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The misfeeling of what happens: Slavoj Žižek, Antonio Damasio and a materialist account of affects

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Abstract In *The Parallax View*, Slavoj Žižek outlines a Lacanian critique of neuroscientist Antonio Damasio's theories of affectively shaped mental life. Damasio is faulted for failing to account for the existence of the *Cogito*-like subject-as-$, an existence claimed to be emotionally significant in ways directly relevant to the Damasian project. Žižek's criticisms stage a confrontation pitting psychoanalytic anti-naturalism against neuroscientific naturalism. This article involves laying out a partial defense of Damasio's proposals. In so doing, it seeks, specifically with regard to the matters at stake in Žižek's engagement with the sciences of the brain, to delineate a position based on the rejection of what is alleged to be a false dichotomy between naturalism and anti-naturalism. The forms of subjectivity posited by what would be a Freudian–Lacanian neuro-psychoanalysis are torn apart in various directions, split along fault lines of tension between what are imprecisely designated as 'natural' and 'non-natural' dimensions.
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Some of Slavoj Žižek's recent work constructs a very useful and unconventional bridge between Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and neuroscientific accounts of emotional life and affective selfhood/subjectivity. Interestingly, there is evidence that Žižek admits the existence of unconscious affects, a controversial admission in psychoanalysis generally and Lacanianism especially. On at least one occasion, he speaks of guilt, in faithful Freudian fashion, as 'ultimately unconscious' (Žižek, 2000, p. 256). In this context, he even indicates two modes in which guilt can be unconscious: one, 'the subject is unaware of his or her guilt' (that is, an unfelt feeling), and, two, 'he or she, while experiencing the pressure of guilt,

is unaware of what he or she is guilty of' (that is, an enigmatic, free-floating feeling) (Žižek, 2000, p. 256). The latter mode arguably also could be (or morph into) what one might risk designating as a misfelt feeling: In the absence of an explicit cognizance of culpability apropos a misdeed relative to a certain rule, the feeling that might otherwise be self-interpretively felt as guilt *per se* is consciously registered as some other affective tonality (such as anxiety, nervousness, vague discomfort or even physical illness) (Johnston, under review).

Žižek's 2006 book *The Parallax View* contains detailed engagements with the sciences of the brain. Among other figures in this set of disciplines, he turns his attention to Antonio Damasio in particular – specifically, his neuroscience-based theories of emotional matters as elaborated primarily in the 1999 book *The Feeling of What Happens*. Before turning to what Žižek has to say regarding Damasio, a few introductory remarks obviously should be made about the ideas and positions of the latter. To begin with, Damasio is generally sympathetic to psychoanalysis and particularly sympathetic to the neuro-psychoanalytic movement in Anglo-American clinical analytic circles (for instance, he sits on the Neuroscience Editorial Advisory Board of the journal *Neuro-Psychoanalysis*, of which Mark Solms is one of the founding editors) (Damasio, 2003). Damasio accepts there being an unconscious as described by analytic metapsychology. (Damasio, 1999, 2003). What's more, whereas the notion of unconscious affect remains controversial in certain sectors of psychoanalysis – for many Lacanians, the phrase 'unconscious affect' is oxymoronic – Damasio (and some of his fellow researchers investigating the emotional brain (LeDoux, 1996; Panksepp, 1998)) posits the reality of affective phenomena below the threshold of self-awareness (Damasio, 1994, 1999). Like Freud (1953–1974, Volumes 9, 19 and 22) he even acknowledges the ostensibly unavoidable awkwardness of proposing that there are feelings that aren't felt as such – 'Someone may suggest that perhaps we should have another word for "feelings that are not conscious", but there isn't one' (Damasio, 1999, p. 37).

In the three shadows cast by Freud, Lacan and Žižek, the current discussion, with its selective focus, will limit itself to touching upon Damasio's fashion of distinguishing between 'emotions' and 'feelings' (as well as between non-conscious and conscious feelings). Properly understanding this Damasian distinction requires initially noting that Damasio insists, as does this Freud-and-Lacan-inspired project here (Johnston, under review), on the essentially mediated nature of human beings' affective lives, on the ineliminable modulation (even constitution) of passions and sentiments by intellectual, linguistic and representational configurations (Damasio, 1994, 1999, 2003). To put it in the language of the neuroscience trinity of cognition, emotion and motivation, the emotional brain cannot be separated from the cognitive brain (Panksepp, 1998; Solms and Turnbull, 2002; Thagard and Nerb, 2006;

Thagard, 2006a, b) (not to mention the motivational brain, whose facets also are of great importance to psychoanalysis, with its reliance on a theory of drives).

The main thesis to be pursued by this project is that affects are reflexive, second-order phenomena (in a way similar to what Lacan, in the opening session of the seventh seminar of 1959–1960, asserts regarding desire – 'it is always desire in the second degree, desire of desire' (Lacan, 1992, p. 14)). That is to say, instead of being elementary givens *qua* irreducibly immediate and transparent experiences of phenomenal consciousness, the phenomena of affective life involve filterings, foldings, mediations and re-doublings that make these phenomena much more complex and much less self-evident than is usually suspected. One fashion of putting this loosely is that feelings are always the feelings of feelings. And, unconscious forces and factors subsist and intervene in the spaces between feelings and the feelings of feelings so as sometimes to render how one feels quite murky and opaque. Advancing and developing this thesis will require combining the resources of Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis and affective neuroscience in fashions demanding important modifications of both these fields (Johnston, under review).

For Damasio, emotions are, by his definition, non-conscious phenomena, rather than referring, as in quotidian parlance, to consciously felt feelings. To be more precise, Damasian emotions are physiological processes visible to third-party observers; feelings, by contrast, are private, first-person phenomena (Damasio, 1999, 2003). He thus aligns emotions with the publicly accessible body and feelings with the publicly inaccessible mind (Damasio, 2003). However, Damasio is far from resting content with an indefensibly simplistic opposition between a non-conscious body of physiological emotions and a conscious mind of psychological feelings. This becomes clear in Damasio's delineation of a three-stage sequence running from non-conscious emotions to potential and actual conscious feelings (with emotions having temporal priority (Damasio, 2003)):

> … I separate three stages of processing along a continuum: *a state of emotion*, which can be triggered and executed nonconsciously; *a state of feeling*, which can be represented nonconsciously; and a state of feeling made conscious, i.e., known to the organism having both emotion and feeling. (Damasio, 1999, p. 37)

The second of these three stages is where Damasio is perhaps at his most psychoanalytic. On his account, the human brain is a compulsive, reflexive self-modeler, constantly generating map-like depictions of the states of the subject's body, its world of objects, and the ongoing interactions between these two enmeshed poles; consciousness is here said to be an outgrowth of

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these self-mapping dynamics (Damasio, 1999). The conceptions and pictures thus formed can be, in Damasio's view, either conscious or non-conscious. He's entirely open about his reliance on the (originally Freudian) assertion according to which the large domain of mental life that isn't conscious contains not only motivational energies and impulses (as per the pseudo-Freudian notion of the unconscious as the dark depths of a writhing, primordial animal id), but also cognitive images and representations (something Lacan adamantly insists upon again and again in his 'return to Freud'):

> Images may be conscious or unconscious. It should be noted, however, that not all the images the brain constructs are made conscious. There are simply too many images being generated and too much competition for the relatively small window of mind in which images can be made conscious – the window, that is, in which images are accompanied by a sense that we are apprehending them and that, as a consequence, are properly attended. In other words, metaphorically speaking, there is indeed a subterranean underneath the conscious mind and there are many levels to that subterranean. (Damasio, 1999, p. 319)

With the preceding details in mind, a better appreciation of the nuances and potentials of Damasio's fine-grained distinctions concerning affective life is now possible. Damasio states:

> This perspective on emotion, feeling, and knowing is unorthodox. First, I am suggesting that there is no central feeling state before the respective emotion occurs, that expression (emotion) precedes feeling. Second, I am suggesting that 'having a feeling' is not the same as 'knowing a feeling,' that reflection on feeling is yet another step up. Overall, this curious situation reminds me of E.M. Forster's words: 'How can I know what I think before I say it?' (Damasio, 1999, pp. 283–284)

Emotions are 'expressions' in the sense of being physiological processes manifested by the body (everything from heart rates and adrenalin releases to blushing and sweating). These bodily states then are cognitively mapped, translated into images and representations. Such maps of emotions, constructed by the spontaneous self-modeling activities of a brain which 'is truly the body's captive audience' (Damasio, 1999, p. 150), would be feelings in Damasio's parlance. However, he crucially stipulates that feelings thus defined are not automatically and necessarily conscious. As Damasio (1999) postulates, one can 'have a feeling', as a non-conscious or unconscious image or representation of an emotion *qua* physiological condition, without knowing it. (Jean-Pierre Changeux, another neuroscientist, likewise observes that, 'the direct experience of feeling is readily distinguished from the knowledge that one has a feeling'

(Changeux, 2004, p. 76).) And, perhaps there are two modes in which this gap between having and knowing can exist: On the one hand, the feeling is unattended to by first-person consciousness (that is, it's an unfelt feeling), and, on the other hand, the feeling is interpreted by first-person consciousness (that is, it's a misfelt feeling, examples of which might include the conscious registration of various varieties of affective excitation as anxiety or of guilt as physical distress).

Damasio's work on affective life should be of great interest for psychoanalysis, including even Lacanian theory (Žižek once more, as in other respects too, is an admirable and rare exception, being one of the all-too-few Lacanians to address seriously the advances achieved by Damasio and the neurosciences as a whole – by contrast, Anglo-American neuro-psychoanalysis indeed has enthusiastically embraced the affective neuroscience of Damasio and others). From a Freudian–Lacanian perspective, several features of the approach to parsing affective phenomena selectively summarized above immediately strike the eye. As per Freudian metapsychology, Damasio's intermediary realm of feelings-had, situated in a mediating capacity between non-conscious emotions and conscious feelings-known, would consist of *Triebrepräsentanzen* (drive representatives), namely, the simultaneously both structural and energetically charged psychical inscriptions forming the coordinates of the drives' aims (*Ziele*) and objects (*Objekte*). Along related Lacanian lines, one cannot help but think of *jouis-sens*, of the hybrid juxtapositions and unstable syntheses of (in Freud's terms) soma and psyche, of something neither strictly corporeal-libidinal nor subjective-meaningful (Lacan, 1990, 2001; Žižek, 1991; Johnston, 2008b). Additionally, the line from Forster quoted by Damasio also elegantly encapsulates Lacan's take on an aspect of free association in the analytic process, a take according to which the analysand, as a *parlêtre* (speaking being) articulating his/her thoughts and desires, comes to figure out what he/she really thinks and wants through the verbal labor of associational articulation itself (rather than free association merely helping to reveal what already was present beforehand fully formed in the repressed recesses of the vocalizing subject's psyche) (Johnston, 2008b).

Before turning to Žižek's critical comments on Damasio, a quick examination of the latter's 2003 book *Looking for Spinoza* promises to be helpful and relevant, in part because it further clarifies arguments and concepts first delineated in *The Feeling of What Happens*. Damasio's Spinozism is expressed via the assertion, taken straight from 'Part Two' of the *Ethics* (especially Propositions XIII and XXIII), that, "the human mind is the idea of the human body" (Spinoza, 1949; Damasio, 2003). For Damasio, an obvious extension of this, in connection with his distinction between emotions and feelings, is the proposition that, 'feelings … are mostly shadows of the external manner of emotions' (Damasio, 2003, p. 29). Again, emotions are 'external' insofar as they are corporeal expressions made manifest as physiological phenomena

potentially, if not actually, observable by third parties. Moreover, as noted, they are, in and of themselves, non-conscious; they can be translated into consciously registered experiences in the guise of feelings, but they aren't automatically and necessarily thus registered. In this vein, Damasio observes – this observation obviously dovetails with assertions central to Freudian psychoanalysis – that pleasure and pain (as emotion-level bodily events) don't need the mediation of conscious experience to generate and guide behaviors (Damasio, 2003, p. 33). He goes on to indicate that this independence relative to consciousness is enjoyed by emotions generally (Damasio, 2003, pp. 55, 60–61).

Damasio, in line with the thesis that the mind consists of ideational reflections of the body, defines feelings (as mental *qua* distinct from physical emotions) as representations of body-states (that is, the body's changing conditions and its ongoing interactions with entities and circumstances affecting it) (Damasio, 1994, pp. 143, 145–146, 159; 2003, pp. 85, 91). He proceeds to elaborate:

> Feelings are perceptions, and I propose that the most necessary support for their perception occurs in the *brain's body maps*. These maps refer to parts of the body and states of the body. Some variation of pleasure or pain is a consistent content of the perception we call feeling. (Damasio, 2003, p. 85)

He continues:

> Alongside the perception of the body there is the perception of thoughts with themes consonant with the emotion, and a perception of a certain mode of thinking, a style of mental processing. How does this perception come about? It results from constructing metarepresentations of our own mental process, a high-level operation in which a part of the mind represents another part of the mind. This allows us to register the fact that our thoughts slow down or speed up as more or less attention is devoted to them; or the fact that thoughts depict objects and events at close range or at a distance. My hypothesis, then, presented in the form of a provisional definition, is that a feeling is the perception of a certain state of the body along with the perception of a certain mode of thinking and of thoughts with certain *themes*. Feelings emerge when the sheer accumulation of mapped details reaches a certain stage. (Damasio, 2003, pp. 85–86)

As Damasio summarizes all of this a few pages later, 'A feeling of emotion is an idea of the body when it is perturbed by the emoting process' (Damasio, 2003, p. 88). From a psychoanalytic angle, a number of details in the passages above warrant commentary. As suggested earlier here, the pleasure-and-pain-infused

'body maps', themselves not necessarily conscious but capable of becoming so in the trappings of the ideational-representational material of feelings, can be associated with Freudian drive representatives (composing configurations of libidinal aims and objects) and/or Lacanian *jouis-sens* (Lacan, 1971, 1974a, b, 1975a, b, 1977, 1977–1978, 1990, 1992, 1998, 2005). These Damasian maps, continually drafted and updated by the perpetual self-modeling activity of the brain, are necessary-but-not-sufficient conditions of possibility for the experience of somatic emotions as psychical felt feelings – 'an entity capable of feeling must be an organism that not only has a body but also a means to represent that body inside itself' (Damasio, 2003, p. 109). What's more, this mapping process is the first step of a two-step translation process at the end of which emerges feelings-known, affective phenomena consciously experienced. In addition to the initial step from emotions to maps as (proto-)affective formations (a step in which representations of body parts and relations with external objects must be integrated), a subsequent step from such maps to 'metarepresentations' (in which cognitive styles and contents, as first-order representations, must be linked and synthesized at a second-order level) is requisite for the genesis of a consciously felt feeling (Damasio, 1994, pp. 162–163). Although Damasio repeatedly acknowledges that something like the psychoanalytic unconscious plays a role in the vicissitudes of affective life (Damasio, 2003, p. 72), his discussions of the trajectories of translation leading from emotions through feelings-had to feelings-known tend to pass over quickly and quietly features of this multi-step movement with respect to which a Freudian–Lacanian metapsychology of affect has a lot to say.

The Lacanian rendition of the Freudian unconscious as a 'superficial' (non-)being at play in twists, turns and gaps inscribed within the very surface of consciousness – as is well known, Lacan is adamantly opposed to the vulgar depiction of psychoanalysis as a depth psychology, an exploration of hidden pockets of profound meaning (Johnston, 2005) – is worth recalling at this juncture. To be more precise, the psychoanalytic unconscious (and not the non-analytic notion of the non-conscious) exists, in part, as events of interventions intervening between different components and operations along the line running from one end of Damasio's affective spectrum to the other, from non-conscious emotions to conscious feelings. In other words, the unconscious isn't itself a deep, obfuscated component or operation of the complex ensemble of affective machinery, but, instead, something slipping into the intervals of spacing distinguishing emotions, feelings-had and feelings-known. It even can and does affect the linkings internal to both feelings-had and feelings-known, namely, the linkings of body parts, states and surrounding circumstances in Damasian feelings-had (that is, first-order representations in the form of body maps mapping the far-from-elementary complexes that are emotions) as well as the linkings of cognitive modes and themes in Damasian feelings-known (that

is, second-order 'metarepresentations' as reflective appreciations of affective experiences). Put differently and more generally, the unconscious of intra-psychical defense mechanisms (that is, the unconscious *qua* repressed, with 'repression' to be taken here in its broadest possible sense) is not reducible to any set of particular content-nodes in the networks of the psyche insofar as it kinetically slides between these nodes. Repression often bears on associative relations between pieces of psychical content. For example, in an analysis, an analysand might very well be able consciously to recollect each and every specific fragment of mnemic material involved in a given constellation underpinning a particular symptom. In such a case, what is repressed isn't one memory among others, but, instead, the web of associations woven between the memories constituting nodes in the network producing symptoms as its outgrowths. The relations between memories are repressed, rather than the memories themselves. The unconscious comes to light in such analytic circumstances as newly recognized connections between previously recognized contents.

Whereas Damasio speaks of organic 'consonances' between the different layers and levels of his affective spectrum, a psychoanalytic approach, taking up his model, would prefer to emphasize dissonances. More precisely, by virtue of the psyche's defensive means of achieving a self-regulated homeostatic equilibrium in terms of affects, there inevitably are absences of translations or distorting mistranslations within and between emotions, feelings-had and feelings-known. Additionally, this analytic metapsychological supplement to Damasio's theory rectifies what appears to be a shortcoming to it: Damasio seems to suggest entertaining the unconvincing hypothesis that a simple, straightforward quantitative factor is responsible for the qualitative shift from non-conscious affective mechanisms to felt affective qualia ('Feelings emerge when the sheer accumulation of mapped details reaches a certain stage'). By contrast, an analytic approach would speculate that much more than 'sheer' quantity alone is at work here.

In several contexts, Damasio somewhat enigmatically refers to what he characterizes as 'feelings of feelings' (Damasio, 1999). At this point, an examination of Žižek's Lacanian criticisms of Damasio's account of affective life is appropriate and promises to be productive. Žižek devotes a certain amount of attention to a topic not delved into above, namely, the theory of the multiple degrees and strata of consciousness and selfhood in *The Feeling of What Happens* (in which Damasio (1999) sets out such conceptual categories as proto-selfhood, core consciousness/selfhood, extended consciousness, autobiographical selfhood and conscience). On this score, Žižek's complaint is that reducing subjectivity to the two dimensions of embodied being (as proto-selfhood and core consciousness/selfhood) and linguistic-representational identity (as extended consciousness, autobiographical selfhood and conscience) leaves out the third dimension first isolated by Descartes in the figure of the

Cogito (that is, the subject proper as the emptiness of the negativity of $, Lacan's 'barred subject') (Johnston, 2005, 2008b; Žižek, 2008a):

> … Damasio's solution to the old enigma of the two sides of Self (Self *qua* the continuously changing stream of consciousness verses Self *qua* the permanent stable core of our subjectivity) misses the mark: 'the seemingly changing self and the seemingly permanent self, although closely related, are not one entity but two' (217) – the first being the Core Self, the second the autobiographical Self. There is no place here, however, for what we as speaking beings experience (or, rather, presuppose) as the empty core of our subjectivity: what am I? I am neither my body (I have a body, I never 'am' my body directly, in spite of all the subtle phenomenological descriptions *à la* Merleau-Ponty that try to convince me to the contrary), nor the stable core of my autobiographical narratives that form my symbolic identity; what 'I am' is the pure One of an empty Self which remains the same One throughout the constant change of autobiographical narratives. This One is engendered by language: it is neither the Core Self nor the autobiographical Self, but what the Core Self is transubstantiated (or, rather, desubstantialized) into when it is transposed into language. This is what Kant has in mind when he distinguishes between the 'person' (the wealth of autobiographical content that provides substantial content to my Self) and the pure subject of transcendental apperception which is just an empty point of self-relating. (Žižek, 2006, pp. 226–227)

The overarching philosophical framework informing this critique of Damasio cannot be exhaustively elucidated here insofar as this would require reconstructing the entirety of the Žižekian theory of subjectivity as constructed at the intersection of German idealism and Lacanian psychoanalysis. But, what's crucial in this context is Žižek's insistence, following Lacan, that Symbolic mediation (that is, the passage of the substantial proto-subject into the enveloping milieus of language-structures) creates a subject (that is, the *Cogito*-like subject-as-$ central to Kantian and post-Kantian German idealism) that thereafter escapes reduction to either bodily nature (including Damasio's 'Core self') or linguistic culture (including Damasio's 'autobiographical Self') (Johnston, 2007, 2008b). Damasio (1999) agrees with Žižek about the invalidity of reducing consciousness and/or selfhood to language; he even speculates that non-human animals have autobiographical selves, thereby clearly indicating that he doesn't consider this stratum of selfhood to be entirely language-bound (Damasio, 1999, p. 198). But, Damasio and Žižek certainly seem to part company apropos the latter's Lacanian thesis that the corporeal substance of the Damasian proto-self and core self doesn't remain a purely biological foundation over which is then subsequently laid utterly

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separate and distinct higher-order mental scaffoldings (lurking in the broadest encompassing background is what would be a much more far-reaching, fundamental debate about the extent to which socio-symbolic mediators penetrate and alter the realities of the body).

In *The Feeling of What Happens*, Damasio does concede that a certain amount of dialectical interaction transpires between core consciousness/selfhood and the additional tiers of different configurations of consciousness/selfhood overlaid on top of it (Damasio, 1999). And yet, Žižek is quite right that Damasio, nonetheless, tends to stick persistently to the claim that an atomic center of substantial bio-material being utterly untouched by non-natural influences remains a pure, impermeable core ultimately grounding all other dimensions of mental life (Damasio, 1999, pp. 200, 228–230). Against this claim, Žižek asserts that insertion into symbolico-linguistic matrices of mediation 'transubstantiates'-*cum*-'desubstantializes' the Damasian hard kernel of bodily existence. However, Žižek's critique ignores Damasio's distinction between the proto-self and the core self, conflating these two entities under the single heading of the 'Core Self'. For Damasio, the core self is a representational map of the proto-self (Damasio, 1999). Nonetheless, in the spirit of Žižek's psychoanalytically inspired objection to Damasio, it would be justifiable to maintain that the advent of language-use (especially the acquisition of proficiency with proper names and personal pronouns (Johnston, 2007, 2008b)) might 'transubstantiate' the very means and results of the translation process leading from the proto-self to the core self.

Mixing together Lacanian and Damasian vocabularies, maybe an irreparable rift rendering all representational translation between the proto-self-as-S and the core-self-as-$ somewhat misrepresentative opens like a gaping wound in organisms subjected to the cutting intervention of linguistic structures. This would be the initial, zero-level introduction into the corporeal reality of human animals of the dissonances and discrepancies that come to be characteristic of split speaking subjects through whose splits circulate unconscious dimensions. But, whereas Žižek sounds as though he flirts at this moment with a vaguely social-constructivist vision according to which the nature-based proto-self-as-S is retroactively liquidated and replaced by the language-induced core-self-as-$, what is being proposed presently is an alternate picture in which, to articulate this in Hegelian fashion, the distinction between S (as the proto-self) and $ (as the core self) persists as a distinction internal to $ itself. That is to say, not only do chasms of varying widths crack open between the language-independent proto-self-as-S and its (un)representational (mis)translations in and by the linguistically influenced core-self-as-$ – a split within the core-self-as-$ mirrors this chasm, a split dividing the core self in two, into both a plastic avatar of substantial bodily being as well as a faceless blank of desubstantialized negativity. In other words, maybe there are two core selves dissonant with each other (in addition to the varyingly dissonant intervals between proto-selves and

core selves): a 'full' core self and an 'empty' core self (the latter being the *Cogito*-like void of interest to Žižek, something admittedly neglected by Damasio).

Returning to *The Parallax View*, Žižek spells out key implications of his critical reading of Damasio's portrait of consciousness/selfhood for this portrait's accompanying account of affective life. He begins:

> Damasio's fundamental 'Althusserian' thesis is that 'there is no central feeling state before the respective emotion occurs, that expression (emotion) precedes feeling' (283). I am tempted to link this emotion which precedes feeling to the empty pure subject ($): emotions are already the subject's, but before subjectivization, before their transposition into the subjective experience of feeling. $ is thus the subjective correlative to emotions prior to feeling: it is only through feelings that I become the 'full' subject of lived self-experience. And it is this 'pure' subject which can no longer be contained within the frame of life-homeostasis, that is, whose functioning is no longer constrained by the biological machinery of life-regulation. (Žižek, 2006, p. 227)

Žižek soon adds:

> The chain of equivalences … imposes itself between the 'empty' *cogito* (the Cartesian subject, Kant's transcendental subject), the Hegelian topic of self-relating negativity, and the Freudian topic of the death drive. Is this 'pure' subject deprived of emotions? It is not as simple as that: its very detachment from immediate immersion in life-experience gives rise to new (not emotions or feelings, but, rather) affects: anxiety and horror. Anxiety as correlative to confronting the Void that forms the core of the subject; horror as the experience of disgusting life at its purest, 'undead' life. (Žižek, 2006)

What Damasio depicts as natural (that is, the core self as the source of not-felt/not-yet-felt emotions) Žižek treats as radically anti-natural *qua* 'no longer … contained within the frame of life-homeostasis … no longer constrained by the biological machinery of life-regulation'. By arguing that 'emotions are already the subject's', he signals his hypothesis that Damasio's proto/core self (or, more accurately, selves) is thoroughly denaturalized *après-coup* by the intrusion of the signifiers of the symbolic order. Of course, one might have reservations with respect to what sounds like a hyperbolic positing of a total and complete denaturalization without reserve or remainder. As regards the (human) 'nature' underpinning subjectivity, this project prefers to conceive of denaturalization as, at least in some circumstances, more of a sedimentary accumulation, a layering of heterogeneous montages of often conflicting dimensions running

the gamut from the relatively 'natural' (for example, evolutionary tendencies rooted in archaic environmental contexts) to the relatively 'non-natural' (primarily, socio-historical factors and variables past and present). To misappropriate some of Žižek's language from *In Defense of Lost Causes* (Žižek, 2008b), the whole problem is that 'life 2.0' (that is, the retroactive denaturalizer of life as such in and of itself) never succeeds fully at erasing and replacing what after-the-fact becomes 'life 1.0' (that is, naked, primitive life *an sich* once it has been retroactively affected by the genesis of life 2.0). At least in certain cases, life 1.0 continues to operate in parallel with life 2.0, with antagonisms and dysfunctions arising between them. Human beings, in terms of where they stand between the natural and the non-natural, could be described as creatures of temporal torsions; parts of human beings lag behind in the time-warp of evolutionary-genetic influences linked to long-past contexts, whereas other parts, which can and do come into conflict with these same evolutionary-genetic influences, take shape according to faster-moving historical temporalities (moreover, the latter are themselves outgrowths of evolution that have escaped control by evolutionary governance alone (Johnston, 2010, [forthcoming]). Such beings are the products of incomplete, partial denaturalizations that fail to eliminate without undigested leftovers the vestiges of things other than the socio-symbolically mediated structures and phenomena of human history both phylogenetic and ontogenetic. Of course, one should wholeheartedly agree with Žižek that 'Nature does not exist' if 'Nature' designates a balanced, harmonious One-All; this is another non-existent big Other (as per Lacan's '*Le grand Autre n'existe pas*') (Zizek, 2008b; Johnston, 2007, 2008a, b, 2010 [forthcoming]). However, nature indeed does exist both as, one, that which immanently allows for and generates the denaturalizations involved with subjectivity (Johnston, 2008b, c, 2009), and, two, a bundle of anachronistic variables, within the substance of human being, out of joint with various and sundry aspects of more current historical-temporal milieus. Nature is a participant in the unbalanced ensemble of conflicting elements. So, to paraphrase Lacan's 'There is no Other of the Other' (rather than his 'The big Other does not exist'), this project asserts that there is no Nature of nature, although there is nature as fragmentary, self-sundering components caught up in the conflicts constitutive of the 'human condition' (Johnston, 2010 [forthcoming]).

Regardless of all this, Žižek's crucial move in the passages quoted in the preceding paragraph is his insightful proposal that the signifier-catalyzed explosion of the emptiness of $ out of the fullness of S, of (as per Hegel) subject proper out of substance, is not without significant repercussions in the spheres of affect. In fact, for Žižek, properly human-subjective affects are neither emotions nor feelings in Damasio's senses of these latter two terms. Damasio treats emotions as automatic physiological processes regulated by non-conscious bodily mechanisms, although he stipulates that the translation of

emotions into consciously registered feelings allows for partial cognitive-intellectual mediation and modulation of embodied emotions (Damasio, 2003). By contrast, Žižek, for a number of Freudian–Lacanian reasons, insists that the emoting body, insinuated by Damasio to rest on a natural/instinctual basis, is altered right down to its bare bones and raw flesh by its transformative insertion into the socio-symbolic matrices of the big Other (first and foremost, the corporeal core self of Damasio is 'transubstantiated' and 'denaturalized' into the disembodied emptiness of Lacan's *Cogito*-like $, a void linked to such linguistic signifier-entities as proper names and personal pronouns (Žižek, 2006; Johnston, 2007, 2008b)). Žižek proceeds to refer to Joseph LeDoux, another major researcher in the field of affective neuroscience best known for his empirical investigations of the role of the amygdala in generating fear, in extending his critique of Damasio:

> … it would be interesting to conceive the very specificity of 'being-human' as grounded in this gap between cognitive and emotional abilities: a human being in whom emotions were to catch up with cognitive abilities would no longer be human, but a cold monster deprived of human emotions … Here we should supplement LeDoux with a more structural approach: it is not simply that our emotions lag behind our cognitive abilities, stuck at the primitive animal level; this very gap itself functions as an 'emotional' fact, giving rise to new, *specifically human, emotions*, from anxiety (as opposed to mere fear) to (human) love and melancholy. Is it that LeDoux (and Damasio, on whom LeDoux relies here) misses this feature because of the fundamental weakness (or, rather, ambiguity) of the proto-Althusserian distinction between emotions and feelings? This distinction has a clear Pascalian twist (and it is a mystery that, in his extensive critique of 'Descartes' error,' Damasio does not evoke Pascal, Descartes's major critic): physical emotions do not display inner feelings but, on the contrary, generate them. However, there is something missing here: a gap between emotions *qua* biological-organic bodily gestures and emotions *qua* learned symbolic gestures following rules (like Pascal's kneeling and praying). Specifically 'human' emotions (like anxiety) arise only when a human animal loses its emotional mooring in biological instincts, and this loss is supplemented by the symbolically regulated emotions *qua* man's 'second nature'. (Žižek, 2006, p. 228)

Indeed, LeDoux, like Damasio, sees neuroscience and psychoanalysis as being far from incompatible. Moreover, like the Lacanian Žižek, he emphasizes the far-reaching 'revolutionary' (rather than just 'evolutionary' as smooth and gradual) ramifications for the human animal of its immersion in language, an immersion changing and reshaping brains and bodies (LeDoux, 2002). LeDoux even muses about the possible alterations of affective dynamics in human

parlêtres driven by linguistic mediation (LeDoux, 2002, pp. 203–204). But, how accurate and justified are Žižek's above-quoted critical remarks regarding LeDoux's ideas about the relation between cognition and emotion in the human brain?

From a psychoanalytic perspective, perhaps one of the most important facts emphasized by LeDoux is that, as it might be expressed, the brain, although a bodily organ, is not organic *qua* a piece of nature as a harmonious and synthesized self-integrated system of balanced components in sync with each other. In fact, LeDoux points to precisely the sort of phenomena that lead Freud to posit the centrality in mental life of intra-psychical conflicts and Lacan to invoke again and again the figure of the split subject as evidence of the brain's hodge-podge, collage-like construction, a construction whose mismatched elements don't necessarily work well together (LeDoux, 2002, p. 31). Along these lines, in his study *The Emotional Brain*, he observes:

> Although we often talk about the brain as if it has a function, the brain itself actually has no function. It is a collection of systems, sometimes called modules, each with different functions. There is no equation by which the combination of functions of all the different systems mixed together equals an additional function called brain function. (LeDoux, 1996, p. 105)

He goes on to add that, 'Evolution tends to act on the individual modules and their functions rather than the brain as a whole … by and large most evolutionary changes in the brain take place at the level of individual modules' (LeDoux, 1996). The brain, like the rest of the human body with which it's inseparably enmeshed, is a product not of Evolution-with-a-capital-E (itself yet another non-existent Lacanian big Other), but of a plethora of different and distinct evolutionary circumstances and challenges spread out over a disparate number of times and places (as Damasio puts it, 'Evolution is not the Great Chain of Being' (Damasio, 1994, p. 185)). In this vein, Alain Badiou's denial of there being Nature as a monolithic cosmic One-All and parallel corresponding affirmation of the existence of a proliferation of natural multiplicities – 'Nature has no sayable being. There are only *some* natural beings' (Badiou, 2005, p. 140) – can and should be applied to the natural-scientific notion of evolution. Moreover, these evolutionary pressures, as not at all coordinated and unified with each other, act separately on a diverse array of independent systems and sub-systems within the central nervous system (Damasio notes that, 'the brain is a system of systems' (Damasio, 1999, p. 331)). No top-down design-plan governed the assembly process producing the peculiar lump of folded, meshwork matter that is the human brain. Its bottom-up genesis (in)consisted of a chaotic vortex of accidents, chances and contingencies. Consequently, the resulting product of such a process is unsurprisingly prone to an incalculable

number of internal antagonisms, tensions and short-circuits. Or, as neuroscientist David J. Linden describes it, the human central nervous system is a 'kludge' – 'The brain is … a kludge … a design that is inefficient, inelegant, and unfathomable, but that nevertheless works' (Linden, 2007, p. 6) and 'at every turn, brain design has been a kludge, a workaround, a jumble, a pastiche' (Linden, 2007, p. 245). Linden's book *The Accidental Mind* repeatedly insists that the brain is inelegantly designed by a multitude of haphazard evolutionary tinkerings in which the newer is plopped on top of the comparatively older and, hence, is 'poorly organized', 'a cobbled-together mess' (Linden, 2007). In the year immediately after the publication of Linden's book, psychologist Gary Marcus, in a book entitled *Kludge*, analyzes a range of mental phenomena in light of the same basic thesis advanced by Linden (Marcus, 2008). Both Linden's and Marcus's positions are foreshadowed by, among other sources, François Jacob's *Science* article 'Evolution and Tinkering' (Jacob, 1977) (a quotation from this article serves as one of the epigraphs to Marcus's book). One would have to be, as it were, utterly brainless not to see the obvious importance of this neuroscientific picture of the material seat of subjectivity for a psychoanalytic metapsychology emphasizing the central structuring functions of conflicts in mental life.

Clearly consistent with his stress upon the non-existence of the Brain as 'brain function' in the singular – echoing Badiou, there is, within each human being, no Brain, only some brains – LeDoux repeatedly and emphatically argues against the false impression that affective neuroscience can and does deal with emotional life in general or an ultimately homogenous emotion function in the brain (such as the so-called 'limbic system', something the objective reality of which is a bone of contention among neuroscientists) (LeDoux, 1996). So, not only is there no coherent brain function overall – there is no emotion function overall either (and, with reference again to the trinity of cognition, emotion and motivation, one might wonder, under the influence of psychoanalytic thinking, whether the same might be said for cognitive and motivational functions too). In his substantial survey *Affective Neuroscience*, Jaak Panksepp takes a further step along this same trajectory delineated by LeDoux (despite he and LeDoux disagreeing about the status of the notion of the limbic system (Panksepp, 1998)). Panksepp maintains that even particular individual emotions lack discrete corresponding 'centers' in the physiological anatomy of the brain:

> … no single psychological concept fully describes the functions of any given brain area or circuit. There are no unambiguous 'centers' or loci for discrete emotions in the brain that do not massively interdigitate with other functions, even though certain key circuits are essential for certain emotions to be elaborated. Everything ultimately emerges from the interaction of many systems. For this reason, modern neuroscientists talk

> about interacting 'circuits,' 'networks,' and 'cell assemblies' rather than 'centers'. (Panksepp, 1998, p. 147)

Combining LeDoux's denial of there being a basic, general emotion function in the brain with Panksepp's denial of there being compartmentalized anatomical brain loci correlated in a one-to-one manner with various feeling states, one can postulate the following: even specific singular emotions are complex (or complexes), that is, non-atomic/elementary clusters of interconnections between multiple different systems and sub-systems in the brain. What's more, it seems quite reasonable to suppose that all three dimensions of brain functioning (that is, cognition, emotion and motivation) come into play in affective phenomena. Panksepp says as much here. Moreover, elsewhere, he remarks that, 'it must be kept in mind that the brain is a massively interconnected organ whose every part can find an access pathway to any other part' (Panksepp, 1998, p. 70). He subsequently links this fact to emotional phenomena, emphasizing that the brain's mind-bogglingly intricate internal interconnectedness makes it such that emotions are inextricably intertwined with non-emotional (that is, cognitive and motivational) dimensions (Panksepp, 1998). Additionally, both within and between these interacting functions, it also seems defensible to hypothesize that a plurality of separate strata of temporal layers deposited in the brain, deposits dating from natural-evolutionary times as well as non-natural historical times, converge and/or clash throughout the neural interactions generating emotions, feelings and the like.

The big picture that arises from all of this, if indeed such a picture can be drawn on the basis of the preceding, is one which LeDoux appears to endorse. This endorsement is expressed in a passage that Žižek undoubtedly has in mind when critically 'supplementing' LeDoux's ideas in *The Parallax View*:

> … there is an imperfect set of connections between cognitive and emotional systems in the current stage of evolution of the human brain. This state of affairs is part of the price we pay for having newly evolved cognitive capacities that are not yet fully integrated into our brains. Although this is also a problem for other primates, it is particularly acute for humans, since the brain of our species, especially our cortex, was extensively rewired in the process of acquiring natural language functions. (LeDoux, 2002, pp. 322–323)

Žižek's earlier-quoted comments on this passage rightly highlight how LeDoux views the discrepancies between cognition and emotion in the human central nervous system to be symptomatic of a negative imperfection, a deficiency or fault perhaps eventually to be remedied in the evolutionary future of humanity. Especially for a Lacanian, this lack (here being a lack of coordination, harmonization, synthesis and so on between different neurological functions) is

positive as well as negative, a plus arising from a minus; and, as does Lacan, LeDoux too identifies the cutting intervention of language as largely responsible for the severity of the cracks and fissures of de-synchronization introduced into the human brain. Hence, Žižek, in consonance with a number of hypotheses recently put forward by various investigators into the brain (Stanovich, 2004; Johnston, 2010 [forthcoming]), speculates that, as it were, in losing a presupposed prior evolutionarily integrated balance of neurological functions, people gain their very humanness, their denaturalized subjectivity with its peculiar, uniquely human affective potentials.

After formulating these observations in response to Damasio and LeDoux, Žižek proceeds to warn that one must mind 'the gap that separates the brain sciences' unconscious from the Freudian Unconscious' (Žižek, 2006, p. 229). He argues that this gap is particularly palpable as regards the topic of emotions (Žižek, 2006). Other authors, such as François Ansermet and Pierre Magistretti as well as Gérard Pommier, likewise caution against conflating the psychoanalytic unconscious with the unconscious often spoken of by those situated in the neurosciences, with the latter frequently referring to what analysis would identify as merely preconscious or non-conscious (rather than unconscious proper in the sense of being defensively occluded by such intra-psychical mechanisms as repression, disavowal, negation, rejection/foreclosure and so on) (Pommier, 2004; Ansermet and Magistretti, 2007). Interestingly, LeDoux himself issues the exact same warning:

> Like Freud before them, cognitive scientists reject the view handed down from Descartes that mind and consciousness are the same. However, the cognitive unconscious is not the same as the Freudian or dynamic unconscious. The term cognitive unconscious merely implies that a lot of what the mind does goes on outside of consciousness, whereas the dynamic unconscious is a darker, more malevolent place where emotionally charged memories are shipped to do mental dirty work. To some extent, the dynamic unconscious can be conceived in terms of cognitive processes, but the term cognitive unconscious does not imply these dynamic operations. (LeDoux, 1996, pp. 29–30)

Damasio too is aware of and acknowledges these crucial differences (Damasio, 1999). Žižek and certain other psychoanalytically inclined interpreters of the neurosciences are quite justified in being concerned that many neuroscientists carelessly and indefensibly equivocate between Freud's unconscious and that of non-analytic cognitive science. However, Damasio and LeDoux, the two neuroscientists mentioned by name in the section of *The Parallax View* under consideration in the present context, are notable exceptions to this tendency in the neuroscientific literature. What's more, although Žižek charges that Damasio problematically treats emotions (as distinct from feelings) as simply

and straightforwardly natural *qua* biologically hard-wired – in his theory of the emotion-based self, Damasio indeed tends to speculate about a core of nature as the fixed foundation for additional later layers of higher-order nurture (Damasio, 1999) – there are moments when Damasio appears to entertain the possibility of socio-symbolic mediation penetrating all the way down into the bedrock of even the most rudimentary bodily emotional ground of human being (Damasio, 1994).

The issue of neuroscientific naturalism (such as Damasio's critiqued by Žižek) and its validity or invalidity *vis-à-vis* psychoanalysis will be returned to shortly. For the moment, four lines of thought in Damasio's defense apropos his alleged failure to account for the properly Freudian unconscious ought to be advanced. First, considering, among other things, Žižek's (2008b) remarks quoted earlier in the opening paragraph of this article, the mutually exclusive contrast Žižek appeals to between an emotional unconscious and the Freudian unconscious is questionable, if not incorrect. Second, despite his general, prevailing emphasis upon the naturalness of the rudimentary emotional building blocks of the embodied human mind, Damasio (as already indicated), nonetheless, occasionally allows for the possibility of cognitive (and, hence, cultural-linguistic) mediation and modulation even of physiological emotions, not just of psychologically parsed feelings. Third, Damasio's distinction between emotions and feelings, rather than threatening to reduce the unconscious to a roiling carnal sea of primitive impulses and passions (in a fashion counter to Freudian–Lacanian psychoanalysis), both dovetails with key features of Lacan's depiction of the unconscious as well as opens up new options for envisioning this set of mental dimensions central to psychoanalytic concerns.

As regards this third line of defense, Lacan continually combats the crude popular image of the unconscious as a dark, hidden depth, repeatedly maintaining (sometimes with recourse to topology as the mathematical science of surfaces) that the unconscious is, so to speak, profoundly superficial, situated right out in the open of the signifiers and structures within which subjects come to be and circulate (Johnston, 2005). Although Damasio, with respect to the topic of the unconscious, indeed often does focus on emotions as deep corporeal states of a naturally shaped body overlooked by conscious mental attention (that is, as unfelt emotions), his distinction between emotions and feelings nonetheless implies a notion of the unconscious that is anything but complicit with the woefully unsophisticated picture-thinking of old versions of depth psychology. The Damasian unconscious would consist not so much of unfelt emotions bubbling away in the obscure, opaque depths of the flesh, but, instead, of the ensemble of intervening mechanisms and processes facilitating and/or interfering with the connections between emotions and feelings. In other words, Damasio's unconscious, like that of Lacan, is a thin, in-between function of gaps, the cause of discrepancies and splits between manifest features of the

parlêtre. In this vein, it's important to recall that Damasio portrays emotions as public rather than private phenomena (Damasio, 1994, 1999, 2003). That is to say, emotional states, as corporeal events, are observable, at least in principle, by third parties, whether these third parties be scientists monitoring physiological changes in a human organism or non-scientific others taking stock of visible alterations expressed in and through the observed body of the person under consideration (this is by contrast with feelings as mental events which, because of their first-person quality and corresponding experiential inaccessibility to other minds, can be 'observed' only indirectly through linguistically conveyed reports). So, an emotion *à la* Damasio, even if unfelt by the person whose body undergoes (un)said emotion, isn't associated by him with concealed depths. Quite the contrary – a Damasian emotion tends to be just as 'out there' in the light of publicly visible day as the utterances spoken by the speaking subject. Along related lines, the Damasian unconscious subsists in the intervals between two types of manifestations: emotions as bodily conditions and thoughts as mental contents (which are potentially expressible in socio-symbolic terms, if not actually thus expressed). Thanks to these intervals as gaps between manifested emotions and their equally manifested translations, non-translations, or mis-translations in ideationally inflected mediums – such intervals should be counted as constituting some of the 'bars' barring the split subject ($) of Lacanian theory – emotions can be not only unfelt, but also misfelt in any number of manners.

The fourth line of defense in favor of Damasio as faced with Žižek's criticisms of him requires circumnavigating back to the question of naturalism versus anti-naturalism. The position to be staked out here in response to this question could be succinctly encapsulated in Žižekian style as 'Naturalism or anti-naturalism? No, thanks – both are worse!'. Žižek closes the section of the fourth chapter of *The Parallax View* dealing with Damasio, a section entitled 'Emotions Lie, or, Where Damasio Is Wrong', by insisting that:

> … we should bear in mind the basic anti-Darwinian lesson of psychoanalysis repeatedly emphasized by Lacan: man's radical and fundamental *dis*-adaptation, *mal*-adaptation, to his environs. At its most radical, 'being-human' consists in an 'uncoupling' from immersion in one's environs, in following a certain automatism which ignores the demands of adaptation – this is what the 'death drive' ultimately amounts to. Psychoanalysis is not 'deterministic' ('What I do is determined by unconscious processes'): the 'death drive' as a self-sabotaging structure represents the minimum of freedom, of a behavior uncoupled from the utilitarian-survivalist attitude. The 'death drive' means that the organism is no longer fully determined by its environs, that it 'explodes/implodes' into a cycle of autonomous behavior. (Žižek, 2006, p. 231)

The invocation of the psychoanalytic notion of the death drive won't be treated in detail here; this author has addressed Žižek's philosophical appropriation of the infamous Freudian *Todestrieb* at length elsewhere (Johnston, 2008b). What will be addressed at present are the ways in which Žižek contrasts Damasio's naturalism with Lacan's anti-naturalism. Both in the passage quoted immediately above as well as others from the same portion of *The Parallax View*, one could read Žižek's remarks as referring to a partial, rather than a complete, denaturalization as characteristic of human beings *qua* subjects (as indicated above by the adverb 'fully' in 'the organism is no longer *fully* determined by its environs'). Interpreted in this manner, Žižek succeeds at resisting the temptation of an exaggerated pseudo-Lacanian anti-naturalism insofar as he presupposes that the primitive emotions deposited within the base of humans' mammalian brains by archaic evolutionary conditions persist alongside socio-symbolic configurations and all the various subjectifying mediations they bring with them. Žižek's move here gestures at the notion of humans being creatures of incomplete, perpetually unfinished transformations, monstrous abortions of the failed sublations of a weak dialectic incapable of digesting the animal bodies out of which it emerges without leaving behind remaining residual scraps. To resort to the lexicon of Marxism, this would be a dialectic of interminably 'uneven development'.

However, one also, perhaps less charitably, could construe Žižek as envisioning a total and thorough denaturalization befalling those living entities transubstantiated into $s by being taken up into the networks and webs of symbolic orders. In an article entitled 'From *objet a* to Subtraction', he indeed sounds as though he endorses an excessively extreme anti-naturalism hypothesizing a denaturalization-without-remainder as brought about by the processes of subjectification affecting human beings (as he similarly sounds in the previously mentioned discussion of life 1.0 versus life 2.0 from *In Defense of Lost Causes*). In that article, Žižek depicts 'Freud's basic lesson' as the idea that, 'there is no "human animal", a human being is from its birth (and even before) torn out of the animal constraints, its instincts are "denaturalized", caught in the circularity of the (death-)drive, functioning "beyond the pleasure principle"' (Žižek, 2007). Subsequently, in the same paragraph of this text, he suggests that:

> In a step further, one should even venture that there is no animal *tout court*, if by 'animal' we mean a living being fully fitting its environs: the lesson of Darwinism is that every harmonious balance in the exchange between an organism and its environs is a temporary fragile one, that it can explode at any moment; such a notion of animality as the balance disturbed by the human hubris is a human fantasy. (Žižek, 2007, p. 139)

Without contesting in the least the accuracy of this interpretation of Darwinian evolutionary theory, it ought to be noticed that Žižek appears partially to

denaturalize non-human animals typically considered to be elements of 'nature' imagined as a balanced harmony – Žižek's larger body of philosophical work, especially in terms of his materialist ontology and corresponding theory of subjectivity, compels a radical re-thinking of the proto-conceptual pictures and metaphors constituting images of nature informing standard varieties of naturalism (Johnston, 2007, 2008b) – while, by contrast, completely denaturalizing human animals, depicting such beings as always-already 'torn out of' their biological, instinctual animality. Although Damasio unambiguously evinces naturalist sympathies problematic from an orthodox Lacanian point of view, he and his like-minded brain researchers (such as LeDoux, Panksepp and Keith E. Stanovich) don't subscribe to any sort of essentialist naturalism unreservedly reducing cultural nurture to natural nature, the more-than-bio-material subject to the physiology of the biological body in and of itself. In fact, in Damasio's defense, his multi-tiered model of the embodied self avoids the trap of the false dichotomy pitting anti-naturalism against naturalism as an either-or choice (again, in Leninist-Stalinist phraseology, 'both are worse!'). Sometimes Žižek himself elegantly navigates around this impasse. But, at select moments, he seems to force this false choice in elaborating his critical observations as regards the neurosciences, evolutionary theory and ecology in particular.

Žižek points to a uniquely human '*dis*-adaptation, *mal*-adaptation' as a fact that the neuroscientific perspectives of Damasio and LeDoux allegedly ignore or discount. However, those aspects of neuroscience most relevant for forging a Freudian–Lacanian neuro-psychoanalysis are far from trafficking in the clumsy, unrefined oversimplifications of reductive strains of evolutionary psychology dogmatically insisting upon the ultimate centrality of 'natural adaptation'. A specific combination of neuroscience and psychoanalysis requires critically amending and qualifying Žižek's Lacanian emphasis on the breadth and depth of human beings' identifying denaturalization: this denaturalization, as non-/anti-adaptive relative to the presumed standards of deeply entrenched evolutionary rhythms and routines, is quite a bit less than absolute and all-pervasive.

The dis/mal-adaptation of which Žižek speaks fails to break neatly and cleanly with older traces of 'adaptation' as patterns of cognition and comportment laid down by much more archaic temporal strata of evolutionary history. A dis/mal-adaptation as a sharp, absolute rupture with anything 'natural' would, in a number of ways, be far more adaptive than the partial and incomplete denaturalization that leaves humans stranded, as malformed Frankenstein-like jumbles of mismatched fragments thrown together over the course of unsynchronized sequences of aleatory events, halfway between nature and culture, between the lingering adaptations of evolutionary histories and those demanded by human histories past and present (Johnston, 2010 [forthcoming]). Additionally, when surfacing within the context of

contemporary socio-cultural circumstances, previously 'adaptive' behaviors conditioned by ancient evolutionary pressures can be much more mal-adaptive than the thoughts and actions of subjects steered by the socio-cultural mediators responsible for human dis-adaptation. Put differently, in the 'inverted world' of human reality, dis/mal-adaptation can be more adaptive than adaptation itself.

Related to this, the conflictuality of overriding interest to psychoanalysis (that is, those conflicts analytic metapsychology portrays as tense fissures central to the structuration of psychical subjectivity) almost certainly includes conflicts between evolutionary nature (associated with adaptation) and non-evolutionary anti-nature (associated with dis/mal-adaptation) as well as conflicts internal to the latter category. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud indicates that one of the root causes of this *Unbehagen* perpetually afflicting socialized humanity generation after generation is a defiant, rebellious constitutional base hard-wired into the fundaments of 'human nature' (the chief example of this being presumably innate instinctual quotas of aggression and destructiveness) (Freud, 1953–1974, Vol. 21). 'Civilization' can and does partially appropriate this base in a number of fashions to be turned to its own ends. But, whatever the extent of its partial successes, it repeatedly fails fully to tame and domesticate savage, resistant undercurrents whose archaic flows, however diluted by 'civilizing' influences, continue to spill over into the present. Human subjectivity is constituted neither by nature nor anti-nature, but by the uneasy co-mingling and chaotic cross-fertilizations between the theoretical poles of these two actually/empirically non-existent extremes, by the collisions of disparate temporal-structural layers sandwiched together so as to form multiple fault lines of tension. Nowhere are the consequences of humanity's abandonment to a neither-natural-nor-anti-natural limbo more apparent than in the peculiarities of human beings' emotional lives. Maybe what makes an affect a specifically human experience (as distinct from the bodily emotions and psychological feelings evidently undergone by non-human sentient mammals too) is its bearing witness to humanity's status as stranded in an ontological limbo between nature and anti-nature, torn between split planes of existence irrupting out of the immanence of a self-sundering material Real (Johnston, 2008b).

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