resistance reaffirm power in their very attempt to destroy it. This logic which inevitably reproduces power and authority, I will call the *place of power*. "Place" refers to the abstract preponderance, and ceaseless reaffirmation, of power and authority in theories and movements that are aimed at overthrowing it. The real "always returns to the same place," and it is this *place*, or more precisely this logic of *return*, that I will be talking about. It is a cruel and malicious logic, but a logic that is nevertheless crucial to the way we think about politics.

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(OVERVIEW CARD)
Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

Lacanian ideas have been used here to go beyond the poststructuralist project of deconstructing identity. The logic of the Real has not deconstructed identity, but has rather *reconstructed* identity on the basis of its own impossibility. While it is not clear that there is a great deal of difference between the two projects—deconstruction does not necessarily reject identity, but merely *questions* it—Lacan's notion of the lack allows one to look at the argument in a different way and, thus, advance it. (1) It has allowed us to construct a notion of an outside which is necessary for a politics of resistance but which has, thus far, eluded us. By seeing this outside, moreover, in terms of a lack—an impossible object lacking from the structure of signification—Lacan has enabled us to avoid turning this outside into an essentialist notion and thus falling into the trap of reaffirming place. (2) While the identity of this radical outside is itself incomplete and fractured—according to the Lacanian logic of signification—it can still provide a ground for resistance. The fact that it is not a fixed identity means that the politics of resistance, developed through this theoretical outside, is freed from an all-determining essence, like the anarchist notion of humanity. It thus remains open to an indefinite field of different articulations of resistance. It does not allow, as we have said, one form of resistance to dominate another. Therefore the fractured and non-essential identity of this outside is precisely its strength. (3) The subject itself—as constituted through a lack, a failure of signification—is open to different and contingent political identities, allowing it to resist a domination that operates through subjectification, through the fixing of identity. Resistance against one's fixed identity has always been a feature of the poststructuralist political project. Now the Lacanian radical outside has finally allowed this resistance to be theorized. (4) The notion of the constitutive outside has been applied to the idea of society itself: the social is seen as being founded on the Real of antagonism that limits it and prevents it forming a complete identity. This opens the social to different political articulations that can never overcome the lack in its own identity and, consequently, will never be able to become completely dominant. The politics of resistance will, therefore, be determined by this hegemonic logic: it will never be able to form a closed dominant identity because its identity is flawed. The politics of resistance is structurally open to difference and reinterpretation. (5) The identity of power, according to Lacanian logic, is also a failed identity, itself constituted through lack. As we have shown, the structure of power is flawed; it produces an excess which both resists it and allows it, at the same time, to be constituted. The identity of power is ultimately undecidable: what threatens it is also what allows its formation as an identity. The outside produced by power allows a space for resistance against it.

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ESSENTIALISM'S NORMALIZING POLITICS REPRODUCE DOMINATION REGARDLESS OF THE MOVEMENT'S RADICALITY

Newman, Saul, 01, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

However, the problem of essentialism is broader than the problem of nationalism. Essentialist ideas seem to govern our political and social reality. Individuals are pinned down within an identity that is seen as true or natural. Essentialist identities limit the individual, constructing his or her reality around certain norms, and closing off the possibilities of change and becoming. There is, moreover, a whole series of institutional practices which dominate the individual in a multitude of ways, and which are brought into play by essentialist logics. One has only to look at the way in which social and family welfare agencies and correctional institutions operate to see this. The identity of the "delinquent," "welfare dependent," or "unfit parent" is carefully constructed as the essence of the individual, and the individual is regulated, according to this essential identity, by a whole series of rational and moral norms.

The changes that have taken place on a global scale seem only to have denied the individual the possibility of real change. Not only does essentialist thinking limit the individual to certain prescribed norms of morality and behavior, it also excludes identities and modes of behavior which do not conform to these norms. They are categorized as "unnatural" or "perverse," as somehow "other" and they are persecuted according to the norms they transgress. The logic of essentialism produces an oppositional thinking, from which binary hierarchies are constructed: normal/abnormal, sane/insane, hetero-homosexual, etc. This domination does not only refer to individuals who fall outside the category of the norm [homosexuals, drug addicts, delinquents, the insane, etc]; it is also suffered by those for whom certain fragments of their identity—for identity is never a complete thing—would be condemned as abnormal. We all suffer, to a greater or lesser extent, under this tyranny of normality, this discourse of domination which insists that we all have an essential identity and that that is what we are. We must not think, though, that this domination is entirely forced upon us. While this is no doubt true to a certain extent—think of prisons, mental institutions, the army, hospitals, the workplace—an essentialist identity is also something that we often willingly submit to. This mode of power cannot operate without our consent, without our desire to be dominated. So not only will this discussion examine the domination involved in essentialist discourses and identities—the way they support institutions such as the state and the prison for example—it will also look at the ways in which we participate in our own domination.

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The problem of essentialism is the political problem of our time. To say that the personal is the political, clichéd and hackneyed though it is, is merely to say that the way we have been constituted as subjects, based on essentialist premises, is a political issue. There is really nothing radical in this. But it is still a question that must be addressed. Essentialism, along with the universal, totalizing politics it entails, is the modern place of power. Or at least, it is something around which the logic of the place of power is constituted. It will be one of the purposes of this discussion to show how essentialist ideas, even in revolutionary philosophies like anarchism, often reproduce the very domination they claim to oppose. Modern power functions through essentialist identities, and so essentialist ideas are something to be avoided if genuine forms of resistance are to be constructed and if genuine change is to be permitted. The changes of recent times, dramatic as they were, were still tied to these essentialist ways of thinking, particularly with regard to national identity, and to forms of political sovereignty like the state. They did not at all challenge or disrupt these categories, often only further embedding them in political discourse and social reality.

ODI - CM - 04 They maintain the law
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Their resistance maintains the law, for

THE LAW CAN ONLY OPERATE THROUGH ITS TRANSGRESSION AND THE EXCESS PLEASURE IT PRODUCES

Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

This possible Lacanian conception of power as founded upon a lack is based on his analysis of law. Lacan argues that the Law functions only through its failure to function, through its essential incompleteness. In his reading of Kant and Sade, Lacan suggests that the Law produces its own transgression, and that it can only operate through this transgression.[19] The excess of Sade does not contradict the injunctions, laws, and categorical imperatives of Kant: rather, they are inextricably linked to it. Like Foucault's discussion of the "spirals" of power and pleasure, in which power produces the very pleasure which it is seen to repress, Lacan suggests that the very denial of enjoyment—embodied in law, in the categorical imperative—produces its own form of perverse enjoyment, or "jouissance" as a surplus. Kant has failed to recognize this reverse side of the Law, the obscene pleasure of the Law.[20] Sade exposes this obscene enjoyment by reversing the paradigm: he turns this perverse pleasure into a law itself, into a sort of Kantian universal principle or right. The right to pleasure is, for Sade, the necessary accompaniment and logical extension of the Rights of Man: "Let us say that the nerve of the diatribe is given in the maxim which proposes a rule for *jouissance*, bizarre in that it makes itself a right in the Kantian fashion, that of posing itself as a universal rule."[21] Sade unmasks, then, the perverse pleasure which permeates the Law based on the renunciation of this pleasure. He does this by turning this pleasure, denied yet affirmed by the Law, into the Law itself. So, the pleasure of the Law becomes the law of pleasure. The desire that transgresses and exceeds the Law is only the other side of the Law. This is why Sade is seen as the necessary counterpart to Kant.

This link between law [or, for our purposes, power] and the pleasure which both transgresses and affirms it, is also recognized by Kafka. The seemingly neutral, faceless, anonymous bureaucracies that are so much part of Kafka's writings, produce, through their very renunciation of pleasure, their own excess of perverse pleasure. This is often manifested in the sadistic enjoyment that Kafka unmasks in bureaucratic functioning. Take, for instance, the torture machine—the Harrow—in Kafka's *In the Penal Settlement*.[22] Its hideous workings are described by the executioner in mundane detail, in a voice of absolute bureaucratic neutrality. The effect is to produce an excess of punishment and suffering which palpitates at the limits of the Law. The Harrow is a machine which literally carves the law into the condemned man's body: the letter of the Law is inscribed only through the excess—the irrational excess of sadistic pleasure—which seems to transgress its limits. The renunciation of enjoyment—embodied in the neutral letter of the Law, in the anonymous functioning of the bureaucracy—produces its own perverse enjoyment, an enjoyment based on its own denial.

For Lacan, law does not prohibit or repress pleasure; on the contrary, it produces it, but produces it as "repressed": "But it is not the Law itself that bars the subject's access to *jouissance*—rather it creates out of an almost natural barrier a barred subject."[23] So rather than prohibition being grounded in law, law is actually grounded in prohibition, in the fundamental lack between the subject and his representation, the object of his desire.[24] The enjoyment which exceeds law, Lacan argues, is produced within the order of law: enjoyment is never a spontaneous transgression of the Law, but rather an injunction of the Law—an injunction to "Enjoy!" We are always being told to enjoy ourselves, to be happy, to not be depressed, and yet this enjoyment is seen in terms of a rebellion, a

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So if power and authority are structured in this way—in terms of a fundamental impossibility—where does this leave us? First, it is necessary to see how this Lacanianized notion of power departs—if it does at all—from the poststructuralist idea of power. While only Foucault engaged the question of "power" directly, Deleuze and Guattari, and indeed Derrida, also dealt with power in, for instance, linguistic and philosophical structures. While, these notions of power are very different, it can be argued that for poststructuralists, the place of power is dispersed. For Foucault, power is multiform and "comes from everywhere;" for Deleuze and Derrida, power is implicated in a dispersed series of linguistic and discursive structures. Power, for poststructuralists, has perhaps little meaning as a concept in its own right: it is a thoroughly plural, dispersed notion. A Lacanian notion of power might differ from this in the following way: rather than power having no single identity, power would have an identity and a structure, but one which is fundamentally flawed—an identity constituted, as we have seen, through its own transgression. A Lacanian concept of power would be a form of power which did not work, which did not function properly, which allowed an excess to escape it, but which operated precisely through this failure. There is a constitutive lack, then, in the structure and identity of power: a lack which allows the possibility of an outside, from where it might be resisted. This resistance, however, would always be an undecidable: while it can threaten power, it also, according to this two-sided logic, allows power to achieve an identity. So while poststructuralists might argue that the diffuse, multiform character of power denies it any real identity, Lacan would argue that this is precisely why power has an identity. The identity of power is failed and based on a lack, but this does not rob it of an identity. On the contrary, this is precisely how its identity is formed. However, this notion of power does not necessarily conflict with the poststructuralist notion: difference and plurality are not denied, but rather form part of a flawed, open identity.

transgression of some sort. As Foucault argues, when we confess our deepest "secrets" and most perverse pleasures, when we affirm our "repressed sexuality," this gives us a certain pleasure, because we think we are flouting a repressive power or law. However, in doing this, we are playing right into the hands of the very power we believe we are transgressing. Similarly for Lacan, the Law does not prohibit or repress, but rather, incites its own transgression: "Indeed, the Law appears to be giving the order, 'Jouis !' "[25]

Therefore for Lacan, the Law generates a surplus or excess of pleasure that resists it. Moreover, the rule of law depends upon this excess. For Lacan, the function of the Law is precisely to *malfunction*: to produce an excess which both transgresses against it and which, *through this transgression*, allows it to operate.[26] For Lacan, an identity is constituted only through its distortion, its inability to be constituted. Similarly, it is only through its distortion that the Law has meaning. Kafka's bureaucratic machine seems to function, not despite but rather through, its chaotic workings, through its inability to function properly. This fundamental link between Law and its transgression is also suggested by Stirner, who argues that crime merely reaffirms the law that it transgresses against.[27] Foucault, too, recognizes this connection: he argues that the purpose of the prison, for instance, is precisely to fail: to continue to produce an excess of criminality which it is supposed to eliminate. It is only through the production of its transgression, of its failure, that the prison continues to operate. Is it not obvious that the prison system has a vested interest in perpetuating criminality: if there were no crime, there would be no need for prisons? So there is a fundamental and constitutive failing in the functioning of the Law—a lack in the structure of power.

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FREEDOM AND DOMINATION ARE BOTH POSSIBLE, BUT NOT INEVITABLE. WE MUST CRITIIQUE ESSENTIALIST DISCOURSE
Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

However, modernity, like everything, is a paradox. It is open to a plurality of interpretations and characterized by different implications, voices, and dreams. The changes that I have spoken about can be seen, at the same time, in a different light. While they have consolidated the political categories that continue to oppress us, they have also discovered ways they may be resisted. While they have tightened the parameters of our identity, they have also shown us extraordinary possibilities of freedom hitherto undreamt of. Freedom, I will argue, is a diaphanous idea, often involving its own forms of domination. But it is also something indefinable, like power: it remains constitutively open, and its possibilities are endless.

Like power, freedom may be seen in terms of the real: it always exceeds the boundaries and definitions laid down for it, and the possibility of freedom always "returns," despite the most ardent attempts to suppress it. So our time presents us with an open horizon, a horizon that allows us to construct our own reality, rather than having it constructed for us. Slavoj Zizek talks about the collapse of communist states as characterized by an experience of "openness," of a symbolic moment of the absence of any kind of authority to replace the one just overthrown.[5] It is a *sublime* moment, a moment of emptiness pregnant with possibility; a truly revolutionary moment caught in that infinitesimal lack between one signifying regime and the next. This is the moment in which the place of power becomes an *empty* place. There is no inevitability about domination, but there is always its possibility.[6] The same goes for freedom. Perhaps we too are caught in this empty place, this chasm between one world of power and the next.

Although we are still very much tied to the old political categories, we are beginning to see their limits. We are beginning to see how we can move beyond them. The question is where are we going to next? If we think that we can move to a world without power, then we are already trapped in the world that oppresses us. The dream of a world without power is part of the political language of this world. It is based on essentialist ideas about humanity, ideas which render it nothing more than that—a dream, and a dangerous one at that. While there is no moving completely beyond power, there are, however, possibilities of limiting power, or at least organizing it in such a way that the risk of domination is defused. One of these ways, I will argue, is through a critique of essentialist and totalizing logics.

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THEIR ADVOCACY OF A PURE, UNIVERSAL REVOLUTION ONLY REAFFIRMS THE POWER THEY SEEK TO OVERTHROW

Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p. 1-2

But on the other hand, one could be forgiven for thinking that things have not really changed that much at all. The same forms of domination and institutional hierarchies seem to appear time and time again, only in different garbs and ever more cunning disguises. With every popular uprising against the state and with every overthrow of some repressive regime or other, there always seems to be a new and more subtle form of repression waiting to take its place. There is always a new discourse of power to take the place of the old. For instance, what does it matter to the Australian Aboriginal, or the township dweller in South Africa, or the prisoner in a Russian jail, or the Latino "illegal immigrant" in the United States, whether he or she has a new set of masters? One is still dominated by a series of institutional practices and discursive regimes which tie him to a certain marginalized and, therefore, subjugated identity. Increased technology seems to go hand in hand with intensified social control and more sophisticated and complex ways of regulating individuals. Freedom in one area always seems to entail domination in others. So there is still, despite these profound global changes, the raw, brutal inevitability of power and authority. Maybe Friedrich Nietzsche was right when he saw history as merely a "hazardous play of dominations."[2]

This is not say, of course, that there have not been significant advancements on a world scale. Nor is it to say that all regimes and modes of political and social organization are equally oppressive. To argue that the postapartheid regime in South Africa, or the now not so new governments in the former Soviet bloc, are as dominating as the ones they replaced, would be ludicrous and insulting. Moreover, we must once and for all stop falling into the pernicious error of advocating a purer or more universal revolutionary theory that would seek to be more complete and sweeping in its paroxysm of destruction. Such a revolutionary strategy only reaffirms, paradoxically, the very power and authority that it seeks to overthrow. The Bolshevik revolution is a good example of this. I will be arguing that the very notion of revolution as a universal, cataclysmic overriding of current conditions should be abandoned. Also I am not trying to be excessively pessimistic or fatalistic by talking about the interminable reaffirmation of power at every turn. However the reality of power is something that cannot be ignored.

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For too long power was shrouded in "objective" explanations offered by philosophies like Marxism, or dressed up in some theory or other which allowed it to be neglected. However, power can, and should, now be seen *as* power. It can no longer be seen as an epiphenomenon of the capitalist economy or class relations. Power has returned as an object of analysis to be studied in its own right. I use "return" here in the Lacanian sense of *repetition:* for Lacan, the Real is "that which always *returns* to the same place" [my italics].[3] The real, for Lacan, is that which is missing from the symbolic structure, the indefinable, elusive *lack* that always resists symbolization by "returning": "Here the real is that which always comes back to the same place—to the place where the subject in so far as he thinks, where the *res cogitans*, does not meet it."[4]

The complexities of the Real and lack will be discussed later, yet we may perhaps say here that power is like the real; power inevitably "returns" to the same place, despite various attempts to remove it. It always haunts, by its sheer inability to be defined, by its resistance to representation within political discourse, the very political discourses that have as their aim the overthrow of power.

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Society has no essance

SYMPTOMATIC ANTAGONISMS DENIE SOCIETY AN ESSANCE

Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

Theories of revolution such as Marxism and anarchism advocated the overthrow of the existing order in the desire to establish the fullness prevented by it. Both theories attempted to overcome domination, but in this very attempt, as we have seen, they ended up reaffirming it. This political logic of "filling" the unfillable gap in society, of overcoming the void that can never be overcome, is an example of *hegemonic* politics.[31] Because society can never form a closed identity, this leaves a gap open for different political articulations to "fill out" the social totality; although this is, as we have seen, only partially possible. Perhaps this logic of hegemony—of the constitutive openness of the social—can help us to explore the problem of the place. If the place of power is the Real that can never be completely overcome, then projects of resistance will be only partially successful in overcoming domination. Perhaps, then, the logic of the place of power can only be resisted through the realization that it can never be entirely transcended.

Society, according to this analysis, is founded upon a radical antagonism that constitutes it through its own impossibility. The antagonism is the Real that cannot be symbolized, the trauma which does not in itself exist, but whose effects are nevertheless felt. Antagonism prevents society from achieving a full identity: it is the fundamental outside—the limit of society. It is the excess of meaning which surrounds society and which limits it. The Real functions like the Derridean supplement. Antagonism is the constitutive outside of society. It both threatens the identity of society—because it leaves it open to different articulations—and, paradoxically, allows it to achieve an identity, albeit incomplete—because it is only through various political articulations which try to overcome this fundamental lack that society has an identity at all.

Antagonism, then, is a constitutive outside which subjects society to the logic of undecidability: society may be seen, rather than as an impossible object, as an undecidable object, caught between the Real of antagonism and signification. It is governed by this radical gap, this emptiness, in the same manner as the Lacanian subject.

Antagonism is not, however, the essence of society. Rather, it is precisely that which denies society an essence. As Laclau and Mouffe argue: " 'Society' is not a valid object of discourse. There is no single underlying principle fixing—and hence constituting—the whole field of differences."[32] Antagonism exists, therefore, as the excess of meaning that cannot be grasped by social signifiers, which surrounds "society" as its limit.[33] This idea of society as a field of differences founded on a radical antagonism, runs contrary to the anarchist notion of society as an essential identity governed by natural laws. Stirner, also, realized that society has no essence, that it is not a thing in itself: it has no ego. Antagonism may be compared, for instance, with Deleuze's notion of the war-machine, which is, as we have seen, a radical exteriority of fluxes, becomings, and differences that threatens the state form—the order of essence and fixed identity. Can we not say, then, that this notion of antagonism as a nonplace, a radical outside, is an extension of the war model of relations, a model that has appeared throughout this discussion? The war model has been used as a tool of analysis: it is a model of relations that embraces dislocation and antagonism,

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HABERMAS' ATTEMPTS TO EXCLUDE CONSTRAINT AND POWER FROM RATIONAL COMMUNICATION REINSTALL DOMINATION.

Newman, Saul, **01**, From Bakunin to Lacan Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power, p.____

It may be useful, at this point, to compare this war model of politics, based on the Lacanian lack, to the Habermasian model of rational communication or "communicative action." This comparison is relevant because Jurgen Habermas' idea of communication and consensus, based on shared rational norms and understanding, is quite close to anarchism: it is perhaps the last bastion of the privileged subject of Enlightenment-humanist rationality, the logic which informs anarchism. It is also relevant to the question of resistance against domination, because Habermasians argue that without any notion of shared rational norms—which this Lacanian analysis would question—there can be no possibility of any coherent political or ethical action.[34]

Habermas tries to describe the requirements for an ideal speech situation in which consensus can be achieved without constraint. For Habermas, communicative action presupposes a universal intersubjective understanding that is latent within the *lifeworld*: "Yet these participants in communicative action must reach an understanding *about something in the world* if they hope to carry out their action plans on a consensual basis." [35] Thus, political subjects can reach a rational understanding about the world through speech acts referring to this context, and this points to the possibility of resolving disagreement and reaching consensus. It points, in other words, to a possibility of communication without power and constraint. The lifeworld is, then, the shared common ground upon which rational consensus is to be based. Anarchism, too, tried to achieve a unified identity in this way, through a perceived common essential ground of rationality and morality. Like Habermas, the anarchists dreamt of a form of communication that was transparent, rational, and entirely free from power. Habermas believes that there is "a universal core of moral intuition in all times and in all societies," and this derives from the "conditions of symmetry and reciprocal recognition which are unavoidable propositions of communicative action."[36] So while, for Habermas, this moral "core" does not necessarily naturally occur within the human subject, as it does in anarchist theory, it is still a transcendent ideal and a universal possibility.

However, it is this ideal of a universal ground which the war model rejects: it sees the trauma of antagonism behind consensus, the rift behind unity and cohesion. Lacan himself would reject this idea of a common ground, a shared symbolic world interpretation.[37] The Lacanian analysis tells us that at the base of every identity, social and political, there is a lack, which disrupts the complete constitution of this identity. I have argued that this lack is the Real of antagonism and power which, as Lacan would argue, always *returns*, although in different forms, despite attempts to repress it.[38] According to Lacan, it is this traumatic void in the symbolic structure of subjectivity that always disrupts its identity. The Real may even return in the form of the very forces that try to repress it. Thus, as Lacan has showed us, Sadeian pleasure returns as the excess produced by the Kantian law that tries to repress it. Habermas has tried to do precisely this: to repress this antagonism, the lack that is irrepressible. He tries to construct, or at least describe the circumstances that make possible, a speech situation free from constraint. However, one could argue, using this Lacanian logic, that this very attempt to exclude constraint and power from rational communication is itself the *return* of constraint and power. The Real of power

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has returned as the very conditions set up to exclude it, thus disrupting the identity of rational communication itself. Rational communication, which is supposedly free from power and constraint, is found, according to this Lacanian-inspired analysis, to be very much embroiled in power and constraint. For instance, what the Habermasian model does not recognize is that these rational norms, which it claims are universal, are not universal at all, but rather are grounded in a particular epistemological and cultural paradigm, and are, thus, inextricably related to power. How would the ideal speech situation deal with the mad, for example, who did not accept these rational norms? Habermas' model does not take account of its own groundedness in a specific epistemological form that restricts difference. So Habermas has only reinstalled power and constraint in the universal notion of intersubjective norms constructed to free communication from power and constraint. Power may be seen, then, as the excess produced by the very structures set up to exclude it. The war model would maintain that any consensus that saw itself as overcoming power, was actually a form of domination.

Habermas believes that the intersubjective understanding presupposed by communicative rationality can free communication from constraint. However, apart from the Lacanian Real that undermines this supposition, we have already seen from the poststructuralists discussed that rationality is already itself a form of constraint, or at least involved with practices of constraint. So I would argue, contrary to Habermas, that communicative rationality is itself a discourse of constraint and domination, if anything because it claims to be otherwise. This is not to say, of course, that there cannot be forms of communication that are not discourses of domination. But there cannot be a discourse of communication that does not involve power in some way. In the chapter on Foucault, I tried to distinguish between his notions of power and domination. However, as I have argued, domination comes from the same world as power. The idea is to try to invent forms of action and communication that minimize the potential for domination. We must resign ourselves, however, as Stirner's theory of ownness exhorts us to do, to the fact that we will never be free of relations of power. This is not so much a resignation, however, as an *affirmation* of this fact. So while the Habermasian perspective sees the possibility of a world free from power, the war model of trauma does not. Even the constitutive exterior to power that I have formulated is not a universe free from power, but rather a lack in the structure of power pointing to an empty, undefined possibility at the limits of power. I have argued, then, that any social reality, no matter how universal and consensual it claims to be, is disrupted by the Real which always returns to haunt it: the limits of power and antagonism which do not allow it to form a complete identity.